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Temporary Homes:
An Investigation into the architectures of forced migration
in post-2015 Athens

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Doctor of Philosophy
University of Edinburgh
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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the ways in which the complexities of living are manifested in the making and presence of multi-scalar ‘temporary homes’ in the context of forced migration with focus on post-2015 Athens, Greece. Following the so-called ‘summer of migration’ in 2015, Greece received an unprecedented influx of migrants from southern countries which transformed the inhabited landscapes of the country significantly. Research on settlements for refugees in this period largely focused on the political ambiguities surrounding the lives of people living in those settlements, and research concerning the ways in which ‘home’ is experienced throughout the production of space in overseas territories has been limited. Due to the pressing need for accommodation of incomers, however, rapid responses to the housing problems have been developed largely by military/humanitarian firms and initiatives in the form of housing units/shelters.

This thesis responds to the urgent need to explore what these practices suggest in terms of the relation of people with place in the context of forced migration. Based on a series of fieldtrips to Athens, Greece, undertaken from November 2018 to June 2019, this thesis deploys ethnographic methods and mapping practices to reveal spatio-temporal aspects of geographies of forced migration that transcend the limits of housing units and confined refugee settlements. This way, it investigates the ways in which temporary homes are produced across multiple scales. This thesis draws upon critical human geography in exploring the concept of ‘home’ and posits home-making as a complex and multi-scalar process. The multi-sited ethnographic methods deployed during fieldwork borrow from feminist approaches to account for the researcher’s being-in-the-field and the hidden aspects of the city experiences in post-2015 Athens both for forcibly displaced people and people who work with them through an analysis of nine in-depth interviews and conversations in the field, participant and non-participant observations in relevant activities across Athens, fieldnotes, sketches, photography, and mapping practices.
The fieldwork is presented in three empirical chapters in which multiple connections across human agents, physical and digital sites have been explored in forms of assemblages. Finally, this thesis 1) finds post-2015 Athens as a ‘learning site’ for its human inhabitants and a ‘threshold’ which connects to transnational physical and cultural geographies, and 2) develops a methodology for analysing and representing architectures of forced migration on multiple scales to reveal hidden complexities of temporary living for refugees, positing these as historically relevant. In relation to current practices of housing for refugees, this thesis shows the limits of reductionist approaches to temporary living of refugees in host countries which are manifested in the forms of housing solutions confined to logistically convenient shelters, and sites of refuge as abstract/unhistorical places of non-experience.
LAY SUMMARY

This thesis studies the lives and activities of forcibly displaced people and people who work with them in the new cities they arrive. It focuses on Athens, Greece, to where large number of people migrated since the summer of 2015. Forcibly displaced people are often accommodated in shelters and similar housing units, and the design industry largely focused on developing these types of products for their accommodation. However, these are not the only places forcibly displaced people live, and it is possible to see various activities in Athens beyond the boundaries of shelters. This thesis suggests that 'home' is a useful concept to understand that there are more aspects to the lives of forcibly displaced people than shelters can address in the cities they arrive, and these need to be considered in their temporary accommodation.

Based on a series of fieldtrips to Athens, Greece, undertaken from November 2018 to June 2019, this thesis finds multiple connections across people, places and activities that relate to forced migration. It reflects on the themes that emerge from the analysis of 12 in-depth interviews and numerous conversations on the field, participant and non-participant observations in relevant activities across Athens, fieldnotes, sketches, photography, and mapping practices. Through studies of the data gathered on and off site, this thesis finds new ways of learning from Athens about forced migration and develops a methodology that can be useful for architects and others working on the spatial aspects of forced migration.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to my research supervisors, Dr Miguel Paredes Maldonado and Dr Penny Travlou, for their invaluable guidance throughout my research journey. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr Nishat Awan and Dr Craig Martin for their valuable comments and recommendations on my work.

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I am particularly grateful to my parents, who have always loved, cared for, and supported me throughout this research and throughout my life. I also want to express my gratitude to my brother and sister-in-law for their support, and their little one for all the joyous moments. Finally, I want to acknowledge the valuable support and companionship of my dear friends BNY and BA throughout this process and beyond.
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Chapter I: Introduction

1.1. Introduction: Background for the thesis

In 2013, IKEA and Better Shelter launched a shelter prototype for temporary accommodation of refugees (Scott-Smith, 2017). The project was supported by the United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees (UNHCR), and was brought to public attention through large advertisement. It was exhibited in various occasions and venues including The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), and was deployed in several countries around the world. It was one of the projects where a conflict of interests and needs were readily evident in the matters of forced displacement. In April 2016, Nesta¹ published a digital book titled *Innovation for international development: Navigating the Paths and Pitfalls*, where the CEO of IKEA reflected on some of the challenges they faced as a result of this conflict of interest (Heggenes, & Karlsson, 2016). The ‘conflicting interests’ have many stakeholders: the international institutions, the humanitarian organizations, the private companies, and the (potential) inhabitants of the shelters.

Meanwhile, Léopold Lambert (2016, April 21) was publishing his observations on *Grande Synthe* and *Calais*, ‘the jungle’, two refugee camps in France—reflecting on how these sites were rendered by varied levels of constraints. The building of the two camps differed both in terms of who was involved in these processes, and the underpinning principles that motivated particular approaches. *The Calais Container Camp* was built by the support of the French State by Logistic Solutions, a company that undertook manufacturing for military purposes (Lambert, 2016, April 21) (Figure 1.1).

¹ Nesta is an innovation-oriented, registered charity in England and Wales with a social focus (NESTA, 2021).
Grande Synthe, on the other hand, was built by more localised endeavours with the support of the Municipality which worked with Médecins sans frontiers and Utopia 56, an association consisting of volunteers engaging in various aspects of support from health to accommodation (Lambert, 2016, April 21). Despite the constraints, the design of this site provided less restriction of movement and more space and possibilities to interact and appropriate the space for its inhabitants.
The different priorities that underpinned the two sites, and materialisation of these priorities affected how the sites were created and interacted with both by the people who engaged with them externally, and their inhabitants. Was it, then, possible to engage in these difficult sites and geographies in Europe struck by massive migratory flows meaningfully through re-evaluating a focus on producing the ultimate industrial container? What was more to the experience of temporary living for forcibly displaced people other than a perfect container that architects and spatial practitioners could redirect their attention to?

Built upon such curiosity, this thesis is motivated by exploring how the materialities of the sites of refuge and agencies of their inhabitants interact in the cities of Europe. It especially focuses on the transnational migration towards Europe which escalated significantly in the past decade, and the problems associated with the temporary accommodation of the new incomers which reached another level of emergency upon ‘the long summer of migration’ in 2015. The increasing need for temporary accommodation triggered interest in the design
industry to get involved with the development of temporary accommodation solutions. On the more local level, citizen-run initiatives began to emerge to address the matters of housing. This research is interested in approaches towards temporary accommodation of forcibly displaced people in this climate. It aims at exploring lived experiences of temporary accommodation in Europe with a focus on Athens, Greece which is often referred to as a ‘gate’ of Europe. In the cities of Europe which have become geographies of arrival for forcibly displaced people, however, further interactions and transformations have been manifested beyond simply the passing through of displaced people to reach their final destinations. Among these cities, Athens has witnessed an emergence of social, geographical and habitational networks which proliferated further after the summer of 2015 summer upon a massive migratory flow into the city. These networks present local and trans-local connections, altering the lives in these cities through their activities. This research considers Athens as ‘home-in-the-making’ rather than a ‘gate’ in order to account for the multiple layers of these dynamic and transformative experiences of ‘temporary’ inhabitation. Investigating social and material manifestations of temporary living through multisited research, it explores urban transformations in Athens as a result of forced displacement and probes what these experiences suggest in terms of contemporary forms of living in cities where forcibly displaced people reside.

1.2. Interrogating disciplinary borders: Locating the thesis

Transnational forced migration is intricately related to the questions of borders and boundaries. In this research, borders and boundaries are constantly interrogated. As introduced briefly in Section 1.1, a shelter—a housing unit, when placed on a site,

immediately begins to define a space beyond itself. The production of a shelter, therefore, registers to a decision made about its potential site, and these sites register to their wider localities and the geographies beyond. Due to the process of emplacement, therefore, shelter, cannot be abstracted from the spatial realms that extend its exterior. It also registers to the relationship of its inhabitant(s) to its inside and outside, allow or restrict action, encourage or discourage interaction within and outside of it.

In the context of forced displacement, ‘shelter’ has potential to be a nexus which allows interrogation of disciplinary boundaries. Arguably, ‘shelter’ is at the intersection of industrial design and (interior) architecture for its scale in the realm of design. Further to this, it is a matter of economics, sociology, political science and legal studies among others. Therefore, it resembles a spatial object through which various connections unfold. It also makes it inevitable to pursue an approach which transcends the limits of a disciplinary framework in its studies.

When I started investigating the housing unit produced by IKEA and Better Shelter, which is often referred to as Better Shelter, I noticed that the team that developed the ‘product’ consisted only of industrial designers. The design of a spatial object which aimed at accommodating people on a diversity of sites, albeit temporarily, as an industrial product was a curious matter to me. Looking further into a wide variety of responses to temporary accommodation crises in Europe, a conception of shelter as a ‘product’ and a container of human bodies stood in stark contrast with alternative approaches to temporary accommodation of refugees which pertain to multiple aspects of their lives in the geographies of arrival. Some of these practices fostered a sense of agency, community-building and participatory processes in decision-making. At a time where divergent

3 ‘Shelter’ as a ‘spatial object’ can be viewed in the light of Martin’s (2016) discussion of ‘shipping container’ as a ‘spatial object’, as shipping containers have also been widely used as housing units in the context of forced displacement.
approaches prevail on the matter, an important mission of this thesis is to examine structures of temporary living beyond products, and how the matter of accommodation has been approached on the ground by local initiatives, activists, NGOs and international volunteers in the city, registering to the spatial complexities these structures engage in. The investigations in this research oscillate between multiple scales. This includes examination of various activities and physical arrangements in and around a particular building, and connections across sites affected by forced migration that unfold on the city scale.

As an interior architect with experience in various projects of similar size and scope, my initial interest cantered on the topic of shelters for refugees in temporary settlements. This interest inspired the focus of my current thesis, which takes shelters as its point of departure and engages with the broader concept of ‘home’ as a primary research area within the field of interior architecture. Through this investigation, my thesis aims to accomplish several goals: first, it seeks to bring a contemporary issue, which is seemingly dominated by industrial design, into the realm of interior architecture, in order to demonstrate the relevance of this field to current challenges. Additionally, my thesis aims to situate interior architecture within the larger context of the built environment by adopting a multi-scalar understanding of ‘home’ and its implications for spatial analysis, including the creation of maps. Through these endeavours, I hope to contribute to the ongoing conversation within the field of interior architecture and provide new insights into the concept of dwelling.

I argue that the spaces of refuge which encompass the immediate and wider physical structures extend beyond the realm of industrial/product design and pertain to the skillset of interior architects and architects, while also inviting them to critically examine their tools and methods in order to unpack the socio-material relationships that embody the complexities of lived experiences, albeit conceived temporary (Olcay, 2020). Raising similar concerns in terms of limited architectural involvement in the matters of ‘shelter’, Breeze (2020) points out the lack of any explicit role definitions for architects in United Nations Disaster Relief
Organisation (UNDRO) guidelines (1982) or the Handbook for Emergencies by the UNHCR (1982). The investigations in this research contribute to developing an architectural lens to ‘shelter’ and ‘sheltering’, and, at the same time, interrogating tools and methods architects deploy for spatial analysis on sites affected by forced migration.

1.3. Agency and the built environment: Key conceptual contributions

Forced migration brings to the fore matters that concern power hierarchies, and is intricately linked with questions of agency. An architectural engagement with the matter, therefore, needs to register to a discussion that concerns power dynamics and agencies in order to be relevant and responsive. Since the second half of the 20th century, design research has been increasingly involved in endeavours to redefine design processes by questioning power relations. A growing interest in challenging the dominant role of ‘the designer/architect’ and passive role of ‘the user/inhabitant’ prevailed.

These trends involved both recognition of the users/inhabitants as active contributors to the design processes (e.g. through inhabiting a space), and advocacy of their further engagement in design processes across a wide spectrum of design activities including decision-making and using or inhabiting. These concerns affected the scholarship in both industrial design and architecture. Among them, Papanek (1971) criticised "egocentric" practices of industrial design and advocated design for the sake of society. Influenced by Barthes' theory of reader as an active subject, the role of inhabitants in architectural processes is revisited by architectural scholars (e.g. Hill, 2003; Hernandez, 2010). Lefebvre's proposition of "right to the city" (1991), on the other hand, generated a strand of scholarship in spatial analysis that persists to day.
Revisiting the dynamics of design processes and the role of users/inhabitants generated new concepts under which these are explored. The term "user-centered design" was adopted in the US and "participatory design" in Northern Europe, to subsequently influence each other (Sanders, & Stappers, 2008). The term "codesign" emerged as a concept of participatory design, which, besides having other meanings attributed to it, is defined as "the creativity of designers and people not trained in design, working together in the design development process", by the authors (Sanders, & Stappers, 2008, p.2).

Having parallel concerns, the discourses of “participation” in industrial design and architecture were only rarely brought into conversation and often followed different paths⁴. As put by Kaminer and Krivy (2013), participation in an architectural context can be considered as addressing the “explicit demands for inclusive, legitimate forms of sovereignty and for the decentralization of power”, which “infer the idea of freedom—from state, from top-down power structures and from institutions” (p. 1). Informed by a vision of empowering communities and preventing citizens from passivity, participatory practices tackled the lack of inclusion of people in the decision-making processes. Divergent approaches were deployed towards participation based on various ideas about how to reach democratic ideals and a variety of participatory formulations were adopted depending on the conditions under which participatory processes have been taking place.

To claim these practices would avoid top-down approaches in all instances, however, is difficult. Examining the Socially Integrated City Programme initiated in 1999 in Germany which aimed at the integration of the disadvantaged by an urban development model, which she considers similar to the practices in other countries in Europe after the 1980s, Mayer

⁴ Addressing the similarities and discrepancies of the participatory turn in these two different disciplines is beyond the scope of this thesis. Taking into account the overlaps between the two due to the involvement of industrial design in the processes of shelter in forced displacement, this thesis engages with the matter predominantly in architectural terms.
(2013) suggests that the organisations which took part, instead of serving for “catalytic functions”, ended up being part of a system where non-profit organisations work as the “extended arm of the local state”. There is profound criticism on participatory processes with similar concerns as Mayer’s—criticising the role of the non-profit organisations within these systems (e.g. Miessen, 2010; Agier, 2011). Napier (2002), for example, in his work on the development of core housing in South Africa, holds that it is “unlikely to get beyond core housing and other elemental housing approaches as long as the international development apparatus grinds on and governments wish to hold on to power” (p. 257). Such limitations as to be bound to international development agenda and to the will of governments yield paradoxical objectives for participatory practices. Despite the fact that the need for designing alternative housing units has begun to be realised by design industry, it is difficult to claim that the issues regarding the accommodation of refugees could be solved by an application of participatory approaches in reductive terms.

Miessen (2010) identifies a tendency towards reducing the means of engagement and participation to certain forms for the sake of establishing institutionalised standards by claiming that “participation has become a radical chic, one that is en vogue with politicians who want to make sure that rather than producing critical content, the tool itself becomes what is supposed to be read as criticality” (p.44). As the international organisations deal with problems in different regions with varied habits and living styles, creating such standards results in the elimination of much of what there is on the local level and consideration of either the generally accepted minimum standards—which means the reduction of the objectives of development to the sustaining of bare life in the cases of forced migration—or practices which seem to highlight approaches such as community engagement even if they are limited in scope. There is a persistent necessity, then, to unsettle the definitions attached to the terms that are forced to have fixed meanings that benefit powerful institutions against the interest of inhabitants.
In relation to architectural practice, we are to witness yet another term that is rising in relation to architecture’s involvement with social projects for unprivileged communities or emergency situations, that is ‘humanitarian architecture’. Although architects have been involved in projects that are considered to fall under this category, the emergence of the umbrella term ‘humanitarian architecture’ is relatively new and is gaining popularity. Fixation on such categories, however, risks associating the relevant principles to particular practices rather than critically transforming architectural thinking. Furthermore, the adjective ‘humanitarian’ evokes the colonial practices that have marked centuries of history, which makes such categorisation even more dubious. In her study, Irene E. Brisson (2015) draws attention to the unidirectional flow of international aid which raises concerns as to an assumption of a binary between the typical givers and the receivers in thinking about humanitarian design. Especially in situations where people are left bereft of their resources such as in forced migration, the problematic implications of such unbalanced relationships need to be interrogated with a critical evaluation of design and design processes.

The problem of unidirectional flow in humanitarian practices is only doubled by conventional architectural practices where architects are considered as authorities in the activity of design and building. The former project manager of Architecture for Humanity, a prominent organisation associated with humanitarian architecture that operated between 1999 and 2015, Eric Cesal (2015) wrote on what he calls “an essential contradiction of humanitarian practice” (p. 213). The notion of success for architects and designers, he suggests, is dependent on fame, and that this creates a concern towards “responding to conditions rather than preventing them” (p. 213). His arguments being based on the situations that result from poverty, Cesal suggests ways to tackle the problems by preventing such contradiction with concern to local capacities and economies, which imply an emphasis on the process over product (Cesal, 2015).
As mentioned above, humanitarian architecture is typically thought in relation to internal conflicts in developing countries or post-disaster situations. Despite their different scopes, however, there are considerable overlaps between the housing approaches developed for these conditions and those that are deployed formally for the forcibly displaced people in temporary refugee settlements in European countries who fled war and conflicts in their home countries. With the increasing interest in post-disaster situations and crises that create need for temporary accommodation, shelter design typologies in the form of containers and modular structures, and their integration into both industrial and architectural practice have proliferated. This condition, which becomes only more attractive with the technological advancements that can go hand in hand with such tendency, necessitates an investigation into the potential consequences and limitations of a turn to such typologies in the forms of architecture and design.

Although the questions with regards to humanitarianism and institutionalisation are pertinent and constitute a significant body of research in the studies of forced migration (e.g. Agamben, 1998; Hyndman, 2000; Agier, 2011; Fassin, 2008, 2012), this thesis does not maintain such criticism as an end. Although relevant, thinking of participatory practices merely within these frameworks limits broader possibilities of bottom-up interpretation and overshadows agencies of forcibly displaced people by taking institutions as the centre of focus. Bearing a footing in these discussions which unfold in the empirical chapters and are discussed further in Chapter VIII, this thesis focuses on people’s engagement in geographies of forced migration by placing them at the centre.

In order to focus on people’s activities in Athens, I elaborate on ‘participation’ in this thesis through interpretations of ‘spatial agency’ in order to explore the spatial processes in which the forcibly displaced people who are living in temporary settlements participate. Moving from ‘participation’ to ‘spatial agency’, participatory architecture ceases to be a strand of architecture, but its premises allow for a critical examination of ‘architecture’ both as a spatial
practice and for its relevance to the agencies it is concerned with. In their book titled *Spatial Agency: Other ways of doing architecture*, Awan et al. (2011) reflect on their preference of the terms ‘spatial agency’ over ‘alternative architectural practice,’ by examining each word for their connotations. They draw attention to the connotation of ‘architecture’ with the physical and the drawn, and argue for the capacity of ‘spatial’ to expand such conception while dealing with space (p. 29). The term ‘agency’ is not understood to be in a dichotomic relationship with structure as implied in the discourses of social and political theory. Drawing upon Giddens’ (1979) take on agency and structure as consisting of two distinct but interconnected conditions, and Latour’s (2005) Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) which suggests that the meaning and significance of any societal event or object can only be fully understood when considering the various relationships and connections it has with both human and non-human actors, the authors argue that “buildings are not seen as determinants of society [the primacy of the individual] nor as determined by society [the primacy of structure] but rather as in society” (p. 31). The concerns presented by the authors are pertinent to this research where the spatial processes are investigated by drawing upon the questions of agency.

1.4. On Terminologies

This section reflects on the use of terminologies in this thesis for its three strands. These strands are discussed under one category each, however, these are related to wider issues and definitions that move beyond these categories and invite a critical outlook on the spheres of spatial research/practice, forced migration, and housing, respectively. The first category of ‘architecture’ introduces a critical perspective for the term, expanding it into an alternative interpretation of spatial practices that challenges a notion of architecture as the

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5 The scope of this thesis is limited to human and material agencies, however, there is potential to investigate the agencies of other non-humans such as various animals affected by the transformations in the cities due to forced migration, which would expand the discussion on the matter.
study of buildings. The category of ‘refugee’ refers to distinct categorisations of subjects and subject groups that are relevant to the literature on forced migration. Finally, the term ‘home’ suggests a shift from a reductive approach to ‘shelter’ with its multi-scalar and multi-layered exploration in academic scholarship, particularly within critical geography; which is developed further in the framework of ‘temporary homes’ in Chapter II to be devised as an analytical tool throughout this thesis.

1.4.1. On ‘Architecture(s)’ and ‘architectural’

In this thesis, the term ‘architecture’ is used alongside ‘built environment’ and ‘spatial practice’. This thesis pursues a critical approach to a conception of ‘architecture’ as fundamentally a study of buildings. It embodies a broader definition of architecture than suggested by a conventional use of the term, concerned mainly with a triad of the use, technology and form of the buildings. Instead, it focuses on the social, material and temporal relationships that unfold in, on, around, between and across buildings. Along similar lines, Awan et al. (2011) point at the association of physical or aesthetical aspects of buildings to the term ‘architectural’ rather than their “volatile” aspects which consist of “the process of their production, their occupation, their temporality, and their relations to society and nature” (p. 27). The spatial/architectural investigations in this thesis encompass these volatile aspects of the built environment, however, the terms ‘spatial’ and ‘architectural’ are used interchangeably as an endeavour to challenge the limited connotations of ‘architectural’ and encourage its broader understandings. This aspect of the thesis is further reflected upon in Section 1.3.

1.4.2. On ‘Refugee’

The very categorisation of forcibly displaced people as ‘asylum seekers’, ‘refugees’ or ‘migrants’ has been a matter of debate on multiple grounds including their legal treatment, the multiplicity of organisations that address their problems, and institutional construction of
their subjectivities. The formal definitions of ‘refugee’ and ‘asylum seeker’ are widely accepted as the UN’s definition of the terms as decided in the 1951 Refugee Convention after the Second World War. In this Convention, the previous categorisation of refugees was reduced to a single definition of refugees. In Article 1 Section A paragraph 2, ‘refugee’ is defined as follows:

Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

Asylum-seekers, on the other hand, are defined as people who are in the legal process of refugee status determination. Besides these, the distinction between ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ can also be traced back to the aftermath of Second World War (Karatani, 2005). Such fragmentary international framework for displaced people, however, was criticised by scholars for being artificial, who argued for a more unified system (Karatani, 2005). Another strand of criticism concerns the obfuscation of the activities of displaced people. In relation to the migratory flows to Europe after 2015, Carastathis, Spathopoulou and Tsilimpounidi (2018) suggest that such "discrete juridical categories" to label migrants are divisive, all the while obscuring the collective struggles of “precaritised groups” (p. 29). Other attempts at challenging categorisation of forcibly displaced people concern the legitimacy of the presence of displaced people in their new countries of arrival. A category of ‘illegal refugees’ emerged to specify the legitimacy of the status of displaced people, which was objected by some scholars for failing to recognise that the legitimacy of concern is not that of the person themselves but of their status (Bauder, 2014). In response to the suggestions to remove the term ‘illegal’ as an indicator of the legitimacy of their status altogether; Bauder (2014) advocated the use of the terms ‘illegalised’ refugees or immigrants to emphasise the “institutional and political processes rendering people illegal” (p. 327).
While the criticism and suggestions outlined above pertain to the juridical categories, the use of the categories ‘migrants’ and ‘refugees’ to refer to forcibly displaced people has also been a matter of their representation on the media during the migratory flows to Europe by the year 2015. A discursive study of the UK media finds the use of ‘Mediterranean migrant crisis’, ‘Calais migrant crisis’ and ‘European migrant crisis’ consecutively in the reporting of the events in 2015, which were finally transformed into ‘refugee crisis’ (Goodman, Sirriyeh, & McMahon, 2017: 105). The authors argue that the construction of the subjects as ‘migrants’ posed them as a ‘threat’ to the security of the UK and Europe, whereas constructing the events as ‘refugee crisis’, thus categorising the subjects as ‘refugees’—particularly based on the photographs of a drowned child—portrayed these subjects in a “humane and sympathetic way” (Goodman, Sirriyeh, & McMahon, 2017: 105).

While the use of the categories ‘asylum seeker’, ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’, alongside those that pertain to the legality of the status of the subjects such as ‘illegal’ or ‘illegalised refugees/immigrants’ might suggest particular representations of the subjects that are worth investigating, the particular connotations of these categories do not benefit this thesis, thus remain out of its scope for any further analysis. Instead, the term ‘refugee’ is used mostly interchangeably with ‘forcibly displaced people’ in this thesis for convenience, unless stated otherwise. As my use of ‘refugee’ does not suggest my preference of the term over other alternatives or advocacy of any such categorisation at all, I do not observe the differences between the legal statuses of ‘asylum seekers’ or ‘refugees’ either—as this is largely irrelevant to the empirical study in this thesis. This thesis, instead, finds fuzzy grounds and multiple layers of categories in relation to people’s journeys to new geographies and experiences, which makes the focus of the studies presented. Therefore, the term ‘refugee’
is used as an umbrella term referring to people who migrated to Greece in the context of this thesis\textsuperscript{6}.

1.4.3. On ‘Home’

In this thesis, the term ‘home’ is deployed as an analytical tool through which geographies of temporary living for forcibly displaced people are explored. ‘Home’ is a multivalent concept that has long been subject to studies across disciplines. As a result of surging human (and non-human) mobilities again in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, we are currently at the verge of emergence of a scholarship on ‘home’ and ‘displacement’ as a strand of scholarship through collective interdisciplinary efforts in which this thesis takes part. In March 2019, I participated in a \textit{European Architectural History Network (EAHN)} themed conference and workshop titled \textit{Displacement and Domesticity: Refugees, Migrants and Expats making homes} in Brussels, which brought together scholars from around the world to present their work and work collectively on an open-source Teaching Tool (2020) with 23 participants with expertise in various fields including anthropology, sociology, history, architecture and urban studies. These activities and their outcomes revealed potentials of the multivalence of ‘home’ to contribute to a broader understanding of the multiple spatialities and various landscapes of displacement.

This thesis draws mainly upon the literature in critical geography to develop accounts of ‘home’ as this allows for a multi-layered exploration of people’s relation with space as an ongoing process. While challenging more conventional conceptions of home as a fixed place, accounts on displacement found ‘homes’ that are more dispersed (e.g. Ahmed, 1990), while feminist approaches which focused on gendered notions of homes found them to be spaces of violence as much as those of sanctuary (Manzo, 2003). A notion of ‘home’, therefore, can

\textsuperscript{6} More specific categorisation, however, has been made when necessary, e. g. in referring to some governmental and international policies.
accommodate positive and negative connotations including ‘safety’ and ‘familiarity’ but also ‘fear’, and ‘the uncanny’. The ways in which ‘home’ is explored conceptually in this thesis is further elaborated on in Chapter II.

It should be noted here that ‘home’ as a term is bounded by linguistic limitations. The distinctions between ‘home’ and ‘house’, and connotations of ‘home’ otherwise might be irrelevant or act out differently across languages. This thesis engages in the term as an analytical concept based primarily on geographical accounts presented in English, therefore, the linguistic discrepancies about the term do not hinder the benefits of engaging with the concept in the scope of this thesis.

1.5. Research questions

This research probes architectures of forced migration in the geographies of arrival in Europe based on three major premises:

1) a reductionist approach to ‘shelter’ and universal solutions in temporary accommodation of forcibly displaced people fail to account for wider networks of relationships that emerge in the geographies of arrival,

2) an exploration of everyday life on the geographies of arrival has a potential to account for the complexities of temporary living experiences in these geographies,

3) developing a bottom-up architectural approach to site analysis and representation which account for such complexities can challenge a hegemonic understanding of architecture as a discipline pertaining to the form, function and performance of buildings.

This thesis adopts a critical perspective on the humanitarian practices related to providing accommodation for refugees in the form of shelters and housing units as industrial products, as discussed in Section 2.6. It argues that these practices may be overly simplistic in
addressing matters of accommodation in the context of forced migration by focusing on a narrow set of problems. To address these limitations, the thesis engages with broader questions about temporary living that shelters as industrial products do not adequately address, and proposes the concept of ‘temporary homes’ as a framework for addressing these issues in a more comprehensive manner. The main questions this thesis probes are the following:

1) What socio-material relationships emerged in the spatial production of the neighbourhoods in post-2015 Athens that are being transformed by the recent migratory flows?

2) How can we develop spatial analysis methods to challenge an abstracted conception of temporary living for forcibly displaced people and account for its socio-material complexities?

3) How do the contemporary lived experiences in the neighbourhoods in Athens that are being transformed by the migratory flows expand our understanding of ‘home’ as a multi-layered geographical concept?

4) How can interior architecture inform/be informed by a multi-scalar approach to architectures of forced migration?

1.6. Outline of the thesis

This thesis is broken down into nine chapters. Chapter I sets out the motivations of this research, introduces key theoretical concepts and provides a preliminary discussion of these concepts. It then elaborates on the terminological approaches, states the main questions and outlines the structure of the thesis. These terminological approaches constitute a significant component of this research for reflecting on the critical approaches to architectural studies and forced migration studies, respectively.
Chapter II builds a comprehensive theoretical background for the thesis which leads to the methodological approach developed in Chapter IV. It draws upon conceptual and typological accounts on refugee camps, complemented by evaluation of ‘shelter’ and sheltering practices. Drawing upon the explorations based on the theoretical and practical approaches to ‘refugee camp(s)’ and then ‘shelter’ throughout the chapter, ‘temporary home’ is developed as a conceptual tool to examine the case study in Chapters V to VIII.

Chapter III introduces Athens as a case study. Firstly, it sets out the rationale for choosing Athens as the site of study. It then outlines the urban transformations in relation to social, political and economic changes in that, exposing their links to the post-2015 experiences in the city in the context of forced migration up to the year 2019 when I conducted my last fieldwork in Athens. The chapter unravels the links between activities, events and transformations that followed migratory flows by 2015 in Athens to the emerging context of the city with focus on the rise of solidarity initiatives since the beginning of the 21st century. Drawing on the recent ‘crises’ Greece has been inflicted with, it concludes by posing the times of crisis as opportunities to engage with the infrastructural matters of their respective geographies. This chapter lays the foundations for the empirical Chapters V to VII based on the fieldwork in Athens.

Chapter IV builds a methodological approach for the case study in Athens, Greece. The methodology builds upon the theoretical approaches presented in Chapter II and discusses the feminist trajectories, ethnographic methods and mapping approaches that are deployed throughout the fieldwork and data analysis for the case study. This is followed by my reflections on my positionality, ethical concerns and the particular opportunities, challenges and limitations posed by engaging with the contemporary geographies of forced migration in Athens. Finally, the chapter introduces the decisions in relation to the presentation of the case study in the following chapters.
Chapters V, VI and VII present primary data from the field trips to Athens from 2018 to 2019. In these chapters, sites and stories that are related to forced migration in Athens are constructed to reveal particular narratives of sites and people. Chapter V follows a participant’s story to discuss the sites ANKAA, KHORA and Eleonas Refugee Camp. These sites are connected through the stories of people that engage with them. Conceptions of proximity, community, integration, and time emerge from the findings.

Chapter VI explores Victoria Square Project, Jafra Foundation and Mazi Housing Project. This chapter focuses on wider relevance of the physical boundaries of the buildings and unpacks the relationship of buildings with the neighbourhood in which they are located. This way, it reveals a situated agency of these sites. Chapter VII reflects on different types of housing across Athens: City Hotel Plaza, The Refugee Integration Centre by Evangelical Church, and Schisto Refugee Camp. The uncanny combination of these types of housing in this chapter is presented as a symptom of various types of housing that have emerged in Athens since 2015, and follows the fieldwork through which these multiple forms of housing across Athens were encountered.

In Chapter VIII, I draw upon the material presented in the three empirical chapters that precede it and reflect on the findings. This includes a discussion of my positionality in the field and as a researcher, and ethical issues and limitations as integral components of the situated approach adopted in this thesis. Here, the methodology and the findings are presented to inform future studies of forced migration and spatial analyses of geographies that present similar challenges and opportunities.

In the final chapter of this thesis, Chapter IX, I summarise the main contributions of this research, emphasising the importance of localising the narratives of forced migration in specific contexts and localities with reference to Athens and wider Greece. I draw upon the recent developments in Athens, which enunciate the ephemeral and delicate nature of
materiality of temporary living. I conclude by discussing the implications of the presented materials within and beyond academy, particularly in terms of nurturing personal and community spaces in Athens, and the broader relevance of this thesis regarding research concerned with spatial practices in geographies marked by marginalisation and inequalities, particularly as a result of forced displacement; emergent geographies of hope and solidarity, embodied methodological research approaches and suggest future directions for research.

1.7. Conclusion

This thesis revolves around the questions of temporary living, shelter and sheltering practices, and ‘home’, in relation to the temporary living experiences of forcibly displaced people in Europe. In this opening chapter, I have begun to unpack a conceptual landscape that this thesis engages in, and introduced the scope and structure of this thesis. I presented a discussion on terminologies and theoretical concepts which I develop further in Chapter II. Consequently, I foreground how multiple social and material relationships unfold in geographies of forced displacement in Athens, Greece, on multiple scales, and demonstrate intermediate spaces, or “thresholds” (Stavrides, 2010) of communication and negotiation.
Chapter II: ‘Temporary Homes’ – An Analytical Framework

2.1. Introduction

This chapter develops ‘temporary homes’ as an analytical framework for the empirical chapters of this thesis. First, it draws upon conceptual and typographical accounts on refugee camps and spaces of refuge. Reflecting on Michel Foucault's (1967) concept of ‘heterotopia’, and Giorgio Agamben’s (1998) concepts of ‘bare life’ and ‘state of exception’, it begins to unfold prominent conceptual approaches to the conventionally established notions of ‘the refugee camp’. The discussion continues with reflections on accounts that challenge limitations of these conceptions by focusing on the agencies of the inhabitants and the practices engendered in the camp environments. These are discussed in light of process-oriented approaches to the refugee camps (e.g. Kennedy, 2008; Grbac, 2013).

Secondly, it zooms in to focus on ‘shelter’ as a structural unit of study for forced migration. In light of the discussion on refugee camps, it engages with ‘shelter’ and ‘sheltering processes’ to develop an alternative approach to temporary living for forcibly displaced people by drawing upon the shortcomings of ‘shelter’ as a precarious, humanitarian project. It then analyses two prominent documents on shelters for forced migration in reference to the ‘universal’ design solutions, focusing on the activities in Europe. Based on geographical accounts of home to engage ‘shelter’ in a broader discussion of home while also feeding into these discussion by engaging ephemeral geographies of forced migration, this chapter finally develops an analytical framework for ‘temporary homes’ to be devised for the case study presented from Chapters V to VII.

7 Common translation: The place of the Other
2.2. On ‘The refugee’ and ‘the refugee camp’: A Conceptual overview

The scholars of forced migration adopted a variety of frameworks to study its dynamics and processes. Among them, Foucault’s (1997) concept of “heterotopia” and Agamben’s (1998) concepts of “bare life” and “state of exception” greatly inspired the study of refugee camps. In his seminal work Of Other spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias, Foucault (1997) draws attention to “the problem of position,” which is concerned with multiple forms of relationships between things, and makes a distinction between inner space and external space, latter of which he claims to be “heterogeneous” (1997, p. 331). Introducing utopias and heterotopias, Foucault (1997) suggests that a significant relation between these two categories is that the former has a property of being “arrangement,” for it holds a relationship to the society but is unreal, whereas the latter is real and yet is a “counter arrangement of effectively realized utopia” (p. 332). In a more precise definition, Foucault describes heterotopias as “places which are absolutely other with respect to all the arrangements that they reflect and of which they speak” (p. 332).

Stating four principles to describe heterotopia, Foucault (1997) maintains that heterotopias are for those who are not considered to behave as “the current average or standard”, which applies to a broad range of places from prison to “homes of the old” (p. 333). Their function is transformable through history, which consists of bringing different spaces and times which are “incompatible with each other” (p. 334). With regards to their temporal qualities, two types of heterotopias are identifiable: those with “a bias towards the eternal” such as museums and libraries, and those that are “time-bound” (p. 335).

The properties of heterotopias as stated by Foucault unfold the arbitrariness of these places in relation to the settings they are situated in, which is parallel to the criticisms of refugee camps for being set as condensed and arbitrary forms of sites up against an existing urban
Foucault’s heterotopia offers ways of interpreting refugee camps for their way of being-in-the-world, the contradictions their conditions exhibit in terms of time and space, as well as the relationship of their inhabitants with these spaces and the outside world. Foucault (1997) points out a contradicting principle that heterotopias hold, that is they “always presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at one and the same time” (p. 335). He also suggests an illusory property for the openings of these spaces, which seem to be leading to inclusion but in fact, lead to exclusion. These points are taken further in Agamben’s (1998) accounts of “state of exception,” where the exclusion of homo sacer, who are the inhabitants of refugee camps in this context, is considered as a form of inclusion. Agamben (1998) defines camp as “the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule” (p. 168-169) and argues that this concept of “exception” erases the limits for power, and any implementation becomes possible. However, as the camp residents—refugees, in the case of forced migration—are not simply subjected to such exclusive treatment, but also to a form of inclusion, as they are strictly bounded by the control mechanisms of authorities.

Foucault considers the ship for its relationship with space, places, and economy as “the heterotopia par excellence” (1997, p. 336). In *History of Madness*, he explores the ships in relation to “madmen” who were taken out of the cities:

Locked in the ship from which he could not escape, the madman was handed over to the thousand-armed river, to the sea where all paths cross, and the great uncertainty that surrounds all things. A prisoner in the midst of the ultimate freedom, on the most open road of all, chained solidly to the infinite crossroads. He is the Passenger par excellence, the prisoner of the passage. It is not known where he will land, and when he lands, he knows not whence he came. His truth and his home are the barren wasteland between two lands that can never be his own” (2006, p. 11).

Foucault did not focus particularly on camps in his work but rather on other heterotopic places like ships and prisons. However, his accounts on the temporal and place-related aspects of heterotopic places resonate with refugee camps underpinned by “policies of exclusion” as well as “organisation and control” (Agier, 2019). The ambiguities surrounding
the passenger of the ship regarding her relationship with place and time with connections to them, but no bonding to anything familiar, and impossibility of belonging, are some of the conditions that emerge for “the refugee camp”.

Hannah Arendt’s (1958) accounts, on the other hand, have been influential for her reflections on exile and her concept of “statelessness” in exploring the complexities of forced migration. Reflecting on her own experiences and observations on exile, Arendt (1994) explores ways in which people tackle these issues in the countries they settled in. With reference to the invasion of Austria by Hitler in 1938, Arendt reflects on the psychology of forgetting and remembering for the Jews, the dilemma between holding on to life with “insane optimism” and suicide, and the identity crises they experienced at different locations around the world not only among people of other nations but also among Jewish people of different background. Basing her accounts on the experiences of European Jewry, she emphasizes the role of “public opinion” which maintains their otherness wherever they are, stating that “such a silent opinion and practice is more important for our daily lives than all official proclamations of hospitality and good will” (p. 116). She explores the difficulties people went through to change their personality in a way to be able to integrate socially (Arendt, 1994). These accounts conceive a discrepancy between the past life and present as a result of a discontinuity manifested in social lives of refugees and emphasise the importance of everyday experiences of people who are uprooted despite a rhetoric that prevail those experiences.

In a symposium paper, Agamben (1995) opens his speech by referencing Arendt’s analyses, claiming that Arendt’s concerns are relevant in a world where “refugee is perhaps the only imaginable figure of the people” (p. 114). He suggests that political theory should be rethought by having ‘the refugee’ in its centre as the subject (p. 114). These accounts refer to the time period following the World War I, by when the notions of nation, state, and citizenship status gained significance for legal implementations. The trend of considering
refugees as “mass phenomena” and the formation of apolitical institutions which deal with them were not convenient in terms of solving the problems (Agamben, 1995). Agamben (1995) raises the problem of the relationship between the rights of a “citizen” and the rights of a “human”, which becomes an essential problem especially in the case of refugees: “…the status of the refugee is always considered as a temporary condition that should lead wither to naturalization or to repatriation. A permanent status of man in himself is inconceivable for the law of the nation-state” (p. 116). Agamben (1995) proposes to transform the questions around refugee and asylum seekers to those that address the very principles that make a nation-state, and to get rid of a category of “refugee” as it is understood with reference to citizens. In terms of the territories of the nation-state, he proposes “aterritorial” or “extraterritorial” spaces (Agamben, 1995, p. 118).

Besides his accounts for “the refugee” as a category, Agamben’s most influential concepts for the studies of refugee camps such as “bare life” and “state of exception” are presented in his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998). In the book, Agamben introduces the etymology of ‘life’ and its interpretation by early philosophers. He points out that the “life” these philosophers were concerned about was represented by the word *bios*, which implies “the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group,” whereas *zoe* is taken to imply “the simple fact of living” (p. 1). With reference to Aristotle’s *Politics*, he draws attention to Aristotle’s consideration of ‘simple natural life’ as confined to “home”, which was other than the “politically qualified life” (p. 2). These conceptions of life relate to Foucault’s biopolitics, which Agamben refers to as an outcome when “natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power” (p. 3). Pointing out the divergent ways in which Arendt and Foucault undertook their work, Agamben identifies Foucault’s neglect of concentration camps, which he argues to be “exemplary places of modern biopolitics” (p. 4).

Agamben reflects on Foucault’s approach towards politics, distinguishing it from those which are based on “juridico-institutional models,” and claiming its focus to be on the “concrete
ways in which power penetrates subject's very bodies and forms of life" (p. 5). He draws attention to the two cores of his study which are "the study of the political techniques" and "the technologies of the self" (p. 5) by questioning the "zone of indistinction" which he suggests not to be addressed by Foucault, and raises this as a problem. In his work, where he suggests the inseparability of the two, Agamben holds that possibly "the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original—if concealed—nucleus of sovereign power. It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power" (p. 6). In his article, Marc Schuilenburg (2008) attempts at clarifying some ideas presented by Agamben and how they differ from Foucault's biopolitics. He argues that Agamben draws attention to the "polittico-constitutional level of the nation-state," which has not been addressed by Foucault. The inseparability of birth and nation in the constitution of a nation-state, according to Agamben, does not mean that the refugee is excluded by way of being opposed to any form of inclusion. Instead, he implies that such dichotomy is not possible, and the refugee is subject to a form of inclusion, as she is strictly bound to the control mechanisms of authorities. At the end of Homo Sacer: sovereign power and bare life, Agamben (1998) revisits the terms bios and zoë by picturing the current situation and suggesting a direction for a broader exploration around life and body:

Today bios lies in zoe exactly as essence, in the Heideggerian definition of Dasein, lies (lieght) in existence. Yet, how can a bios be only its own zoe, how can a form of life seize hold of the very haplos that constitutes both the task and the enigma of Western metaphysics? If we give the name form-of-life to this being that is only its own bare existence and to this life that, being its own form, remains inseparable from it, we will witness the emergence of a field of research beyond the terrain defined by the intersection of politics and philosophy, medico-biological sciences and jurisprudence. First, however, it will be necessary to examine how it was possible for something like a bare life to be conceived within these disciplines and how the historical development of these very disciplines has brought them to a limit beyond which they cannot venture without risking an unprecedented biopolitical catastrophe" (p. 188).

Agamben's accounts suggest that a fundamental shift in the understanding of life that extend beyond "bare life" would shatter the bases on which modern disciplines that deal with it stand. Exploration on ‘the refugee’ and ‘the refugee camp’ in migration studies is abound with challenges that such conceptual limitations pose, and attract critical and cross-
disciplinary approaches through which the dynamics and processes of forced migration are examined.

A pertinent scholarship which relates to the concepts of ‘state of exception’ and ‘bare life’ in the studies of refugee camps is about their reliance on humanitarian relief. There is profound criticism regarding the separation of humanitarian activity from politics and how humanitarian organizations operate in refugee camps. One of the prominent voices belonging to Agamben (1995), scholars reflect on the ways in which humanitarian activities reduced the possibilities of agency for refugees and hindered the proliferation of their livelihood, and some hold that humanitarian organizations manifested a form of governmental extension (e.g. Malkki, 2002; Agier, 2002; Fassin, 2012). More recent accounts on ‘the refugee camp’ elaborate further on the contradictions and paradoxes associated with this category (e.g. Diken, 2004; Grbac, 2013). Diken (2004) suggests that despite being formed as transitory places to respond to exceptional states, some camps “become a ‘permanent’ location” so that “the transient condition of the refugee extends indefinitely, becoming an irrevocable and permanent situation, freezing into nonnegotiable, rigid structures” (p. 93).

The discussion presented so far outlines a conceptual framework for ‘the refugee’ and ‘the refugee camp’ by drawing upon Foucault’s concept of ‘heterotopias’ and Agamben’s concepts of ‘bare life’ and ‘state of exception’. These concepts reveal ‘bare life’ as a limited notion to account for ‘the refugee’ as a categorical subject, and contradicting characters of ‘the refugee camp’ as a categorical space. Despite opening up categorical discussions on institutional politics and humanitarian intervention, however, these accounts do not elucidate everyday lives of the refugees beyond as a categorical subject, and the refugee camps beyond categorical spaces. The following section introduces the importance of ‘everyday life’ in the study of the spatial processes of forced migration beyond these categorical investigations.
2.3. On ‘Spatial agency’ in/around refugee camps

Sociological debates on refugee camps and agency attracted much interest in the past two decades (e.g. Malkki, 1995; Walters, 2002; Diken, & Lausten, 2005; Isin & Rygiel 2007; Andrijasevic 2010; Ramadan, 2013; Grbac, 2013; Redclift, 2013). Among them, Ramadan (2013) provides insights into studying everyday life in refugee camps. He probes the ‘spatiality’ of camps by examining the Palestinian camps in Lebanon with the aim of understanding how the geopolitics of camps manifest in the everyday life (Ramadan, 2013). “Spatializing camp,” he argues, “is a way of grounding geopolitics in the everyday: understanding the small moments and acts that negotiate and constitute broader geopolitical architectures in the spaces of the camp and beyond” (Ramadan, 2013, p. 67). Criticizing attempts to understand refugee camps merely based on the reflections on ‘state of exception’ by Agamben (1995), Ramadan contends that such take on the issue results in the reduction of the complexities embedded in the lived life of refugees both in relation to the sovereignty issues that are at play and the agency of the inhabitants in the refugee camps (Ramadan, 2013). Adding to his overview of the literature on refugee camp, Ramadan describes refugee camps as “temporary space[s] in which refugees may receive humanitarian relief and protection until a durable solution can be found to their situation” (p. 65). Giving reference to the debate on the uniqueness of the Palestinian case, Ramadan points out the issues around the refugee status which has broader applications beyond the Palestinian case. These include “voluntary repatriation,” the impossibility of “local integration in the country of displacement” and “resettlement in a third country” (p. 66).

Ramadan (2013) draws on Agamben’s take on refugees and the studies that followed with reference to his work, stressing the inappropriateness of the “generalized model of the space of exception,” which would “risk losing sight of the complex sovereignties of refugee camps, and the possibilities of agency on the part of refugees themselves” (p. 68). Instead, he proposes the everyday activities of refugees to be considered for having a political character.
and not being “the silent expression of ‘bare life’,” (p. 67). Ramadan introduces the concepts “relational space” and “assemblage,” which consider “space as always in process”, drawing attention to the production of camps as something beyond a “void of law and political life” (p. 70). This way, he encourages recognition of the multiple agencies as well as processes in the camps, suggesting the questions of significance to be the “who and what is in the camp, how they interrelate and interact” (p. 70). Ramadan draws on the physical transformation of the place as a way to demonstrate the means by which the materiality of the place is transformed in relation to the lives of people, and emphasizes the dynamism at play. Such focus carries the refugees and their activities in the centre of discussion with regards to the everyday experiences of the camps. Limiting our understanding of camps to the notion of ‘state of exception’, Ramadan concludes, results in the impossibility of qualifying the actions of refugees as political. In order to challenge such limitation, he suggests studying the “everyday geopolitics” to understand the “spatiality” of the camps (p. 74). These accounts suggest a necessity to move beyond the discourses on ‘the refugee’ and ‘the refugee camp’ whereby these are devised as categories for institutional criticism, towards exploratory approaches on the agency of the refugees.

Grbac (2013), on the other hand, points out the relevance of paradoxes manifested in ‘the refugee camp’ in the spatial processes related to these spaces while also emphasising the agency of their inhabitants. He suggests that “identity is actively formed, empowerment is encouraged, and resistance is practiced” in these spaces (Grbac, 2013, p. 3). Referring to Sanyal’s (2010) accounts where he perceives a stark distinction between the camp as a state of exception and the city as a norm, Grbac (2013) attempts to reframe refugee camps as urban spaces to challenge such perception to probe the built environment of these spaces and the practices within through a new lens. He criticises Agamben for failing to account for the diversity of experiences related to the camps, and lack of distinction between different types of camps such as internment camps, concentration camps and extermination camps (p. 11). This approach, he concludes, neglects the “autonomy ” and “individuality” of
the refugees whereby they are presented as “victim[s] unable to resist and respond to the complex situation engendered by the camp” (p. 11). Still focusing on the camps, his introduction of the concepts of ‘city’ and ‘urban space’ to their discussion emphasises the—probable—transformative powers of the camp residents.

The train of thought that encourages the study of the camps and other spaces of refuge in relation to the agency of their inhabitants began to inform further research on refugee camps and similar structures in Europe and beyond in the past few years (e.g. Sigona, 2015, Bulley, 2014). Among them, Sigona (2015) attempts at “de-exceptionalising” camps with focus on “nomad camps” in Italy where people from the former republic of Yugoslavia were sheltered at the turn of 21st century. Bulley (2014) examines several camps in Africa and the Middle East and reflects on how “community” counter-acted its instrumentalization as a tool for governance in refugee camps with displays of “counter-conducts” and “greater agency” (p. 63). With reference to Shatila, a Palestinian camp in Beirut, Martin (2015) re-evaluates the concepts of ‘bare life’ and ‘state of exception’ by suggesting the extension of the camp beyond its formal limits. She argues for the absence of exact boundaries between the camp and informal settlements, and between refugees, which resulted in “campscapes” to emerge (Martin, 2015). These accounts suggest social and political links within and/or beyond the camp spaces based on the sites of investigation, which resist their abstracted conceptions. While a stark distinction between the concept of ‘city’ and ‘camp’ began to dissolve through these studies, the presence and activities of both displaced communities and other residents of the cities suggest alternative ways of looking at the landscapes affected by forced migration that transcends the physical boundaries of camp settlements.

### 2.4. Zooming-in: Shelters

Against the backdrop of the growing literature on the refugee camps as presented above, this section probes the relevance of shelters and sheltering practices to the discussion of the
paradoxes of the refugee camps, the agency of their inhabitants and the complexities of everyday life as manifested in these spaces. Shelters/containers/housing units often serve as the basic spatial units to accommodate lives in refugee camps in Europe—replacing tents—and exhibit the contradictory characteristics of exclusion and inclusion as well as temporality and permanence that are attributed to the refugee camps. The design industry is increasingly involved in the production of these units in the past decade, however, the design of these structures is an area imbued with challenges for designers/architects to probe the dynamics of design processes and test their tools and methods to be responsive to a manifold of problems. Despite these difficulties, however, the proliferation of shelter responses demonstrate a significant presence of these practices in the spaces of forced migration.

The forms of structures and shelters in refugee camps show varieties across geographies. Reflecting on his observations in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, Agier (2002) pictures a vivid image of the “mud huts” and the “more traditional Somali huts” which are “all covered with the UNHCR canvas; materials used to transport international aid have been recycled, in particular the sheet metal of food canisters and drums, which has been flattened to make tiles, doors, windows, tables, and hen coops” (p. 325). Peteet (2005) reflects on Shatila camp in Lebanon which was based in an urban settlement with “bombed and burned out buildings” (p. 13). Reflecting on Nyarugusu, a Congolese refugee camp, Thomson (2014) explains that the refugees in the camp are responsible for building their own houses “with sundried mud brick and thatched roofs” to ensure that “they can eventually be destroyed without a trace” (p. 376). She interprets the “temporariness” built into the houses in the camp by way of using materials which signal their “eventual destruction” as “violence built into the camp architecture” (p. 376). In an interview, one of the residents of the camp states that they rebuild their houses fully or partially each year or more frequently, as the materials and construction are not durable to remain intact (Thomson, 2014). The UNHCR supplies plastic sheeting for the roofs and sticks, and the refugees are obliged to use mud brick which they
are not allowed to bake to accomplish more durable construction (Thomson, 2014). The resident also comments on the “sameness” of the houses as a result of material and structural limitations: “You see how our door is nicer? That's because we used leftover materials from the hospital. But the rest is just the same as everywhere else in the camp,” he maintains (Thomson, 2014, p. 378).

The different observations on the materiality of the refugee camps across geographies and contexts can be understood based on different refugee camp typologies. Grbac (2013) identifies two typological approaches for refugee camps which consist of “assistance-focused” and “purpose-focused” approaches (p. 12) based on Schmidt’s and Agier’s categorisations. Schmidt (2003) categorises refugee camps according to the level of assistance they receive which are 1) planned rural, 2) unplanned rural and 3) full-assistance settlements. Agier (2011), on the other hand, identifies four types of spaces of refuge based on their functions and modes of management which extend beyond the refugee camps. These are 1) self-organised refuge spaces 2) sorting/transit centres, 3) more confined spaces such as refugee camps 4) unprotected reserves mostly used in the cases of internal displacement (p. 39). Despite their differences in the ways they function and are managed, these spaces also bear overlapping spatial characteristics. Acknowledging the contribution of typological approaches in understanding the built environment of the refugee camps and other refuge spaces, Grbac (2013) draws attention to the limitations that the typological approaches pose. Placing the spaces of refuge on a spectrum, he suggests, potentially overshadows nuances (p. 12). He instead suggests an alternative approach derived from an integration of historical, philosophical and typographical approaches to account for the diverse configurations of these spaces which he calls “the urban approach”. This approach entails an interpretation of Lefebvre’s ‘right to city’, and the scholarship that elaborated on this notion for the spatial analyses of refugee camps and other spaces of refuge. An important implication of Grbac’s approach is a shift of focus from institutional authorities to people’s actions and relationships in the definition of ‘rights’, and spatial investigations of
refugee camps and spaces in the light of this approach. However, prominent manuals and handbooks about refugee camps and shelters/housing units (e.g. *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies*) are slow to address various overlaps and complexities these spaces of refuge present.

### 2.5. *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies* – An Introduction

This section draws upon the scope of emergency shelters in the selected documents prepared by prominent institutions. In 2007, UNHCR published a new edition of *Handbook for Emergencies*, which consists of four chapters and Appendices which gives brief information about the definitions in relation to its mission, management, operations and support (2007). This came after its first publication in 1981 and second edition in 1998. Being considered a principal manual, *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies* was mentioned by several scholars before (e.g. Cuny, 1977; Herz, 2007; 2008; 2009; 2013; Stevenson, & Sutton, 2012) with Grbac’s (2013) further investigation on its relevance to the refugee camps as built environments and its effects on the relevant practices these spaces engender.

Investigating camp design in his thesis, Kennedy (2008) states the following:

… the state-of-art type commonly used by humanitarian organisations reveals and emphasis upon short-term rather than long-term solutions, and an emphasis upon camps being a delivered collection of shelter objects, rather than being considered in the light of the social performance of the settlement as a whole (n. p.).

In response to this pitfall he observes, Kennedy (2008) investigates a combination of factors that inform refugee camp design by drawing upon “institutional, financial and design constraints”, creation of a predominant type by reflecting on “humanitarian organisations’ guidelines” and “actual camp construction” (n. p.). Subsequently, he focuses on the identification of performance gaps and possibilities for developing an “amended design tool for camps” (Kennedy, 2008, n. p.). Drawing upon the guidelines and observations on the *Ifo refugee camp* in Kenya as a case study, he summarises five points of conclusion. These include his conviction that the specific context of each refugee camp makes it impossible to
determine “universal set of numeric or graphic guidelines for the camp’s morphology” to be applied across a wide range of refugee camps (Kennedy, 2008, p. 221). In addition, he observes the change of the morphology of camps by its residents and other actors, concluding that “the design tool must be described as a process, with cycles of assessment and intervention, using a palette of localised tools, in response to the previous adaptation of the morphology, and developments in operations and performance of the camp” (p. 221) but also that “there can never be a full creation of the palette of tools for intervention prior to the creation of the camp” (p. 222).

Kennedy’s (2008) study supports to the following discussion on shelters with its findings in two major ways:

1) An emphasis on the subsequent processes engendered in the refugee camps, which are related to the activities of refugees and other actors, is more urgent than the focus on the morphology of refugee camps while developing design tools and processes.

2) The combination of institutional, financial and design factors differ across a wide range of refugee camps, therefore, context-based approaches and alternatives need to be developed.

Developing design tools and processes for refugee camps is beyond the purposes of this dissertation. However, Kennedy’s and Grbac’s insights regarding the priorities in developing design tools and processes and their focus on the activities of refugees and other actors reinforce the methodological approach that is developed further throughout this dissertation as presented in Chapter IV to explore spatial configurations of spaces transformed throughout the migratory flows in Athens, Greece.

2.6. Shelter as a ‘humanitarian’ technology

Humanitarian intervention, which was previously predominantly associated with the Global South, has gained significant attention in the Global North due to the so-called refugee crisis in Europe that escalated in 2015 as a result of the Syrian war. Scott-Smith (2020) points out that the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in Europe served as a turning point, bringing the issues
surrounding the accommodation of refugees "right here" rather than solely "out there" in developing countries (p. 1).

Scholars have raised a number of concerns and questions about humanitarian intervention, including Welsh's (2001) examination of sovereignty, international relations, and the responsibilities of states to protect their citizens. Welsh argues that the concept of sovereignty, which refers to a state's exclusive rights to control its territory and govern its citizens, is challenged by humanitarian intervention, which involves the intervention of one or more states or international organizations in the affairs of another state. Welsh (2001) suggests a careful and transparent approach to intervention, while Thakur and Maley (2006) prioritize human sovereignty over state sovereignty and consider intervention necessary in cases of gross human rights violations. Held and Kaldor (2006) address humanitarian intervention in terms of global governance, which they define as "the system of rules, institutions, and practices that regulate the interactions of actors in the global system" (p. 3). They argue that global governance is based on a multilateral and cooperative approach involving various actors, including states, international organizations, civil society groups, and the private sector. Arreguín-Toft (2005) emphasizes the importance of evaluating the potential or likelihood of success for interventions. However, it remains a complex issue, raising questions not only about the form and processes of intervention, but also about the intentions of intervening bodies and the power dynamics that are generated through these practices. This includes criticism about the relationship between imperialism and the doctrine of humanitarian intervention (e.g. Ayoob, 2004).

The 1990s and 2000s saw significant global migration as a result of various wars and crises, such as the Gulf War, the Balkan conflicts, the Rwandan genocide, the Sierra Leone Civil War, and the Darfur conflict in Sudan, which caused mass killings, human rights abuses, and forced migration. These events prompted varying levels of humanitarian response and contributed to the development of a growing body of criticism and evolving approaches to
humanitarianism. Anthropologist Miriam Ticktin (2014) identifies a turn among anthropologists from subtle to severe critique of humanitarianism in the 2000s (p. 227). Several scholars and humanitarians argued that the humanitarian interventions in the Global South worked towards normalising a lack of search for political solutions (e.g. de Wall, 1997; Fassin, 2011; Terry, 2002; Weissman, 2004). Among them, de Waal (1997) argues that these practices reduced the problem of famine in Africa down to a technical problem, obscuring its political relevance. In light of her examination of the relation between illness and acquisition of legal rights for immigrants in France, Miriam Ticktin (2006) makes a similar observation for humanitarian interventions in the Global North. In addition to the depoliticization of the matter, she suggests that these practices may lead to hierarchies and new forms of exclusion through division of “exceptional individuals” from the rest (Ticktin, 2006, p. 44). In the context of forced migration, immigrants are considered as “suffering bodies” that evoke compassion and humanitarian action, through which they are stripped off their political relevance (p. 44). In her later work, Ticktin (2014) considers refugee camps to be the ultimate spaces where this problem is manifested (p. 278).

Humanitarian intervention, as proposed by Redfield (2012), can involve the provision of humanitarian goods as a means of addressing suffering and protecting human life in situations where states are unable or unwilling to offer political solution where states are unable or unwilling to offer political solutions. Redfield notes that the ethical motivations behind the production and distribution of these goods are closely linked to their economic value, as they are intended to sustain human life. However, he also notes that these technologies of care often fail to address the underlying causes of suffering and do not lead to necessary political changes (p. 180). Schwittay (2014) also examines the market-based approach to development through the lens of humanitarian design, which emphasizes innovation as a means of addressing contemporary issues. While acknowledging the neoliberal critiques of this approach, Schwittay takes an "agnostic" stance and instead focuses on the potential for informed design to engage with contemporary issues (p. 30).
Indeed, within the extensive body of critique surrounding humanitarianism, there remains the question of how best to address the issues that humanitarian interventions aim to tackle. In their article, Fechter and Schwittay (2019) propose a further emphasis on citizen aid and grassroots humanitarian activities as a possible future of humanitarianism which escaped attention of several critics of humanitarianism such as Ticktin (p. 1776). According to the authors, such focus concerns “the agency of ordinary people making ethical decisions about providing assistance to others” (Fechter, & Schwittay, 2019, p. 1770). These activities have been framed in various ways including 'solidarity', which has been widely used to define various grassroots activities in the context of so-called refugee crisis in Europe since 2015.

Fechter and Schwittay’s approach is in line with the recent efforts to move beyond the more conventional approaches to humanitarian intervention. Quinton-Brown (2020) asserts that the history of humanitarian intervention is “too white” (p. 514) and that the West has frequently utilized the justification of humanitarian intervention for its own interests, particularly in the Global South. In an attempt to move away from the traditional North-South divide and more established conceptions of humanitarian intervention, Quinton-Brown (2020) proposes a "counterhistory" and argues that the "terms, domain, and range" of the debate on humanitarian intervention must be "re-evaluated and re-formulated" in order to engage with a wider range of human rights practices and understandings (p. 516).

This dissertation follows a similar thread of thought as outlined above, which departs from humanitarian practices towards a more inclusive framework to study temporary living of refugees. To this end, it begins by examining the provision of shelters as a form of humanitarian aid, and then expands to consider the complexities of temporary accommodation for refugees, including the role of grassroots organizations and solidarity networks. The dissertation also investigates the evolution of these practices from merely providing aid to seeking more empowering approaches.
Most spatial studies of forced migration in the aftermath of Second World War, and more recently after the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ that affected Europe significantly, focused largely on the refugee camps. ‘Shelter’ as a unit of accommodation received limited attention in these contexts. In their recent edited book *Structures of Protection? Rethinking Refugee Shelter*, Scott-Smith (2020) suggests that shelter is conceived as “too material, too banal, too small-scale and technical” to contribute to scholarship in forced migration (p. 1). However, emerging scholarship on structures such as “shipping containers” (e.g. Martin, 2016) and specifically “refugee shelter” (e.g. Scott-Smith, 2019) as a humanitarian response demonstrates that scrutinising approaches to shelter and sheltering practices in forced migration bears a potential to unfold different layers of the production and experience of temporary living spaces for forcibly displaced people. The following sections draw upon literature on spatiality of refugee camps to establish links to ‘shelter’ in order to examine it as a concept and practice.

2.6.1. *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies – Shelters/Housing Units*

Chapter 12 in the third section of *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies* is titled “Site selection, Planning and shelter” which includes some criteria and instructions listed for shelters to be used in refugee camps. The six essentials of a shelter are listed before the introduction chapter which are stated as follows:

- Refugee shelter must provide protection from the elements, space to live and store belongings, privacy and emotional security.
- Blankets, mats, and tarpaulin must be provided.
- A refugee shelter should be culturally and socially appropriate and familiar. Suitable local materials are best, if available.
- Shelter must be suitable for variance in the seasons.
- Except for tents in certain circumstances, prefabricated or special emergency shelter has not proved to be a practical option on either cost or cultural grounds.
- Wherever possible, refugees should build their own shelter, with the necessary organizational and material support (*Handbook for Emergencies*, 2007, p. 220).

Together with the functional requirements of a shelter, it is possible to identify concerns which are expressed as cultural and social in this list, although they remain largely implicit.
There is reference both to the materials of the shelter units, types of the shelters and the refugees’ involvement in their process of making. The sixth point also implies failed examples of prefabricated shelters on both economic and ‘cultural’ grounds, suggesting feedback from case reports. Before elaborating more on these points which provide a point of departure for further analysis of the relationship of housing units/shelters and refugees, it is useful to review the section on shelter to the end in order to identify concerns that were included in the handbook in general.

The two requirements that were singled out by a graphic detail in the handbook—bold fonts on a blue background—are “provision of sufficient blankets, mattresses, additional plastic sheeting and provision of heaters” (p. 220) and “provision of roofing material in line with climatic conditions and living habits of the refugees,” (p. 221) respectively. In the introduction, attention is drawn to the necessity for consideration of specific needs of each situation for which shelters are required. In terms of the physical provision of the parts of the shelter, priority is given to provision of adequate roofing materials (p. 221). Self-built methods are encouraged both for its supposed positive effects on the refugees and its economic efficiency (p. 221).

As for the type of shelter, ‘individual family shelter’ was promoted instead of the ‘communal accommodation,’ as well as the use of local materials when possible. The handbook also sets specific sizes for shelters:

- minimum of 3.5 m² per person in tropical, warm climates, excluding cooking facilities or kitchen (it is assumed that cooking will take place outside); and
- 4.5 m² to 5.5 m² per person in cold climates or urban situations, including the kitchen and bathing facilities (Handbook for Emergencies, 2007, p. 221).

Provision of plastic sheeting stands out as a significant concern, as well as the provision of ‘frame materials’ that support them. Light weight emergency tents (LWET) are presented for their potential to be appropriate solutions as shelters, whereas pre-fabricated shelters were found inadequate for a number of reasons including the hardship in logistic aspects, cultural
and social inappropriateness, and their irresponsiveness to environmental conditions (p. 222). There is also additional information and specifications provided for shelters for cold conditions (p. 222). In the limits of a handbook, this concludes the scope of the section with regard to shelters as published in 2007.

In 2013, The Refugee Housing Unit (RHU) was launched to replace the tents that are prevalent in refugee camps. These housing units are the most ‘commercially-available’ units as their production is supported by UNHCR, as stated in the Fact Sheet published online by the UNHCR (Shelter and Settlement Section – DPSM, n.d). What is immediately apparent in the Fact Sheet UNHCR provides is the detachment of the housing unit from any ground (Shelter and Settlement Section – DPSM, n.d). The Fact Sheet introduces the elements that the housing units consist of, accounts on its marketing properties and instruction to its deployment (Shelter and Settlement Section – DPSM, n.d). For the purposes of the document, they are considered as purely industrial products. Indeed, durability of the housing units, strength of the materials developed for wall panels, ease of their transport and assemblage of their constituent modules are the innovative aspects of the project. As they are intended to be mass produced, they consist of standardized modules allowing flexibility to add or extract modules according to their use. The materials of the housing units are light-weight and resistant to weather conditions, which makes them preferable to the tents. Other housing units have been developed by a number of architectural and industrial companies to accommodate refugees. These include Tuk-temporary Accommodation Units, which were developed by DREHTAINER, a company which manufactures containers mainly for “defence technology” and “nuclear technology” (DREHTAINER, n. d.), as well as multi-purpose projects such as Universal Rooms which can either serve for residential, educational, or healthcare services (Dörries, C., & Zahradnik, S., 2016). These projects propose products that are technically and logistically convenient to be deployed on site, however, their relevance to the wider conditions which render the temporary living of their (potential) residents remains to be explored.
2.6.2. *Shelter Design Catalogue by UNHCR*

Within the framework of UNHCR’s Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter, the Shelter and Settlement Section (SSS) of the UNHCR has developed and published a *Shelter Design Catalogue* in 2016. Although this catalogue does not cover all shelter typologies that are found to be used by refugees, it serves as a significant guide produced by the UNHCR, which is among the most prominent international institutions that are involved in the supplication of services for refugees, targeting experts and practitioners in on the ground. Therefore, this catalogue serves as a basis for the overview of shelters in this section.

The shelters introduced in the Shelter Design Catalogue by UNHCR are structured into four categories which are *Global Shelter Design, Emergency Shelter Designs, Transitional Shelter Solutions* and *Durable Shelter Solutions* (n. p). The emergency shelters consist of an overview of ‘Gable frame’ in South Sudan, ‘Tuareg shelter’ in Burkina Faso, ‘Tuareg tent’ in Mali, ‘Tukul’ in South Sudan and ‘Tent Shelter’ in Afghanistan. The transitional shelters consist of ‘T Shelter’ in Azraq, Jordan, ‘Compact Bamboo Shelter’ in Ethiopia and ‘Twin Elevated Shelters’ in Myanmar. The examination of durable shelter solutions includes ‘One Room Shelter’ in Pakistan and ‘L Shape Shelter’ in Iraq (Figure 2.1).
As the diagram in the *Shelter Design Catalogue* also suggests, the distinctions between the categories are not absolute and there are overlaps between both emergency and transitional shelters, and transitional and durable shelters. The Refugee Housing Unit, which is also referred to as “Better Shelter,” for example, falls under both emergency and transitional shelter categories. The shelter design process is divided into five stages which consist of concept development, prototyping, field testing, production analysis and finalization of the product (Figure 2.2).
Applying Kennedy’s (2008) and Grbac’s (2013) framework of analysis they deployed to evaluate guidelines for the refugee camps based mainly on the UNHCR Handbook of Emergencies (2007), the shortcomings of developing shelter prototypes become immediately evident. In relation to Kennedy’s accounts outlined above, an approach towards developing these units necessitate a cycle of their performance evaluation and re-evaluation. Besides, despite the little attention given to these units in the literature, the dynamics that brought Kennedy and Grbac to examine the refugee camps beyond their typologies and morphologies also render the shortcomings of attempts at developing universal shelters.

### 2.6.3. On (Shipping) Containers

The shelters used in and out of refugee camps to accommodate forcibly displaced people include but exceed the ‘products’ presented in the catalogue. One of these products or “objects” (Martin, 2016) are the shipping containers. Shipping containers, which have been used as shelters in several refugee camps across Europe and other sites of refuge such as

![Diagram of project development phases of three types of shelters as presented in the UNHCR Shelter Design Catalogue (p. 6).](image-url)
container villages, exhibit the frictions embedded in humanitarian technology and design further. The initial proposal of these objects is attributed to Malcom McLean, a US truck operator who proposed the transportation of truck trailers on the sea rather than on soil (Martin, 2016, p. 34). The standards of the shipping containers of today were agreed upon by ISO in 1970 (p. 37). Examining their use to accommodate forcibly displaced people unfolds wider links of these sheltering practices to the notions related to the movement of people including, but not limited to the physical qualities of these ‘objects’ in which the human bodies are contained. These objects are also situated at a curious junction in terms of their relationship to the design and architecture. In numerous refugee settlements, these objects constitute the basic units of accommodation. However, these objects are not typically designed or produced by architects or professionals of spatial disciplines which are concerned about the relationships of structures to the ground, to the human experience and social relationships. This situation presents sets of questions regarding their production and mobilisation as accommodation units.

In his book *Shipping Containers*, Craig Martin (2016) reflects on the ubiquity of shipping containers for serving a wide range of functions which exceed their original purpose of transporting goods (p. 8). These objects are part of global distribution networks and have potential to unfold the “space of distribution” that are central to the mechanisms of capitalism (p. 10). They facilitate cost-effective means for loading and unloading for maritime shipping (Levison, 2006; Martin, 2016, Baumann, 2020). A particular character or shipping containers is their standardised shape, form and materials. Furthermore, these objects affected the standardisation of the infrastructures world-wide through which they are mobilised (p. 32). Drawing upon Serres’ take on objects as having ‘spatial character’, Martin (2016) stresses the possibilities of shipping containers to expose “object-geographies as a way of understanding the complexities of distributive space” (p. 12). In the case of forced displacement, these links suggest that mobility of people inevitably—or purposefully—engages with this distributive space and its dynamics.
Alongside global trade, shipping containers are widely related to war and humanitarianism activities for their logistical convenience (Levinson, 2006; Baumann, 2020). Along the line of scholars who point out similar practices and mobilisation of war and humanitarianism (e. g. Attewell, 2018; Khalili, 2018; Ziadah, 2019), Baumann (2020) suggests that these two are embroiled “with aid and reconstruction following in the footsteps of destruction, completing a circle of profit” (p. 17). Arguably, an unsettling coupling of military and humanitarian means becomes materially evident in the manufacturing and mobilisation of multi-purpose containers.

2.7. Expanding ‘shelter’: Alternative spaces of refuge

In this section, I begin to introduce alternative approaches to ‘shelter’, and distributed spaces of refuge in the urban context. Following from the earlier discussion in this chapter based mainly on Ramadan and Grbac’s accounts pointing at the active and transformative agencies of refugees and other actors related to refugee camps, this section reveals further implications of such agency in distributed spaces of refuge in the urban context. A major leap forward in establishing connections of the literature on refugee camps with concern to the aforementioned agencies and the spaces of refuge in urban contexts has been made through an expansion of literature on ‘shelter’.

The year 2015 marked a rise of interest in shelter as a turning point in terms of geographical distribution of forced migration due to the increasing migratory flows to European cities. The surge of events related to the migratory flows to Europe at this historical juncture shifted the problems of “sheltering, protecting and accommodating” from being a matter that is primarily related to the geographies of developing countries to being an indispensable concern that also affects the developed countries where most aid agencies are based in (Scott-Smith, 2020). While ‘shelter’ remains to be associated with basic physical spaces of refuge in practice for the most part, scholars began to try and incorporate complexities associated with
living in/around/through the processes of ‘shelter(ing)’ and the agencies of their inhabitants/participants.

In June 2018, I attended a conference at Oxford University where scholars from various disciplines discussed structures of forced migration. Throughout the conference, from which the book *Structures of Production: Rethinking Refugee Shelter* (2020) was developed, the scholars adopted various novel approaches to shelter. This included shelters as containers and housing units, but also other accommodations including “formal to improvised, the expansive to the compact” (Scott-Smith, 2020, p. 3). Some accounts referred to ‘sheltering practices’ and ‘shelter as a process’ (e.g. Western, 2020; Vandevoordt, 2020). Unfolding shelter as a process gives way to elaboration of physical and social structures beyond refugee camps but also stretches to wider geographies. This section builds upon these instances by developing a discussion on alternative spaces of refuge that are not refugee camps. To do this, it briefly introduces a variety of formations across the cities of Europe. These spaces are discussed in greater detail with reference to Athens, Greece in Chapter III.

As a consequence of the increased migratory flows to Europe by 2015; various forms of formal and informal structures and architectures have emerged beyond refugee camps. These include the re-use of buildings such as *The International Congress Centre* and *Tempelhof Airport* in Berlin; container villages, and other initiatives by citizens, international volunteers and NGOs provided support for refugees. These civil efforts generated an upsurge of solidarity (Vandevoordt, & Verschraegen, 2019b; della Porta, 2018; Feischmidt, Pries & Cantat, 2019; Sutter & Youkhana, 2017; Mudu, & Chattopadhyay, 2016). In her study, Mehra (2020) discusses *Melissa Day Centre* and *Hotel City Plaza* in central Athens, Greece, as shelters where participation, equality, and shared power are at the forefront. Vandevoordt (2020) draws attention to a hosting programme in Brussels which is a citizen initiative to host migrants in homes. In his analysis, social dynamics and interpersonal relationship come to the fore in these processes (Vandevoordt, 2020). In relation to these
more complex relationships that defies a reductive study of spaces of refuge, the following section develops a framework for ‘temporary homes’ as an analytical framework in the study of emergent geographies of forced migration. By doing this, the emerging literature on ‘shelter’ in the spatial studies of forced migration is linked to a longer-standing interdisciplinary literature on ‘home’. While focusing on ‘shelter’ as a product and a process in forced migration presented potentials of pursuing a multi-scalar approach first to refugee camps and spaces of refuge beyond refugee camps of exploring multiplicities of agencies and processes involved, ‘temporary home’ pushes this further by linking these to the studies of home to engage in and expand knowledge in both of these fronts.

2.8. ‘Temporary home’ as an analytical framework

The previous section began to expand the notion of shelter. This section develops an analytical framework for spatial analysis of spaces of refuge by devising the concept of ‘home’ which has been subject to vast bodies of literature in social and humanities disciplines such as anthropology and human geography. Drawing upon insights from these disciplines, this section engages shelter and sheltering processes in a broader discussion of dwelling, while also interrogating the gap between shelter as a humanitarian technology and home as a geographical concept. In order to do this, it first draws upon seminal architectural accounts on the concept of ‘home’. It then incorporates a cross-disciplinary framework that expands the notion of home to include anthropological accounts and insights from critical geography to account for the transient nature of ‘home’ and its multi-scalar geographies related to forced migration.

The experiences of living for forcibly displaced people are prone to be obscured by a prevalent focus on the sovereign powers as the determinants of the lives of refugees. The association of temporariness to the living spaces of forcibly displaced people leaves the geographies and complexities of lives in the geographies of arrival largely hidden and
underexplored. This section draws attention to these geographies by developing an account of ‘temporary homes’, whereby ‘the refugee camp’ is not the necessary nucleus for their presence in the geographies of arrival, nor the immediate physical structures of their inhabitancy have to be bounded by the limits of ‘shelter’. ‘Home’ in this section is interpreted as a geographical concept which allows for an exploration of the intimate relationship of refugees with place in its social and material complexity. A study of this relationship by devising ‘home’ as an analytical tool in this dissertation serves two purposes:

1) Broadening the discourse on ‘home’ to include its contemporary practices in the geographies of forced displacement with reference to Europe

2) Challenging the hegemonic, reductive approaches to shelter/housing.

The concept of ‘home’ generated much attention in studies of space in architectural discourse. Earlier accounts on ‘lived space’ and ‘home’ that have influenced architectural thinking include Bollnow’s (1961) accounts on these concepts. In his article Lived Space, Bollnow makes a distinction between the mathematical space and the lived space. He accounts on the ways in which the lived space depends on movement and perception (Bollnow, 1961). He claims for the place to have a “distinct coordinating zero point”, and a “distinct axis system which is connected with the human body” (p. 2). Acknowledging the non-fixity of ‘a man’ in the way he lives, Bollnow finds it unrealistic to identify what he calls a “zero-point of lived-space” with the “momentary origin of sights”, an idea which he attributes to psychologists (p. 32). He holds that house is a reference to a man “from which he builds his world”, and that he is not always where he “belongs” (p. 32-33). He considers house in a wider context, as “part of a larger whole” (p. 33), i.e. the city. According to him, a “firm dwelling place” is a necessity which prevents man from being “dragged along helplessly by the stream of time” (p. 54).

8 These limits both refer to reductionist approaches to ‘shelter’ as presented above, and the limited literature that have only recently started to expand on the notions of ‘shelter’.
Bollnow’s accounts demonstrate his conviction that the house is central to our belonging in the world. The traces of Bollnow’s ideas are encountered in Norberg-Schulz’s (1996) seminal work *Genius Loci*, which has long influenced phenomenological architectural research. Declaring a strong influence of Heidegger, Norberg-Schulz explains the idea of “*genius loci*” as “the concrete reality man has to face and come to terms with in his daily life” (1996, p. 5). According to him, it is the architect’s mission to make places meaningful (p. 5). “Character” is determined by the “concrete treatment of the space-defining elements (the boundary)” (Norberg-Schulz, 1996, p. 11) which would be the job of architects. Norberg-Schulz, like Bollnow, acknowledges that where we act is not a “homogeneous isotropic space” but has qualitative properties. According to him, “identification’ and ‘orientation’ are primary aspects of man’s being in the world” and freedom is dependent on a presumption of belonging (Norberg-Schulz, 1996, p. 22).

Travelling from the most intimate place to the largest geographies, these accounts treat home as the place around which the life is shaped, a place that is guaranteed. Despite being one of the most eminent figures in the phenomenological approach in architecture, however, the way Norberg-Schulz develops his inquiries to reflect on the architectural forms does not seem to provide a productive base on which a phenomenological approach in architecture could proliferate. The potential of phenomenological approach to inform understanding of architecture that appears strong in the beginning of *Genius Loci* becomes weaker as Norberg-Schulz attempts to interpret architectural form. In an article where he elaborates on Norberg-Schulz’s phenomenological approach, Haddad (2010) considers the most unsuccessful part of his work as “his desire to translate phenomenological discourse into a tool for the generation of architectural forms that recreate a resemblance of meaningful environments” (p. 98). Such translation can be argued to contradict the modes of enquiry in phenomenology by reducing it to formal interpretations of a certain sort, hampering multi-scalar dimensions of architectural experience.
Recent critical geographical accounts on home point at a more promising direction towards investigating the experience of home in its further complexity. In their book *Home*, Blunt and Dowling (2006) conceptualise home as “a complex, multi-layered geographical concept”. They define it as “a place/site, a set of feelings/cultural meanings, and the relations between the two” (p. 1-2). This broad definition, which is elaborated in depth throughout the book, illuminates the idea of home as extending beyond the merely enclosed place one gets used to live in. Although it might be obvious that the concept of home is shaped in a unique way for each person, transnational experiences of home allow even broader possibilities of understanding home. In her article *Home and away: Narratives of migration and estrangement*, Sara Ahmed (1999) reflects on Dhingra’s (1993) accounts of her sense of home, pointing out her comfort in being at an “in-between place”, that is, the airport, which secures a destination. Ahmed infers from this that “a space of belonging” is not necessarily bound to a particular home, but is rather defined by the “journey” between homes, and is connected to a future which is yet to arrive. “Leaving home”, according to her, “produces too many homes and hence no Home” (p. 330). In these accounts, home is not necessarily bound to our being in it, but is about the idea of reaching it.

Ahmed (1999) considers the accounts of home as familiarity as a reduction of what home is, as it is possible to encounter strangeness and the other within the home as well. Elaborating on this view, she widens the scope of home on the scale of a house to nation as a home, where encounters with the other are inevitable, if not essential to the lived experience of home. Ahmed develops a perception of home that is “sentimentalized as a space of belonging” as opposed to what she calls to be “fantasies of belonging” (p. 341). Drawing attention to Avtar Brah’s (1996) view of home as “the lived experience of locality” (p. 192), Ahmed develops a view on “being-at-home” as an experience through which “subject and space leak into each other, inhabit each other” (p. 341). Considering “home as skin,” Ahmed challenges the boundaries of self, home and “away” (p. 341). Such a take on home does not only challenge home as an isolated place, but also underlines the sensory aspects of the
experience of home. Displacement, in such view, is “a spatial reconfiguration of an embodied self: a transformation in the very skin through which the body is embodied” (p. 342). Defining the new home as “the intrusion of an unexpected space into the body,” Ahmed asks: “how do bodies rehabit space?” (p. 342)

Ahmed’s accounts suggest ways of looking at reinhabitation in terms of the subject’s spatial engagement beyond the confines of a fixed physical structure. In terms of forced migration, then, the urban context can be considered as an extended home in which the subject’s relationship with the space is manifested. The spatial studies of forced migration which investigate the urban conditions, networks, and agencies, therefore, have a potential to expand and engage the questions of home in a way to engage the concept spatially beyond a fixed, defined space.

Home in the context of displacement also pertains to critical views towards its connotation to ‘familiarity’. In her article where she explores the ways in which the idea of ‘home’ has been constructed throughout history with a focus on Ruskin’s ideas, Kaika (2004) criticizes what she considers to be the fallacious sense of familiarity which is created for the conception of home as separate from the social and the natural, and examines the notion of the “good water” in light of her discussion. Drawing upon Ruskin’s “true nature of home,” which she brings under two categories as the exclusion of the social and natural processes, Kaika refutes the possibility of the former by asserting that even by the very act of this distinction, home is attributed a social stance, through which it is involved in the social process. This is perceivable also by means of the supplements for our homes. Kaika challenges the preconceptions of what is outside as bad and dirty and what is inside as good and clean by exploring water as an essential element for a home. “Good water,” which is sterilized and acquired the necessary qualifications to enter home, is still an essential element for home which is derived—and continues to be derived—from nature and therefore, it is not possible to exclude the natural from home either (Kaika, 2004). Disregarding the existence of these
factors, therefore, is only another way of constructing relationships with them. These accounts investigate home against a perceived outside, and suggest that a modern home is constructed as an abstract place, detached from nature and social life. Such a division is perceivable also in the humanitarian context. In the case of shelters, identification of such constructs open up possibilities for new formulations of a notion of home and interpretations that take into account connections of these structures to the wider geographies in which they are situated. Following is an excerpt from the website of Better Shelter which gives information on certain properties of the housing units produced:

…The Better Shelter becomes their home away from home in temporary settlements, transitory sites and camps—a place where they can close the door and get a little privacy and calm.

The shelter resembles a house, with semi-hard, non-transparent walls. It has four windows and a high ceiling, enabling residents to stand upright inside. The door, lockable both from the inside and the outside, lets everyone—and women and children especially—feel safer when they are at home. A solar powered lamp provides light during the hours of darkness. The shelter allows residents a higher level of safety, security and dignity than a tent (Better Shelter: Safe and dignified, n.d.).

This passage implies that what make these shelters better than tents in terms of homeliness are mainly the higher levels of ‘safety, security and dignity’, which are achieved by the ‘lockable’ doors of the shelters. Admittedly, these criteria can be considered fundamental for establishing a sense of home. However, the limitations of such provision are also implied in the passage, as these aim at ensuring the shelters are isolated from the outside as a form of necessity. A conception of home that moves beyond the spatial distinction presented in this approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of ‘safety, security and dignity’ in relation to transnational migration. Moving beyond spatial distinctions as a source of homeliness, questions of where these structures are situated in, how they are related to amenities in cities, how social and material relationships do or do not form become relevant concerns that inform the planning of temporary settlements for forcibly displaced people.
The development of ‘temporary home’ as an analytical framework in this section builds upon geographic accounts on ‘home’, and informed by Blunt and Dowling (2006) in particular. The authors define ‘geographic’ to be associated with “relations between place, space, scale, identity and power” (Blunt, & Dowling, 2006, p. 2). Reflecting on the multiple layers of ‘transnational homes,’ Blunt and Dowling (2006) argue that these are “shaped by the interplay of both mobile and located homes and identities and by the processes and practices of home-making both within particular places and across transnational place” (p. 196). These accounts point at the material and imaginary connections that span across national borders in the cases of transnational migration. This way, the “multi-scalarity” of home comes to the fore in these experiences (p. 196). In line with Ahmed’s (1999) reflections presented above, a sense of home in such material and imaginary geographies challenges “a sense of home as a stable origin and unsettle the fixity and singularity of a place called home” (p. 198).

The second approach to ‘home’ which contributes to this thesis is its conception as a transformative agent. Miller (2001) suggests that, as structural approaches began to lose their influence by 1980s, home shifted from being merely “a site of consumption” that is acted upon by human agents, to being an agent itself, having transformative power (p. 4). These approaches do not only foster a reciprocal interaction, but also emphasise home as a process which transforms and is transformed itself. The framework for temporary homes in this thesis suggests the following in the study of spaces of refuge in relation to the above discussion:

1) Temporary homes as multi-scalar geographies: This aspect of analysis engages with the connections of sites of dwelling to the wider city and across the globe (Blunt, & Dowling, 2006).
2) The transformative agency of homes: The role geographies of home play in shaping everyday lives of forcibly displaced people (Miller, 2001)
3) Social processes that relate to the processes of home (Miller, 2001)

Research on home and forced migration raises questions that challenge a notion of home as a stable, fixed or singular point of origin. It opens up perspectives that consider home as
“relational across space and time” (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 198). Other attempts at discovering alternative notions of home include studies of ‘queer home’ which have opened up possibilities for viewing home other than fixity. Driven by her work on queer experiences of home, Fortier (2003) suggests home to be “lived in motions”:

… the motions of journeying between homes, the motions of hailing ghosts from the past, the motions of leaving or staying put, of ‘moving on’ or ‘going back,’ the motions of cutting or adding, the motions of continual reprocessing of what home is/was/might have been. But ‘home’ is also re-membered by attaching it, even momentarily, to a place where we strive to make home and to bodies and relationships that touch us, or have touched us, in a meaningful way (p. 131).

These accounts reinstate home as a “space of differences” underpinned by anti-normative meanings, rather than “home-as-sameness” (Fortier, 2003, p. 132). On similar lines, this thesis aims to unfold a chapter in the process of home in the context of forced migration based on a study of post-2015 Athens, investigating sites that are marked by a notion of in-betweenness, between the geographies of departure and imaginary destinations.

2.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I developed an analytical approach to study the spaces of refuge in Athens, Greece. To do this, I first introduced ‘the refugee’ and ‘the refugee camp’ as categorical concepts. This discussion is informed primarily by Foucault’s concepts of ‘heterotopia’ and Agamben’s discussion on ‘state of exception’ and ‘bare life’, which have prominently informed the studies of refugee camps. I then elaborated on conceptual and typographical approaches on ‘the refugee camp’ to engage spatiality of the spaces of refuge, and the agency of their inhabitants. Focusing on ‘shelter’ as both structural and spatial nucleus involved in these social and material processes, I engaged a geographic discussion on ‘home’ to develop a multi-scalar account where geographies of shelter are investigated in an analytical framework of ‘temporary homes’. This framework consists of a 1) multi-scalar approach and 2) the transformative agency of homes.
This thesis builds a methodology by incorporating the framework of temporary homes developed in this chapter with a critical approach to data gathering and representation of geographies rendered by forms of temporariness. While focusing on this analytical framework, this thesis engages with the geographies of forced migration by adopting ethnographic methods throughout several instances of fieldwork conducted in Athens. This framework is consequently discussed in relation to the themes that emerge throughout these fieldworks and presented in Chapter IX. The next chapter introduces Athens as a ‘threshold’ for a study of temporary homes, while also performing as a threshold connecting to the empirical part of this thesis.
Chapter III: Forced Migration and Post-2015

Athens

Figure 3.1: A preliminary study of urban forms in Athens by the author—a partial plan traced on a Google Maps image
3.1. Introduction: Athens as a ‘gateway to Europe’

In Chapter II, I developed a framework of ‘temporary homes’ to be devised throughout this dissertation to explore the geographies of forced migration. This entails the relevance of a broader context than suggested by a conventional understanding of ‘shelter’ which is associated with basic enclosures to sustain lives of refugees in the context of forced migration. This approach demands a further understanding of the landscapes that extend beyond the confines of the housing units/containers/flats, or other physical structures where refugees reside. In line with the multi-scalar and multi-layered geographical approach I proposed, a study of the geographies of arrival as temporary homes demands an exploration of the contexts through which process of homes emerge. Focusing on Athens as the site of study, the second part of this thesis explores multiple sites in the city which are presented in the empirical chapters from Chapter V to VII. This chapter sets the scene for the methodology in Chapter IV and the empirical chapters V to VII by attempting to unpack the geographies of Athens in relation to the urban transformations and events preceding 2015, by when migratory flows climbed significantly.

In 2015, more than 1.25 million people arrived at the borders of the countries in European continent (Greussing, & Boomgaarden, 2017). Despite identifiable challenges and themes that emerged across countries in Europe which received recent migratory flows that show similarities, forced migration is manifested in particular ways across countries and cities. Greece has often been referred to as a ‘gate of entrance’ as its geographically positioned on the path into Europe for those who migrate from various geographies. Thousands of displaced people in the contemporary world aim to reach “wealthy North” through Greece (Makrygianni, 2018). Greece borders the European Union and the Balkans, Central Asia and Africa with 92 percent of its borders being coastal. Most arrivals to the country have been

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9 See Chapter II for a detailed discussion on ‘shelter’ as a concept in the spatial studies of forced migration.
from the sea where border control is more difficult than that on land (Tsilimpounidi, & Walsh, 2010).

This chapter focuses on the ways in which post-2015 waves of migration relate to the political culture and urban texture in central districts of Athens, Greece. This pertains to the social, political and material practices that unfold across the city in relation to the recent waves of migration, and draws upon some practices that pertain to a notion of “home as a process” (Miller, 2001). Firstly, it draws on the recent urban transformations that shaped modern Greece and the contemporary Athens and focusing on polykatoikia as a dominating urban form in central Athens. It then introduces the spaces of refuge, and explores how these interact with the cityscape in relation to the emerging social movements and the impacts of this interaction on the city. Finally, it examines the artistic practices that proliferated as part of an emerging subculture in central Athens and discusses these activities as a way of communication and practicing agency through mobilising the urban form.

3.2. The urban fabric of contemporary Athens

The urban transformations in Greece reflect the social and economic changes the country went through since its independence from the Ottoman rule. The contemporary urban fabric of Athens is a result of a few centuries of formations and transformations, which in turn, has been a significant factor in defining how the post-2015 migration interacted with its cityscape. Importantly, the so-called refugee crisis did not hit an unhistorical, apolitical geography, or take an independent trajectory in the Athenian landscape; instead, it formed a particular relationship with the history of Athens, taking part in its historical continuum.
Urban development in modern Greece has a complex history due to multiple social, political and economic factors that informed its trajectory. After the Greek Independence in the 19th century, Greece emerged as a neoclassical city with the attempts at planning a ‘rational’ city (Oikonomou, 2016). As the capital of Greece, Athens was a primary base of these reconstructions during the organisation of the new Greek state. The notion of ‘rationality’ was manifested in the masterplans as:

…the repeated use of the orthogonal grid with specific dimensions, absolute straight alignments, uniform and geometrical structure, rectangular urban blocks, regularity and symmetry, hierarchy of street network, clear separation of private and public space, division of urban land by rational land fragmentation demonstrate a straightforward policy about the urban form of the new city (Oikonomou, 2016, p. 414).

Stamatis Voulgaris designed the masterplan of Patra in 1829, which shows the characteristics of the urban planning of the period. This plan consists of urban blocks which are designed to have an open space inside, and the width of the buildings in these blocks are the same (Oikonomou, 2016). Adoption of neoclassicism was an attempt to re-establish Greekness with the use of classical Greek architectural forms (Monioudi-Gavala, 2012; Oikonomou, 2016).

After the Second World War and the Greek Civil War (ο Εμφύλιος) triggered by the ideological struggles of the right and left in 1943 and lasted until 1949, Greece had a major urban transformation through an intensive urbanisation process and proliferation of buildings constructed without licence (Makrygianni, & Tsavdaroglou, 2011). As a result, new proletarian neighbourhoods emerged with similar spatial characteristics in 1950s. These neighbourhoods had “a high population density; low-rise, small buildings; narrow streets, limited communal public space; mixed land use, etc.” (p. 30). A practice called antiparochi escalated during this period as a response to the housing problem that emerged as a result of the increased population in the big cities such as Athens and Thessaloniki. This meant that a building contractor was allowed to give a part of the building to the owner of the plot, whereby promoting private ownership and development (Makrygianni & Tsavdaroglou, 2011;
Oikonomou, 2016). Dimitris Emmanuel, having devoted a large body of his work into the study of housing during the post-war period in Greece, describes this period as “precapitalist” as commodification of housing and speculative building signalled capitalist forms of practice albeit to a lesser extent compared to the 1970s (1981, p. 1). In 1960s and 1970s, Athens went through an intense concretisation with the building of concrete apartment blocks, however, these were not accompanied by infrastructural support and did not function efficiently (Makrygianni, & Tsavdaroglou, 2011).

In order to systematise the urban developments in Athens, The Operation for the Reconfiguration of the Urban Plan (ORUP) and the 1985 Master Plan of Athens were introduced (Makrygianni, & Tsavdaroglou, 2011). These projects entailed the legalisation of the buildings that were built illegally, allocation of enormous tracks of land to the towns around Athens which later led to suburbanisation, and modelling of the inner parts of Athens into a polycentric character (p. 31). Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou (2011) argue that the ORUP project was mobilised to curb the political ideologies in the “anarchist and far-left political spectrum” in downtown Athens—particularly in Exarcheia neighbourhood—through its gentrification (p. 31). The middle and upper class residents in the inner parts of the city left for the suburbs, and this flow only increased towards the 2000s with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of migrants to Athens (p. 31).

A series of economic developments marked the 2000s in Greece. In 2001, Greece joined the Economic and Monetary Union and hosted the 2004 Olympic Games three years later (Makrygianni, & Tsavdaroglou, 2011). As this event put Athens under the spotlight, several infrastructural projects were initiated during the time that led to the Olympics. These developments were met by resistance and led to the student movement in 2006-2007 (p. 31). Meanwhile, protests took place against neoliberal practices in various domains which resulted in the formation of other movements such as the schoolteachers’ movement in 2006 (p. 31). The early 2000s in Athens was rendered by these tensions, and further steps were
taken by people and groups in the left and anarchist spectrum to assemble in a more profound manner through squatting places for gatherings and formation of unions (p. 31).

The economic and political developments into the 21st century led to the contemporary Athens which is characterised by “diffused and mixed land use, increased urban density, lack of public open spaces, and high-rise blocks” (Makrygianni, & Tsavdaroglou, 2011, p. 32). After many of its residents moved to the suburbs, the inner parts of Athens were left largely to the migrants to settle in (p. 33). The central areas of the city—including Gazi, Psirri and Metaxourgeio—were gentrified due to the redevelopment projects to be reproduced as “controlled multiplexes for tourism, entertainment, consumption, and innovative entrepreneurship” (p. 33), a strategy which still acts upon Athens today.

3.3. Zooming-in: polykatoikia

A closer look into the polykatoikia, which dominates the urban scenery in contemporary Athens, allows for a further insight into how political and economic trajectories act out on a smaller scale in the central parts of the city. Polykatoikia is considered as “a symbol of modernisation in interwar Greece” (Makrygianni, & Tsavdaroglou, 2011, p. 32). These urban blocks consist of standardised and repetitive architectural forms as multi-storey buildings with white walls (Fig. 3.2). They are compact and continuous, featuring balconies as their connecting elements to the outside (Oikonomou, 2016). The urban blocks were originally planned as residential buildings, but their structure was convenient for many other uses. Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou (2011) suggest that the vertical distribution of inhabitants reflect the social class segregation with the lower class residing in the basement and the highest in the penthouse (p. 34). These blocks are connected by streets, which constitute an essential element of public space in Athens due to its lack of vast green spaces (p. 35). The building blocks in the city centre are smaller than those in suburbs, which means more fragmented streets in these areas (p. 36). Various activities take place on the streets during
day and night including everyday activities such as socialising and trading, but also demonstrations and protests (p. 35). The urban block is still the dominating form in central Athens, creating particular uses of the urban forms, and relationships across enclosed and open spaces. In the empirical part of this thesis from Chapters V to VII, these relationships emerge as significant factors which mark the urban experiences in the geographies of forced migration in post-2015 Athens with a focus on particular cases.

Figure 3.2: A digital sketch of an urban block form based on a photograph taken by the author in Victoria Square, Athens

3.4. An introduction to the spaces of refuge

The type of settlements in which refugees reside in Greece vary. These include reception centres, open camps and occupied buildings. Asylum Information Database (AIDA) provide extensive data on accommodation for refugees and statistics based on formal documents.
This section is informed primarily by this database in outlining the spaces of refuge in Greece and the procedures related to these. According to the statistics provided by Greek Council for Refugees, there were 58,661 applications for protection status in 2017–36,340 of which were pending by the end of the year and 9,323 of which were rejected (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021a). The five procedures in relation to granting the status pointed out by Greek Council for Refugees are 1) Regular Procedure, 2) Border Procedure, 3) Fast-track border procedure, 4) Accelerated Procedure, and 5) Dublin procedure (see Figure 3.3 and 3.4). In the regular procedure, the applications should be examined within 6 months, and this can be exceeded up to 9 months and a further 3 months in special occasions\(^{10}\). With reference to Explanatory Memorandum pertaining to UNHCR’s submission to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on developments in the management of asylum and reception in Greece, May 2017, the Council points out the large number of pending cases, and the possibility of first instance applications to last up to two years (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021a). The large number arrivals and the delays result in inadequate living conditions for the applicants and refugees.

\(^{10}\) Article 51(2) L 4375/2016, Article 51(3) L 4375/2016 and Article 51(4) L 4375/2016.
Figure 3.3: Applications not subject to the EU-Turkey statement (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021b)

Figure 3.4: Fast-track border procedure: Applications on the Eastern Aegean islands subject to the EU-Turkey statement (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021b)
The Greek Reception System has been subjected to criticism for not providing adequate conditions of living for the incomers. This includes the European Court of Human Rights records suggesting the violation of Article 3 in a number of cases, which is concerned with the “prohibition of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) held that the conditions of various detention centres in Greece, where the applicant was placed, along with the living conditions after his release, constituted degrading treatment and thus a violation of Article 3 (prohibition of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)\(^{11}\).

Besides the official reception system that is run by the National Centre for Social Solidarity (Εθνικό Κέντρο Κοινωνικής Αλληλεγγύης, EKKA), there are temporary camps in mainland Greece (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021c) (see Appendix A.1). In addition, a UNHCR accommodation system was introduced in November 2015 as an urban accommodation solution which consists of provision of rented housing for the vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees (UNHCR, 2019a). In the UNHCR Accommodation Update for February 2019, the number of the places created by the UNHCR within this scheme is declared to be 26,186 which consists of 4,457 apartments and 19 buildings in 14 cities, Athens taking the lead, and six islands in Greece (see Figure 3.3).

\(^{11}\) see Mohamad v. Greece (Application no. 70586/11), 11 December 2014 and F.H. v Greece (Application No. 78456/11), 31 July 2014
In March 2016, European Council and representatives from Turkey met and discussed the crisis in Europe as a result of flow of migration into Europe after 2015 (European Council, 2016). The parts signed a deal which was commonly referred to as The EU-Turkey deal. The deal consisted of an agreement of the closure of the Western Balkan route to Europe, preventing migrants crossing Turkey to enter Europe to proceed their journeys. This had significant consequences regarding refugee movement and accommodation in Greece. Approximately 50,000 people were trapped in Greece, which resulted in severe conditions in the islands due to overcrowding (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021d). The number of temporary camps and UNHCR accommodation facilities increased, but the problem of adequate accommodation persisted in the months that followed. In the monthly report published by the UNHCR in February 2019, it is stated that 3,700 people reside in the reception centre in Samos, despite its capacity for 700 people (UNHCR, 2019b). The report
also notes the tensions that arise between the local community and asylum seekers in Leros island due to the high number of new arrivals (UNHCR, 2019b). The concerns regarding the overcrowd in islands are also noted on the UNHCR Fact Sheet for Greece for January 2019. According to the Fact Sheet, there are 72,300 refugees and migrants in Greece, 14,550 of which reside in the islands and 57,750 in the mainland (UNHCR, 2019c).

The National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) referral network is a state authority with a referral network for the placement of the applicants. Asylum seekers need to make a request for placement to initiate the process. As there is not sufficient number of places, this procedure does not guarantee the placement of all applicants. In fact, according to the EKKA reports, the acceptance in 2017 was only 35.2% (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021c).

3.4.1. Temporary camps

Following the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, several temporary camps were open in mainland Greece to provide additional accommodation for asylum seekers. Different from the procedure for EKKA, the reception and evaluation of requests for placement was less straightforward. The Greek Council for Refugees reports that this was largely undertaken by the office of the Minister of Migration Policy until February 2018, as well as Central Operational Body for Migration (Κεντρικό Επιχειρησιακό Όργανο Μετανάστευσης, KEPOM) which also operated under the Ministry of Migration Policy in 2016, and ceased its operations since mid-2017 (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021c).

There is a lack of clarity regarding the legal status of temporary camps. A diversity of authorities is in charge of these settlements, and most of the destinations work without official site management (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021c). The officially established temporary camps are Elaionas, Schisto and Diavata. Several camps, including Elliniko and
Softex, were shut down as a result of the reactions against their unsatisfactory conditions (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021c).

3.4.2. UNHCR accommodation scheme

UNHCR began executing a settlement plot devoted to relocation (Accommodation for Relocation) in November 2015. The project was funded by the European Commission and consisted in UNHCR building up 20,000 places in open accommodation. By July 2017, it was incorporated into the Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA) programme, which is funded by DG ECHO (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021c) (Appendix A.2).

3.4.3. Hotspots

The Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) are also referred to as ‘hotspots’, and people residing in these places are bound by “geographical restriction” as a result of the EU-Turkey deal, and cannot leave the island (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021c). This resulted in severe overcrowding in the facilities which accommodate people over their capacity. There are also NGOs which run facilities in islands. It is reported that “the nominal capacity of the RIC facilities (hotspots) was of 6,246 while 9,902 were residing there, under a geographical restriction” as of 31 January 2018 (Greek Council for Refugees, 2021c).

It is within this climate this research had been undertaken. In this section, I briefly introduced the contemporary situation in Greece in relation to forced displacement, based primarily on reports published by UNHCR and Greek institutions. The temporary accommodation facilities for asylum-seekers and refugees are not limited to those that are outlined in this section. Various alternative accommodations proliferated in the form of temporary informal settings in urban areas in Greek cities. These will be detailed from Chapter V to VII where the case studies in Athens are presented.
3.5. The rise of solidarity movements

The recent history of Athens is shaped by a series of events which gave rise to grassroots solidarity initiatives. Among these events, Olympics was argued to have led to the commodification of urban spaces and environmental damage in the city, caused uprising by its citizens who protested the neoliberal developments in the city. Another event that marked the rise of contestation was the mass mobilisations and the occupation of Syntagma Square in the summer of 2011. Following these events, grassroots solidarity initiatives and solidarity network and structures emerged by grassroots activist groups across Athens and in wider Greece.

The solidarity initiatives that began to emerge within Athens actively tackled the emergent problems as a result of forced displacement which were considered to be related to insufficient policies that fall short of empowering the incomers by those who take part in the solidarity movements. These initiatives focused on alternative responses to the crises by overturning notions such as ‘charity’ and ‘aid’ which suggest asymmetrical relationships between the ‘giver’ and ‘receiver’. This way, a duality persisted where displaced people were bound to be ‘other’. Instead, they fostered social relations that are based on solidarity and mutual activities in which people participate equally regardless of their background or immigrant status (Alexandri, 2015). Alexandri (2015), Kaika (2012) and Leontidou (2014) are among the scholars who explore solidarity as an alternative to the duality and ‘otherness’ as an underpinning conception that prevalently mark policies for immigrants and refugees. This view suggests that solidarity practices are alternative to ‘othering’ practices by placing people side by side. Other studies based on solidarity initiatives in Athens (e.g. Rakopoulos, 2014) explore solidarity by focusing on the grassroots economic activities and their political repercussions in Athens.
Recently, scholars invested in studies of the spatial aspects of solidarity in Athens, Greece. Kaika and Karaliotas (2016) focus on “discursive and spatial choreographies” of Synatagma Square protests by arguing for a perspective that tackles a homogenising take on the events by either considering them as “new political imaginaries” or “expressions of post-political era” in understanding their role towards democratic politics both for the possibilities they offer and their limitations. Arampatzi (2017) investigates the spatial manifestations of solidarity by looking at urban spaces in Athens which tackle the neo-liberal crisis in the city followed by austerity-based politics which was introduced in 2010 in Greece to tackle the budget deficits (p. 2168). Cappucini (2015) examines Exarcheia by developing a framework contrasting austerity with democracy. She argues that the opposition between the two has shaped contemporary urban landscapes in Athens (Cappucini, 2015). The solidarity networks and initiatives in Athens, therefore, are significant part of the post-2015 experiences in Athens. Throughout the empirical work in this thesis, various aspects, connections and implications of solidarity networks, initiatives and activities have come to the fore as transformative elements in the experience of the neighbourhoods forcibly displaced people live in and around. These are further explored in the empirical chapters V, VI and VII, and discussed in Chapter VIII for their connections to the notion of temporary homes.

3.6. Landscapes of forced migration

Solidarity initiatives engaged in a variety of activities in central Athens. Since a major issue regarding the difficulties faced by forcibly displaced people who resided in Athens has been housing, it has been an issue at the forefront. In order to understand the alternative responses from solidarity groups and initiatives, it is important first to account for the spatial manifestations of recent migratory flows to Greece. In his study, Makrygianni (2018) paints a picture regarding the changes in the landscape across Greece in the first decade of 21st century:

The country is filled with detention camps, a fence is raised along the Greek-Turkish borders (Evros), the land and sea border areas have become cemeteries for the
‘anonymous’ strangers, and many islands (such as Mytilene, Kos, Samos, Crete, etc.) are shifting from vacation paradises to overflowing refuges of persecuted migrants (p. 249).

Makrygianni (2018) then points out to the emergence of “spaces of solidarity, resistance and struggles” which resulted in the formation of new relationships among former residents of the city and new incomers (p. 249). The recent migratory flows caused significant transformations in urban terrain in Greece and gave rise to squatting as alternative forms of urban housing. However, Greece has a longer history of migration which has been affecting and transforming the country since the first half of the 20th century. Following the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913, the First World War in 1914-1918 and the Greek-Turkish War in 1919-1922, thousands of people were displaced and forced to live in the peripheries (Makrygianni, 2018). Despite the fact that a state project was in place concerning the resettlement of refugees, it was common for people to resort to informal constructions to cover their needs for housing (p. 249). There have been other waves of displacement during the second half of the 20th century following the Second World War and Greek Civil War from 1946 to 1949 where informal accommodations proliferated in Greece due to the lack of an organised housing plan for the accommodation of internally displaced people (Makrygianni, 2018). Makrygianni (2018) suggests that during 1990s and 2000s, the squatting practice was practiced differently than the decade that followed, with little involvement of migrants and more of political activists (p. 250). He points out that the practice of squatting has changed during 2000s upon massive inflow from the Middle East, Asia and some African countries took place which resulted in more abandoned buildings being occupied by the incomers (p. 250).

One of the earliest squats which was the former Court of Appeal occupied in 2003 and inhabited increasingly by migrants who came from various geographies including Middle East, North Africa and Balkans from 2006 onwards (Makrygianni, 2018, p. 251). He points out no significant connections of the occupied building with the neighbourhood but support
from leftist and anti-authoritarian groups against attempts at eviction by police, as the building was considered a “hygienic bomb” (p. 251). Other examples are the building blocks called The Refugees (Ta Prosfigika), which were built to host Greek refugees in 1930s, and were increasingly occupied by migrants in addition to homeless and unemployed people (p. 252). Over half of the squatters since 2015 were migrants coming from Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria (p. 252). The involvement of the solidarity group in the activities related to the occupied buildings include collective kitchens, a place for kids and a barbershop (p. 253). These examples show that the urban transformations that resulted from the increasing migratory flow to Athens from early 2000s merged with a political culture that is accompanied by the activities of people from solidarity initiatives, leading to the creation of social and spatial networks which began to shape the built environment and the activities in the city. I expand on some of these activities in the empirical chapters of this thesis, based on my field trips to Athens, and reflect on how these relate to the forced migration scene as of 2019.

The more recent practices of squatting that relate directly to the forcibly displaced people in Athens date back to the mobilisation of 800 people who lived at an informal settlement in Pedion toy Areos until August 2015 (Tsavdaroglou, 2018). This was followed by the occupation of a former governmental building Notara 26 and another building on Dervenion 56 (Tsavdaroglou, 2018). Tsavdaroglou (2018) suggests that Dervenion 56 operated “as a hub” accommodating facilities and activities that included “the kitchen, food, clothes, hygiene and medicine supplies warehouse” with a prospect of additional functions to be introduced to the space including “workshops and skill-shares” (p. 9). The squats in Athens mentioned above were followed by others including Gini building, Acharnon squat, Hotel City Plaza, School 2 - 2ο Filoxenio Prosfigon, Themistokleus 58, Themistokleus 96, Strephi squat, School - 5th Likio, Hotel Oniro, Cat’s Spirit, Kannigos 22, Steki Metastanon and General Hospital Patision (Tsavdaroglou, 2018, p. 9). The solidarity groups that are involved with alternative housing of displaced people during these stages of squatting practice engaged in
activities related to “healthcare, food supplies, kitchen, distribution, warehouse, clothing, counter-information, cleaning, creative activities for kids” (Tsavdaroglou, 2018, p. 9).

The developments outlined in this section illustrate that the transformation of central Athens through occupation of abandoned buildings during the post-2015 era and the involvement of solidarity initiatives in these practices are strongly linked to the political climate that preceded the recent migratory flows into the city. In relation to the emergent political culture that underpinned the endeavours of solidarity groups which favoured practices of direct democracy through self-management and anti-hierarchy, these practices of squatting foster an organic spread around the city. This is opposed to the confinement which is often associated with refugee camps that are situated outskirts of the city with clear physical boundaries, strict supervision and limited mobility. Despite the limitations posed by appropriating abandoned buildings which lack necessary amenities to ensure safety of their inhabitants, the activities undertaken–or envisioned to be undertaken–within these spaces signal a fuller understanding of lived experience that accounts for social relations, freedom of movement and a sense of agency for inhabitants in principle. This stands in contrast with ‘bare life’ that is attributed to inhabitants of refugee camps who are provided with basic needs but deprived of further engagement with the city and social life, lacking ability to practice their agency.

While squatting practices proliferated in downtown Athens, government-led refugee camps were intact and kept rising in number due to the on-going migratory flow into Athens and wider Greece. In addition to the government-led projects, international organisations were involved in developing housing projects, among which ESTIA has been the largest. In addition to these projects, the Evangelical Church in Athens introduced an Integration Centre for Refugees and several groups were formed to design longer-term solutions for the problem of housing for displaced people by solidarity groups and international volunteers.
The current ecosystem in Athens in relation to forced migration is a mixture of initiatives which vary in their scope, purpose, connection to local and international bodies, as well as their financial and logistical support systems. Acknowledging the importance of unpacking these connections and structures of each initiative, a detailed study of these structures is beyond the purpose of this thesis. However, there is a growing body of literature investigating the implications of the involvement of particular civil and state actors which draw upon a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches including studies undertaken on voluntary initiatives across Europe post 2015 (e.g. Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019a; Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019b; van Dyk & Misbach, 2016; Feischmidt & Zakarias, 2019). Some civil initiatives have been argued to have been institutionalised in a way to allow the states to neglect their responsibilities in responding to the emerging issues in a substantial manner while distracting people’s criticism and attention from them (van Dyk & Misbach, 2016; Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019b). However, in a climate where the restrictive policies of the states create difficult circumstances for the immigrants at the countries they arrived, civil initiatives also created alternative conditions and support for them which brought them up against the states, conflicting with their political agenda (Feischmidt & Zakarias, 2019).

3.7. Communicating through urban form: Artscapes

As presented in Section 3.2 and 3.3, the central parts of contemporary Athens are characterised by dense and multi-story buildings which demonstrate similar architectural characteristics; limited greenery and narrow, fragmented streets as the significant public spaces where various activities take place. These urban forms have also been essential means through which resistance have been expressed in the times of political tension. In Athens, communication and dialogue have been at the forefront in endeavours of artists, activists and solidarity groups. These manifested in various forms of art activities around the city including street art and public performances.
In their article, Tsilimpounidi and Walsh (2010) examine street art which has been increasingly practiced in Athens during the early 2000s. The authors explain it as “a new street-level language that has twisted, innovated and filled in the gaps of a culture’s hegemonic discourse” as a result of an influx of incomers which began to transform the landscape of Athens and a conventional and nation-based Athenian identity (p. 111).

Drawing upon Judith Butler’s accounts on public sphere and visibility as acknowledgement of reality (2004), the authors view street art in Athens as responses to human rights issues through the use of “refined symbols, decomposed stereotypes, re-visioned aesthetics and anti-authoritarian slogans” in a way to transform the walls into “social diaries” (2010, p. 113).

Tsilimpounidi and Walsh (2010) account for the changes on the walls of Exarcheia over time since 2008. They report observing newly added slogans including “we are all immigrants,” “Solidarity is the weapon of humans” and “Our home is the world” (p. 113). These accounts demonstrate the shaping of the cityscape of Athens with the voice of incomers over the past years. In Greece, immigrants have been often associated with the problems of the society in contemporary Greece such as unemployment, murders, petty crimes and sex-trafficking (Lalioti, 2005; Lazaridis and Wickens, 1999). Through street art, the shortcomings of mass communication and mainstream presentations are contrasted with expression on streets with the city as a canvas.

In another study, Stampoulidis (2016) looks at graffiti in Athens based on his fieldwork over seven months in 2015 to examine “the metaphormosis of the Atheninan urban linguistic landscape” (p. 11). The author analyses five wall writings in central Athens; one from Omonia Square, one from Acropolis of Athens and three from Exarcheia, arguing them to be “not only the symptom of the crisis in contemporary Greece, but also a collective expression of an emerging urban subculture” (Stampoulidis, 2016, p. 15). The prevalent practice of street art in Athens, especially in and around the neighbourhood of Exarcheia can be viewed...
as a manifestation of lives and voices that are undermined and remained marginal. Referring to human struggles, Gilmore (2006) argues that “the greater challenge is to find enabling forms by which [these truths] can be conveyed” (2006, p. 190). Street art is one form of expression through which these struggles are manifested in Athens. In addition, protest art forms such as demonstrations and performances have been widely practiced especially in central Athens around Exarcheia neighbourhood.

It is noteworthy that these investigations do not represent Athenian society as a whole, nor do they account for all political views and approaches prevalent across the city. Focusing on the central areas of Athens and especially on Exarcheia, these studies indicate the emergence of a subculture in downtown Athens that is intertwined with the contemporary social and political issues in Athens. As pointed out specifically in Tsilimpounidi and Walsh’s (2010) research, street art increasingly pointed at issues regarding ostracising of immigrants and forcibly displaced people in Athens since 2008. These practices demonstrate how central Athens has been materially appropriated by its inhabitants by way of artistic expression, and the expansion of the matters of expression with an increased focus on the issues around migration. Artistic endeavours fostered both material processes throughout which the parks, streets and walls of the city are appropriated and claimed, and the social processes through inclusion of more participants and expression of their concerns—all of which expanded the artscapes of Athens.

3.8. Conclusion: The times of ‘crisis’

The modern history of Greece has been rendered by a series of mishaps and events that underpinned the cultural and political landscape of contemporary Athens since the World Wars I and II. Before becoming an epicentre of the so-called refugee crisis following the outbreak of the Syrian war in 2015 and an unprecedented migratory flow to Europe, Greece was already in a financial crisis (Carastathis, Spathopoulou, & Tsilimpoundi 2018).
Suggesting Greece to be in crisis requires an elaboration on what ‘crisis’ suggests for understanding the Athenian context in the turn of the year 2015. According to Berlant (2016), ‘crisis’ is an interruption in time, or a “glitch”—or a set of glitches that reveal infrastructural failure (p. 393). Along similar lines, Dalakoglou and Agelopoulos (2018) find a common conception of ‘crisis’ in their edited book as a turning point which both generates and exposes new or previously hidden circumstances. If we understand infrastructure as that which includes all that mediate the organisation of life, in Berlant’s words: “the lifeworld of structure” (p. 393), such failure provides opportunities for alternative organisations—or infrastructures.

In this chapter, I have outlined the urban transformations in modern Greece first by focusing on the urban form and social movements. I explored the ways in which the issues regarding forced displacement in Athens have merged into the emerging social, economic and political context in downtown Athens that became increasingly visible in the 2000s. I then explored the emergence of solidarity initiatives as grassroots responses to the ‘crises’, which took an active role in tackling the issues forcibly displaced people have been facing in Athens. I then looks at the ways in which activities of these groups transformed central Athens with a focus on alternative housing projects, and the manifestation of these struggles in artistic and creative forms with a focus on street art—a practice that increasingly marked downtown Athens.

Finally, I discussed artscapes as a means of communication in Athens through the urban form, which increasingly expressed matters of migration in the 2000s. In Chapter VIII, the potential of such art and creative activities in empowering marginalised people to make a statement about themselves is discussed further with references to three fieldtrips in Athens, Greece over the years 2018 and 2019. In accordance with the relevant literature on the issue, this chapter is mostly undertaken with focus on solidarity initiatives which appear to be in opposition to governmental policies. However, the landscapes of forced migration in
Athens bear a further complexity of relations beyond such dichotomy. Such complexity becomes more visible upon closer inspection to specific cases, people and geographies in Athens. Chapter IV develops a methodological approach to further investigate the geographies shaped with forced migration in Athens. It reflects on the units of investigation and structuring of narratives to account for a multi-layered investigation of several spatialities encountered in Athens to prepare the grounds for the presentation of my empirical study.
Chapter IV: Building Methodology

4.1. Introduction: Stepping into temporary homes

“In architecture, to position a building as a ‘methodology’ rather than as the end result of the method or process that makes it, is a radical proposition” (Rendell, 2012, p. 8).

I have so far drawn an intellectual background for this dissertation and elaborated on the post-2015 Athenian context. In Chapter III, I elaborated on the political and cultural climate in Athens, Greece, with focus on the neighbourhoods that are particularly transformed by forced migration after 2015. This chapter situates the empirical part of this dissertation against this backdrop by introducing the methodological approaches I have pursued. This prepares the empirical findings of this thesis presented across Chapter IV to VIII.

The empirical part of this thesis consists of a case study undertaken through a series of fieldwork in/on Athens, Greece, to explore emergent geographies of ‘homes’ as experienced in the state of temporariness—or in the conception of it—through forced migration. This is based on the intellectual and contextual framework drawn in the preceding chapters Chapter II and III. In Chapter II, I discussed spaces of refuge in relation to approaches to ‘shelter’ and ‘sheltering practices’ with reference to refugee camps and other spaces of refuge, and developed ‘temporary homes’ as an analytical framework. I argued that the discussion of these spaces as multi-scalar geographies allows for an understanding of housing for forcibly displaced people whereby the transformative agencies of these spaces and their inhabitants can be explored. In Chapter III, I elaborated further on spaces of refuge with reference to the recent events and activities in Athens, Greece. I explored particular ways in which an emerging cultural landscape of the city interweaves with experiences of forced migration. In this chapter, I build upon these discussions by crafting a methodology that speaks to the motivations of this research and the context of Athens. Building upon the discussion in the preceding chapters, this chapter develops a methodology to study spaces of refuge in
Athens, Greece, to deploy in a case study presented in the empirical chapters of this thesis from Chapter V to VII. In addition, this chapter begins to introduce the sensitive aspects of engaging with a politically charged geography underpinned by a state of flux and multiple layers of vulnerabilities which are explored further in the following sections.

The initial steps in designing a methodology for my fieldwork consisted of interrogating my potential modes of engagement with the sites and interaction with people. This involved probing what it means to be present in geographies affected by forced migration as an architectural researcher first, and then, evaluating possibilities and consequences of any further engagement I might have with these geographies. Besides these, I sought to account for a variety of experiences in Athens without reducing my findings to homogenising narratives, and retaining the complexities embedded within these experiences in line with the motivations and intellectual framework of this thesis.

In order to develop a methodology that responds to the concerns I have outlined above, I have borrowed from feminist approaches which interrogate the dynamics of relationships that might be produced on and off site, and challenge practices that might create forms of hegemony. The feminist approaches were adopted for their emphasis on the non-objectual, non-formal, and their situated and localised engagement with the sites which is explored further in Section 4.2. This decision feeds into two motivations of this research:

1) Pursuing an ethically informed, reflective and responsive fieldwork,

2) Probing new ways to engage architectural research and representation on difficult sites/sites of conflict/friction.

In Feminist Practices, Brown (2011) poses pertinent questions which probe the foundation of the disciplinary education and practice of architecture:

...if the ‘star’ architect, who as students we were all taught to emulate, is no longer the working model, then what sort of models should replace it? What kind of engagement with the project, the client, or community partner is possible and how might this relationship inform the design process and eventual outcome? How does architecture benefit from these types of
relationships? What are other possible ways the architect can design with and through civil engagement? What are broader implications of this type of approach? (p. 4).

Such questions which interrogate the role of the architect/architectural researcher in the processes of spatial practice are briefly presented in Chapter I where the motivation of this thesis is presented. For building the methodology, these questions provide basis for my motivations for developing an approach where my presence in the field, interaction with people and related activities are constantly reflected upon. The sites of forced migration present unique opportunities and challenges for engagement depending on the context of each site and the time period in which research is undertaken. The empirical part of this research, therefore, has an experimental character where the methods of data collection, analysis and representation are adjusted throughout the fieldtrips. As this thesis focuses on forced migration where mobilities and temporality are predominant, the necessity of developing such methodological exercises have been crucial for my endeavours to suggest relevant approach both for forced migration studies and architectural research.

4.2. Feminist trajectories

Feminist approaches have had a growing impact in the field of architecture since 1970s through a wide range of practices from textual explorations to spatial interventions on physical sites (Rendell, 2012). As discussed briefly in Chapter I, spatial practice began to be informed by writings of Lefebvre (1991) and de Certeau (1984), which put emphasis on the processes of spatial practice not only as the design of the buildings, but also “the activities of using, occupying and experiencing, as well as modes of writing and imagining which describe, analyse and interrogate” (Rendell, 2012, p. 92). Such approaches inspired a view of architecture as sets of embodied, dynamic and performative practices beyond the design of the buildings.
The methodology of the case study in this thesis draws upon the four trajectories Rendell (2012) identifies at the intersection of feminism and architecture, which are “critical spatial practices”, “other spaces”, “difference and location”, and “the performative turn”. While discussing critical spatial practices, Rendell draws a distinction between practices which “operate to maintain and reinforce existing social and spatial orders”, which she calls “strategies,” setting them against those that “seek to resist the dominant social order of global corporate capitalism”, which she refers to as “tactics” (2006; 2012). There are multiple ways in which these tactics inform the methodological approach in this thesis. First is the emphasis on process over product, which means that critical spatial practices do not necessarily result in conventional architectural buildings as outcomes because their “way of working is itself a critique of architectural design methodologies that emphasize form and object-making” (p. 92). In line with this proposition, this thesis does not seek to make a proposal for a building, but to engage critically with geographies of forced displacement, developing a methodology that accounts for the dynamic spatial processes as an architectural exploration.

The second trajectory concerns transcending binaries to account for “the margin, the between, the everyday, the heterotopic and the abject” (Rendell, 2012). Discussing these non-binary spaces in relation to “other spaces”, Rendell focuses on interiors as predominantly marginalised. In this thesis, “other spaces” are spaces where forcibly displaced people dwell in Athens, Greece, that are ephemeral, incomplete, imperfect, some of which lack formal recognition or legal status, and their place in mainstream architectural discourse.

The third trajectory concerns the epistemological aspect of the case study in this thesis, or the ways of knowing. Haraway’s proposition of “situated knowledge” (1988) interprets knowledge other than abstract and objective, but intertwined with identities and locations. Haraway (1988) writes: “Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated
knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object” (p. 583). Such conception of knowledge also pertains to political and ethical aspects of research as a form of knowledge production. Acknowledging the importance of the “vantage points of the subjugated”, Haraway (1988) points at a danger regarding “seeing from” other people’s perspective: “…there also lies a serious danger of romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their positions” (p. 583-4). In her reflections, relativity is problematised as much as totalitarian perspectives as being “god tricks”, as they exclude “location, embodiment, and partial perspective” as underpinnings of knowledge (p. 584). These approaches to knowledge production inform this case study and the mapping practices undertaken in relation to my encounters throughout my fieldtrips which are reflected further in Chapter VIII.

The fourth trajectory, “performative turn”, emphasises a bodily engagement with the activity regarding the site. Referring to her own engagement with writing, Rendell (2012) suggests that “performativity” and “self-reflectivity” in her practice “questions the terms of reference that relate the critic to the work positioned ‘under’ critique, transforming over time depending on their specific locations, constructing as well as tracing the sites of relation between critic and work” (p. 95). In relation to my engagement with the physical and digital sites of forced displacement in Athens, my walking in the neighbourhoods and encounters in the city, but also with documentation in the forms of fieldnotes, lecture notes, sketches, photography, and mapping practices, my case study in Athens consists of a set of performative activities underpinned by my intersubjective relationship with the sites and activities. Developing forms of representation in relation to these performances is therefore an act of construction based on my partial perspective and intersubjective relationships. These approaches not only informed the methodology that I have developed for my fieldwork, but also the writing and analysis.
While mapping out my fieldwork and working through the material from my fieldtrips, I made an effort to follow narratives in a way to avoid assumed categorisations, both concerning the people and the sites, following the links that emerged from my own activities and engagement throughout my fieldwork. My writing has been inevitably imbued with the challenges of writing ‘on’ a situation I was not fundamentally involved with, and ‘about’ people other than myself, which required a constant self-reflection, and my positionality not only in the field, but also in relation to writing about the field. As with the visual mapping exercises, I often emphasised my subjectivity by way of writing, and reflected in particular on my presence in the field and positionality throughout the preparation of this dissertation. I took these challenges to create an opening for further criticality in the spatial studies, and to challenge homogenising narratives and approaches. Adopting feminist approaches allowed a more nuanced investigation to this study, sensitive to the spatial and temporal contexts in which I undertook the fieldwork, and to the heterogeneous subjectivities that are relevant. In the context of forced migration, the benefits of following such methodologies include challenging ‘the refugee’ as a homogenised subject, and spaces of refuge as ‘non-spaces’, reinstating the diversities and complexities that are embedded in everyday practices.

Throughout the design and execution of the research methodology, an open, experimental approach is adopted which informed/is informed by the research process in an on-going bases. This methodological framework consists of the use of ethnographical methods in combination with mapping practices. In the following sections, the particularities of this methodological framework are discussed in relation to the sites of study. These will be followed by reflections on my positionality as a researcher and the limitations of the methodology that I carried out throughout the preparation of this dissertation.

Although a linear structure can be followed throughout the presentation of this chapter through division of sections, the ways in which the methodological components are represented in each section do not follow a linear structure. This choice is made in order to
reflect better the characteristics of the ethnographic approach that I pursued in the undertaking of this research, and to avoid a misleading separation of components that are considered to have informed the experiences in the field together. The following sections introduce the particular ethnographic methodological approaches that inform the case study.

4.3. From Multi-sited ethnographic methods to alternative mapping

“Every colony is a hive of activity. And if we follow the lines of activity, we find that they can be traced back neither to a single, collective super-organism nor to a plurality of individual organisms. Rather, to trace the lines of activity is to describe a vast network, in which any individual appears as but a particular node” (Ingold, 2008, p. 210).

In this research, I use ethnographical methods to explore the possibilities of understanding spatial practices in relation to forced migration to Athens. The emphasis on observation on the site of research, and absence of suppositions that underpin ethnographic methodologies (e.g. Groat, & Wang 2013, p. 225) are in line with the objectives of this study as presented above. Ethnographic research encompasses a wide set of practices. In his article where he reviews several issues around conducting ethnographic research, Hammersley (2006), refrains from drawing boundaries for ethnography, whilst identifying a central “methodological orientation” which situates ethnography as “a form of social and educational research that emphasises the importance of studying at first-hand what people do and say in particular contexts” often during a long period of time (p. 4). This entails “participant observation in relevant settings, and/or through relatively open-ended interviews designed to understand people’s perspectives, perhaps complemented by the study of various sorts of document—official, publicly available, or personal” (p. 4). The methodologies of this research consist of participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews in Athens, and a series of mapping practices based on multi-sited ethnographical approach to study various encounters within the wider city of Athens. Multi-sited ethnography differs from ethnographic methods that focus on a single site extensively to study “the circulation of
cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (Markus, 1995, p. 96). A multi-sited ethnographical approach entails strategies which follow “connections, associations, and putative relationships”, departing from macro-perspectives which endeavour to provide a comprehensive frame by which the object of study is bounded (p. 96).

I adopted a process-based approach to my fieldwork. Beyond preliminary decisions that concern initial contacts, location of residence and a background research on the sites and activities in Athens, the fieldwork and its (re)presentation does not follow a predetermined linear strategy but allows the field to determine the journey that the fieldwork consists of. Such approach is in line with Dona Davis’s (2007) reflections on ethnography where she points out its occurrence emerging beyond plans that precede it. Not only was it impossible to predict all the sites and occurrences I would encounter throughout my fieldwork beforehand, but the ways in which various foundations, initiatives and activities related to forced migration came into being did not seem to follow a particular order or a hierarchical system either. Data gathering during my field trips was based on my learning on the site, which was both necessarily disorganised and unpredictable. This presented various opportunities and challenges. One of the determining factors of my site visits was the formal and informal boundaries in terms of their accessibility. While I had initially documented several formal refugee camps to visit as part of my research, the government-led refugee camps required specific documentation and restricted access which did not comply with my objectives while also limiting my physical engagement with those sites. On the other hand, I had more opportunities to discover informal settings and initiatives in both central and wider Athens, which resulted in my engagement with larger networks than I initially envisioned.

Bringing together this information was possible through reconstructing the material I gathered in forms of mapping exercises which I undertook both throughout my fieldwork and for the representation of my findings. partial knowledge construction through mapping
exercises served to foster these potentials in the form of representation for temporary homes—for its power to reveal what goes unnoticed, eradicated or prone to be dehistoricised through its own temporary, transient and incomplete nature.

Experimental mapping practices have been increasingly used to explore cities and personal experiences thereof. In her book Bangkok Songlines: Spaces, Territories, Mobility; Gitte Marling (2005) discusses her and her students’ mapping approaches based on the individual experiences and stories of the residents of Bangkok. What she aims at challenging are the values that she considers to be prominent in architectural circles, which are based merely on architectural typologies and their lack of concern to "unseen, hidden and new kinds of spaces where everyday life takes place" (Gitte 2005, p.23). Being in line with the rationale of this approach of revealing experiences that are not immediately visible, the case study in this thesis addresses temporary spaces and interprets them through mapping, which brings a new dimension to the investigations on an arguably typical city, that is, a city that is conceived as a stable or permanent home for its long-term inhabitants.

In his prominent work Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention, Corner (1999) points at the creative potential of mapping as opposed to the conceptions of mapping merely as an activity of tracing. With reference to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's accounts (1987), he emphasizes the activity of mapping as a “necessarily performative practice” which is exploratory rather than imposing, the latter of which they suggest the practice of tracing to be (p. 213-214). Explaining the ‘agency of mapping’, Corner suggests that maps are both “analogous” and “abstract” (p. 214-215). In his accounts, the analogous character of maps refers to their correspondence to “actual ground conditions,” which makes it possible to undertake activities on it such as projecting routes, whereas it also entails abstractness due to the process of “selection, omission, isolation, distance and codification” (p. 215). Corner suggests that this ‘analogous- abstract character’ has been of strategic use both militarily and ideologically, but that the “strategic, constitutive and inventive
capacities of mapping” remained largely unexplored by planners (p. 215). Instead, he suggests that it was used for “quantitative and analytical survey” that would inform planning and secure its relationship with the “reality” (p. 215). According to Corner, maps depend on certain techniques by which they are constructed, and the planning projects are therefore informed by constructed realities. Corner sees this quality of constructing realities as a huge potential to be unfolded through creative mapping practices which would operate towards new realities.

Corner (1999) hints at the possibilities newly emerging digital media could offer in exploring the potentials of mapping (p. 252). In her work Diasporic Urbanism: concepts, agencies & ‘mapping otherwise’, Nishat Awan (2011) attempts to explore the ways in which mapping practice could move beyond the three-dimensional representation of space by the use of digital technologies. She suggests ‘n-dimensions’ instead, which would reveal the ‘relational and topological space’ by introduction of temporal input regarding the spatial experience of the interviewees (Awan 2011, p. 241). Awan argues that this temporal input does not merely suggest a fourth dimension but implies “a field of influence,” revealing “how certain events or the presence and absence of certain people and places changes the mapped territory” (p. 241). Crucial in her n-dimensional mapping practice is the qualitative data that she gathers from her conversations with people and reliance on their declarations. This does not only recognise the spaces as subjectively produced, but also establishes conversations as the source of information in producing their representations in forms of mapping practices. Similarly, this thesis follows people’s stories, which inform the structuring of the empirical chapters and visual mapping practices that accompany them.

4.3.1. Representing ‘relational practices’

As I have begun to explore in the previous sections, understanding architecture beyond the study of buildings engenders new forms of engaging with the built environment, and brings into question not only the relationship of architects or architectural researchers to the sites of
their study, but also the representation of these sites and processes that are involved. Among recent scholars of the built environment, Petrescu’s (2012) approach to mapping and agency through her practices and research around ECObox project interrogates these matters and finds links between Lefebvre’s (1991) social production of space, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) approach to ‘line’ as the fundamental element creating social milieux rather than ‘point’, and Latour’s (2005) Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), to engage with architecture as “relational practice” (p. 135). Relational practice, in her work, stems from Bourriaud’s (2002) “relational aesthetics”, which accounts for the “inter-human relations” that artworks generate (Petrescu, 2012, p. 135). Petrescu develops this further to engage in spatial and temporal relationships involved in relational practices such as architecture. Such expansion also brings ethical and political aspects of these practices into the discussion, and the questions about “how a ‘relational’ artwork could transform the socio-spatial context” it is situated in (p. 135).

The underpinning principles of Petrescu’s work are closely related to the principles behind the mapping practices that I undertook throughout this thesis. A key focus of such practices is on ‘the processes’ rather than ‘the objects’ of the spatial practices where Petrescu argues to have designed ‘agencies’ rather than ‘objects’. Petrescu anchors her discussion in the project ECObox by atelier d’architecture autogérée (aaa), which she founded with Constanin Petcou as a collective practice. ECObox is a temporary garden project which consists of processes that involve collaborative action by the members of aaa, but also other collaborators including the residents of the neighbourhood. It consists of using recyclable materials in the realisation of a garden fostering self-management processes with a purpose to facilitate preservation of “urban ‘biodiversity’ by allowing wider range of life styles and living practices to coexist” (Petrescu, 2012, p. 136). In relation to ECObox project and other practices aaa is engaged in, Petrescu reflects on the position of architects and their agency in processes of spatial practice. She focuses on a notion of the architect not as someone
who works on behalf of others, but instead “with others”, as a way to practice her agency—by reinstating agency to others.

Another focus of the project is on “social and spatial assemblages”, referred to as “agencements” (Petrescu, 2012; Deleuze, & Guattari, 1993). The term *agencement* in this context refers to Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. Philips (2006) explains the connotation of the word in French to ‘arrangement’, ‘fitting’ or ‘fixing’, noting its multivalent uses in language:

one would speak of the arrangement of parts of a body or machine; one might talk of fixing (fitting or affixing) two or more parts together; and one might use the term for both the act of fixing and the arrangement itself, as in the fixtures and fittings of a building or shop, or the parts of a machine (p. 108).

In relation to the use of the term in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Philips (2006) suggests that *agencement* moves beyond what arrangement suggests, registering to “an event, a becoming, a compositional unit”:

The ‘collective agencement of enunciation’ designates the language system to which all speakers of a language belong; the ‘social agencement of desire’ designates the individual’s relation to his objects; and the ‘machinic agencement’ exceeds both the planes of enunciation and desire, recombining them in further enunciative events (p. 109).

These accounts suggest that the events or processes are not reducible to the sum of the distinguishable parties involved. *Agencements* instead “generate enduring puzzles about ‘process’ and ‘relationship’ rather that leading to systematic understandings” (Petrescu, 2012; Deleuze, & Guattari, 1987).

Another set of practice *ECObox* project engaged in is concerned with the representations of *agencements* that have been engendered throughout the activities through mapping practices (see Figure 4.1). These maps demonstrated individual trajectories and groups of interest, among others. With reference to Rancière’s (1998) “democratic permanence”,..
which necessitates one’s subjectivity through its relationship with another, Petrescu (2012) explains the aim of “mapping relational practice” as follows:

To draw networks which size a socio-spatial entity in formation, continually moving, reforming new networks and refining relations and to conceive spatial constructions which could maintain [this] ‘democratic permanence’ (p. 138).

Figure 4.1: An excerpt from a diagram produced by aaa as part of ECObox project (Petrescu, 2012, p. 139)

In the empirical part of this thesis where I explore architectures of forced migration in Athens, I similarly adopt process-oriented approaches and practices with concern to agencies alongside ‘temporariness’ and ‘multiplicities’. This way, I put forth the invisible aspects of the physical realm transformed by forced migration that pertain to its spatial processes. As the following chapters reveal, the collaborators of these processes range from newcomers from Middle Eastern countries to the local artists in Athens, from international volunteers from North Europe and the United States to former migrants residing in the city.

The temporal aspect is an important dimension which underpins process-based investigations of space. While the relevance of time is embedded in the notion of ‘process’ itself, there is another layer of temporality—a sense of temporariness—forced migration
brought to the sites I explored in Athens. Till (2009) points out the importance of time in understanding architecture as a dynamic process which is “released from the hold of static formalism” (p. 96). Exploring this temporality, then, can elevate our understanding of architecture as a dynamic process.

4.3.2. Mapping the geographies of arrival

In this thesis, mapping is not only used as a tool for representation, but also as a tool for research. In this section, I detail the particular mapping methods that I used throughout each phase of this research:

1. Digital mapping – excavating the sites of research:

Initial stages of my research consisted of working with maps and image collection on the Internet across several digital platforms including Google Earth, Google Maps and social media platforms—especially Facebook. These exercises consisted of 1) collecting and studying the aerial views and 3D imageries depicting physical sites across Athens on Google Maps, Google Earth, the maps provided on UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) reports and IOM (International Organisation for Migration) documents, and 2) tracing of connections across activities and networks both with and without physical base through analyses of connections, links and interactions primarily across Facebook—and occasionally Instagram—through their published content that was made accessible to general public.

2. Maps as tools for conversation:

Following my studies on the images and maps throughout my initial digital research in the first phase, I gathered some of these materials to use during my initial trips to Athens. Whereas I used Google Maps to trace my routes through my walks across the city, pin down new places to explore and to take notes on particular destinations, I also used printed maps
and documents as complementary visual materials to explore throughout my conversations with people who worked with refugees. During my conversations and interviews with the participants, we used the maps to discuss the routes, activities, organisations and settlements for refugees across Greece. In this stage, new information began to emerge beyond those revealed in documents and reports provided by large international organisations such as UNHCR and IOM.

3. Maps as research findings:
Besides working on existing maps as a basis for further investigations, I elaborated on my findings through drawing diagrams and maps during my fieldwork. My mapping practices from this stage onwards were largely based on my data collection on the site and were experimental practices where I studied representation of the visual, textual and auditory information as well as my own movement as a signifier of the partial knowledge I produced through these exercises. With these practices, I was able to identify various connections that unfolded through encounters during my fieldwork in Athens.

4. Maps as tools for analysis:
Alongside my fieldnotes, interviews, visual documentation through photography and sketches, I used the mapping exercises I have developed throughout my fieldwork in exploring the city, analysing the sites I visited in Athens, and their connections to several locations beyond the areas I visited. At this stage, I worked with my experimental maps, topographical maps, and a reproduced AutoCAD drawing of Athens to expose different levels and scales of information on these maps. Some of the maps zoom in on a single site at different times of visit, demonstrating the dynamic materialities and social culture surrounding the chosen site, while others reveal movements of human agents beyond the city scale by their engagement, bringing in the city the experience and information gathered by such an engagement.
5. Mapping as the representation of findings:

Finally, I presented the findings of my research by incorporating the principles I have used throughout with the mapping exercises, where I found cross-connections across people, organisations and the sites. The organisation of the empirical chapters reflect this approach by presenting the textual content as the outcome of these practices of finding hidden dimensions, connections and relations across various stories and observations that underpin the ethnographic finding of this thesis.

In line with the approach outlined in section 4.3.1, this thesis seeks to explore the potentials of mapping in exploring the dynamic and temporal aspects of temporary living in the case of forced displacement. Within the apparent limitations of operating in temporary sites for refugees in European countries that are seemingly dependent on top-down political decisions and restrictive regulations, it seeks to challenge the imposed representations of these spaces, and open new ways for spatial practitioners to think about place and experience employing critical thinking though the processes of mapping. Mapping in this research is introduced, in Corner’s words, as an “operational technique,” and addresses the questions of “how” rather than “what” (1999, p. 251) in order to rethink the processes of spatial practice and representation.

Key to the experimental mapping practices in this thesis are to explore the potentials of mapping in architectural understanding and representation of the complexities that underpin the geographies undergoing transformations due to forced migration. While conventional mapping and information gathered by aerial views and 3D views Google Maps have provided basis for further research across Athens, the later mapping practices challenge the limitations of conventional mapping and architectural drawing that fall short of accounting for people’s movements, activities, connections, dynamic and temporary physical and social traces which have unfolded throughout my fieldwork by digital excavation, encounters with people and listening to their stories. My endeavours to unfold these hidden or less obvious
aspects of the geographies of forced migration in Athens through experimental mapping practices have been complementary to my elaboration on the complexities of a dynamic understanding of ‘home’ as opposed to a reductionist understanding of ‘shelter’ in the context of forced migration.

The experimental mapping practices in this thesis speak to the individuality of the stories and complexities of the lived experiences in these settlements, and aims to challenge the conception of refugee settlements as abstract or non-places, and the conception of housing units in refugee camps as structures of non-experience. The main challenge of this study, therefore, is to trace experiences that have ambiguous relationship with space in its temporality, with past and future presumably imagined elsewhere. This emerging condition of temporality deals with the temporary experiences of a city, bringing its permanence and stability into question in order to understand it. Engaging in the individual stories of the residents of these spaces of refuge, it aims at questioning the borders of shelters and buildings, which hints at the borders of home by tracing the experience and relationships that render the refugee settlements as places of relations, experience and history. It attempts to create alternative narratives of place as a creative practice, and encourages a relational and multi-scalar understanding of home. This way, it provides a critical perspective for spatial practitioners in engaging with displacement which challenges the reductionism of the hegemonic approaches to living for refugees in temporary settlements.

4.4. On the Site(s)

Due to its location, Greece has been a key destination in Europe since 2015 for the transnational migratory flow to reach other countries in Europe especially for people who flee the war in Syria. By August 2017, there were five reception and identification centres on Greek islands where forcibly displaced people come and stay for a varied durations of time depending on their personal circumstances and the management by relevant authorities. The sites in which refugees live and dwell in Greece show different characteristics which are
discussed in further detail in Chapter III. Among these differences are their histories, the buildings and structures of accommodation on these sites, the profiles of their residents and the managerial structures regarding the living and activities in these settlements. The pre-trip research on the sites of examination is therefore narrowed down to Athens for an in-depth analysis of multiple sites which are geographically close compared to the other sites around the country.

This case study is designed with fixed and emergent components of methodology that allow flexibility during the execution of its practical elements (Creswell, & Clark 2011, p. 55). Such flexibility has been necessary due to the unpredictable conditions of the sites that reveal opportunities and limitations during the site visits. This case study can be broken down into four stages.

**Stage one:**
The first stage consists of a pre-field research which involves a remote data gathering on the sites. This includes the documents published by national and international institutions such as governmental records on formal and informal settlements for refugees (see Appendix A.1-5), IOM and UNHCR documents; documents prepared by grassroots organisations in Athens such as lists of services and NGOs, and social media pages of these grassroots organisations and alternative initiatives which shared information about their histories as well as events and activities. Although I started discovering these sources before my visits to Athens, their discovery has been an on-going process throughout my fieldwork due to the social media12.

12 Some of the Facebook Pages: IOM Greece: https://www.facebook.com/IOMGreece, Kids Club Athens (later Play Up Athens), 2ο filoxenio prosignon (later 2ο filoxenio families help and support at camps), Jasmine School Athens, Classes for adults and kids at Jasmine, Exarchea Tourism, Ελεύθερος Κοινωνικός Χώρος Nosotros-Free Social Center Nosotros, Victoria Square Project, Documenta 14, This is not a feminist project, Butterflies & Camels, Campfire Stories, Solidarity Now, ANKAA Project, The Syrian & Greek Youth Forum / SGYF, Perspectives Art, Athens Housing Collective, Melissa Network, No Borders, No Borders Music, Musikorama, Scrap Coop, Communism,
Stage two: Fieldtrip 1 [25 Nov 2018 – 1 Dec 2018]

The second stage consists of an initial fieldtrip to Athens. During this fieldtrip, I stayed at an accommodation in Metaxourgeio in central Athens. Metaxourgeio is in proximity to the Omonoia Square which is a very central part of Athens with links to the various parts of the city; and is imbued mixed socio-spatial dynamics. Throughout this visit, I aimed to explore central districts in Athens through walks, and by meeting people who worked with refugees to collect data on the temporary refugee settlements in Athens for a week. This visit included meetings with members of organisations working with refugees in Greece, informal discussions, unstructured interviews, observations of the settlements and visual documentation.

Stage three: Fieldtrip 2 [8-23 Feb 2019]

My second fieldtrip spanned a two-weeks period. I stayed at an accommodation in Exarcheia, which was close to several informal accommodation spaces and facilitated my immersive data-gathering through participatory observation (e.g. participation in social activities), semi-structured interviews and artefactual documentation. My interviews and site selection have been largely informed by snowball sampling, through which I discovered an ecology within the city during my conversations, interviews, studies on social media platforms of the relevant organisations, and advertisements/announcements across physical and digital platforms. This stage prepared my more focused study in the stage four where I conducted the 12 key in-depth interviews.

Kassandras, Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza, Architecture Sans Frontieres International, Defence for Children International Greece, Athens Squat Volunteers support after eviction, Project Elea, ECHO Refugee Library
Stage four: Fieldtrip 3 [27 May – 14 Jun 2019]

My third field trip consisted of participant observation, informal conversations and 12 semi-structured interviews in Athens. I chose my interviewees by using snowball sampling method which is also informed by my previous visits and encounters in Athens. This method consists of establishing new contacts through initial contacts to undertake interviews (Bryman, 2002, p. 202). Bryman (2002) argues for the convenience of this method while engaging with “shifting populations” in qualitative research (p. 203). Use of this method aligned with my approach to exploring physical sites throughout my fieldwork, and allowed me to account for different layers of identities of people that engage with the sites I investigated. For example, among my interviewees, P3 has an experience as a refugee, and works in an administrative role in Jafra Foundation, helping new refugees. He was also involved in Mazi Housing Project. On the other hand, P4 is from the United Kingdom, who worked for both KHORA and Mazi Housing Project. Such multiple connections and complexity of identities made it more feasible to determine interviewees parallel to my explorations on sites and activities throughout my fieldwork.

The fieldtrips were followed by prior research on initiatives and organisations around Athens which is based primarily on my digital site research. This method is chosen due to the fact that social media has been actively used around Athens and in wider Greece as platforms of communication and networking with recent updates. Both prior to and throughout the fieldtrips, these platforms revealed connections and activities for which several initiatives engage and/or collaborate. Announcement of activities in which several initiatives collaborated and the links that were made available on their social media accounts revealed network links among initiatives, sites and the people. Throughout the three fieldtrips, further connections unfolded and sites visited. The physical and digital site visits therefore took place throughout the research, complementing each other and informing the site selection process.
While determining the sites of visit, I gathered information about initiatives through gathering documents on international organisations, governmental institutions, NGOs and grassroots organisations both through digital excavation and documents provided by my contacts mapping initiatives working for refugees across Athens.

My initial site visits consisted mainly of three neighbourhoods in central Athens, which are Exarcheia, Metaxourgeio and Victoria Square. Throughout my conversations with people I met at the social and community activities in these neighbourhoods, I discovered other initiatives around wider Athens. Among these, the following chapters focus on the projects in central and wider Athens:

1) ANKAA & ScrapCoop
2) KHORA
3) Victoria Square Project
4) Communitism

And accommodation centres:

1) 2nd School—Housing squat for refugees
2) Hotel City Plaza—Housing squat for refugees
3) Refugee Integration Centre
4) Eleonas Refugee Camp
5) Schisto Refugee Camp

Throughout my field trips, I spent most of my time in Victoria Square Project, attended activities by KHORA and Communitism, and visited the accommodation sites listed above except for the refugee camps. Due to the restrictions on visits to refugee camps, the data I examined on Eleonas and Schisto refugee camps are based only on interviews.

The projects and accommodation centres studied in this thesis as listed above are the result of a diverse sets of practices undertaken in Athens. This demonstrates a wide spectrum of architectural portraits of forced migration by involvement of national and international actors, NGOs and grassroots organisations in shaping the landscape of forced migration in central Athens. Despite the differences in the structures through which these projects came into
being and operate, these sites are connected through human actors and activities as revealed throughout my ethnographic work in Athens.

4.5. Data collection

This research deals with a contemporary issue that is rendered by on-going conflicts and transformations and therefore, newspapers and news reports have been significant source of information to trace the recent conditions regarding the refugee settlements in Athens, Greece prior to the fieldtrip. Besides these, maps and figures by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM), two prominent bodies in Europe which provide open-source data on refugees, are consulted. Through Google Maps, it was possible to gather relatively detailed visual information on several occasions about some of the sites in Athens. Several sources are also unfolded throughout the fieldtrips as alternatives to mainstream media which informed the dissertation throughout its completion process.

The data that have been retrieved and analysed throughout the ethnographic studies on the physical site consist mainly of 1) the fieldnotes taken throughout the three fieldtrips to Athens, Greece that were undertaken between November 2018 to June 2019, 2) in-depth interviews and 3) visual documentation through collection of brochures, leaflets, photograph taking, sketching and mapping practices. The process of data collection and analyses include the following:

4.5.1. Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes constituted a significant part of the ethnographic part of this research. Based on convenience and availability, I took my fieldnotes on different media throughout my fieldworks. These media include a smart phone, a personal laptop, notebooks and a sketchbook. I used my notebooks and sketchbook for drawing some sketches as part of my
fieldnotes. I then combined these fieldnotes through transcribing the digital notes on the computer and scanning my handwritten notes and sketches. I used some of these fieldnotes in data analysis in textual form, and others informed my mapping practices for their textual content and the sketches. I experimented with various combination of my records further exploration of temporal and spatial dynamics of the sites and my engagement with them.

4.5.2. Interviews

Throughout the fieldwork, numerous conversations were undertaken to get more insight into the contemporary situation in Athens, everyday activities and living conditions of forcibly displaced people. Throughout the third fieldtrip to Athens from 27 May to 14 June 2019, seven in-depth interviews were undertaken with people including forcibly displaced people and people who work with them in addition to informal conversations. The interviews were not limited to the forcibly displaced people as the people who work with them are also considered to be the actors influenced by/influencing the experiences in the city. The preparation for the interviews consisted of the following:

Step 1: Preparation of an interview guide.

In this research, the field is perceived as a place of possibilities, and it was given importance that assumptions are not projected neither on the spatial encounters nor on the people that are encountered and interviewed. However, it was deemed useful to prepare an interview guide to set out some questions that could lead the participants to reflect on certain themes that could illuminate the issues that could unfold some of the issues that this research is tackling with. These necessarily differed for forcibly displaced people and people who work with them. Figure 4.2. shows how some of the people I encountered and conversed with related to different sites and projects. The people whose interviews were included in this thesis are anonymised as ‘P’ followed by a number, while other people who I conversed with and was in close connection during my fieldwork, who I did not formally interview, are
anonymised with the letter ‘R’ followed by a number. Therefore, an initial interview guide was prepared to be deployed throughout the semi-structured interviews (Appendix B.3).

Figure 4.2: A diagram showing connections across people (anonymised), projects and accommodation types for refugees as unfolded throughout the fieldwork, produced by the author
**Step 2: Building rapport**

I undertook the in-depth interviews were undertaken during the third and last fieldtrip that was undertaken to Athens, Greece throughout this research. These were preceded by several visits to the sites of research, participation in activities and conversations with people. These visits made it possible to accumulate more site-specific knowledge in the field that would allow informed conversations with the participants of the in-depth interviews. Throughout the process of building rapport, it was possible to get more insight into the ongoing issues, events, activities and networks in the city, and the interview guide that was initially prepared began to evolve into more site-specific questions informed by the investigations on sites. According to the new data I gathered, I asked more specific questions each time to the participants including the names of the places, initiatives and activities they may be familiar with.

**4.5.3. Visual documentation**

The visual documentation that has been undertaken throughout the fieldwork is informed by the specificities of the sites and of the particular encounters throughout the fieldwork. Some sites such as refugee camps did not allow recording of certain types such as photography and voice recording due to the measures taken by the administration. At other times, the nature of my involvement and activities in a particular setting led me to choose particular recording methods over others. The methods in which the visual documentation was undertaken is complementary to the findings of this research, as they illustrate both the particularities of the field that was being studied and my way of involvement in the activities. The documentation methods are in themselves an essential component of the findings. My decision to use particular media for recording in different cases and conditions throughout my fieldwork was informed both by ethical concerns (such as observing the privacy of the people in my company and their living places), and potentials these recording methods may offer for mapping the sites of my visit throughout my research and for its presentation. Most
mapping practices juxtapose several media to explore the sites of forced migration. These studies have also documented my own exploration of the city which led me to identify my sites of focus (Figure 4.3).
Figure 4.3: A Mapping practice depicting my city walks from 10 to 19 February 2019 (across pages)
The purposes of using visual documentation throughout the fieldwork are as follows:

1. Exploring the physicality of the spaces,
2. Exploring the relationship between different spaces, identifying boundaries and thresholds,
3. Exploring the different uses and transformation of the spaces – challenging a perception of spaces as passive/fixed platforms,

4.5.4. Mapping practices

Mapping practices have been developed throughout this research in order to explore the different layers of relationships that unfold during the fieldwork. These practices aim at exploring the possibilities of analysing data in non-linear forms. These experimental practices of mapping demonstrate an acknowledgement of the complexities of data that cannot be reduced to simplified form of conventional visual or textual representation. Further explanation on approaches to mapping is presented in Section 4.3.

4.6. Data coding & analysis

4.6.1. Approaches to data coding and analysis

This research holds the premise that the agencies of humans and places in Athens are not immediately obvious, and that the global narratives about how the city is being transformed as a result of forced displacement can be misleading in acknowledging the spatial practices on the city that are taking place on multiple scales. In order to defy assumptions projected on the city, I developed this research with a concern to explore how the city and agencies would be unfolded throughout my presence in the field. In order to allow for authenticity of findings on the sites, it was important to avoid assumptions about potential encounters and responses on the sites. In order to ensure minimum assumption and maximum authenticity throughout the processes of data collection and analysis, Krathwohl’s (2006) list of qualitative coding and Turner’s (1981) accounts on coding procedure with a focus on grounded theory served as guidelines in the design of the coding and analysis process.
Being an inductive method leading to theoretical discoveries based on empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), grounded theory in this research is used to define the topics and issues that are derived throughout the empirical studies. With the use of this method, the interpretations of empirical data determine the aspects of the intellectual framework drawn in Chapter II that are explored throughout the case study in Athens as presented from Chapter V to VII.

4.6.2. The analysis of fieldnotes

The first step in the analysis of the fieldnotes was to merge all the notes in a single document in chronological order. I then undertook multiple layers of coding. These consisted of thematic coding where I identified recurrent themes and parallels across various observations. Another layer of coding was based on the scope of the content as (1) physical and spacial descriptions of sites and the buildings, (2) my encounters with people in particular settings (3) my reflections on the events and activities I took part in or observed.

The patterns that emerged throughout my analysis of fieldworks, together with the interviews prepared the grounds for the assemblages that informed the empirical chapters in this thesis and the mapping practices, which are elaborated further in section 4.10.

4.6.3. The analysis of interviews

I conducted the interviews in this research as semi-structured and unstructured qualitative interviews undertaken in conversational manner with ten people, seven of which were audio-recorded. I then transcribed and coded the audio recordings. During the conversational interviews, I asked the interviewees about their journeys, daily routines and activities in the sites they engage with, their feelings about the housing units/shelters they are accommodated in, other spaces they do or do not use and their feelings about them, and other matters they would like to share about their experience. I intended these interviews to take the form of “creative interviewing” (Douglas 1985, p. 22) as the situatedness of the conversations was important for the purposes of my research. Following this approach, I
omitted a detailed pre-determination of the ways in which the interviews are conducted (Douglas 1985, p. 22). I undertook the interviews after a period of participatory observation in order to allow for a degree of “immersion,” as Douglas (1985), the author of the book *Creative Interviewing* calls it, which entails “de-focusing” from what one assumes before direct experience (p. 12). Such sequential decision is expected to increase the familiarity of the researcher with the situation before having relatively focused conversations. I deemed it important that the people voluntarily choose to participate in these conversations, and although I sufficiently informed them about the research and how the interviews would be used, I observed to maintain the most comfortable conditions for the participants of my study. The interviewees are adults who vary in their age, gender and ethnicity, all interviewees being above 18 years-old. The interviews are voice-recorded and transcribed for interpretive analysis.

**4.7. My positionality as a researcher**

Being a Turkish woman researcher dressing according to the Islamic dress code and making a PhD at a UK university, I assumed a particular positionality throughout my research. Reflecting on some aspects of my positionality was significant to illuminate the particularities of the encounters throughout my fieldtrips. In this section, I reflect on some of my assumptions with regards to the impacts of my identity which turned out to be incorrect, and other observations in relation to my perceived identity in Athens:

At most places I visited and spent time around in Athens during my fieldtrips, most of the displaced people had come from Muslim countries. As a result of this, I assumed that my Muslim identity would make it easier to establish sense of trust with people and therefore, that it would be easier to participate in the activities they are involved with and to communicate with them. Although it is not possible to determine to what extent this was the case, as the consequences of otherwise cannot be tested, there have been situations where it was possible to surmise the impact of my religious identity. The three different
neighbourhoods I resided in during my stays in Athens were those where many students and immigrants resided, therefore, had a level of diversity. My experience in each of them, as well as in the sites of my studies varied and are not unified.

I had a chance to talk easily to some Muslim women just by approaching them and initiating conversation at community activities. It was especially helpful that I have some basic knowledge of their native language (i.e. Persian). My Turkish identity turned out to be particularly intriguing to many people, as they had spent some time in Turkey before they moved to Greece, and some of them had a good command of Turkish. Many people started speaking in Turkish with me once they knew I was Turkish, and some said they could not improve their Turkish whilst in Turkey because they mostly worked and lived with other immigrants and barely had the need to learn Turkish. Most often, the younger the person, the more proficient they were in Turkish. I reflected further on multiple aspects of my positionality in Conclusion chapter under section 9.2.

4.8. Ethical issues

The case studies are undertaken with the consent of the ethical committee of University of Edinburgh. In this section, I detail the ways in which ethical concerns are approached in the undertaking of this study. Some of the ethical concerns are embedded in the theoretical approach presented in Chapter I as they have been part of the theoretical framework that underpinned this research, however, I present in this section further ethical concerns that have informed certain aspects of the methodology.

Throughout my interactions among researchers of forced migration\textsuperscript{13}, contemporary issues with regards to the researchers’ and refugees’ interaction, mental health, and other practical

\textsuperscript{13} This research has been informed by on-going discussions on working with refugees. This includes participation in the activities across Scotland where practitioners and scholars gather to discuss the
and ethical concerns are addressed, as well as broader issues that would improve studies about forced displacement. The ethical issues considered throughout this dissertation are informed by but not limited to these particular discussions on the topic. In what follows, I will outline some ethical decisions that are taken throughout the design of the case study. The seven interviews were undertaken upon receiving written informed consent from the research participants. An information sheet was prepared to outline the research and presented to the interviewee/participants, and read to the participants when necessary. However, consent is understood in broader terms in this research rather than merely as a formal process at the beginning of the research. As Miller and Bell (2012) emphasized in their work on the ethical issues around 'informed' consent, it is given importance that consent is sought for in an ongoing basis throughout the research for the interest of the participants. Some of the research participants fall into the category of vulnerable people for being potentially emotionally affected by the conditions this research addresses. The privacy and confidentiality of these participants are respected, and subjects are not identified throughout the dissertation. Pseudonyms are used for quoting the interviews.

This research is also informed by previous experiences of researchers who conducted ethnographic fieldwork in areas with socially sensitive conditions. Explaining the dilemmas regarding his fieldwork as a “first-time researcher” in a divided society, Ioannis Armakolas (2001) points out an issue concerning the products of his research presumably not being in line with the expectation of the participants as to what she would make out of their declarations for her conclusions. Throughout the analysis of data, I put maximum effort in staying true to the findings while also not causing suspicion or distrust of the participants. I

issues around making research on forced displacement, as well as the practical difficulties and ethical concerns about such research mainly through my engagement with the activities of Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network (GramNET). Based in the University of Glasgow, the formation facilitates events where researchers present work and initiate conversations around theoretical and practical concerns regarding working with refugees through various events and activities. This included the presentations and workshops in refugee weeks undertaken each year in Scotland, mainly around Glasgow and Edinburgh.
achieved this through making overt research which entailed being transparent about my position as a researcher and the scope of my research, the design of the consent form (Appendix B.1) and omitting the share of sensitive/personal information on various occasions.

4.9. Methodological opportunities, challenges & limitations

I conducted three fieldtrips to Athens from November 2018 to June 2019 which consisted of six weeks of presence on the physical site. The duration of my visits to Athens was bounded both by logistical and financial limitations concerning my travels. These included the requirements of my student visa that restricted my mobility outside United Kingdom during my residence in the country. The duration of my visits to Athens is considerably shorter than conventional ethnographic research which is usually undertaken over a longer course of time ranging from a few months to years. Therefore, I gathered data in Athens through an intensive engagement with people and activities regarding my research, and my fieldwork was on-going in a digital form in between and after my visits to Athens. My data gathering process and fieldwork, therefore, were informed both by physical and digital research and encounters that fed each other. Social media was widely used in the announcement of news, publication of reports and sharing activities by initiatives and other formations that work with/for refugees. Following up the activities of people and organisations through media, therefore, became a fundamental part of the fieldwork I undertook.

4.9.1. Issues on language

A prominent concern for my fieldwork on a multinational geography has been language. I undertook most of my interviews in English, however, having Turkish as my native language proved to be useful throughout my fieldtrips. I had conversations with people whose native language differed. These included Greek, English, Arabic, Farsi and Kurdish. Many people I talked to, especially those coming from Syria, Kurdistan and Afghanistan had learnt Turkish to a sufficient degree to be able to hold a simple conversation. Some people who spoke
Turkish with me explained to me that they learned Turkish while living and working in Turkey for durations that ranged from a few months to a few years, before they arrived in Greece.

In addition to Turkish and English which I am proficient at, I had a basic knowledge of Farsi and Arabic languages. Especially Farsi proved useful in getting in touch with people from Iran and Afghanistan, who started to talk to me once they knew I spoke Farsi even though it was on a basic level. It was especially easy to talk to children who often spoke Turkish better than their parents. Several children of school age also spoke Greek and English easily.

Despite these advantages of having knowledge of a few languages spoken by the people I encountered to a certain extent, my level of knowledge of their native language and their knowledge of Turkish or English did not often allow deeper conversations to take place. Also, I was not able to keep conversation with many people as they did not feel comfortable speaking in English. It seemed possible to gain more insight into the lived experiences of people in Athens if I could communicate myself to them in their native language, and I could potentially reach more people this way. The range of languages and my command of them, therefore, proved to be useful in some cases and limiting in others, in relation to whom I could communicate with.

4.9.2. Issues on accessibility and recording

Due to factors including those that are administrative, ethical, physical and temporal; I encountered various difficulties across sites of my fieldwork with regards to access and recording. The government-led camps (accommodation facilities) required a completion of a form which asks for the details of the research, number of people contacted etc., also by stating no voice or visual recording is permitted. Some of the informal settings where refugees are accommodated had partial access and some did not allow researchers to access the buildings or talk to the people who live inside. The accessibility of the activity and
community centres differed from one to another. It was possible in some centres to have
direct connection with people who use the facilities whereas in others there was clearer
hierarchy and it was necessary for staff or managers to have the mediator role and facilitate
communication between the users and I.

Among the government-led refugee camps, I attempted to visit Schisto Refugee Camp
twice—during my second and third fieldtrips. In my first attempt to contact the administration, I
did not receive any response from the authorities. The second time I contacted the
administration with a proof of evidence from the university regarding the aim and scope of
my research, I received a response including a series of questions and a document request.
I was informed by the administration that in the possibility of conducting a research in the
setting, I would not be allowed to take photos or make audio recording.

The main drawback of the restrictions and formalities regarding my access to and research
into some refugee camps was their contradiction to my methodological approach which
required a level of flexibility to be informed by the site and my encounters with people.
Rather than imposing a project, questionnaires or surveys upon the residents, I wanted to
build a rapport first, observe the site and listen to what people had to say. Besides, it was
unclear whose interest the restrictions served. In order to stay true to the motivations and
objectives of this research, I decided not to follow the procedures that would grant me
access to the camps in the terms of their management. Despite difficulties with Schisto
Refugee Camp which is located outside central Athens as I mentioned, I had an easy access
to Eleonas Refugee Camp. I visited the camp twice during my second and the third fieldtrips.
I took fieldnotes and made an elevation sketch of the container where the resident I was
visiting lived in.

Recording in the context of forced migration is a substantial issue which has a bearing on
ethical and political concerns. The particularities of recording in the context of this research
informs the representation techniques experimented throughout this research which constitutes a substantial part of the methodology that has been developed. These challenged informed my experimentations with the possibilities of spatial representation in line with its ethical concerns and objectives of challenging the boundaries of conventional practices of architectural representation.

The methodology of this research is informed by the theoretical approaches towards forced migration that I outlined in the previous chapters, which aim to defy presumptions about the field, encounters and the collection of data. In line with this approach, the thread of the ethnographic activities unfolded during the undertaking of the research. This resulted in different modes of note taking and recording throughout. The fields of study showed varied characteristics in terms of their physical accessibility, availability and modes of recording, and the scope of conversations with human agents on the field. This aspect of the methodology relates closely to the temporariness and immediacy of the situations I encountered, which I reflect on in the following section, 4.9.3.

4.9.3. Temporariness/immediacy of the situations

Throughout my fieldwork on the site and the preparation of this dissertation, there have been numerous changes which affected the living conditions and experiences of forcibly displaced people and of those who work with them. The Greek Government and international organisations such as the UN introduced new housing schemes and policies to manage the crises, some of which were short-lived such as the ESTIA housing scheme. The scale of such changes differed ranging from Athens, Greece, to Europe and other geographies around the world that have been affected by forced migration. On a more local level; the lifespan and success of grassroots and other voluntary organisations in Athens varied. In a climate where there have been rapid changes, unforeseen circumstances and consequences of local to governmental and international interventions, this research catches
glimpses of experiences acknowledging such occurrences as architecturally relevant moments of history that otherwise miss attention due to potential lack of permanent physical manifestation of these that can be accounted for as part of historical evidence.

4.10. (Re)Presentation of the case study

The methodological framework in this thesis is not only informed by a critical approach towards how the data is collected and analysed in the study of a city in relation to forced migration, but also how it is represented. As Law (2004) suggests, the methods are not only tools to describe realities but they also create realities. This necessitates an interpretation of the components I studied in my investigations of forced migration in Athens on multiple levels. Building on the feminist trajectories and the multi-sited ethnographic methods I presented early in this chapter, I reflect in this section on how I consider ‘elements’ of my spatial investigation throughout the case study and its (re)presentation. Firstly, I interrogate ways to approach ‘the social’ component of my case study in relation to the city and city experience. Secondly, I elaborate on how multiple components of the study; the sites, people, stories, places and activities are elaborated and (re)presented in the three following chapters on my case study in Athens.

My approach towards the social component in my research has its foundation in Latour’s (2005) Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), which inspired scholars to examine social situations as part of network of relationships. Although this was a step towards a strand of scholarship built upon ANT and its criticism suggest ways of examining social situations beyond as a network. Ingold (2008)’s critique of Latour’s, for example, proposes “Skilled Practice Involves Developmentally Embodied Responsiveness” (SPIDER) as an alternative approach to ANT (p. 215). This approach opposes the tendencies to reduce ‘things’ to mere objects or entities of the same sort, while acknowledging the vitality of every condition that results in the agency of certain things (e.g. humans and non-humans withintentive characteristics) as
relevant for facilitating presence and action of the agents, but not necessarily as agents themselves that ‘act’. He suggests the use of ‘thing’ as a concept as opposed to ‘object’, the latter of which he claims to attribute an autonomous entity to everything that is considered to be part of the network, that is, “a closed-in, self-contained object that is set over against other objects with which it may then be juxtaposed or conjoined” (p. 211-212). Instead of a “network of objects”, he proposes to look at the relationships with an understanding of “meshwork” which takes into account the environmental conditions and things that facilitate any agent to act (Ingold, 2012). A significant consequence of putting forward the idea of a ‘meshwork’ against ‘network’ is acknowledging the agents and the (social) situations as being embodied and developed in particular settings in which the agents behave and act in a certain way. It points at the insufficiency of laboratory situations in accounting for social situations, as such approaches might be successful in bringing together selected agents, but would fail to account for the ‘meshwork’ in which situations arise.

While meshwork considers ‘things’ beyond objectified entities and reinstates them as embedded in particular conditions, ‘assemblage,’ as a deleuzoguattarian concept suggests possibilities to rethink how things come together (Deleuze, & Guattari, 1987). Introducing the term at the opening of A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe the book itself as an ‘assemblage’ that consists of diverse parts which move beyond subject and object dichotomy. The concept, developed in different ways in the chapters “Geology of Morals” and “Postulates of Knowledge” in A Thousand Plateaus, inspired architectural studies through its different readings alongside other disciplines in social science and humanities. Reflecting on its uses across disciplines, Anderson and McFarlane (2011) identify common themes of its use in geographical accounts such as “emergence, multiplicity and indeterminacy,” suggesting that the concept “connects to a wider redefinition of the socio-spatial in terms of the composition of diverse elements into some form of provisional socio-spatial formation” (2011, p. 124). In line with this interpretation of the concept ‘assemblage’, the first part of case study in this thesis is structured into two chapters,
Chapter V and VI, formed as assemblages. The composition of elements in each assemblage/chapter is unique, and resulted from analyses, and reassembly of data gathered throughout fieldwork in/on Athens, Greece not only for their categorical content (e.g. the refugee camp) but also other relationships to humans, activities and other sites that unfold throughout data analysis which are explained further in these chapters. Reconstructing the case study in the form of assemblages in Chapter V and VI provide a focused presentation of selected notes for their socio-spatial connectivities that are revealed throughout my engagement with people and the sites. These assemblages pertain to my presence on the sites in particular, mediated through my fieldnotes, interaction with people and visual documentation. This way, their (re)presentation is directly informed by my embodied experiences and interactions with the situation through fieldwork.

More specifically, Chapter V and Chapter VI are presented as assemblages that unfold throughout my fieldtrips through organisation of the textual bodies and mapping practices that accompany the texts. Mapping practices unfold ‘things’—the diverse but interconnected elements—in forms of assemblages and account for buildings, physical sites, human agents, regular and special events, among others (see Figure 4.3). The relationship of these ‘things’ are only left to unfold throughout my direct or mediated engagement with them (e.g. through participation or interviews).
Figure 4.4: A mapping exercise exploring Athens as an assemblage produced by the author based on fieldwork (across pages)
Chapter VII is presented in a slightly different manner: In line with the diverse forms of accommodation in Athens inhabited by forcibly displaced people, this chapter investigates a series of housing types presented in the formats that depend on my interaction with these sites and people who engage with them, and focus on expanding a notion of ‘shelter’ towards ‘home’ with a particular focus on dwelling sites connecting back to my discussion in Chapter II on shelter/house/home. Chapters V and VI therefore zoom in to the selected nodes for their socio-spatial connectivities, while Chapter VII zooms out to extract different typologies of accommodation across Athens that I encountered throughout my fieldwork. While the former constructs places of refuge as assemblages rather than self-sufficient categories, the latter draws upon the multiplicities of accommodation for forcibly displaced people in urban Athens and outskirts of the city, through which various assemblages may emerge within particular timeframes\(^\text{14}\).

4.11. Conclusion

In this chapter, I began to build up the methodology that informs the case study presented from Chapter V to VII. Firstly, I presented my motivations in pursuing particular approaches with a focus on the intersection of feminist approaches and architecture, followed by my use of multi-sited ethnographic methods. I then reflected briefly on the particular elements that framed the case study by introducing the specific aspects and conditions of the site. In the following sections, I detailed my methods for data collection and analyses of the case study. In the following sections, I reflected on my positionality, ethical issues that are relevant to studying forced migration on site, and the challenges and limitations regarding the methodology. Finally, I elaborated on how the methodological approach inform the (re)presentation of the case study in the empirical chapters from Chapter V to VII.

\(^{14}\) Further reflection on the temporality of these accommodation types can be found in the Chapter IX in light of political shifts and the pandemic in 2020.
Chapter V: Creativity at Home–Incomplete spaces

I am around Eleonas Camp. The main thing here is that it is dusty. Very dusty. It is industrial, lorries keep coming and going. Not pleasant to walk, not pleasant to stand. And it is very hot. I am the only person standing. The motorbike cyclers, drivers look a bit puzzled to see me standing here getting busy with my phone. Because everyone is on the move. This is not a place to stand.

12 June 2019, Fieldnotes, Athens
5.1. Introduction

As presented in Chapter IV, I obtained a list of initiatives working with refugees in Athens prior to my visits in order to start exploring the landscape of forced migration in the city. Identifying the particular sites of visit, however, was part of the ethnographic work I undertook on the site. This consisted of multiple conversations with initial contacts and new contacts that I made during my fieldwork. Determining sites of visits upon these conversations revealed connections among various sites, initiatives and activities that were not possible to detect from the lists and official documents.

In November 2018, I made my first ever visit to Athens to explore the city's life amid migratory flows as part of this project. I had spent most of my life in Turkey, the neighbouring country and my hometown, but I was living in the UK for my PhD project when I flew to Greece. Despite my poor knowledge of Greek, I was still familiar with several aspects of the city life, climate and food culture for its geographical proximity to my hometown. I spent a lot of time walking around Athens, developing a spatial memory of the places I visited repeatedly and the routes I took. Not being able to rely on my knowledge of Greek letters, I relied on my spatial memory to manage several visits a day to different venues.

Among those, one was exceptionally distant from any central venues I visited. This was the ANKAA Project, located in an industrial site close to Eleonas Refugee Camp. This chapter reveals connections among ANKAA Project, Eleonas Refugee Camp and KHORA Project. While ANKAA Project and Eleonas Refugee Camp are located in Botanikos, to the west of Athens, KHORA Project is located in Exarcheia in central Athens. These sites do not present a categorical connection, but are connected through people who engage with these sites and their activities which are revealed throughout my conversations and interviews with them. Bringing these sites together, this chapter aims to highlight some hidden aspects of the city experience and architectures across Athens.
The analyses and discussion in this chapter are based on a cross-working of fieldnotes, interviews and visual documentation. The sites were explored through 1) the analyses of the fieldnotes that were produced during several visits, engagement with activities that took place in those sites, 2) conversing with and interviewing people who engage with the sites.

5.2. A workshop in the being: ANKAA – ScrapCoop

I went to ScrapCoop today at 14.00. I took the metro to get there, and after I got off the metro, I had 16 minutes of walk to ScrapCoop. I got off at Kerameikos metro station, which was only one before Eleonas, which was apparently very close. And walking to ScrapCoop in fact was more difficult for me than to walk to Eleonas - something I did the last time I was in Athens. There were no pavements at some moments along the way, and I had to walk on the road which was pretty busy with cars but mostly lorries, and I got one or two horns bumped at me. After a not-so-pleasant walk on the dusty road, with industrial places around me, I arrived at Dimaraki street. As I walked down the street, I didn’t know exactly which building I should expect to see, and hesitated at a few places until I saw a man entering a building, which I thought might be the one, for some reason. And then I saw the label ANKAA on the door, and a lovely front garden, which convinced me that that was the place I was looking for.

Fieldnotes, 10 Jun 2019

While I was having conversations with volunteers in central Athens, I was repeatedly referred to ANKAA Project and ScrapCoop. Many initiatives in Athens were formed by the international activists who came to Greece upon the closure of the Macedonian borders to help aid refugees who stuck in the camps in poor conditions. P9, one of the founders of the ANKAA Project in Athens came from Luxemburg in 2016 and explains how she started her journey in Greece:

We were four people that just had a crazy idea, we collected – my house became a warehouse, we collected many things in Luxembourg, we filled up two vans and we just came for private people for ourselves and went to Idomeni. That was the first one. After that, I became a volunteer with a small Luxembourgish non-profit, which was not doing projects by themselves but basically collaborating with other NGOs or groups in Greece or whatever in Europe. So I was volunteering with them for a while. And in Kios, I was volunteering as well with a small group which is called ‘Kios Eastern Shore Response Team’ which was not an official NGO, not an official non-profit, it was just a group of people but now I think they became a non-profit, so – " (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).
Throughout my interviews with the members of relevant initiatives in Athens, Greece, it emerged that it has been common for Greek and international volunteers to have worked across camps to then start long-term projects in the mainland Greece. Among the participants of my study, Elisa and P6, who have been based in Greece and are currently working with different organisations in Athens, also started their journey by participating in the activities around camps before they were involved in long-term projects in the mainland. Providing them with the familiarity to what people go through upon their arrival to the country, working in dire conditions and with a cultural diversity, the work on borders prepare prepares the volunteers a ground to build for their endeavours in the camps, but it is fundamentally different than the work in the mainland in certain ways. P9 explains how she worked with a group of volunteers called Kios Eastern Shore Response, and the activities she undertook during that time:

> They weren’t anything but all the island knew them and basically we were in charge of the boat landings, so because I was there for quite long, I became a coordinator on the islands so I had to phone 24 hours a day, so I was the person that got phone calls from the coast guards, or from whoever that there was a boat and I had to organise the people to come and deliver the first aid to people. And working in the camps and whatever, doing like many other things as well (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

During my conversations with people in Athens who had an experience in volunteering in camps, two main factors emerged as reasons to leave the borders and start long-term projects in the mainland: 1) The negative psychological effects of working on the borders for a long time by being exposed to traumatic events and overwhelming work, 2) a realisation of the necessity to build long-term projects for people who make their way to the mainland. P9 also mentions these reasons explaining why she wanted to move on to a long-term project, instead of continuing to undertake activities on border:

> While we were there, we realised that all this is just an emergency response and it’s not a long term solution and also because we got really damaged by the island as well, we decided to leave and to kind of start something in Athens because Athens is more like the place where people stay, it’s not so much a transit place, to kind of do a long term project (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).
The following procedure to start an initiative entails work towards understanding the present situation in the city including the needs of people it would serve, the possibilities and logistics surrounding the foundation and running of the initiative. In the case of ANKAA, this consisted of a prior research of six months, choosing and renovating the building to work in, and undertaking pilot classes (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

The Building

When I entered the building through the glass doors, I saw a few people at the reception. A girl asked me which language I spoke, I said Turkish and she asked P8 to deal with me, assuming I came to register for the classes. P8 knows a bit of Turkish and lots of English, so as soon as he realised I knew English, we started speaking in English. I told him that I was a researcher and that I was interested in knowing what they were doing here, and how the building operates […].

While we were sitting on the lounge, I asked him about the furniture on the lounge as well as the little garden on the outside. He told me with a smile that he was involved in with most of the work outside, as well as the making of the furniture in the lounge.

At the reception, there was also an Afghan person, who lived in Bagcilar, Istanbul for a while, with whom I had a small chat. He explained to me how difficult it was for him to pass to Greece from Turkey. He tried on the land and was rejected 5 times, and 6 times on the island but he kept trying. He was then given a relatively short time for the interview and he got his papers 11 days after his interview to come to Athens. He is right now living in a proper flat in Athens.

Fieldnotes, 10 Jun 2019
The building in which ANKAA runs its activities with ScrapCoop, a smaller initiative that operates in conjunction with ANKAA, is located in an industrial site at a walking distance to Eleonas Refugee Camp. It is a multi-storey building (Figure 5.1) consisting of a large workshop with equipment for crafts including metal work, carpentry and jewellery making. The building is used to run classes including crafts like painting, tailoring, photography, metal work together with language classes which are listed at the entrance of the building (Figure 5.2 & 3). The building was acquired in April 2018, and the first classes were started to be given by September 2018 (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

The classes depend on the availability of volunteers who could instruct the participants, and therefore, not all classes run at all times. The teachers of the classes are international volunteers including refugees. The classes are available for everyone, however, due to limited quota, some people have to be registered to the waiting list to attend classes in the following rounds. By the time I visited ANKAA, there were several classes running, others stalled due to lack of volunteers (Figure 5.4). Language courses and the workshop were on
high demand. P9 says that the language courses run four days a week, which is too frequent to be feasible for some and resulted in withdrawal of many students who are unable to attend regularly. Workshop, on the other hand, seem to be on demand but the quota is more limited compared to the language courses, and not all who want to join are able to do so (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

Figure 5.4: A Notice on a board at the entrance of ANKAA, photo by the author

The vast building has a barber shop (Figure 5.5), a tailor’s room and an IT room on the first floor, with several classrooms and a kitchen on the upper floor (Figure 5.6-9).

Figure 5.5: The Barber on the first floor of ANKAA, photo by the author
The workshop, which is used by ScrapCoop and accessed through a garage door, constitutes a distinguishing feature for the space, offering a vast area to engage in production. While I was visiting the building, the door was open and several people were coming in and out. The ground floor is where heavy machines and equipment for metal and wood work are located (Figure 5.10). The space is mostly left naked with few interventions except for provision of necessary surfaces and tools.
The mezzanine floor, accessed through wooden stairs (Figure 5.8), is split into three parts with only the middle part having a specified purpose, being dedicated to finer crafts such as jewellery making (Figure 5.11 & 12).

Figure 5.10: The ground floor of the workshop at ANKAA building, photos by the author

Figure 5.11 & 12: The stairs to mezzanine floor & the mezzanine floor with the metal workshop underneath, photos by the author
Both the main building and the workshop had an unfinished feeling to them due to the minimal intervention to the building structure and some spaces within which were yet to be prepared for new functions. Despite its state of being in progress, the workshop was largely active during the day with people producing some work and projects (Figure 5.13 & 14). During my visit to the building, some members of the ScrapCoop finalised a birdhouse, which they started to build from scratch a few days ago (Figure 5.15 & 16).

The interior partitioning, boards and several other elements were also produced in the workshop (Figure 5.17). Some of these items were being used in other spaces of ANKAA.
outside the workshop. Some of the items produced in the workshop were exhibited by a wall painted in green, alongside a timetable for the use of the workshop (Figure 5.18 & 19).

![Image](image1.png)

Figure 5.17: Information boards prepared in the workshop to be used in the building, photo by the author

![Image](image2.png)

Figure 5.18 & 19: Crafted items display at the workshop, photos by the author

The building is filled with furniture built up in the workshop by the participants of ScrapCoop (Figures 5.20-24). In one of our conversation, a member of ScrapCoop team told me that the materials are in fact scrap materials found at various places in the neighbourhood and around the city.
Figure 5.20: The Lounge of ANKAA with a view of the garden, photo by the author

Figure 5.21: A close-up to the furniture in lounge at ANKAA, photo by the author

Figure 5.22, 23 & 24: Furniture built in the workshop at various places in ANKAA building, photos by the author
At the time of my visit, there were women who participated in classes that were being undertaken outside the workshop. However, there have not been any females working in the workshop other than people who helped running the initiative. When I asked about the participation of women in the space, one of the female volunteers told me that this has been a concern, and that they wanted to encourage the participation of women which turned out to be difficult to do. There is effort to challenge a conception of the space as a place for men only, which manifested as plates of ‘equality’ hung around various places within the workshop (Figure 5.25 & 26). There are, however, restrictions which have effects on the profile of people who could use the space. Due to security concerns, only people of age 16 and above are permitted access to the space. This causes especially women with children to withdraw, and result in a lack of gender balance in terms of the use of space. P8 mentions women coming and asking if they were allowed to bring their children, who decided not to come once they received a negative response (personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

The workshop, which presented itself as a work in progress, provided opportunities for its participants to both teach various skills and produce their own work, some of which became part of the space itself. This allowed the participants to create a space that they could furnish and modify to make their own, and it served as an alternative venue where the restrictions of camps and squats did not apply. However, the agendas of the volunteers did not always align with the way the space was used. This was particularly noticeable in the use of the workshop, where courses offered upstairs were in high demand among both men and women, but the workshop itself was dominated by men, with only women working in the workshop being the volunteers themselves.
Figure 5.25 & 26: The notices on a board at the workshop in ANKAA building encouraging gender equality in the use of space, photos by the author
On Location

ANKAA building is located on Dimaraki Road on the west end of Athens, which connects to the Agiou Polikarpou Road on the north. Eleonas Refugee Camp is situated on Agiou Polikarpou Road, with an approximately 650 meter distance from ANKAA building (Figure 5.27). ANKAA building has been distinctive for its location compared to the rest of the initiatives I visited, being considerably distant from the city centre where most initiatives were located.

During my visit to the building, I had conversations with the founding member of the initiative, P9 from Luxemburg, and a member of the group, P8 from Syria. P8 lives in Eleonas Refugee Camp and works at ANKAA building during the day (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019). Both P9 and P8 reflected on the location of the building during our conversation. First, we talked with P9 about how the place was determined and why the particular building was found appropriate. Explaining how they chose the place, P9 says that they wanted to have a place that is “neutral”: “We didn't want to be in Exarcheia for example,
we didn’t want to be in an area that is political or in any area where there is prostitution or drug consume, or whatever” (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

Exarcheia, as explained in detail in Chapter II, is a neighbourhood which hosts activities of several political groups, most of which are aligned with anarchist or leftist approaches. Upon the so-called refugee crisis, numerous initiatives have incorporated issues related to the problems newcomers face upon arriving to Athens, and new formations emerged in the neighbourhood. Unlike the political motivations that drive many initiatives in Exarcheia, P9’s explanation suggests that the agenda of ANKAA is not so much driven by expression or a demonstration of a particular political ideology. Instead of situating it in such a politically charged neighbourhood, then, the founders chose a location that is far from such central neighbourhoods. The building of ANKAA is located close to Eleonas Refugee Camp. Despite being one of the refugee camps closest to the centre, Eleonas is located near the motorway in an industrial zone and the ANKAA building is within the same industrial zone. One of the reasons P9 states for their choice is related to the building itself, the second is about its particular location outside the city:

First reason; we liked the building. It was big and it was suitable for what we wanted to do. […] There is many projects in the city and there is nothing really a bit closer to the camps, so to Eleonas and Skaramagas, this is much closer so it’s kind of a compromise between the city and the camps (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

The choice of the particular area is also related to the ‘noisy’ activities that were anticipated to be undertaken in the building, especially in and around the workshop – and the consequences of this in the city was a matter of concern:

[…] we didn’t want to have trouble with the neighbours as well. We make a lot of noise, we have the workshops and all this, we make a lot of noise there’s a lot of people coming in and out. This is kind of an industrial area so people don't complain (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

Despite being distant from the city centre, the building is not isolated from a surrounding underpinned by human activity. The building has a front yard of few meters of its own, but is
adjacent and in close vicinity to several other buildings. For the initiatives I visited in the city centre, their location, use and activities resulted in both anticipated and unforeseen impact on relationship with neighbours – including their participation and complaints in particular cases. According to P9’s elaboration on their interaction with neighbours, it appears to be limited but pleasant – and not isolated:

[…] we also try to have good relations with our neighbours, like there is a market just at the front, we go and buy the tea and the sugar and this kind of things there, then the other two neighbours we always speak to them, we try to keep a good relationship with some of the neighbours to kind of – most of the neighbours are here just like in the morning until early afternoon and then everything is closed anyway. So until now we have never had an issue with anybody […] also I think the students never had a problem (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

P8’s statements also demonstrate contentment with the location of the building on the grounds of the use of space and the activities that are being undertaken within:

[…] It’s actually better even than centre of Athens. There is workshop, lot of people, noisy things… This area is factory here, so it’s good. Nobody will see ten person walk in the street and say, ‘what are these guys doing here’? That’s normal here. So I think here, this place is better (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

Despite being more distant from the city centre than many other initiatives run for and by refugees, the people who join classes come from various places around the city. This includes different refugee camps in and around Athens along with formal and informal accommodation within the city centre. P9 is convinced that a level of compromise in terms of distance is worth the consequences: “OK, it’s not the nicest area but it’s working well for us and also people who really want to come will make the way because everybody say ‘oh, it’s so far’ it’s not far, it’s 20 min bus drive from Omonia” (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

When I asked P8 about his thoughts with regards to the location of the building, he said that the building was not distant from city centre nor difficult to access. (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019). Our conversation with P8 on distance developed for the most part intertwined with his reflection on time. He suggested that there was a difference
between the lives of the refugees in Athens and the others who live in the city. He said that people in Athens were very busy and that “every minute is counted” (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019). The situation was different for the refugees, however, as they could spend one hour also by laying down in the bed, and they did not have time restrictions (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019). On the grounds that the building was not substantially distant from the city centre and the refugees had free time during the day, he did not think that time and distance would be a problem if people were willing to participate:

Well, we are not living in desert, there is a metro and bus everywhere. It’s not so far from any place in Athens. If I want to come here and learn English, I can cut two hours from my day, my empty day – my empty day for hours. It’s easy. I mean for us, for refugee. Not other people maybe have problem for time (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

P8 also pointed out the differences regarding what is acceptable in terms of ‘being late’ in Athens and he suggested that it was normal to be late for an hour in Syria where he came from:

Because we don’t have like–you will not arrive at time–there is always traffic in the street, everything makes you late. Everything. Really, if you take appointment and go in the city, you have to count before four hours because traffic sometimes--sometimes the police just stop on the street and for no reason. And you are late for one hour […] yeah, it’s normal to be late. (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

The conception of time in different cultures came up also during our conversation with P9. The classes are run by international volunteers and while different backgrounds and expertise of each teacher enrich the exchange of knowledge, cultural differences seem to create tension at times within the organisation. P8's mention of cultural differences in the perception of time also highlights the potential for conflict and misunderstandings within the organization, particularly given the diverse backgrounds of the volunteers and participants. This may be due to differing cultural expectations around punctuality and the value placed on time, which can create tension within the space.
More on peopled processes

Similar to the many initiatives started within the city by people who worked on the borders of Greece before, ANKAA was set up with a goal to have a long-term impact. Within the foundation, refugees take an active role both in managing everyday tasks, which consist largely in registers and admission of students, and knowledge exchange through teaching. P9 explains that perceiving refugees as active agents rather than as passive receivers is a priority within the foundation, which would give them both opportunities to share and responsibilities and criticises an attitude in which refugees are treated as “victims”:

A lot of people talk about integration, inclusion but unfortunately we’ve got this habit to treat people as victims. They are victims, we don't have to talk about this, we don't even have to discuss this topic. But I will still not treat you as a victim. I want to treat you as a human being that has strength and weaknesses. And because I want to consider you like this, I want to give you all the normal things that are in this society, some kind of rules, some kind of structure in time, or for example, when it’s a national holiday, we close, it’s a national holiday, we don't have to work seven days a week just because we are an NGO and you are a poor refugee, you know we just want to give back something to people that is normal, everyday, with a kind of structure with kind of the rules that this society has as well. It’s very basic small things but people underestimate how important this is (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

The point in the above statement regarding the take on the agency of the refugees is connected to the reflections of other participants, where they raised concerns about hindering the development of independence of the forcibly displaced people by the act of giving in the form of mere provision:

...I think this is one of the biggest mistakes we made at the beginning – is to give so much without any rule any structure, anything, we make people so dependent on us, and now we have to pay for the consequences that we have actually kind of created. It’s not easy (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

P9 complains about a trend she considers prevalent in which people are treated as if they do not possess skills that they brought with them from their countries and that their potentials for contribution is largely neglected:

You might be an electrician in your country. You might have been a carpenter in your country, whatever. So when you are living in your country, your society, you as a person, you are like a puzzle. And in your society, you had all these pieces of the
puzzle. But when you left, because you were forced to leave, when you left you kind of lost some pieces on the way. Is it language, because you entered a new society and you don't have the piece of the language here or is it – I cannot use a computer because in this society I actually need to use the computer for nearly everything – so some pieces are gone. But some pieces are still there of the puzzle. It is not that everything is gone (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

P9 explains that this has been an important aspect of their approach in the space, and that they try to foster the skills people already have and encourage them to make use of those skills either by producing or teaching in the centre:

So what we want to do is actually value person in the strengths, in the skills – for example you have a carpenter – like he is really good in woodwork. OK, come to the workshop, create your own things, or teach people how to do things, this empowers you – and at the same time, got to the Greek class, or to the CV writing class, or to the computer class to actually get the skills that you miss to enter the labour market here. So that at the end you have again all the pieces of the puzzle to actually enter the labour market and the society. OK, I will not promise you a job at the end of the journey but your chances for an opportunity get much higher (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

During our conversation, P8 also elaborated on how different background and expertise of the teachers who volunteer to teach the classes in the building enriched the learning experience by giving examples:

[…] for example in workshop – the last term there is a professional teacher, […] he’s a very nice guy. And he teach them the things they didn’t see it or know it before in their culture in their country. So they do as he say but now we have – for instance, the jewellery fixing, this is something – he is from Iran, he teach how to fix jewellery. This is something, he do it like he learn it in his home, not here in Greece. So that’s depend on the teacher if they do something completely new, the other student they follow him whatever they are from Africa, from Syria, from Iran, they want to learn the best way. (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

P9 also reflects on how isolation through their accommodation make it difficult for the refugees to understand and overcome the challenges of intercultural relationships, pointing out the cultural differences that cause misunderstandings. Also, she suggests that living an isolated life in the camps with limited agency causes a lack of motivation “… so many people lost their motivation because they were here for three years sitting in a container. So it’s very difficult to get these people moving but we try” (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019). She claims that the refugees do not get a chance to learn about the generally accepted rules of the societies they found themselves into. What is considered normal in their society, P9
says, can be considered rude “in Europe”, and people will not know until they are told, but they will then be considered rude by people who are not aware that they don't know these unspoken rules:

… it's very difficult if you don't have somebody to kind of guide you a little bit and they got segregated from the society in camps that are outside of the city so also they don't really connect so much with Greek people. So how should they know, how should they learn?” (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

She goes on to explain why she thinks it’s a problem to confine people into camps by providing them all the services within the confines of the camp: “so you are basically in your small Afghani, Arabic, Muslim so whatever world, but in another world” (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

Having over five years of experience in Greece, P9 herself is an international volunteer, and she acknowledges some cultural differences that proved challenging for her too. She makes further remarks on her relationship with Greece and local people, reflecting on issues such as time efficiency and her personal relations with local people:

[…] but then, there’s these days you go to the bakery and the person that works there says: ‘Hi, P9,’ and gives you coffee, offers you maybe, I don't know, a biscuit, and everybody’s so friendly. And people are outside, then there is life and this – this for example we don't have it at all in Luxemburg” (P9, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

P8, being a resident of Eleonas Refugee Camp, prefers spending his day outside the confines of the camp, learning other cultures and how to live in Greece (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019). He prefers to spend his days with the members of ANKAA instead of around the camp with other residents. He lives in a container with two more young men as himself, and when I asked P8 about how his roommates spent their days, he said he did not know what they did (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019). For P8, it seemed more important to be outside and talk to Greek people and other residents of the city rather than camp residents.
When I asked about his life in the camp and how the containers were organised, P8 told me that families did not want to live close to single young men, so their containers were distant from where families lived. Each container was separated into two rooms with a shared bathroom, and were planned to accommodate eight people maximum (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019). When I asked him how they undertook daily tasks such as shopping, P8 told me that there were no legal markets in the camp and that they needed to leave the camp for activities like shopping. However, he does not consider the ability to easily walk in and out during the day as a flexibility of movement on the grounds that not returning to the camp for more than 15 days would result in the resident losing their space, and the unoccupied space would be allocated to other people (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

Isolated as the camps are for being segregated from city life, there have been initiatives to bring in some activities and projects into those spaces. One of those initiatives was ProjectElea, which was based in Eleonas camp and undertook projects with the residents. When I asked P8 about it, he said that the project was for children and that he did not know much about it. P8 did not like to spend time in the camp or attend the gatherings, and he mentions two reasons for that. One is that he feels bossed around and being forced to do certain things by the volunteers:

[…] I always see the same two person who always organize the party and they are from the camp but always, 24 hours […] volunteer and they’re like […] a boss in the camp. The volunteer encourage […] every […]. Not people can do everything that you want. Yes. […]. So I will not go and see this two person organize this party (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

Another reason seem to be his unwillingness to attend activities with people whom he shares a sensitive condition with:

Actually, there is some – no I will not do it in the camp because we live in the same camp and we are sensitive towards each other we all refugee (sic) and everything you say or your actions become very sensitive. If I speak for example with you or someone from […] speak with me I will not be sensitive. I would not say that I don’t like to say that but when Afghani […] talk to me something (sic) I would be more
sensitive, aggressive. I don't like to say that but that's the - (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

When I asked him about what he would change about the camp for it to be better, he said “Its name is camp, so this has to change” and went on explaining that he felt controlled and isolated from people, which would also make it difficult to challenge the negative perception towards the refugees:

When you live like – I will not go to prison but in some area some specific area you have specific [...] that's control. That's what – something, and then [...] things, between to communicate with the community in Greece, that's the missing thing, important. Like, I don’t want also stay and (see my roommate from Syria - I want to see Greek people I want to [...] If they just see me in the camp they will [...] – the idea of some people like maybe dangerous people live in the camp, yeah, that’s the missing something, to live like a neighbourhood with Greek people, from other countries, it’s OK. It’s much more better. And [...] have to leave the camp if I find a job I have to leave the camp, I lost my [...] in the camp. Like the house and the support, I lost my job. I don't want to stay in the job for ten years. I have to change. Yeah, this is the – I think this is the problem not about the money or supporting, no, it’s fine. Everything is fine about these things. [...] You don't feel like, you are not part of the community or working or, I think. You just stay in the camp [...] (P8, personal communication, Jun 10, 2019).

P8’s explanations show that despite the provision of basic facilities and means in the camp, both the conception of “camp” and restrictions that surround residing in refugee camps make it futile to merely encourage activities and interaction within the camp to improve the sense of agency and connection to the communities of the countries in which refugees arrive.

ANKAA, providing an alternative space outside the camp, becomes preferable for P8 to spend time and engage in the activities of making, despite the persistent problems regarding joining labour market.

ANKAA building acts as a node on West End Athens, where volunteers and refugees from different geographies around the world, and from various parts of Athens come together to learn, share and work in a porous setting where they are encouraged to acquire responsibilities. It offers means for both an intellectual and physical activity, through which both knowledge and physical products are produced. The place is not devoid of limitations,
and despite efforts to encourage gender equality with regards to the activities, not all necessary regulations could be put in place which would take into account dependents like children. In P9’s experience, cultural differences also prove challenging while running the system, which is coupled with some participants’ previous experiences of highly restricted life conditions such as those in some refugee camps in which their sense of agency was stalled by being treated as passive receivers. Despite these limitations, the building manifests a dynamic life with many participants who interact and work together, and are willing to spend their time in this space.

As with ANKAA foundation, several initiatives I encountered throughout my fieldtrips to Athens demonstrated a dominance of North European and North American members and volunteers in initiating and undertaking the main tasks that underpin their endeavours, albeit people coming from other geographies were encouraged to participate. This sometimes resulted in a lack of communication with refugees from other parts of the world with different native languages and cultures, leading to a lack of insight into the needs and desires of the people that the initiatives were targeting.

5.3. KHORA

KHORA is one of such foundations, which has been active for a longer time than ANKAA project has. By the time I visited the foundation in June 2019, the facilities of KHORA were distributed into three buildings. One of them was the Free Shop (Figure 5.28), which consisted of provision of free items, which were mostly clothes, to people in need. The other facility, which operated from different buildings throughout KHORA's history, was Asylum Support where displaced people would be given legal advice on how to proceed with their inquiries related to their stay in Athens. The other building was not operating at the time, to which the Asylum support facilities would be transferred. The multi-storey building would also include catering facilities such as a café and a restaurant, with the remaining spaces open for negotiation (P5, personal communication, Jun 2, 2019).
KHORA undertook its activities in a building across the Free Shop that was operating in June 2019, where all the facilities such as the Free Shop and catering services were being undertaken. Due to some legal necessities, that building was closed which resulted in disruption of the activities. Regardless, the Free Shop was moved to another building across the street and continued operating. It has been constantly operating along with Asylum support ever since, albeit change of places (P5, personal communication, Jun 2, 2019). By the time I was having a conversation with P5 during my first visit to the Free Shop, there were uncertainties surrounding the spatial distribution of the activities along with legal and logistical processes.

KHORA is an association with an international member profile. This includes activists and volunteers from around Europe, the US, as well as immigrants and refugees who have been in Athens for a few months. Despite its multi-cultural profile, P5, a member of the association, stated that the involvement of refugees in decision-making processes is very
limited. She pointed out the issue of communication within the community based on lack of ability to use a common language or translation services. In her view, this is a major problem as the voices of many people cannot be heard. This results in projecting on their needs and desires without being familiar with their politics. P5 mentioned that the lack of refugees in their assemblies has been an on-going concern among KHORA members. Reflecting on her own experiences in Free Shop and her inability to talk in depth with people in the shop, P5 believes that it is due to the language problem that they are missing a profound interaction (P5, personal communication, Jun 2, 2019).

P5 also reflected on a recent conflict with another group working with refugees in Athens, throughout which KHORA community was accused and tried to be forced to hold a certain attitude the conflicting group finds appropriate. Holding that the group had strong political agenda of its own and an authoritative attitude, P5 suggested that the refugees who are part of the association or participate in its activities could have different views and might not be sharing similar political objectives as “them,” which cannot be determined due to a lack of communication and unwillingness to attend assemblies by most refugees. P5 points out that there is a shared ideology among white Western Europeans, and despite being on a different place on a spectrum, that they share similar anti-racist and anti-fascist values. Although these positions may be shared among the refugees, the Intense politization of these people and groups, according to P5, results in their instrumentalization to some extent (P5, personal communication, Jun 2, 2019).

A lack of communication due to language differences and limited involvement of refugees in the decision-making processes raise concerns regarding how sufficiently their interests are being taken into account both in terms of political action and other activities the initiatives aim to undertake that target these communities. P5 also mentions that certain activities and workshops they attempted at initiating at Victoria Square Project, an initiative she collaborates with, did not attract as much attention as anticipated (P5, personal
communication, Jun 2, 2019). Based in Exarcheia, KHORA Free Shop is close to many informal accommodations for refugees, and various political groups are active in the neighbourhood. Its location allows easy access for people in the neighbourhood, however, it can be subjected to the conflicts between different groups working in and around Exarcheia, which manifest in the different attitudes, undertakings, and the ideas of what needs to be done (P5, personal communication, Jun 2, 2019).

KHORA is one of the initiatives which reveal a level of intricacy and networking between different sites, nodes and people in Athens. Several members of KHORA, including P5, work across sites and initiatives. My first conversation with P5 took place in KHORA Free Shop and around Exarcheia Square where we walked together. The second time, I visited her in Victoria Square Project on Elpidos Street, close to Victoria Square (Figure 5.29), an artistic project which was intended to be a social space within the neighbourhood, hosting creative activities. Another KHORA member worked at the Free Shop was a teacher, and would teach at one of the informal accommodations (squats), the 2nd School. One of the members helped initiating the Mazi Housing Project, which aimed at decent housing and life-building for single young men, a profile which has been largely overlooked.

![Figure 5.29: Aerial view from Google Maps showing Victoria Square Project and KHORA Free Shop (Google maps 3)](image)
5.4. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the ways in which the lived experiences in Athens are formed with a focus on a particular section of the city as encountered throughout the fieldtrips. It drew upon the conversations with people and places in the form of interviews, fieldnotes and visual documentation in order to elaborate on particular perspectives based on qualitative data gathered from in-depth personal interactions. The geographies and activities that have been explored throughout the chapter revealed the ways in which certain nodes in Athens allowed or hindered the connectivity of its inhabitants. Specifically, the analyses of the conversations with P8 demonstrated a particular way in which living in *Eleonas Refugee Camp* was manifested for him, and the importance *ANKAA/ScrapCoop* building had in terms of his engagement with the city beyond the refugee camp.

In *ANKAA*, women did not participate in the activities of workshop despite the presence and willingness of the volunteer women who worked there to encourage women to join the activities of the workshop. The conversations with P9 and P5 demonstrate challenges resulting from cultural differences and language gap among people who shared spaces and activities. The concerns regarding lack of sufficient communication with refugees also raise questions about the ways in which initiatives operate and the interests they serve. Different notions of ‘time’ also emerge as a manifestation of different cultural conceptions of ‘delay’ and ‘lateness’, appearing both in the accounts of P9 and P8. ‘Free time’ also emerges as pertaining to the state of being a refugee in P8’s account.

With reference to *ANKAA* and *KHORA*, this chapter demonstrates practical attempts at creating open spaces across Athens where creative engagement of communities is encouraged. These attempts, however, are not immune to limitations which stem from a lack of understanding or concern to the interest of refugees. Therefore, their level of success vary in relation to their objectives, and their activities present dynamic processes which evolve through learning, reflecting and negotiation.
Chapter VI: Extended Living Rooms—Merging with the Neighbourhood

This is an amazing van everyone loves. I have seen it at many places in Athens and on social media. We first met at Jafra while I was walking around Exarcheia, then at Victoria Square Project for language classes. It does not only bring books, but also people, activities and creates new spaces as it parks.

Fieldnotes, 14 February 2019
6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents another assemblage through which I explore places of refuge in Athens, Greece. Chapter V discussed three physical settings; ANKAA, KHORA and Eleonas Refugee Camp by exploring the ways in which these spaces facilitate or hinder connectivity of forcibly displaced people in Athens on the local and trans-local levels. These places were connected primarily through the accounts of P8, and of other participants of these sites I conversed with during my visits. Among the sites explored in Chapter V, KHORA presents a node that has a wider reach through the physical sites of its buildings that allow engagement of people and communities in the neighbourhoods in which those are located, and the activities of its members beyond KHORA.

This chapter explores Victoria Square Project, Jafra Foundation, and Mazi Housing Project. A member of KHORA works in collaboration with Victoria Square Project, and another KHORA member is a co-founder of Mazi Housing Project. Jafra Foundation is located close to KHORA, and accommodated some of its activities in its building while KHORA was short of place to accommodate those. Among these projects, Victoria Square Project is a social centre created as part of documenta 14 art exhibition undertaken in 2017. Situated in a neighbourhood transformed throughout years upon waves of migration, the project stands as a node in which food-related and creative activities are undertaken. Most of the activities result from collaborations with creative individuals, groups or initiatives, including a member of KHORA foundation who runs workshops at the centre each week. The discussion of the centre includes interviews with two people involved in the creation of the project and organisation of its activities. Both interviewees are natives from Greece. The analyses are primarily focused on an array of creative and community activities which aim at connections on the local and international scale. The location of the project and its relationship with the neighbourhood emerge as dominant themes which mark this chapter.
The second centre investigated is the branch of Jafra Foundation in Greece which is located in Exarcheia, a neighbourhood where many refugees reside in formal and informal accommodations. Having roots in the Palestinian conflict, the centre has a multinational team of volunteers including those who have been refugees in Athens. The discussion of the centre in this chapter includes an analysis of an interview with P3, a Palestinian member of the foundation. The interview focuses primarily on the location and engagement of the centre with its neighbourhood and the effect of the cultural background of its members in interacting with refugee communities. Concerning these matters, it explores a project developed in the centre for young single men in the neighbourhood. This is followed by a discussion on Mazi Housing Project which consists of a housing scheme developed for single refugee men in Athens in which P3 was initially involved. Based on an interview with P4, a founding member of the project from the United Kingdom who has been volunteering in Athens for three years, the problem of housing for young single men in Athens and the focus on the notion of ‘independence’ and ‘sense of agency’ are explored in relation to temporary housing schemes for refugees.

6.2. *Victoria Square Project*

![Figure 6.1: On-site sketch of the ground floor of Victoria Square Project produced by the author](image-url)
I met P1 at a café across *Victoria Square Project* in June 2019. P1 had been involved in the creation of the *Victoria Square Project* to assist the artist Rick Rowe during *documenta 14* art exhibition which was undertaken in Athens for the first time in 2017. Rick Lowe, a socially engaged artist was invited from the United States where he was based in, and he met P1 in Athens. P1 relates the roots of the project to Lowe’s *Row Houses* housing project in Houston and her *Suzi Tros* project in Athens, which she argues to have had parallel objectives. *Suzi Tros* consisted of repurposing of a building which could not be rented due to economic crisis, and was turned into a centre where *tarhana*, a traditional Greek soup was served. She explains how the project aimed at gathering people:

> So the idea is to give free food to everybody, to people without -you know- food, it was open for Athenians, the neighbours, the art people [...]. And I was cooking *tarhanas* and we also had activities – art activities, screening of films, theatre, whatever. So it was kind of gathering, people that did not know each other but they used to be in the same place, sharing food and art. So we create a lot of connection between people and many of them, they did works together, you know. And that still exists (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

Reflecting on the ways in which Lowe’s and her approaches were similar, P1 suggests that there are common concerns when someone attempts to get involved in socially engaged art and community-oriented practices regardless of geography, such as facilitating on-going engagement and addressing people’s needs in the community. In addition to the programme and objectives of the practice, Lowe and P1 also deemed it necessary for the project to run over three months, which was the duration of the exhibition:

> If you started a project that is for three months, it’s like to show off and to make fun of people you work with, you know. And it’s not real, it’s fake. [...] Because creating relations with people is not a story of five minutes. I mean, you have to invest time in order to understand what they need, first of all, and how you can plan a long term project in order to change and to create, let’s say this ‘social sculpture’ as Rick used to say, how to shape the community (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

*Victoria Square Project* dates back to *documenta 14* exhibition undertaken in Athens, which was subjected to both celebration and criticism regarding its objectives and consequences. It was created by an artist who was not familiar with the context in Athens, therefore brought a collaboration with a local artist, P1. Despite its artist’s absence and the closure of the
exhibition, it extended into being a social node in the neighbourhood as its lifespan was extended and exceeded several years as it grew and remained active: “[…] we start to have collaborations with many different groups of people, with many different associations, with the municipality, with immigrants, with refugees, with businesses, with this with that” (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019). During my visits to the place over November 2018 to June 2019, I witnessed numerous exhibitions and collaborative activities that engaged both local and international artists at the place.

**On Location**

The project is located close to Victoria Square and is situated in a pedestrian area (Figure 6.2). During our conversation, P1 reflected on the impacts of location and the relationships with neighbours. She pointed out that the restaurant owners have been supporting the project and that their presence has been helpful: “It’s very nice to have in your corner a restaurant and also to be in touch with people that know the area the last 40 years. So we have an interaction with the place that we are sitting in now, you know. And they help us to do the catering when we have big events” (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019). They also rented three flats in the building where the restaurant is located to create “neighbourhood within the neighbourhood” which are used as artist residencies (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).
P1 pointed out the importance of choosing Victoria Square for the project, drawing upon its history:

[…] he decided to choose Victoria Square because Victoria Square is in the centre of Athens and used to be a very important area with a lot of artists, cinemas, theatre, writers, rich people, fantastic buildings – it was a wealthy area. But because Victoria has a train station, has a square and also next to it is the Green Park, when refugees started to come to Athens, or from north or from the sea, it was very easy to end up at Victoria. So, the place became full of immigrants and of refugees. At the end of 80s, when the Greek people started to have more money, they decided to leave the centre and go to the suburbs so all the waves of immigrants and refugees – they took over the houses here, you know (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

The way the neighbourhood was transforming, however, was not received well by all citizens around the neighbourhood:

For me, it’s really great, because I mean it’s a multi-colour area, but for many citizens here it is very problematic. Because they feel that their neighbourhood is occupied by strangers, you know. One of the things that we try to do at our place is also to show to everybody, to the strangers, to the citizens that we are all the same and that it’s nice to collaborate all together, that it’s nice to learn from each other and
to trust each other and I think we have succeeded a lot of things out of this up till now (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

P1 said it was because the area was “problematic but with a great history” that Lowe chose the location to execute his project (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019). During my several visits to the Victoria Square Project throughout my fieldwork, I encountered many demonstrations and collective activities around the Square. Victoria Square has long been a site of friction among different political groups, especially between far-right Golden Dawn supporters, and leftists and anarchical groups. There have been gatherings against evictions of squats, written and performative protests (Figure 6.3-6) as well as activities of sharing and exchange of clothes and food. The Hope Café, which serves free food prepared by its volunteers, also distributed free food in the evenings at the square.
In *Victoria Square Project*, there are weekly recurring activities as well as special activities which are announced on the boards in and out of the building, and social media (Figure 6.7 & 8). Many activities include collaborative creative and artistic activities and food sharing. *Amalgam* was one of the activities I attended which had the highest turnout among the activities I attended at the building (Figure 6.9 & 10).
One of the permanent members of the project is Click who immigrated to Greece from Zimbabwe. According to P1, Click is the “queen” of the space (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019). Click used to participate in the activities of Melissa Project, a network of migrant and refugee women in Greece which was founded in 2014 and has been one of the
most active networks that were targeted towards migrant women. P1 explains that Rick Lowe went to *Melissa* where he met Click, and she began to come to *Victoria Square Project* more and more often:

> So Click started to come to our place here slowly — slowly slowly she moved here. And she became our queen. So we gave her a part of our room to have her atelier. She is a very active lady, she’s doing everything. She’s like a big mom, you know. She’s cooking, knitting, singing, she has bees also. She’s an amazing lady (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

Click shares the space with two more permanent people working in the building and interns who work on a temporary basis. She teaches knitting, runs the workshop *Trash to Treasure* and *African Dance class* every Sunday. The project is aimed for a year, but its closure was postponed each year: “We say, ‘do we have to close it or do we go on? No, we go on” (P1, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

Another permanent member of the project is P2, with whom I talked further about the project, participation of the community and the relationships with neighbours. P2 started working for the project in June 2018 and has been responsible for the communication, social media and coordination of the space and the activities (P2, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

Reflecting on the way they work and organise activities, P2 pointed out the various ways and durations in which the place is used for creative activities and exhibitions with regards to the purposes and proposals of the artists who are willing to collaborate. P2 also points out the way they form the activities depends on responses: “…we work a lot with feedback, so by having this knowledge of how people react to certain activities and what they are looking for and also how many people are looking for the same thing, we try to blend that in order to have the best result” (P2, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

Throughout my visits to the place, I noticed that during the day when there was not a specific activity, there were times when it was busy with people inside who were busy with their
phones. When I asked about this, I was told that the people used the space to connect to Wi-Fi. P2 reflected on how this way of using the space was approached:

…we tried not to give the idea that this space is only for Wi-Fi, but for what you can tell, there are also different age groups as well, maybe they are youngsters, maybe they are children. In that case, we prefer them to have safe space where they can even do that just to be in a familiar environment. And also, little by little, even though they only come for the internet, sometimes they interact. Sometimes they get – you know- they open up, it just takes a little longer (P2, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

The initial decision of locating the Victoria Square Project building in a particular site in conversation with the neighbourhood is attempted to be carried along through the ways in which the project is run and the activities are undertaken. In terms of how the local context is considered in determining the activities, P2 mentions that they encourage people from organisations and the participant artists to spend some time in the place to acquire familiarity with the place and people:

…we would recommend them just to pass by, to spend some time - we have a library, they can have a look at the library, maybe they want to see an exhibition, to just have the time to really observe the space, observe the people and then decide. Because I think it makes it more organic (P2, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

…every activity we have, we want to connect It somehow in a local scale. So even if we have an artist from abroad that are coming and want to work with us, we want them to experience a little bit of the community like how it is to live in Victoria, how it is to work with people, so not be something that just crops out and has nothing to do with what is going on – the environment around it but to be a result of a journey within this environment (P2, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

While it is deemed important that there is an interaction with the context by participants who attempt at initiating activities in collaboration with the project, the ways in which (potential) participants interact remains open with the flexibility provided in terms of attendance to the activities in the space:

…we never ask for registration. Even though weekly activities – I don't know if this is good, because I see that people are not consistent but at the same time it's important because you give them the chance to understand that they are in charge of what they want to do, what they don't want to do. And you know, it's all about them (P2, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).
Here, again, it becomes important for people to have a choice of attending or not attending the activities undertaken in the space. This is not registered and documented in a way to restrict the actions and decisions of the people who would like to participate in them whenever they want and in the frequency of their choice. P2 pointed out that there is a high demand for music classes and more language courses which they undertake in collaboration with the ECHO Library every Wednesday for Greek and English language practice. P2 reflects on the particular way in which they approach language learning in the space:

...we had this conversation with the girls from ECHO Refugee Library that we didn’t want to approach language like every other space, understand that there is the need of learning language properly but in our space we wanted it mostly to be like a communicational tool. So it’s just gathering together and trying to communicate and open up a little bit, be more comfortable. So it’s this aspect that we wanted to focus on. So that's why it’s not like ‘open your books, you have this for next week’. This is more like, open up, just have a warm-up (P2, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

The responses from the neighbourhood to the activities undertaken in the space seem to be varied. P2 noted that despite the demand from the participants, music could become a source of conflict within the neighbourhood. Mentioning the complaints of some elderly people in the neighbourhood, P2 points out that there is also positive feedback from others of the same age group:

...we have other neighbours of that age that we talk every day, we have a great communication but they never participate. It’s something as well. Because they know we are here, they feel safe, they know that if they need something they can talk to us. If something breaks in the space he’s going to come and help us so we have this mutual love exchange in that sense, that we care for each other, but at the same time he just doesn’t feel comfortable participating but it’s OK (P2, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

P2 also reflected on a conversation she had with a neighbour after Amalgama event which is illustrative of some conflicts with neighbours:

I had an argument with a neighbour the other day and he was just like going on and on and on about how – the Amalgama, you remember, we are on a public – it was amazing. That’s why I tell you that I think it’s more of a personal thing other than – so he was like, yeah, you were sitting down, and this is not hygienic, and there was music, but I was like – it wasn’t allowed – yeah, but there was still music, and then I was like, […] I just asked him, because he was ‘I think this place is not for the neighbourhood’ and on and on, ‘would you feel better if this space would close,’ like very direct and he was like ‘well, actually no, I don’t mind. I wouldn’t say that, it’s just
that...’ and then you see that they appreciate certain things but you know, sometimes you just need to listen to try to draw information that can be useful in order to avoid certain things in the future but at the same time just maybe push a little bit as well (P2, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

P2’s statements hint at conflictual situations with regards to the activities of space, demands of its participants and some of the neighbours who express their disturbance by certain activities organised at the space. P2 says that as the members of the project, they try to solve the conflicts as they arise and achieve a balance between initiating the activities that interest potential participants and the neighbours’ demands by way of negotiating with people. According to P2’s statements, these conflicts and adaptations seem to be at the core of the project and its growth:

There are always ways to improve and you have to be very flexible when you have such a space because you are working with a community, you are working with people, so you need to adjust. I don't think that people would make any sense if at the beginning we had one goal and one goal only, and after you reach it or not reach it and then it doesn't make any sense. Yeah. You always shift a little bit. You always try different things so – (P2, personal communication, Jun 13, 2019).

*Victoria Square Project* makes a statement regarding the site it is situated in and maintains an open contact with its neighbourhood and passers-by. Manifested also in the physicality of the space, there is often interaction with the outside and an overcoming of physical boundaries through an exposure of the interior through a transparent façade alongside stretching activities and furniture outdoors (Figure 6. 11).
Figure 6.1: Victoria Square Project indoors and outdoors space use diagram for 8-23 Feb 2019
Activities

*Victoria Square Project* hosts regular and special activities, and many of these activities are designed and organised through their collaboration with individual artists or initiatives. During the day when there is no special activity, the space is usually open for people to come by. The *Victoria Square Project* building has been one of the places I faced no hardship having access to. From the first time I visited the centre, I could talk to the volunteers working at the place, learn about it and spend time there. Throughout my multiple visits, I witnessed several people coming and going—some attending the on-going activities inside, others hanging around outside the centre or chatting on the bench. These included local residents of the neighbourhood, newcomers, artists from different countries who exhibit their work in the space or are discussing for the possibilities for it, and visiting students from overseas.

The accessibility of the centre for all made it a hub where people come together regardless of their political status and backgrounds. Both the interior and exterior of the centre encourage interaction among the visitors. The large, communicative glass facades of the centre enhance the feeling of porosity. Some items and equipment that are used during the creative-reuse workshops and the outcome of creative activities are exhibited around the space. The furniture, objects and other items exhibited inside and outside of the centre work as affordances and facilitators of communication. Together with the announcement board by the door, the glass facades are used to hang posters and announce activities both undertaken in the scope of *Victoria Square Project* activities or other initiatives around the city (Figure 6.12). This way, the physical space acquires a dynamic character, transforms and facilitates transformation in relation to the creative activities that asks for the engagement of communities.
Figure 6.12: The building façade of Victoria Square Project on 13 February 2019, photo by the author

During my stay in Athens, I joined some of the activities undertaken by or in collaboration with Victoria Square Project. Some of these activities involved a collaboration with ECHO Mobile Library. ECHO Mobile Library was running English and Greek language practice for refugees. On 13 February, the activity took place on the big table by the door, and was attended by at least six people including the learners and volunteers. It consisted of games and simple conversations held in English in a relaxed and joyful manner. During the activity, the ECHO van was parking outside by the building across (Figure 6.13 & 14).
ECHO Mobile Library was refurbished into a little library with red shelves, seating, colourful cushions and carpets. The books on the shelves were in various languages, and the members of the Library were looking for more books in certain languages that were on demand, such as Turkish (Figure 6.15 & 16). Parked near Victoria Square Project, and its door open, the van generated a new space as a spatial extension of the project building, defining also an intermediate space in between. This allowed different spatial configurations and activities for the buildings the van visited, as I later observed also when the library was visiting Jafra Foundation.
On the day (13 February), the van was preparing for a visit around several temporary sites for refugees for Valentine’s Day and for the days that would follow. We used the floor of the building to prepare a poster which would travel with the van around the settlements that would be visited, including several refugee camps.

The creative reuse workshops were busy at times, and only few people participated in others. The workshops have different themes and focus each week. I participated in a chemigram art activity led by an Italian artist with the participation of students joining from a school in Canada (Figure 6.17 & 18). The event took place around the large table where language classes also took place. It was followed by the serving of the food that was prepared just outside the building by a member of the KHORA community.
Victoria Square Project functions as a node where creative events take place not only through participatory creative activities but also through exhibitions where artists from Greece or other countries showcase their work. During my fieldwork in Athens in February 2019, I went to two exhibitions that took place in the centre which are The Rhythm of Small Things and At Home in the World, the former of which was held in the basement floor, and the latter on the ground floor where the bookshelves and the activity table were used as exhibition units.

On The Rhythm of Small Things.

The first exhibition, which was called The Rhythm of Small Things, was curated out of a collaboration of Melissa Network, This is not a feminist project and Victoria Square Project. This was part of the Residency program of the latter for 2018-2019 (The Rhythm of Small Things, n.d.). Among the collaborators, Melissa Network is a formation that emerged upon the crisis in 2015 and has been actively working for migrant women in Greece for several years. This is not a feminist project, on the other hand, offers a 4-week Artists’ Residency programme. The handout of the exhibition emphasises the importance of art in facilitating ‘dialogue’ and ‘solidarity’ as a motivation for their activities, alongside tackling issues of identity:
The use of visual arts as a tool for dialogue and solidarity is further embedded in the character of the project’s activities and approach, increasing opportunities for artists and contributing to the development of a more enlightened narrative around issues of gender and identity (The Rhythm of Small Things, n.d.).

This statement demonstrates the emphasis the project puts on the potentials of art, artists and artistic activity in increasing the awareness towards people’s lives by providing platforms of interaction. Their focus on ‘gender’ and ‘identity’, on the other hand, resembles the broader scope of identity issues addressed by various solidarity groups that use art as form of expression, which include marginalised communities both within and other than refugees. The Residency promotes a culturally embedded approach through which the artists develop their work while getting immersed in Athenian culture (The Rhythm of Small Things, n.d.).

The theme for the year 2018-2019 has been on mobility, migration and displacement with a concern to “women’s lives and on how a sense of belonging and self-identification can emerge under these circumstances, as a result of having a personal routine” (The Rhythm of Small Things, n.d.).

The exhibition showcased Jana Koelmel’s art practice that consisted of a video series concerning the experiences of six refugee and migrant women (Figure 6.19 & 20). One of the videos was projected onto the wall at the entrance of the exhibition. The rest of the videos were shown on wide screens where visitors could sit on benches and put on headphones to listen the sound of the videos. The handbook of the exhibition also contains reflective thoughts of the artist in relation to her experiences in Athens and encounters with the women she spoke to.
On At Home in the World.

*Victoria Square Project* hosted another exhibition named *At Home in the World* by Sophie Rodin, a Norwegian artist who worked with refugees on different locations over several years, from 20 to 24 February. The work exhibited consists of three books of sketches, collages and texts, some produced by migrants and refugees themselves and others by the artist and present her reflections. The work was exhibited on the bookshelves, on the activity table and on the glass wall, and was followed by workshops on the weekend (Figure 6.21 & 22).

Figures 6.21 & 22: ‘At Home in the World’ Exhibition in *Victoria Square Project*, photos by the author
These two exhibitions presented work that is produced through engagement and conversations with refugees in various contexts and geographies. In *The Rhythm of Small Things*, narratives are presented in the forms of audio-visual materials, and in *At Home in the World*, drawings, texts and collages on paper were the prominent artforms. Against somewhat natural interaction of *Victoria Square Project* with its neighbourhood through an open and flexible attitude, these activities brought in another layer that are not precisely aimed at the participation of the marginalised communities or refugees but would be of interest to other artists, researchers or other people who are curious to know more about the experiences of refugees. Although some of these activities are complemented by participatory activities that are aimed at engagement of people in the neighbourhood, and particularly refugee communities, I observed that the way people in the neighbourhood interacted with the place was less determined by their interest in these artistic/creative activities designed for them, but more about the affordances that appeared inviting such as light, outdoor benches, the flow of people and the overall liveliness regardless of the profile of people or their motivations of being in and around the building.
Figure 6.23: A study of the activity areas in relation to the physical boundaries of Victoria Square Project building
The exhibitions with focus on issues of inequality such as marginalisation and displacement attracted people in creative industries to engage with the project more than the people in the neighbourhood by means of their focus. The residency programme and spaces rented in the neighbourhood that are dedicated to accommodate artists opened it up to short and long-term trans-local engagement of international artists. These programmes also allowed them to get familiar with the Athenian context. The project and its activities, then, engaged local communities directly by activities such as food sharing and language learning; facilities and affordances such as internet connection, provision of safe space for relaxation and socialisation. It also engaged the local community indirectly by means of its accessibility throughout exhibition events which attracted people across the city and beyond—including international artist—which created an active and lively atmosphere around which people gathered, caught a breath, or socialised.
Figure 6.24: A section from a mapping practice depicting Victoria Square Project on 12 Feb 2019
Figure 6.25: A section from a mapping practice depicting Victoria Square Project on 13 Feb 2019
Figure 6.26: A section from a mapping practice depicting *Victoria Square Project* on 20 Feb 2019
Figure 6.27: A section from a mapping practice depicting Victoria Square Project on 22 Feb 2019
6.3. Jafra Foundation

Similarly concerned with the neighbourhood it is situated in is Jafra Foundation in Exarcheia. Jafra Foundation differs from ANKAA, KHORA and Victoria Square Project for having its roots in the Palestinian cause. Jafra Foundation was established in 2002 as a result of grass-roots initiatives by Palestinians from Yarmouk Camp in Damascus City (Jafra Foundation, n.d.).

The first time I visited Jafra was when P5 walked me in Exarcheia, talking about some public spaces and buildings around the neighbourhood. When we went to Jafra, P3 greeted us and gave me brief information about the space. ECHO Mobile Library was also visiting and the van was just outside the space (Figure 6.28 & 29).

During my third visit to Athens, I had an in-depth conversation with P3. P3 was born in Yarmuk camp where Jafra was founded in 2002, and he knew some of the volunteers in the space already since childhood when he started working with Jafra in 2018 (P3, personal...
communication, Jun 11, 2019). P3 considers it as an advantage in terms of communication for refugees to be volunteering in the foundation:

We always try to fulfil the need of the situation according to the need of refugees because we have an advantage that all organisations in Athens don’t have it that we are volunteers but we are also refugees. So we feel each other. We understand the people’s need. We speak their language. We have the same problem. We have the same pain. So when someone comes here and says like I have this and this problem I understand how he feels because I have been through this beforehand. So if I could do anything to help him I will do (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

P3’s statements indicate that it is not only the linguistic or cultural similarities that would make communication smoother but also the shared experiences which result in being able to relate to each other’s circumstances. The profile of the people who volunteer at the foundation, however, is not limited to people from specific geography and new people and projects are welcome:

We have volunteers from Syria, Palestine, Kurdistan… We had British, Spanish, now we have American – we have Farsi speakers like Iranian, Afghani… We have German teachers, so anyone who’d like to do anything we are already doing, is very welcome to come and participate and if you have an idea for example, that is useful for people, and according to our resources, we can help (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

When I asked him about the participants of the courses, P3 pointed out that there has been also a variety of student profiles:

Some classes we have majority Farsi speakers, some classes we have majority Arabic speakers. Some classes – like one class, they have ten students, seven of them are Turkish. We have from Africa. Also Greek – unemployed Greek. They use our services (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

In the case of Jafra, the fact that Greek people participate in the activities of the foundation shows that Jafra created an inclusive node in which international volunteers including refugees and Greek people started to come together and share spaces and activities. The activities that are undertaken in the building include language classes for Greek, English and German on different levels, and practical courses including photography, music, computer literacy, and hairdressing (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019). Similar to ANKAA,
the language courses were in demand and the foundation was seeking English, German and
Greek teachers. In the building, there is also a place which is dedicated to women only:

And also we have women’s space, only for women – that help women develop
certain skill they have. […] we have sewing, knitting, making dresses – they make
clothes here.

[…] Only women are allowed there. In addition to […] small room for children who
are accompanied with their mothers. So that they don’t disturb the class – For those
parents who come with their children. They can put their children in this space but
they can’t leave the building. As long as the children are in the building, the parents
can’t leave (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

During my visit, I noticed a considerable presence of women in the building participating both
as volunteers and as students. When we talked with P3 about how this might be related to
the spatial and programmatic arrangements that could ease the participation of women that
he mentioned, P3 shared his observations that such arrangements encouraged women’s
participation:

A lot of women come here, sometimes when it’s busy we have 25 women, when it’s
not busy we have like 10 to 15. […] the women have the biggest advantage. They
can go to all courses including women courses. The men can go to all courses but
they can’t go to women courses (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

Having branches in different parts of the world, Jafra Foundation in Athens focuses on skill-
building, which has been a prominent approach among the initiatives I visited in the city with
long-term goals. P3 drew attention to this approach that is prioritised in the space which he
associates with ‘youth development,’ which is different than ‘relief,’ a priority for the situation
of war:

…for example, in Syria we have around 25-35 branches, only in Syria, so we do a lot
of this various things according to the situation – There is the situation of war. Here
is the situation of refugees. And in Lebanon, it’s the situation of both – according to
the Palestinians. Palestinians have been suffering for decades” (P3, personal
communication, Jun 11, 2019).

With regards to the branch in Athens, P3 emphasised the focus on skill-building for job
market rather than aid-giving:

…we don’t give people fish. We teach them how to fish so they can go and get
themselves. So for example, now instead of paying money to give people food, we
pay the same amount of money or so much less to get tools to start hairdressing course, so that people can start after that their own job and become barbers, and make money out of this (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

In the neighbourhood which is the epicentre of a wide spectrum of political ideologies and various degrees of political involvement groups and initiatives that work with refugees tend to claim, P3 emphasized a strong ideological background that motivated the volunteers in Jafra:

The volunteers here, they don't work for something – they work for an idea. Like, we don't work for something tangible. For example, we might – if we had a lot of work, to prepare something, we might be working from 10am until 1am the next day – continuously. Because of the things that we have in our minds. Like we have an idea that we want everyone to know […] for example, when we opened the centre – Handala Centre – we worked that day – for three days, from 10am until 3am. Every day (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

Handala Centre is located in the same building as Jafra and was open on 17 April 2019. In the centre, many items including souvenirs and clothes of cultural significance are exhibited. P3 explained that these items were made by Palestinian families in Syria and imported to Athens to increase awareness of Palestinian culture:

…we felt that people don't know a lot about our culture and we needed to find a way to show people like what is our culture, what's going on, what happens. And especially the scarf that's called Kuffiya. Most people in Europe, they have an idea that this thing they wear revolutionaries, which is completely wrong. It's not only about revolution. It's a part of the Palestinian uniform and culture. And it's a political idea that has a meaning. So we started having these things, and we give it to people and we explain to them what is Kuffiya. for example, what is this scarf. It means this and this and this (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

Based on P3’s explanations, Handala Centre can be conceived as a way to link Palestinian culture across geographies through the materiality of the items produced by Palestinians. These items, which are ‘not sold’ but are given for the amount of money they cost with possible donations provide means to communicate their culture for the Palestinian volunteers in the centre (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019). These items are also an important part of another project the Foundation initiated which is concerned with the drug-dealing that has been a problem in the neighbourhood:
Well, basically, we go to squares where drug-dealers are, and we clean everything, we clear the square, and then we prepare it then show a movie. This is like, for example, it is not the end, there is always another chance, you can do something. So when we talk to some of them, like, we are trying to find a solution because like you know in Exarcheia Square, some refugees sell drugs there. And that's making a big problem with the leftist parties there. So we're trying to understand why are they doing this. Some of them say like 'we want to live, we don't have papers, we don't have anything, so if we don't sell drugs we will die of starving'. So we started thinking like how we can help with that. How can we find something else to help them. So we have now the idea that those people who do these things – they can come to Jafra and take some stuff in the heritage – in the Handala Centre, and they go, they don't have to pay anything when they take – Sell it, OK? They give us back only the cost of this and all the extra money they sell, it's for them. We started this project with two or three people already – three people. Yeah, and it's going well (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

By extending its activities beyond the building towards the neighbourhood, the foundation begins to interact with and transform the conditions of the people around the neighbourhood. P3 related their intimate involvement with the situation around them to a relatability and an understanding of the culture of refugees who share the neighbourhood.

We try to understand the problem of the people. If you always try to beat them, [...] Eastern people, they have something in common. All of them are stubborn. If you say don't do this, even though it's wrong, they will do it. But if you just talk to these people, try to understand them as I said before, we are not European, we are refugees, we have the same thing, we have the same issue, we have been through this journey. Maybe not the same experience, a little bit modified from one person to another, it's an individual issue, but yeah, the main story is the same. So we really try to help these people (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

P3’s reflections with regards to the interaction of the foundation and its volunteers with people in the neighbourhood resonate the concerns P5 raised about the communication problems. Some of the most active members of some initiatives, including KHORA, do not speak the languages the refugees are comfortable in speaking, which creates problems of communication, and according to P5, is one of the reasons why they are not always willing to participate in decision making and other activities. In the case of Jafra, such communication problem seems to be of less concern: “If you go around in Exarcheia, and that's where Jafra Foundation [...] our reputation around here is really–especially with the refugees. Because we reach out refugees so much easier than other organisations” (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019). When I asked P3 whether it was the location that
made it advantageous for the centre to reach out, he emphasised mutual understanding as a source of communication:

Not only location, common language, common experience, common culture, common way of thinking. Like when we have, for example, an activity, here in Europe, they have completely no difference between men and women. For us, […] we understand that women and men are a little bit different. Women, they have their own space, private space, they need to – they don’t feel completely safe when other men are close to them. So when we do these kind of activities we take these things into consideration. Because of our culture. That’s how we grow up. We understand. But like in a European organisation, they try to understand but they make mistakes, they take time to understand what’s going on around them. And that causes a lot of problems and might cause like fear from some women like ‘I don't feel comfortable doing this, and I feel shy saying no’. But here […] if something happened they directly come to us because we treat them like our sisters and mothers (P3, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

P3’s explanations reveal a sense of cultural belonging and relatability as sources of motivation and successful communication. A cultural awareness renders both the configuration and organisation of the interior space and the relationships with the neighbourhood. The interior spatial configuration and organisation of the centre in the form of provision of spaces and allocation of facilities exclusive for women demonstrate a responsive attitude towards cultural sensitivities of the participants of the centre. This was possible through active engagement and participation of women who are comfortable expressing their demands to the organisers and volunteers in Jafra, and the willingness of refugee women to use the space and communicate their demands made it possible to negotiate the spatial organisation with refugee women. While this created a more inclusive environment within the building, personal interactions of the refugee volunteers of Jafra members with forcibly displaced people in the neighbourhood inspired them to initiate projects that address the issues faced by young refugees that use open spaces in the neighbourhood.
Figure 6.30: A section from a mapping practice depicting Jafra Foundation on 29 Nov 2018
6.4. **Mazi Housing Project**

P3 also engaged in a project initiated in Athens which aimed at developing housing solutions for young refugee men who lived in Athens, called the *Mazi Housing Project*. P4, who came from the United Kingdom to volunteer in Athens, is one of the founders of the project. P4 came to Athens in 2017 and started volunteering at *KHORA* community centre (P4, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019). P4 explains their realisation of the scale of accommodation problem for refugees in Athens as their motivation to start the project:

…I was working with *KHORA Legal Team*, one of the big things that I got involved with was accommodation. [...] it was quite obvious that it was one of the biggest problems in Athens for displaced people and through *KHORA* we started an accommodation working group where we’d try and find people to places in squats or semi-formal or formal accommodation and gather information, and it just became a lot clearer as time went on that we were trying to get more people into a limited number of spaces and that number of spaces was less than number of people. And the more time goes on the more the more you realize that, OK, you help Mohamad one day, and that means that P3 won’t get the place the next day. So you’re helping some people but the general problem is not actually being solved or eliminated. So it was through that that we started talking about whether we’d start a project ourselves to try and improve capacity even on a small scale. And we looked through different demographics of who we could help and the most obvious seemed young single men over the age of 18 who were here in Athens without their families. And that’s is how we started to get involved with Mazi Housing Project and that’s been my focus since the last year (P4, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

P4 points out here that despite the efforts of the volunteers to assist refugees in finding available housing options, the current housing options were not sufficient to meet the need.

P4 has been also involved in other housing projects with different scale and focus that were alternative to the accommodation offered by the Greek Government or the United Nations such as *ESTIA*, which addressed accommodation for forcibly displaced people in Athens:

…since the beginning I’ve been involved in other housing projects. It’s funded by a Spanish organisation called “*Amigos de Ritsona*”. They started in refugee camp Ritsona, and then they’ve moved their funding more towards the urban environment because they were aware that the accommodation is a big problem. So I’ve been involved in that as well, coordinating that project. That’s for between three and five flats – currently four flats, over different like a mixed demographic – So they started funding things in the camp and then they started to realize there were other needs and then we started with funding one single men in a mixed flat in September 2017 and then they had more funding to extend it to other flats in Athens (P4, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).
Mazi Housing Project was planned for transitioning the lives of young men from a temporary into a permanent living in Athens. This involved both financial support for the residents and their guided integration to the life in the city:

What we offer is one year of accommodation and we offer like two things I guess you’d say like material things and non-material things. Material things we offer is the flat itself, so the rent is paid, food, utilities, Wi-Fi, the first three months residents get paid for the monthly metro cards, we pay for their phone cards every month the whole year, so there’s the material things that we offer. And then we also offer social support so we have a house manager who goes to the flats up to five times a week and is there to offer support for the residents in terms of finding work and finding free classes and more generally making connections to other organisations who can provide these things in a more specified way – specialized way (P4, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

While providing a guided support, the project is expected to allow the residents of Mazi Housing Project to be fully independent at the end of the support the process. Part of this consists of familiarisation of the residents with the organisations within the city which provide services to assist the residents.

We are a small organisation and we can't do everything. So we are very aware that there are all these other organisations around us who offer these things in a really great way, and if we can connect people really well, then they can really receive a lot of good support and we believe also that's a form of independence. If you know your way around the city, you know where these services are, that for us in fact is one of our three components of being independent. So that’s the big thing that we are offering is this those connections.

‘Independence’ in the context of the project is understood in terms of 1) increased connectivity, 2) employability and 3) communal living skills:

So we define independence in three strands: one is that the making – having knowledge of and connections to local services at all levels, be that grassroots, larger NGOs, or governmental services, that includes health services and all these things, and second we have employability, so improving people's ability to find a job – so everything from learning skills to writing CVs, training for job interviews, and finally getting the job itself. And then thirdly taking ownership over their space in the house, which is another way of saying communal living skills. Like, people making decisions about their own space about how they live, dealing with the challenges of living together, and solving problems together. So really we’ve said that the house manager, if she and we, not just she – if we’re all doing our job correctly, than her job will become more irrelevant throughout the year. So once they are like really taking ownership they can solve these issues themselves, then we'll have done good job. So if people are improving on these three levels throughout the year, then that's our sort of mark of success (P4, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).
The focus on the independence of the residents is considered related to the residents’ agency as to choices they make in their own lives:

...in the flat, we feel it’s very much a part of being independent is that people aren’t telling you what to do, that you had the opportunity to make decisions for yourself and that agency turned out to be very important. If we tell the residents what to do, then they leave the flat and then who’s going to tell them what to do? They need to – in some ways I guess it might be interpreted as being patronising or condescending but like we’re talking about 18-19 year olds who are like, last summer they were kids, right? So it’s important that we’re like – and you know they spent their adolescence having experiences that are very different to my adolescence. And they’ve become very resourceful and resilient. But also, they were recently children. We really think it’s important to improve those skills like decision-making and solving problems for yourself that are vital to being independent adults (P4, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

One of the concerns about temporary accommodations offered for the forcibly displaced people in Athens, Greece, is the ambiguities surrounding the subsequent steps upon the end of these schemes. P4 reflects on the different impacts of being left out of the scheme on people:

...one of the big problems with accommodation is that obviously it’s money as well but it’s that what happens at the end of the three months – the six months or when your money runs out. For people who are financially independent, accommodation is a very different thing. Because you can say to your friends, that you can stay in my house for two months, and depending on your friend, maybe your friend has the ability to find somewhere else or if worse comes to worse, get an AirBNB or a hotel, won’t end up in the street. So that’s a very different decision to when you are hosting people who do not have those means. Then you’ve always got to think what is the exit strategy. So yeah, I mean there is loads of accommodation projects where they haven’t done that like ESTIA – ESTIA scheme is one example where the focus is on a roof, and although they implemented some elements of social support, they haven’t done it in a comprehensive way that can ensure that people have a way out – there are people leaving the ESTIA accommodation scheme homeless, which is crazy given amount of resources and amount of time that people have been in that scheme (P4, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

Mazi Housing Project has a partnership with Forge for Humanity, a local NGO which also focuses on young single men in Athens. Forge for Humanity supports the Project by referring resident candidates for the project and with casework support. In terms of their connection to Forge for Humanity and other NGOs, P4 points out that their ability to support residents of Mazi Housing Project comes from their increased familiarity with the organisations across Athens as a result of having been operating for a relatively long time:
In terms of other organisations and how we connect to them, we don’t have anything formal with any organisation, but because we’ve been here for a while, in terms of grassroots like more than six months is like wow, you’ve been there forever, we have a lot of connections so we know people or we – at least we know – we have knowledge about those services, what they can offer, and we have the means to find out whether they can provide stuff for us, so it’s about directing people to those organisations and it’s not like we have a red button where like(?) OK, accept a Mazi resident, but we have this kind of knowledge and some kind of connection with them to be able to do that (P4, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

P4 explains the changes in the Mazi Housing Project team throughout and reflects on the transient nature of volunteering in Athens. He mentions the specific strengths of each team member to be factors defining the scope of the project:

... at the moment there is four of us including the house manager and myself but almost a year ago there was a team of ten of us who started the project and there’s people who had to leave because the volunteering that – you know. it’s not sustainable to live here. But yeah, all of that knowledge from those ten people who has contributed in terms of the different fields they worked in everywhere from KHORA to the squats, to legal services, educational services, so everyone has like a different experience of how homelessness affects people in those different areas. And all that knowledge was kind of put into the project. We also have someone who’s a psychologist who has a lot of experience in that field, who has worked in a hospital, we’ve had one two social workers who work with us as well, so yeah we are very much the product of a lot of people’s knowledge and experience (P4, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

**On Location**

P4 explains the difficulties of initiating and undertaking such an accommodation project in Athens despite the available funding:

we were delayed for quite a while largely because of the accommodation crisis. Like the reason that we are needed is also one of the reasons that it took a long time for us to set up. Finding a flat was very difficult. We were upfront from the start. We’d say ‘this is what we want the flat for’. And people were very suspicious and weren’t interested. But, I mean, that just tells you how difficult it is for people who aren’t helped out by Northern Europeans, by Greek people, by having money like certain funding – so it was difficult for us but it was ten times more difficult for the demographic of young single men who were not – who were on their own looking for somewhere (P4, personal communication, Jun 11, 2019).

Such accounts demonstrate difficulties not only with regards to financial means or availability of flats in Athens, but a suspicious attitude towards accommodation of young refugee men in Athens which hinders possibilities of establishing a life in the city. The selection process of the flat for Mazi Housing Project was also informed by difficulties regarding ownership issues.
that mark some of the properties in Athens, and while the initial flat that was chosen was in

*Plateia Amerikis*, a central area with affordable flats, the team rented another flat in *Kallithea*
in southern Athens eventually to avoid the delay of the project:

Let's say where we ended up is very good but that's not by design. We originally
were in discussions with the landlords in *Plateia Amerikis*. So fairly central and was
extremely cheap. It wasn't in a good condition but it was so cheap that we'd clean it
up and it would be a good option. In fact it was three times cheaper than what we
are paying now. You know, ludicrously cheap. But it had plumbing issues, and it had
several owners. It's a common thing here. When there is lots of owners, and then
they all have to agree to rent the flat so – yeah, it's really common here, there's a lot
of property that's tied up because of that. And in the end, after a lot of toing and
froing we decided we can't wait until 2025 for this flat, we have to find something
else. In the end we've found somewhere in *Kallithea* which is a southern
neighbourhood, it's really lovely there, it's very different to centre, and very different
to Exarcheia or *Plateia Amerikis*. It's not near, it's not near the normal services the
displaced people go to, but it's in a very nice neighbourhood, a lot more chance
there to make connections with Greek people and I think they have a very different
attitude to refugees, less familiarity, less experience with them. So, yeah, it turned
out really well. Even though that wasn't our first choice (P4, personal
communication, Jun 11, 2019).

The selection process of the flat for the *Mazi Housing Project* was also informed by concerns
on the qualities of the flat itself. P4 explained that the flat was chosen carefully to provide a
'dignified' way of living for its residents:

...we were quite keen on getting a flat that was a dignified space, so like, the flat we
have in the end is beautiful, it's enormous, it's 200 square meters, it's in a nice
neighbourhood, it's light, it's spacious, has big balconies, and someone did ask me
recently what happens when people leave, and they weren't living in a flat like that
probably for many many years. So OK, this is a good point but we did think that it's
important that people had a dignified space and they are not living in a dark,
underground basement. So that was another important thing (P4, personal
communication, Jun 11, 2019).

Initiated by volunteers who have been experienced in working with refugees in Athens, *Mazi
Housing Project* demonstrates a multi-layered approach to temporary housing which is not
limited to accommodation as a form of mere shelter. It addresses the issue of temporality for
its connection to the future experiences which informed the design and objectives of the
program which aims at an increased independence and sense of agency.
6.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed three projects developed in Athens related to refugee experiences in the city. Among them, Victoria Square Project was initiated as part of documenta 14 art exhibition without an exclusive focus on refugees. The project, however, was situated at the heart of a multi-cultural neighbourhood in central Athens which has been shaped by flows of migration over the past years. The project was aimed as a social node in the neighbourhood which offers social and creative activities open for everyone. The flexibility of the program allowed collaborations with initiatives that work exclusively with refugees such as KHORA and ECHO Mobile Library. One of the KHORA members undertakes weekly workshops in the space and the ECHO Mobile Library van visits the space weekly for language classes aimed for refugees and migrants. In this way, the centre acts as a connecting node within the city not only for the activities it provides, but also as a physical space where several forms of connections become possible.

The Victoria Square Project demonstrated a clear connection between social issues in Athens and the artistic community. It also highlighted an awareness and connection to the recent history of the neighbourhood, positioning the recent migratory flows as a continuation of a long-standing phenomenon. The project attracted a significant number of artistic community members, but it also had its limitations. This was particularly apparent in the level of attendance at some of the special events, which indicated a lack of communication and understanding of its targeted communities illustrates the challenges of engaging a diverse community and promoting a sense of belonging and inclusivity. Despite this, especially the events around food were very popular, and the space was used on a daily basis for more spontaneous activities, serving as a social hub.

Similarly, Jafra actively engaged with the community in which it was located, with a specific focus on addressing the challenges faced by young men. The project aimed to tackle these
issues through fostering social interaction and providing opportunities for work. *Mazi Housing* project also focused on addressing the issues faced by young refugee men, specifically through providing them with suitable accommodation. Both *Jafra* and *Mazi Housing* actively engaged with the issues present in their respective communities, and the initiatives were informed by the current problems identified through engagement with community members and an exchange of knowledge. These initiatives were tailored to the specific needs of the community by an active engagement and communication. These projects illustrate a proactive and community-informed approach to addressing the issues faced by refugees, fostering inclusivity in addressing the problems related to forced migration.
I came for the collective cooking event at Communism. The door was locked and they are doing some cleaning at the moment. They took me into the courtyard. Two dogs are playing around. I pet them. There are around 6 people. Some guys are decorating the courtyard with artificial green plants. There is Greek, English and Arabic being spoken.

Fieldnotes, 31 May 2019
7.1. Introduction

Chapters V and VI consist of discussions of three sites each, and explore the ways in which these converse through location, physical properties and human activities. This chapter focuses on four accommodation types and their connection to the other sites within the city and narrated differently from the preceding chapters. Part I consists of an exploration of two centres which served as social spaces for me to explore the sites in Part II: *Communitism* and *Nosotros*. These centres are where I met people who work in various accommodation projects across Athens. Founding a base for our conversations, these sites are explored for the roles they play in Athens in relation to forced displacement. The chapter then moves on to a discussion of accommodation sites throughout Part II which consists of reflections on four accommodation sites for refugees: *Schisto Refugee Camp*, *The Refugee Integration Centre* by the Evangelical Church, *Hotel City Plaza* and *Jasmine School Squat (2nd School)*. The discussion on the first two accommodation centres are based on conversations with P6 and P7 undertaken at *Communitism* and *Nosotros*, which are presented in Part I. These are followed by other types of accommodation for refugees visited throughout the fieldwork.

7.2. Part I: Two places of encounter

My fieldwork was fraught with open community activities which allowed me to constantly engage in social activities, interacting with people and broadening my understanding and knowledge about people and activities regarding forced migration. One of the activities I attended was in *Politechnio*, which is an occupied university building where open assemblies are held to discuss current issues in Greece and around the world that pertain to matters of injustice and human rights. The former university building complex is situated within an area with several informal housing for refugees. During my fieldwork, I followed the activities in *Politechnio* on mostly on digital platforms. One particularly impactful event took place on 11 June 2019 on the eviction of the squats in Greece when this started to be major concern for many informal setting. I joined the event in the lecture hall, along with a wide profile of
participants from across the city. In the event, several refugees shared their experiences of eviction and other housing issues, while others offered suggestions for addressing these challenges (Figure 7.1). My most frequent engagement with open assemblies on site, however, took place in Communitism and Nosotros where I met people who work with refugees in Athens and across Greece.

7.2.1. Communitism

It's 19.22 at the moment and I am at Communitism. This is the first time I actually walked here from Omonia metro station. I felt a little uncomfortable but it was a 10 min walk, so that was fine. The previous times I came here, it was pretty late and dark. This time it was pretty bright with the sunlight, and it felt quite different. There is a coffee table and a projection screen in the room I sit in. One large sofa on the right with a colourful cloth on it. There is a circular table with real summery flowers on it. I hear the sounds of guitar strings, someone's practicing. Few people passed speaking Arabic. Someone is singing now alongside an electronic guitar. I see a poster saying:
'Tomorrow's weather forecast
Too futuristic for me'

Fieldnotes, 30 May 2019

As I walked through the streets of central Athens, I became familiar with the abundance of abandoned and dilapidated buildings that seemed to be a common feature of several neighbourhoods. Despite the bustling energy and lively atmosphere of the city, the crumbling architecture of these buildings created a striking contrast. This mismatch between the vitality of the city and the decrepit state of its buildings was particularly noteworthy, and one also manifested in the building of Communitism.

Communitism, located near the Metaxourgeio district in central Athens, served as a communal center for various artistic endeavors and collaborations. In contrast to the Victoria Square Project, which was analyzed in chapter VI, Communitism had a unique approach to its emergence as a cultural hub. The building is located close to the Metaxourgeio area in
Figure 7.1: Mapping of the Politecnio with notes from the discussion on the eviction of squats on 11 June 2019 (across pages)
central Athens. The leaders of the project described Communitism as an ‘open community of creative professionals’ aimed at cultural heritage commoning through repurposing abandoning buildings in a way to encourage community participation, having art at the forefront of their activities (Communitism, n.d.). The centre hosts Social Thursdays each week, which is an open community discussion meeting where people from around the city gather together to meet and discuss ideas and project proposals. The building is also the base for the newly formed Syrian and Greek Youth Forum which was formed to improve the means of inclusion for Syrian Refugees in Athens.

Throughout my stay in Athens, I conducted several visits to the space, attended activities and held conversations with a number of participants of the project and attendees of activities. This is also where I met P6 during a Social Thursday meeting, who is involved with community activities in the city and works at Schisto Refugee Camp. She was also part of the Art and Action Network which consisted of some teachers and artists in Greece. The network initiated a class at Communitism which was directed at refugee women and women with vulnerabilities in Athens to be held every Sunday to be led by the organisers of the group. The ground floor of the building was dedicated to weekly workshops which shared the floor with another project that was initiated in the space—the Syrian and Greek Youth Forum.

Communitism is located on Keramikou Street close to Exarcheia neighbourhood. The building consists of two wings and a courtyard where some of the social and creative activities take place (Figure 7.2). The building does not signal any significant improvement to its physical appearance. It is damaged for the most part with cracks and holes on the walls and paints of the walls stripped off. The building is maintained to an extent where it can function by provision of basic services such as electricity and furniture with finer details or repairsments unperformed. However, it serves as a vibrant social and artistic hub with most of its spaces used actively for gatherings and creative work including live performances.
Figure 7.2: Courtyard of Communitism where performative activities take place, photo taken on 31 May 2019 by the author

The different areas in the multi-storey building are used for regular or special events. These areas include a free shop, an exhibition area and meeting rooms where social gatherings and workshops are held (Figure 7.3-7).

I had a walk around the floor and passed across through a door. The stairs lead to another large hall where clothes were laid. Between two halls, there is a transient space - a side of which is broken and a hole was open at the size of a door. No further additional operations were made - it remains as a broken wall. There is a poster of Butterflies and Camels on the wall. Just by the wall, there is a short drawer with fresh flowers on it. Behind it is part of a mannequin located against a painted background which extends across three intersecting walls. This area receives daylight and creates a unique atmosphere on the way to the other hall.

Fieldnotes, 30 May 2019

The physical elements of the building such as walls, floors, corners and halls are used as part of artworks. The installations on the roof included tires that were used as seating for the
performances undertaken on the roof. Engaging the building elements and objects with the activities undertaken in the place, the building is kept in conversation with the activities within and around, giving it a dynamism with ever-changing physical disposition.

Figure 7.3 & 4: Inside a room at Communitism on 30 May 2019, photos by the author

Figure 7.5, 6 & 7: Images of the hall connecting two parts of the building on 30 May 2019 at Communitism, photos by the author

While working on my computer, I wanted to confirm that there’s going to be a concert tonight. And I asked the person who has been wandering around and who had suggested to turn the lights on for me – the man I had met the second time I went to the Social Thursday and he was preparing a calendar. He told me that there was going to be a concert in the courtyard and said ‘you will know when they arrive’.

They didn’t though – not while I was there. But apparently they came afterwards and it was a huge festival. I didn’t stay because it was already quite late by the time I left.
I only saw some videos on Facebook later and heard that it turned out to be a very big event. I met several people while I was waiting for the concert though. Two Greek men and some women. People often assumed that I had a certain familiarity or was part of the project and asked me what the place was about, and one of the girls told me that she wanted to get involved in something, and that she was curious about the activities. We had a look at the small leaflet which had a weekly program for Butterflies and Camels week at Communism, and there was a collective cooking event the next day. So we said we’d meet tomorrow for the event and see how it goes.

Fieldnotes, 30 May 2019

The evenings at Communism were rife with performative activities (Figures 7.4-7.6). A series of events were undertaken from 25 to 31 May 2019 with the name Butterflies and Camels. On 2 June 2019, Red Umbrella, an NGO dedicated to advocating the rights of sex workers, used the exhibition space at Communism to showcase artwork (Figure 7.8) and undertook a performative event in the courtyard (Figure 7.9-11).

Figure 7.8: Exhibition by Red Umbrella on 2 June 2019, photo by the author
Figure 7.9 & 10: A performative activity in the courtyard with Red Umbrella at Communitism on 2 June 2019, photos by the author

Figure 7.11: Before a live performance at Communitism on 12 June 2019, photo by the author
I have been hopeful about the activities of Communitism, because the place is always active, huge with different areas available for different purposes at different times. But what I have noticed is there are barely any migrant women in the place except maybe for the special occasions, while I have been able to see many men. Sadly, I have missed the Art and Action meetings for women, which was on a summer break.

Fieldnotes, 2 June 2019

Most events that were held in the place throughout my visits emphasised on themes such as diversity and inclusivity. The activities suggested openness, communication and a welcoming attitude for people with various profiles and backgrounds. Despite such premises, however, the manner of inclusivity offered by the place did not seem to attract many migrant women to the place. It rather displayed a specific cultural disposition which could be welcoming to certain people and groups while discouraging others.

A stark difference in terms of inclusivity would appear if inclusivity in Communitism would be compared to that which Jafra provided. Taking its motivation from the Palestinian cause, Jafra has had both historical and cultural understanding of some sensitivities of the geographies where many of their male and female refugees came from. In Communitism, the core group of refugees who were member of the project stood out almost as exclusive refugee members of the community, consisting also of only male members. During my several visits to the building and participation in the open activities undertaken in and around the building, I was not only unable to see any refugee women, but also noticed that the activities implicitly discouraged their participation through child-unfriendly performance shows and exhibitions with explicit content that would not speak to the cultural sensitivities that value a relative privacy of women, as my conversation with P3 also revealed. In the context of Communitism, and as especially manifested in the form of performative activities and exhibitions, inclusivity seemed to refer more to the marginalised communities in the neighbourhood that are sex workers—and trans-gender sex workers—, which also brought about other relevant matters of gender and identity. The way inclusivity was manifested here seemed to be in the expense of inclusivity of other marginalised groups. In both projects,
Jafra and Communism, therefore, underpinning ideologies determined the participating groups and attractiveness of these centres to the members of marginalised communities. In their own way, both engaged with their respective neighbourhoods and the issues they deemed important. While allowing opportunities of participation, inclusivity and equality are the overarching principles for both, the cultural and ideological differences created invisible layers of exclusion that are visible in the form of absence of some marginalised communities in favour of others from seemingly open and accessible sites, places and activities.
Figure 7.12: A section from a mapping practice depicting Communitism on 21 Feb 2019
7.2.2. Nosotros

Few steps from the Exarcheia Square, Nosotros is a free social centre which hosts events that concern the community and current issues in the neighbourhood. The location of the centre is important for its proximity to Exarcheia Square which became a symbol for political actions and demonstrations in central Athens. Throughout my fieldwork, I visited Nosotros multiple times to meet people who are involved with formal and informal accommodation of forcibly displaced people living in Athens. I also attended other activities in relation to the situations that arise from the contemporary climate within the city as a result of how forced displacement is received by people and the government. These matters are related to wider issues that concern the residents of the city such as economic situation and gentrification. Throughout my visits, several meetings, lectures and discussions were undertaken in the space in relation to various topics that concerned the urban life in the city (Figure 7.13). The participants included local and international academicians, activists, students and many people from the local area. The discussions were often held in both Greek and English. The events were announced mainly on social media. Leaflets and posters about the events in the centre and other places across Athens also covered the entrance of the building in which it is located. I met P7 at Nosotros during one of my visits to the centre. P7 is working for the Refugee Integration Centre by Evangelical Church and other training programmes addressing refugee women and children.
Part I presented two social centres which introduced me to two different sites of accommodation in Athens throughout my field trips: Schisto Refugee Camp and Refugee Integration Centre. Part II starts with a discussion on Schisto Refugee Camp and the Refugee Integration Centre based on our conversations with P6 and P7 respectively. These are followed by explorations on two informal accommodation sites I visited throughout my fieldwork, which are Hotel City Plaza and Jasmine School.
7.3. Part II: Sites of accommodation

7.3.1. Schisto Refugee Camp

During my field trips to Athens, I had conversations with several people who worked with residents of refugee camps in Greece. There was, however, often a major difficulty and sensitivity in terms of accessing and making research by being present in those settings. These are manifested as ethical concerns regarding camp residents, safety concerns regarding researchers and difficulties of communication with the administrative authorities. During one of my visits to Communitism where I attended a Social Thursday meeting, I met P6 who worked in Schisto Refugee Camp. This section is based on my in-depth interview with P6 about Schisto Refugee Camp undertaken in Communitism.

Located in northwest Athens, Schisto Refugee Camp is among the largest camps in Athens along with Eleonas, Malakasa and Skaramagas Refugee Camps. In a report published in 2016, Schisto Refugee Camp was noted to be “very recently and hastily completed” and lacking organisation (Bolani et al. 2016, p. 87). There have been improvements since including upgrades for the physical setting and enhanced educational facilities. P6 explained that the refugees in Schisto Refugee Camp live in containers since 2017 when the tents were replaced by them, each containing small groups and family units:

…they tried to put in each container a family, or two mothers with children – people like that. And they are not – they are trying to keep this that way but probably it’s very – probably in the following months they will bring more people from the islands, and they will have to put two families (P6, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019).

The containers are fully furnished and contain a kitchen where their residents can cook. By the time I undertook the interview in February 2019, there were several specialized people working in the camp including social workers, doctors, nurses and psychologists who had their offices and working spaces in the camp in different containers. There are also large containers in which social activities take place. The camp is located on a site which used to be owned by the army, and some of the buildings that belong to the army are used to serve
for several facilities in the camp. These include activity rooms for women, gym, a library where Arabic, Persian, Greek and English books could be found, and educational facilities (P6, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019). While explaining the facilities, P6 mentions gardens where people grew vegetables and animals the residents owned:

...in my camp most of them are from Afghanistan and from areas where they were, how to say, they were living through the land. And you'll see they have made small yards in front of the containers […]. They are really really beautiful. They have their own pets, they have dogs, animals, rabbits. (P6, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019).

P6 also mentioned how people decorated the containers they resided in: “Go inside their homes, you will see they’re so clean, they have the curtains, and it’s, it’s like home” (P6, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019). These practices show that despite the limitations the camp setting and the use of the containers as the housing units bring, some residents of the camp took initiative to transform the spaces they live in and appropriate them according to their habits and lifestyle preferences.

_Schisto Refugee Camp_ is situated away from the central areas of Athens. One of the issues regarding the camp in relation to its distant location is about the integration of its residents into the life in the city. P6, being affiliated with the educational coordination in the camp, explained the ways in which lack of integration of the children has attempted to be overcome through new policies introduced. Initially, the Greek Government initiated educational activities for children in the refugee camps through evening classes and opened Greek Schools where refugee children were taught by special education teachers. Upon the closure of borders, the efforts were made towards a more permanent solution which entailed the inclusion of the children of the refugee families through their admission to public Greek schools. The evening classes were not ceased completely, and they still operate for the newcomers and in islands where educational improvements take place at a slower pace (P6, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019).
While the improvements in educational system for the children of the refugees signal a way of moving beyond the confines of the refugee camp, their implications hint at the importance of other factors that needs to be addressed. P6 explained the prevailing unwillingness of some refugees and their children of using services despite their ample provision. She mentioned that although there is no restriction to access to education and buses are provided to take children in the camp to the schools in the city and bring them back, some children do not go to the school more than once a week as they are unwilling to wake up:

… we have buses for them every day to take them to—they don’t go by their own. And we have every need of—taking care of every need. And this is no good I think. No more. Because we have created some kind of—people with special needs. They are not ready to take care of their lives. They have this false idea that for everywhere they are going to have these services. I think this is not good (P6, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019).

P6’s statements hint at the issue of agency which was largely taken away from the camp residents as they were made dependant on service provision to engage with amenities in the city, while having limited ability to integrate with the life in the city by their own means and choices. The provision of help and services in a top-down approach in the form of ‘help’ and ‘aid provision’, P6’s account suggests, resulted in the problem of creating people with special needs (P6, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019). This resulted from a very limited agency of the residents in taking life choices and responsibilities as they are not prepared to take care of their lives in the new country they reside in. In the case of Schisto Refugee Camp, then, the mere provision of services and access to the city do not seem to work towards empowering refugees by increasing their sense of agency. Within the camp environment, however, there have been ways in which the residents of the camp exercised their agency especially in the form of transforming the spaces they live in.
7.3.2. Refugee Integration Centre

During one of my several visits to Nosotros, I met a member of Evangelical Church called P7 who has been taking part in running an integration centre for refugees in Athens. During our conversation, he explained certain activities of the Church in housing the refugees in Athens and across Greece. The idea of the centre was borrowed from a model in Germany called Refugio, based in Kreuzberg, Berlin (P7, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019), and it consists of a “combination of full-time staff and the kind of organic interaction with the church family” (P7, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019). The current integration centre accommodates maximum of four families for up to three months. It is located below a church space which consists of a room for worship, a kitchen and an activity area (Figure 7.14-16). The rooms open to a courtyard (Figure 7.14). There is a shared bathroom on the ground floor and another bathroom on the upper floor (P7, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019).

Figure 7.14: Sketches produced on site by the author on 14 February 2019
The integration centre is planned to be moved to another building which will provide more space for accommodation, and there will be separate entrances for the church and the rooms in which refugees stay, which is not the case at the moment. Each room will have their bathrooms. The new centre consists of three floors. The bottom two floors are planned to be rooms and living areas for refugee families. The top floor will be where the church services will be undertaken. Above these floors is the garret which will be used as an office space for the members of the church (P7, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019).

The admission to integration centre is based on a referential system, and only people with an official refugee status are accepted. There is a network which works across Greece from the islands to the mainland as part of the referential process for transition to the centre. *Gateways of Life* in Moria, for example, acts as a partner organisation and is part of the network. During their residence in the integration centre, social workers help the refugees with the process they need to go through to reside in the country. Despite provision of a level...
of assistance, however, there seems to be a strong emphasis on encouraging the refugees to be self-sufficient in tackling the problems they face in the new city they reside in:

...when it’s just about kind of filling up boxes, then, you kind of lose sights of the fact that people want to be viewed as individuals and people desperately need to regain the sense of agency. So they are constantly receiving things and being – stuff is being done to them, then, they are not yet being rehumanised (P7, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019).

Here, P7’s accounts support P6’s reflections in relation to the agency of refugees. During our conversation, P7 explained how they, as the members of the Church developing projects for refugees in Athens, tried to transform the support system for refugees in the form of top-down aid provision to those which instead on supporting them in navigating the new city and the systems they engage with. Other two layers of agency that came forth were concerned with ‘choices’ that the refugees would be able to make, and interacting with the communities and taking part in projects through various forms of ‘contribution’. One of the themes that came up in our talk was what he referred to as ‘rehumanising’ of the refugees which he explored further as follows:

...providing them a sense of agency, so allowing them to do things for the locals. So they often – so actually a lot of the stuff that Penny was doing with the FoodLab, that was very very intentionally – so we were very influenced by that, from seeing that first hand. (?) intentionally making sure that it was the refugees themselves that were planning, executing and leading the projects rather than, you know, with kind of the local kind of Greek or foreign partners, umm, kind of alongside them, being enablers rather than running the projects. […] not just about then receiving all the money from the projects, it’s so much more than that. But it shouldn’t be any less than that either, you know. And so yeah, things where they are able to feel that they have –it’s not much about power, it’s about agency, it’s a slightly different thing. It’s about them feeling that they have options, they are able to make choices, again, rather than just being directed […] (P7, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019).

P7 referred to the ‘sense of agency’ of refugees through being part of “planning, executing and leading the projects” as well as by means of “allowing them to do things for the locals” (P7, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019). *Options FoodLab*, which P7 mentioned as a project of influence, is an initiative that was set up in March 2015 in Greece. It consisted of a series of activities around food-making which was undertaken by collective endeavours of a multi-ethnic group towards establishing a self-employment model by operating around
Exarcheia. The initiative adopted an approach in which displaced people are actively involved in the organisation and undertaking of the events by cooking and providing catering services as active agents, who also earn from what they produce and share the profits.

The means which P7 mentioned as ways to improve the sense of agency of refugees included their involvement in small tasks through physical engagement such as helping with building, hosting guests in the house and to have ‘options’ to choose from:

…one time I remember, we organised a music event, this wasn’t something they were involved in but having the option of going with friends and family to listen to music – to a music event, was something they hadn’t been able to do the whole time they’d been in Greece. And so there is a lady who’s from Afrin, who’d been shot, and she turned around and kind of sits with my wife, she said this is the very first time that we have music in our lives, the whole time we’ve been in Europe, in Greece. And […] this is just a small thing for us but actually for them it’s kind of like there are new options entering my life. I’m able to choose now rather than being told, you know, this is your life. Actually, I can start living life the way, people in, kind of, in organised –let’s say- society are able to do by having various options – I can go to the park, […] I can attend a music event, I can cook dinner for friends, you know, all of this is kind of – it’s not just a process of integration to society or even just socialization, it’s this rehumanization where people feel that they are not just, the members of –active members of the society with a number, in like a social security number, but they are actually helping to build, they are being part of the people who are building the society (P7, personal communication, Feb 14, 2019).

As an example regarding having options, P7 mentioned a music event that was organised, as something entering the lives of the refugees as a choice, which they may choose to attend or not. P7 considers such increase of choices as moving beyond the process of integration or socialisation towards ‘rehumanisation’ and being active participants of the society.

There is not a standard way of transitioning to a permanent residence from the integration centre, which is to say that once the maximum duration of stay is achieved, some of the people who reside the integration centre end up in informal settings such as housing squats. Integration centre, therefore, is one of the ways in which some of the refugees begin to form relationships with the city of Athens.
Besides formal settings and housing projects, hundreds of forcibly displaced live in housing squats that are typically located in urban areas in Athens. Exarcheia is one of the neighbourhoods in Athens that accommodate some of these squats. Hotel City Plaza is the first informal accommodation I visited in my first trip to Athens in 2018. Among all squats, Hotel City Plaza was largely publicised and had gained an international reputation. During my first visit to the building, there was also an anti-racist group from Germany that was visiting.

When I entered, there was a group of people in the entrance. Two behind a table, three on the sofas on the right side. I said ‘hi’ and then sat on the sofa on the left side. They looked at me questioningly, and then they asked me why I was there. […] On the walls, there are hundreds of pictures and posters. There are slogans saying ‘no borders’, and some anti-patriarchal mottos. The corridors are full of lists which are for shifts. These include cleaning and kitchen work. Kitchen seems to be working
well. It seems to have enough equipment and there was food service while I was visiting. A young boy approached me on my way back from the kitchen, and asked me where I was from. I told him that I was from Turkey, and he walked back, looking disappointed.

Fieldnotes, 28 November 2018

Hotel City Plaza is located near Victoria Square in central Athens. The eight-storey building was collectively occupied in April 2016 by solidarity activists, students and refugees (Squire, 2018). In a booklet collectively produced and distributed on the reception area of Hotel City Plaza titled City Plaza: living resistance which is published two years from its opening avoids providing statistical data on the profile of the refugees but states that roughly 2200 migrants have resided in the building from 13 countries by then (City Plaza: living resistance, p. 5). Following my first visit on 28 November 2018, I visited the building again on 30 November for a performance by Muzikarama, a multi-ethnic music group that was performing at the common area on the first floor.

When I arrived, there were unfamiliar people at the reception. One guy asked me if I was there for Muzikarama, which I was, and told me to go upstairs. The hall was a mess and there was quite a crowd. There were photographs and posters hung on the walls. Some of them included protests against racism, and references to the recent events of racism. The group had several songs to play in different languages. It was like a festival, both people in the building and from outside participated. Many watched or clapped hands, but a group of people also danced in the small hall in front of the musicians. I left towards the middle of the night, and they were still playing songs - although they had said it was the last song for the one I heard the last.

Fieldnotes, 30 November 2018

The building was lively with people coming and going, and the walls were covered with hand-drawn pictures, photographs, posters and lifts for duty shifts. The hall was slowly getting more and more crowded by residents of the place as well as visitors. There was a wide range of people from different ages and ethnicities. During Musikarama's performance,

15 The publication date is not specified in the booklet, however, there is an indication of the time of its preparation through the following statement: “It is given that Hotel City Plaza will not last forever. However, two years on, Hotel City Plaza has become a symbol of struggle against the European border regime, …” (p. 7).
several people from audience joined by singing together, dancing, rhyming or cheering (Figure 7.18-20). The songs played were in different languages and of different styles.

Hotel City Plaza also maintained an active presence on digital platforms, where its community disseminated information and updates pertaining to the issues faced by refugees, as well as the challenges encountered by solidarity groups and individuals advocating for the rights of refugees. This was exemplified by the frequent posts on the platform depicting demonstrations in Athens in response to the substandard treatment and conditions faced by refugees, as well as similar events in other locations worldwide, including neighbouring countries such as Turkey and Serbia, as well as more distant regions such as North Africa and Central America (Figure 7.21). By the active use of digital platforms and social media, Hotel City Plaza not only engaged with the broader geographies of migration through physical means, such as providing a space for intercultural interactions within its building facilities, but also facilitated the exchange of knowledge and encouraged further action and solidarity through digital means.

Just after the Muzikarama event, I visited the building again on 1 December 2018 for a conversation with a person from the solidarity group about the squat. We sat at the Café which was near the hall where Muzikarama held its performance two days ago. During
Figure 7.21: A map displaying public posts from the Facebook page of Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza (Hotel City Plaza) from 30 November to 21 December 2018 and showing various locations mentioned in the posts (across pages).
this conversation, I also had a chance to observe the everyday life and activities in the building. It was a hub of multi-culturalism where people with different stories and backgrounds shared a living, and with children speaking multiple languages fluently.

During our conversation, three beautiful girls came and started talking to [her]. They could shift between English and Greek, and they were extremely polite in their actions towards me. One of them liked my pen and kindly asked me if she could try using it. I gave her my pen and notebook. She wrote her name several times, showing me how she could draw the 's', then her friend asked me to take over, and wrote her name. They left shortly after, thanking me again for using my pen. I told [her] that I was very impressed by their command of different languages, and she told me that the children there knew Arabic and Persian at least to a degree to communicate basically, and also Greek and English.

Fieldnotes, 1 December 2018

During the course of my fieldwork in Athens, I found myself in the midst of a heated discourse surrounding the eviction of housing squats. These squats have been homing forcibly displaced people in Athens for a number of years, particularly since the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal. Regardless of their official status as refugees or asylum seekers, these squats have provided a space for affected individuals to reside and participate in social activities within urban areas. However, as they operate outside of government regulations, and some having issues with the official owners of these buildings, they have faced various pressure since their inception. Despite these challenges, the occupants of these squats have steadfastly resisted eviction efforts.

With the parliamentary elections of the summer of 2019, the then-governing coalition of SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) was defeated by ND (New Democrats), and the evictions of these squats began to accelerate. In the absence of alternative housing options and with the continued influx of migrants, conditions in refugee camps have since significantly worsened (Mylonas, 2020).
Figure 7.22: A section from a mapping practice depicting Hotel City Plaza on 30 Nov 2018
7.3.4. *Jasmine School & the Kids’ Club*

Another housing squat I visited was a former school, called *Jasmine School*. I first visited *Jasmine School*, also known as the 2nd School, on the suggestion of a member of the organization *KHORA*. I had attended a *KHORA* open assembly at their new building in Kipselis on June 4th, 2019 to discuss my research project and met one of the members who volunteered at the *Free Shop*. The next day, I went to the *Free Shop* to chat with him and learn more about how it worked. After our conversation, he told me about the *Jasmine School* squat, where he taught math classes to kids and invited me to join him to visit it that afternoon. The squat was located on Sourmeli Street, a 20-minute walk from the *Free Shop* and close to other squats like the *Hotel City Plaza*. When I arrived there, the courtyard was full of residents and the building, which used to be a school, then housed many families in rooms that were converted from classrooms.

*Across the entrance is the class. [He] gives maths and English classes here two days a week. There are kids from all ages. There are five kids at the moment, four of whom are girls. And there is a younger kid walking around, going in and out. The door is open, people come and go. The surfaces are all damaged and broken. Between the hall and the stairs is a cloth as a division for the spaces.*

*Inside the class, there are crafts and paintings made by the kids. [He] tells me that these are from months ago. There are some toys at the back. [He] tells me that they had 'learning by playing' hours, which no longer took place because it simply turned into throwing toys.*

Fieldnotes, 5 June 2019

Among the squats, *Jasmine School* was one with an easier access with a courtyard of a former school which provides an intermediary space between the school and the street. Volunteers used the ground floor for their activities, however, the families did not allow visits upstairs where they resided. I visited the squat multiple times and the gate of the school courtyard remained open in all of them, giving it an accessible feel. During my first visit, there were many people in the courtyard, most of whom were men. In the courtyard, there was a prefabricated shelter on the left side of the courtyard where young people were seated.
and had conversation among themselves. There was a playground towards the end of the
courtyard (Figure 7.23).

Figure 7.23: Playground in the courtyard of Jasmine School, photo taken on 11 June 2019 by the author

I met other volunteers on the courtyard by the playground, some of which were the people
who constructed this structure. They formed a group called Kids’ Club which operated as the
kids section of the old KHORA. Behind this playground, the kids built a structure in the form
of a poultry house where they can enter through the doors they built at several places
(Figure 7.24 & 25). Their projects included the building of a ‘house’ in the courtyard, which
was decided and executed by kids themselves. When I looked above at my right, I saw that
most windows at the building were open. These were the classrooms where people lived.
The families separated these classrooms using fabrics as curtains. In the building where
around 230 people reside, there were only two male and two female toilets and the number
could not be increased.
While *Jasmine School* provided space for a significant number of individuals in need of housing, the conditions within the building were dire. Furthermore, the transformation of the building from a school to a squat presented a range of additional difficulties compared to other squats such as *Hotel City Plaza*, which possessed a spatial configuration that was better suited for residence. Despite these limitations, the *Jasmine School* squat offered some opportunities for social interaction among residents, as the classrooms on the ground floor and the schoolyard provided some communal spaces. The *Kids’ Club* was able to operate in the schoolyard and volunteers could provide classes and activities for the children and adults living there.

### 7.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced two social centers and four accommodation sites across Athens that I visited throughout my fieldwork from November 2018 to June 2019. Located in central Athens, *Communitism* and *Nosotros* acted as nodes through which I gained access to knowledge about various sites of accommodation for refugees. These were also sites where
people who worked with refugees connected and exchanged knowledge, ideas and experiences. P6’s activities within the city and in Schisto Refugee Camp facilitated connectivity across different geographies of Athens that have been influenced by displacement. On the other hand, P7 attended meetings at Nosotros and explained to me that these interactions with other people and knowledge on their activities inspired them in developing their programs and vision in the accommodation of refugees and the type of support they could provide for them.

In Athens, the inadequate availability of housing for refugees has led to the emergence of various forms of accommodation. This chapter presented an examination of some of these options. While Eleonas Refugee Camp was one of the closer refugee camps to the city centre despite being located in an industrial area, Schisto Refugee Camp was located in the outskirts of Athens and offered limited opportunities for its residents to integrate into the city life. Chapter V showed that for P8, a resident of Eleonas Refugee Camp, participating in activities such as working at ANKAA, managing its garden, and producing furniture at the workshop were of significant, as they provided opportunities for interaction outside the camp. P8 also demonstrated little inclination towards personalizing his living space or building relationships with his fellow camp residents. P8 also put very little effort to personalize his space in the camp, or getting to know the people he lived with there.

On the other hand, P6, who worked in Schisto Refugee Camp, suggested that being contained in the camp and having little responsibility in managing their lives or providing for themselves, the residents of Schisto Refugee Camp had limited opportunities to practice their agency. Similar concerns were raised by other volunteers working with refugees as presented in Chapter V and Chapter VI. Some residents, however, personalised their living spaces and engaged in gardening activities, transforming their surroundings. This suggests that within the perceived confines of a refugee camp, some camp residents performed
agency in a way to appropriate their lived spaces and surroundings in the absence of sufficient access to the urban life.

Among the housing options in the central Athens is Refugee Integration Centre which was developed by the Evangelical Church. Despite its distinct motivations, the project was informed by the communications, exchange of ideas and community practices among people who work with refugees. The two informal accommodation centres; Hotel City Plaza and Jasmine School presented precarious conditions for their residents due to limited resources, physical and legal restrictions of the buildings. Among them, Hotel City Plaza hosted several public activities including live music performances. These performances are announced on social media and not only attended by its residents but also by other citizens and international volunteers across Athens. Its social media presence was extended to news exchange on wider geographies of forced migration around the world. In these ways, the building claimed its connection to the wider geographies of the city and beyond. Another squat, Jasmine School is among the most accessible squats, with less popularity and publicity than those of Hotel City Plaza. International volunteers undertake teaching activities with the residents of the building.

The four accommodation types presented in this chapter are temporary sites with significant limitations. While Schisto Refugee Camp delays a normalised lifestyle for displaced people with limited access to city life and hinders possibilities of community building due to limited encounters with the citizens, informal accommodation sites such as Hotel City Plaza and Jasmine School fall short of providing secure living conditions. While these alternatives attempt to tackle the failure of the government in providing adequate housing for refugees, the housing squats were prone to vulnerabilities due to the constant threat of eviction at any time, and the lack of stability for their residents. Despite these limitations, the communal activities like concerts at Hotel City Plaza or classes and activities for children in and around
Jasmine School can be seen as attempts to foster social and cultural integration of residents with the surrounding community. Such activities not only improve the living conditions for the residents but also facilitate their integration by creating social and cultural ties between the residents and the larger community.
Chapter VIII: Reflections—Athens as a Learning Site

When I spoke with the co-founder of *documenta 14*, she commented that despite the exhibition's title of "Learning from Athens," they did not learn anything of significance during their brief time in the city. This sentiment was echoed by a long-term volunteer, who moved between the US and Greece, and felt that each time she returned to Greece, she had a deeper understanding of how much she didn't know. Similarly, this study is by no means a comprehensive examination of the geographies of forced migration in Athens, but rather a glimpse into the dynamic nature of this issue and an attempt to engage with its complexity.

By drawing on the findings of Chapters V to VII, which mapped the multi-layered connections across specific sites and activities related to forced migration in post-2015 Athens, this chapter situates Athens as a learning site. It uses the framework developed in Chapter 2.8 in the analysis of Athens as a temporary home, which consist of an investigation of sites of forced migration as (1) multi-scalar geographies (Blunt, & Dowling, 2006), (2) transformative agents (Miller, 2001), and (3) sites of social processes (Miller, 2001). To this end, this chapter is structured into three main sections. Section 8.2 provides a thematical analysis of interconnected themes that have emerged from the findings of the fieldwork presented from Chapters V to Chapter VII. This consists of a multi-scalar analysis of the city of Athens posited as a temporary home for the forcibly displaced people. It explores the emerging themes from the analysis of interviews and fieldnotes to map out the transformative agencies which act and are acted upon, and social processes as the multiple layers of geographies of migration in post-2015 Athens.

The reflections in 8.2 explore (1) the unfolding of an ecology of networks (see Figure 8.1), some of which span country borders and continents; some connecting hotspots to mainland
Greece, some various cities in mainland Greece, and others the neighbourhoods in Athens; (2) intercultural encounters within the city and through the activities of initiatives that work with refugees, (3) a sense of agency and humanising as emergent principles that transform activities involving refugees through negotiation and learning, (4) creative potentials which connect to the cultural and political climate in Athens—particularly that which developed since 2000s through the activities associated with solidarity movements and anti-authoritarian practices that precede the recent migratory flows, (5) the agencies of various buildings across Athens as the sites which host, witness and interact with some of the activities and transformations in relation to forced migration in Athens; and finally (6) the frictions as another layer of analysis manifested through presence or absence of women from particular sites.

In line with the framework presented in Chapter 2.8, the term ‘temporary home’ refers to a multi-scalar and transformative process through which these themes have emerged and social, material and cultural processes are enacted as unfolded throughout my study. The discussion on the emergent themes is followed by an exploration of my mapping practices in Section 8.3 as a method of site analysis which visualise further layers of temporal and material realities. In these mappings, different layers of visual and textual documentation were juxtaposed in order to expose the various dimensions of ‘temporariness’—in contrast to home as a fixed site of familiarity—, as well as ‘complexities’—as opposed to abstract shelter—both in terms of my activities and presence on the sites throughout my fieldwork, and of the compositions presented as visual materials which captured particular moments and assemblages of these social and material complexities in the form of photography, note taking, and sketching.
8.1. Home-in-the-making

This part of the Chapter presents the emergent landscapes of forced migration in Athens shaped by the migratory events in post-2015 Athens by focusing on the themes emerged in the case study presented from Chapter V to Chapter VII.

8.1.1. An Ecology of networks

Chapter III showed that Greece is one of the countries with hotspots to receive migrants. Hotspots, formerly referred to as reception facilities, are the sites at the external borders of European countries, operating with a goal to “better coordinate EU agencies’ and national authorities’ efforts […] on initial reception, identification, registration and fingerprinting of asylum-seekers and migrants” as stated in a Research Paper published by the European Parliamentary Service (EPRS) (Mentzelopoulou, & Luyten, 2018, p. 1). The ‘hotspot approach’ was introduced as part of the European Agenda on Migration on April 2015 when an unprecedented number of refugees arrived at the EU (p. 1). These sites which were built as part of crisis management endeavours for arrivals by the sea are now overcrowded and fail to provide the migrants with sufficient living conditions, risking their health and safety. The report published in June 2018 by EPRS states the three of five hotspots in Greece to be overcrowded, which are in Chios, Lesbos and Samos (Mentzelopoulou, & Luyten, 2018, p. 3).

Hotspots in Athens are rendered by precarious and inhumane situations people find themselves in when they arrive at Greece, and many volunteers, groups and NGOs have been dedicated to support newcomers at these locations. As stated by several people I interviewed in Athens, it is common practice for volunteers who began by volunteering at the borders where there is constant need for additional support to move to mainland Athens to work in different frameworks as part of established networks or organisations, or by initiating their own practice. Mainland Athens withholds precarity that is most apparent in the hotspots to various degrees, and the dignity it provides for people is relative both in formal and
informal sites and settlements. This thesis finds connections between the initiatives that work at the hotspots, and those that operate in mainland. Such connections allow a reference system through which people on the mainland are informed about new cases and needs of particular individuals and families. There is a wide system of networks, operating both on physical site, but also through digital means which allows people to seek accommodation, legal advice and other forms of support for the newcomers. Most of the squats, refugee camps, initiatives and project explored from Chapter V to VII had associated pages on prominent social media platforms (e.g. ANKAA, Eleonas Refugee Camp, KHORA, VSP, ECHO Mobile Library, Jafra, Mazi Housing Project, Communitism, Nosotros, Jasmine School and Hotel City Plaza). These pages are sometimes used to create awareness about the current news on present inequalities in Athens and beyond, and to announce individual and collaborative events undertaken on their physical site. In Chapter IV, I presented these digital means as having informed my fieldwork in Athens and the activities I attended. These endeavours, although limited in comparison to the scale of the problems newcomers face upon their arrival to Greece, kept people from various groups, NGOs, cooperatives and grassroots initiatives connected and informed in the search for convenient contacts and solutions for displaced people. This was especially evident through the use of digital platforms where there was open access, and members of these groups could equally participate once they joined these platforms.

Besides the connections between hotspots and mainland Athens, this thesis finds out focus-based connections both within Greece and across countries. Among them, Chapter VI finds connection between Amigos de Ritsona and Mazi Housing Project as initiatives focused on the problems of accommodation. The ways in which these projects are shaped are based on the experiences through practices on site, where these focus areas begin to emerge. Amigos de Ritsona, for example, is a Spanish organisation which started as a project based in the Ritsona Refugee Camp, and moved to the urban space to tackle the accommodation problem, which has appeared to be a pressing issue. Similarly, Mazi Housing Project, which
is funded by *Amigos de Ritsona* is developed informed by the experiences of its members in Athens while volunteering in other projects including *Khora*, which had an accommodation working group. Throughout these learning and negotiation processes on site and across initiatives, accommodation for young single men is identified as a major problem, and volunteers across several organisations gathered to found *Mazi Housing Project* which addressed this problem in particular.

Embodied engagement of people working with refugees on site is enriched by profound social interactions with refugees and other people working with refugees. This did not only help volunteers and other people who work with refugees to identify and be responsive to the problems, but it also enabled shared principles to prevail across these initiatives. During our conversations, some of the interviewees established their connections to various organisations that have inspired them to adopt shared notions, while others pointed out specific influences. For example, Chapter VII notes that a member of the Evangelical Church who is responsible for the *Refugee Integration Centre* stated that they were influenced by *Options FoodLab Project*. *Options FoodLab Project* was based on the participation of refugees in the planning, management and execution of a project, whereby a conception of refugees as receivers and the locals as the givers was challenged. The project reinstated refugees as agents who contributed to change, taking active roles in the process from planning to execution of a project. This way, *Options FoodLab Project* reflects the principles solidarity movements are based on as explored in Chapter III, which also informs the operational systems of the squats in Athens. According to my conversation with the member of the Church, these principles are observed in the program of the *Refugee Integration Centre* which prioritise the sense of agency of refugees. Such an approach is also evident in the change of programmes in other centres opened by the Evangelical Church. A training centre in Exarcheia for women which is run by the Church, for example, shifted focus from an aid-based approach to a training-based approach.
These experiences demonstrate an ecology which is shaped by negotiations of people from different projects and initiatives. Chapter VII discussed how social centres such as Nosotros, and Communitism facilitate these discussions and negotiations among people across Athens community activities and digital platforms. Despite various ideologies and inclinations that underpin the activities of those who work with refugees, these social spaces are generally declared inclusive with their doors open to people with different profiles and views. Such openness, however, did not always guarantee the elimination of all forms of exclusion. The frictions which hinder widely held principles of participation and equality among solidarity groups to be acted out to their full potential in practice by focusing on two overlapping issues are reflected on 8.2.6 subsection.
8.1.2. Intercultural encounters

My fieldwork from 2018 to 2019 in Athens reveals a mingling of activities related to forcibly displaced people with this existing political climate in Athens. This is especially manifested through a significant involvement of civil people/solidarity groups in supporting forcibly displaced people upon their arrival to Athens. As presented in Chapter III, political resistance against austerity measures and anti-immigrant policies began to spring in early 2000s in Athens. During this time, solidarity initiatives emerged and took political action in the form of demonstrations and occupation of spaces especially in central Athens. Creative activities mostly in the form of street art have also flourished.

Throughout my visits and engagement with the sites which are transformed by migratory flows to Athens, an ecosystem of projects has unfolded across the city which has connections to other parts of Greece, Europe and across continents. The dynamics of the initiatives that I investigated, however, vary. The founders and members of initiatives range from local people to international volunteers from Northern Europe and North America. Among them, ANKAA was founded by Luxembourgian women and KHORA with the involvement of British and North Americans. Both the increasing diversity as a result of migratory flows from the neighbouring countries and more distant geographies, and the presence of international volunteers resulted in interethnic coexistence in the urban space in Athens.

8.1.3. Sense of agency/rehumanising

My conversations with people working with refugees in Athens revealed two identifiable notions of ‘agency’. In Chapter VII, these are referred to as ‘agency’, ‘sense of agency’ or ‘rehumanising’ by the participants, referring to autonomous decision-making processes and a level of self-sufficiency. Two overlapping categories were identifiable as common approaches to the understanding of sense of agency in the context of forced migration in
Athens, which are 1) decision-making and 2) application/acquisition of skills to be independent.

**Decision-making.**

The first of these two categories depend on options being available to forcibly displaced people. These options include life decisions such as choosing where to live and how to live. In terms of the (im)mobility of refugees, this is one of the areas that pose major challenges especially for refugees with little to no means. Refugee camps across Athens are bounded by limitations that restrict their movement. As explained by a resident of *Eleonas Refugee Camp* in Chapter V, it is not possible for a resident to maintain a place in the camp if they secured a job even if temporary, and it was difficult to secure a job which provides financial means to rent a flat. Besides, some refugees find it more difficult to find flats for rent as the homeowners are unwilling to rent their houses to refugees from particular countries. These chain effects related to residence and income regarding the life cycle of some refugees, especially those with no means or social networks to support them, create a loop of dependency in which decision making on life matters cannot be practiced. Such dependency is primarily related to the exclusion of refugees from the job market in practice. That is, even though a refugee who resides in a camp has the right to work, the practicalities force them to stay out of job market to secure a place to live. This presents a situation where refugees were granted only relative agency within this loop.

The forms of relative agency out of the work force was often practiced through decision-making in the undertaking of everyday activities. This aspect relates to the availability of a range of accessible social and creative activities in the city. This thesis finds many initiatives and projects that seek to elevate a sense of agency for refugees and facilitate enaction of agency by creation of such sites of engagement and participation. Providing a relative sense of agency, however, these practices do not necessarily tackle the loop of dependency that concerns life decisions for refugees. This results mainly from the lack of involvement of
refugees in the job market and not taking part in the economic system—stuck in volunteering/humanitarian endeavours.

Application/Acquisition of skills to be independent.

Chapter V and VI presented that KHORA, Jafra, ANKAA, ECHO Mobile Library provided workshops and trainings for people to practice and acquire skills. The language courses were the most demanded. English and Greek were commonly taught in the centres which offered language training, but other languages such as German were also taught. Workshops included training in crafts, but also, in ANKAA, digital skill training was also provided. Horizon Boys by Evangelical Church provided advanced tools and technologies for children to experiment with. These were some ways in which forcibly displaced people were prepared to enhance their skills to build a life in Greece or other countries in Europe they would travel to settle in.

Refugees did not only have the role of a student in these training programmes. In ANKAA and Jafra, for example, some refugees worked also as instructors who teach languages or other crafting skills. This allowed a knowledge exchange where the humanitarian giver and receiver dynamics were no longer practiced, and refugees were not considered to be starting from scratch to learning without having any prior skills and knowledge. Instead, their contribution to knowledge was facilitated through skill-sharing and teaching in these classes and workshops. Beside these activities, Chapter VI and VII showed the foundation of Handala Project in Jafra, Syrian and Greek Youth Forum and Zorostio Project in Communism as examples of active involvement of refugees in founding initiatives that engage with the cityscape of Athens.

The chronological transformation of trainings is also notable. Similar to the journeys of volunteers from the hotspots to mainland Athens to move from aid provision to long-term projects engaging refugees, such transformation is perceivable in the changing programs of
some projects in Athens. As I pointed out in section 8.2.1., such transformations are informed by a network of relationships and negotiations that are made available through physical and digital social platforms across Athens. These transformations entail more focus on training and support directed to facilitation of independence rather than mere provision of aid and supplies, or in addition to those. Digital literacy classes at ANKAA and introduction of activities such as CV preparation are examples for such endorsements.

8.1.4. Creative potentials

The concept of ‘creativity’ in this thesis unfolds two sets of practices that are interrelated but not reducible to each other in relation to the ways it emerged throughout the analysis of the fieldwork as presented from Chapter V to VII. The first approach to creativity concerns the agency of refugees and people who work with them. This is related to the agencies of refugees and how these are practiced in a more comprehensive sense, ranging from community-making practices to participating in protests.

The second approach is narrowly focused on artistic activities. As the artistic activities embody a wide set of practices involving performance, the distinction between two approaches is arguably indeterminable. In Athenian context in particular, the latter is often related to political agency. As discussed in Chapter III, creative practices, especially in the form of street art or public performances, are undertaken as means of communication and dialogue.

Among the sites I visited, Victoria Square Project stands out as a creative event in its own right, emerged as part of the art exhibition documenta 14 and declared to be a ‘social sculpture’. Since its emergence, it hosted art activities and collaborations with artists and creative initiatives. Creativity in the way it is practiced in Victoria Square Project extends beyond art as a practice for the privileged or of the privileged. It encourages community
participation through gatherings for food, dance, and various crafts, operating as a social hub in its neighbourhood.

Appropriating an abandoned building, Communitism sets out a more radical example with a focus on protection of heritage through creative activities. Creativity in their practice is also embedded in engagement of communities in making and appropriating a social and physical environment, manifested first as the occupation and use of the Communitism building. Art and Action activities take place in the large rooms of the neo-classical building, alongside weekly social meetings where the seeds of new initiatives are planted. These practices signify an oscillation between creativity as artistic activity and practice of agency at the heart of Athens in Metaxourgeio neighbourhood. In ANKAA, there is a continuous activity of production in the forms of jewellery, signboards and various furniture. These are used in the building, or showcased and sold in exhibitions. Encouraging circular economy, these practices revolve around using scrap material at workshops. These practices challenge precarity and restrictions in the form of creative action, engaging imperfect buildings and the communities in the making. Section 8.3. explores these overlapping socio-material processes further through reflecting on a series of mapping practices. The next two sections reflect on the frictions as sites of challenges during these socio-material processes.

8.1.5. The Agency of buildings: Place-bound manifestations of political action

My visits to Athens were marked by my engagement with either unpolished, incomplete buildings which were maintained at a basic level, or still in the process of renovation. Victoria Square Project, which was better developed in terms of its physical amenities, had an incomplete notion through an open plan and flexibility that rendered the building in process, shaped by people’s engagement and activities.
All the buildings I visited in central Athens had deep connection to their neighbourhood and their socio-spatial context. Among them, Communitism was occupied to repurpose cultural heritage in a way to foster a dynamic use by the neighbouring communities. Putting it side by side with refugee squats, the founding members of Communitism refer to these occupied spaces as “reservoirs of hope and solidarity” which use “creativity, imagination and open-minded policies” (Communitism, May 2019). In another note, it is defined as a “social experiment” (Communitism, 2018). These remarks foster a situated approach to the project in which the building is considered not only as part of a historical continuum whereby a neoclassical building is attempted to be revived, but also as central to facilitating social and cultural engagement for its contemporaries. The building embodies a history the modern Athens has been through, signifying a way in which the abandoned buildings in the city centre can be revitalised. It is a typical neoclassical building surrounded by polykatoikias in a dense neighbourhood, and its physical architectural elements—its courtyard, stairs, walls, rooms, hallways, penthouse—used to gather and share, mostly in the form of the practice and display of various art activities. The activities undertaken within the centre sought to engage neighbouring communities, which included collaborations with initiatives that focus on rights of the marginalised in these communities such as Red Umbrella.

Similarly, Victoria Square Project was created with strong focus on the neighbourhood and its historical transformation, aiming to respond to its contemporary experiences. Defined as a ‘living room’, it works with similar principles of equal access and participation, aiming for social and cultural engagement, as well as creation of communities. In terms of its activities, Victoria Square Project also engages with the artscapes of Athens, and the building mediates this interaction through its open interior spaces, glass walls, façades, announcement board with posters, indoor and outdoor furniture and changing layouts to engage people in various ways in the use of its spaces and activities.
Social nodes which are in conversation with their neighbourhood are not limited to the initiatives which put artistic endeavours at forth. Central Athens, especially Exarcheia, accommodates various social centres which facilitate casual and special social events. Among them, Nosotros is a free social centre in the heart of Exarcheia, where discussions are held around issues related to the neighbourhood and wider Athens through meetings and public lectures. Politechnio is another example of occupied buildings where open assemblies are held to discuss current matters such as the eviction of the squats (Figure 8.2).

Despite a prevailing notion of temporariness, these spaces operate as nodes through which social change is facilitated. Referring to the contemporary urban form of Athens, Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou (2011) observe that as a result of the dense urban blocks and narrow streets in Athens (p. 35):

> private and public life interact in its hallways, its balconies and façades...—multiple signs of communication transforming the impersonal shell of the building into a dynamic living organism that constantly beats, yells, makes a multitude of noises, falls in love, and quarrels.

The geographies of forced migration in post-2015 Athens in these cases, therefore, engage with the ways of communication through the means of urban form. The degree to which these endeavours are successful in their particular objectives is open to discussion, however, these spaces continue to be part of an on-going process that is part of Athens’ urban history, as well as that of its permanent and temporary inhabitants.

8.1.6. Sites of friction

Linguistic and cultural issues

As I discussed in 8.1.2., people from around the world come and participate in the endeavours concerning refugees in Athens. As the relevant social projects work in a state of flux, it is common for their programs to be adjusted according to the needs and demands of potential participants of these spaces and of wider geographies in Athens. These are often
decided upon assemblies where members of particular groups or projects participate, but are also informed by public meetings, discussions, lectures and demonstrations. A heterogenous interculture participation, however, is not always achieved. Even though the initiatives are particularly targeted towards refugees, such as in KHORA, it is common for very few to no refugees to participate in decision-making processes. This resulted in endeavours that refugees were not interested in attending, and activities undertaken in open spaces ending up not receiving attention from target groups. These situations did not only limit the responsiveness of the events proposed by the initiatives that lacked attendance of their target groups, but also an overall communication gap between people who are members of these groups and share the same language, and refugees. Two of the interviewees in this study who work with refugees, one North American and one Palestinian, pointed out the importance of cultural liaisons in relation to the lack or presence of a strong interaction among people. While this stood out in my conversations with members of KHORA and Jafra, however, in my conversation with P8, who resided in Eleonas Camp, such differences appeared to be motivations to learn and interact with people from different cultures who speak different languages.

**Presence and absence of migrant women**

Solidarity groups in Athens share fundamental principles such as equality, inclusion and participation. However, particular ideological inclinations of groups and their level of ideological engagement differ. Such differences sometimes cause frictions and discontent towards practices and decisions of among individuals and groups. Another aspect of ideological inclination concerns the presence and participation of women in these places.

There has been notable involvement of local and international women volunteers in the ecosystem of networks in Athens. The founding members of ANKAA and Communitism were women. ScrapCoop team consists of both female and male instructors who work in the workshop. Many women participated both in classes and management at Jafra, and Victoria
Square Project. However, participation of refugee women in some sites was visibly limited. This was most evident at Communitism, which set inclusion and equality as a predominant principle. Communitism functions as a social centre which is anchored in the history of the neighbourhood and is dedicated to vitalise the neighbourhood it is situated in. It also facilitated the foundation of the Syrian and Greek Youth Forum. However, the level of participation of migrant women was visibly low in this centre. Although attracted some local women, the creative activities by KHORA in collaboration with Victoria Square Project also failed to attract much attention from migrant women, and no women apart from the core members participated in the KHORA open assembly I attended. This was an issue that was raised among the members, but yet to be resolved. ScrapCoop similarly tried to encourage migrant women’s participation in the workshop, but their participation was considerably limited.

Studies on Melissa Day Centre in Athens demonstrate a significant involvement of migrant women in networking, community making and other creative activities (e.g. Christopolou, & Leontsini, 2017; Mehra 2020). This shows that migrant women are actively involved in the dynamic social processes that keep shaping Athens, but their presence is not equally balanced across initiatives. Two issues that came out throughout the interviews have been lack of sufficient facilities for child-care and lack of familiarity to cultural nuances. While P3 from Jafra pointed out the advantages of shared culture in reaching out people and creating spaces that respond to women’s preferences, P5 from KHORA drew attention to the difficulties in communication between the English-speaker members of the community and non-English speakers from the migrant community. In terms of women’s participation, this resulted in lack of an understanding of their preferences, and therefore, lack of strategies to encourage women’s engagement.
8.2. Mapping the ‘thresholds’

This section discusses the socio-material connections on the sites of forced migration across Athens and beyond, based on my fieldwork in Athens from 2018 to 2019 through a series of mapping practices. The mapping practices in this case study have been used both as means of investigation and representation. To reiterate, Chapters V to VII mapped out the sites of investigation through textual compositions accompanied with images. Their narration is based on the studies of the materials gathered from the sites in multiple configurations, leading to a non-linear and heterogenous studies of the sites.

This section draws upon the visual mapping practices derived predominantly from the photography, architectural drawings, sketching and various other media forms. It concludes four strategies that underpin these mapping practices which are (1) studying maps through tracing walks, (2) deconstructing to recompose, (3) zooming-in and (4) zooming-out.

Drawing from the methodological approach presented in these thesis, these practices situate me as a researcher(observer/perceiver) in these mapping practices as a non-universal subject in at least two ways: through photographic depictions which represent my perspective of the scene that is captures, and by exposing ecologies of forced migration as they were revealed to me in a particular manner and order, within the spatial and temporal limits of my presence and experience.

These mapping practices oscillate between scales to reveal multiple layers of connections. Importantly, in line with Stavrides’s conception of city as a “threshold” (2010, 2015, 2019), these practices rethink Athens as constantly in the making beyond enclaves. Stavrides (2010) talks about “a city of thresholds” in the following terms:

A potentially liberating city can be conceived not as an agglomerate of liberated spaces but as a network of passages, as a network of spaces belonging to nobody and everybody at the same time, which are not defined by a fixed-power geometry but are open to a constant process of (re)definition.
With this conception, Athens is delegated from its assumed role as a ‘gate’ to Europe to a ‘threshold’, whereby its spaces are constantly produced and reproduced by its temporary and more permanent inhabitants.

The mapping practices presented in this thesis are produced by the composition of topographical maps and CAD drawings whereby these are explored through photographs, fieldnotes, and other materials that depict temporal and dynamic state of the places through their appropriation and performative activities of their inhabitants. These practices are underpinned by my embodied experience on the field, and are thereby perspectival. The mapping practices tackle a de-historicised and abstracted conception of temporary living in forced migration by exploring the relationship of buildings and sites to their surroundings, neighbourhoods, and wider geographies across the city.

Photographs constitute an essential part of the mapping practices in this thesis. Presenting a pictorial complexity, the photographs are considered as sites of complex meaning which convey more than abstract depiction of architectural drawing. With the use of photography in my mapping practices, I sought to retain a level of complexity in partial depiction of the buildings and the sites I captured. My focus was often on particular moments or relationships rather than the ‘architectural object’ as the dominant component of the images. This way, my use of photography as a data gathering method and as a component of mapping aimed at a reconstruction of meaning by way of representational forms of the sites they depict. This approach emphasises the reality of inexact projects in the making which are not in complete, static, perfect forms. Instead, they attend to “that which is seemingly contingent and marginal in relation to the architectural object itself” (Wilson, 2015, p. 14).

The mapping practices consisting of photographs taken on the sites are used both as means of spatial exploration, and for making connections to the themes that have emerged throughout this study. Therefore, the photographs are often accompanied with textual
descriptions. These depictions signify components of the photographs for the particular purposes of the relevant discussions without claiming to offer a comprehensive explanation.

When photography was not possible, sketches and/or textual portraits were drawn through fieldnotes. The forms of data gathering through photography, sketching and fieldnotes are denote a particular journey I took throughout my fieldtrips. These entail the affective registry of my body to the space as a form of embodied spatial practice (Awan, 2016).

8.2.1. Studying maps through tracing walks

Prior to my visits to the sites of forced migration in Athens, I engaged in a thorough mapping and research process to study the city and identify key locations to visit. This process involved utilizing various digital cartographic tools and traditional paper maps, to pinpoint areas of interest based on my research. I have carried some of these maps with me throughout my visits to expand on my studies, discuss them with people and document new locations as I discovered those.

To further my understanding of the sites, I also undertook a series of city walks, during which I had the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the accessibility, material condition, and current state of the buildings, roads, streets, and sites. These walks provided me with much more information than the maps alone, allowing me to gain insight into the status of inhabitation, activity, and overall condition of the sites at the time of my visit. My research on digital platforms, and especially the social media moderated by people and communities in Athens, and my conversations with people were other fundamental components that guided and expanded my mapping practices.

In addition to these mapping practices and research, I also employed a combination of GPS tracking and photography during my several walks through the neighbourhoods in Athens. This approach allowed me to reflect on the routes I preferred, areas where I encountered
difficulty, and the locations where I spent more time than others. As I began to realize the significance of these juxtapositions and the insight they provided into the temporal aspect of the sites and my own temporary presence, I began documenting and mapping the sites I visited during different times. These practices led to various visual compositions which documented the sites as dynamic places, defined not just by their physical enclosures, but also by the various prominent elements that make each composition. This process of deconstruction and recomposition ultimately emerged as a powerful tool for representing the sites of forced migration, allowing me to capture the nuances and complexities of these locations.

8.2.2. Deconstructing to recompose

During my visit to Athens, I found that the concepts of time and temporality played a significant role in shaping my engagement with the various sites I visited. In order to gain a deeper understanding of these spaces, I employed a visual analysis approach, utilizing photographs as the primary means of reflection. Through this method, I was able to identify the various social and material compositions that these images captured. It became apparent that a single photograph was not sufficient to fully capture the nuanced nature of these sites. As such, I sought to engage in a process of visual deconstruction, examining the various elements that make up the built environment such as layouts, materials, social interactions and in this case, also artworks.

In this approach, I moved away from traditional topographical mapping and instead used a corresponding timeline as my point of reference. Through this method, I aimed to present these buildings and sites in a new light, deconstructing their components to reveal relationships that are not necessarily defined by physical enclosures. In doing so, I aimed to provide an alternative reading of these spaces, one that takes into account the various material transformations that have occurred over time. Additionally, by documenting the historicity of the irreducible and non-abstract experiences that are closely tied to these sites,
my analysis also highlighted the processes related to forced migration that have shaped the city of Athens over time.

8.2.3. Zooming-in

Informed by the principles of mapping practices developed above which explore multiple sites across Athens, I developed another set of mapping by shifting the scale and focus. For example, the changing spatial configurations of Victoria Square Project gives insight into how to apply some of the principles outlined above in the building scale. The focus on the building, its interior spatial configuration, the extension of interior activities on the outside and generation of new spatial configurations which extend beyond the building into the neighbourhood are studied in these mapping practices. Similar to the previous methods, the photographs I took during my site visits are presented to overcome the limits of technical drawing on representation of the various materialities of the building’s interior, its connection to an outside, people gatherings and activities. In this practice, the basic representational techniques of architecture such as plans and sections are appropriated to help explore the discrepancies, and imprecise operations to account for the visual complexities. The photographic depictions account for the inexactness of the geometrical definitions of the building and the site, and the changing perception of the space depending on the time and the position of the perceiver—me.

The photographs taken at different times in Victoria Square show that the surfaces on the park are used as media to communicate messages. On 13 June 2019, I noticed two statements on the wall of a prefabricated structure, meaning “solidarity with the immigrants” in both French and Arabic. Short walls by the greenery and the floors were also used to convey messages. The images that depict the façade of the building and the surfaces in the square present these surfaces as intermediary spaces, or ‘thresholds’ of communication. The glass façade of the Victoria Square Project building communicates the interior space and indoor activities to the outside. The glass wall is also used to advertise the events to be
undertaken by *Victoria Square Project* and other initiatives around Athens. This way, the glass wall operates as a medium through which interaction is enacted across the physical boundaries and sites. During some events, the front of the *Victoria Square Project* building serves as an extension of the indoor activities. Occasionally, the activities are primarily based in this area. During the language classes, *ECHO mobile library* van parks on Elpidos Street, creating a spatial configuration which resembles an extended library, stretching between the activity table to the van.

The mapping practice that I employed in my examination of *Politechnio*, on the other hand, aimed to provide a more nuanced understanding of the building complex and its relationship to the wider context of forced migration in Athens. By situating the complex within the context of housing squats, the mapping reveals the material and social realities of the area and how it relates to forced migration. Through this approach, I was able to examine not only the physical characteristics of the building complex and its surroundings, but also the social and political dimensions that shape it. The notes taken during the open assembly, for example, provided insight into the issues that refugees and the people who work with them are facing and how they are addressing them. Additionally, by attending the assembly and gathering this information, I was able to better understand the perspectives of those who are directly impacted by forced migration.

This mapping practice provided an alternative way of understanding the geographies of forced migration. Instead of relying solely on traditional topographical mapping, which primarily focuses on the physical attributes of a location, this approach highlights the social and political dimensions that shape the experiences of those affected by forced migration. Additionally, it emphasizes the temporary and dynamic nature of the connections between the building complex and the wider context of forced migration in Athens.
8.2.4. Zooming-out

Through my engagement with digital and physical sites in Athens, not only the specific sites within Athens but also the wider geographies of forced migration began to unfold. Utilizing a multi-scalar approach, I was able to examine the connections that extend beyond the confines of individual buildings, neighbourhoods, and the city itself. The process of mapping these connections led to the identification of multiple linkages across Athens, Greece, and various other parts of the world. These connections encompassed a variety of phenomena, including interactions between people in different locations, the dissemination of knowledge and information through digital media, and networks of people working together to support newcomers.

The diverse elements of the geographies of Athens, such as settlements, open public spaces, regular and special events, organizations, and networks without physical bases, are all contribute to the dynamic, temporal, and assemblage-like process of making Athens a temporary home for many people. Through the representation of these dynamic components and activities on a typographical map, an ecology of forced migration was brought to light and traditional understandings of borders and geographical distance were called into question. Moreover, this representation facilitated an understanding of how different dynamics, temporalities, and assemblages have unfolded within Athens and how they are interconnected with global issues related to forced migration.

Eventually, the digital and physical sites in Athens have revealed a highly intricate web of connections that extend far beyond the boundaries of the city itself. These connections, while heterogeneous in nature, all contribute to the ongoing process of constituting Athens as a temporary home for a multitude of individuals and to a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of these dynamics with global issues.
8.3. Conclusion: Structures of temporary homes

This chapter explored emerging themes in the study of Athens in relation to the empirical chapters of this thesis from Chapter V to VII. This is followed by an exploration of my visual mapping practices in both documenting and exploring the geographies of migration as I have encountered them throughout my fieldwork from November 2018 to June 2019. In relation to migrant women’s networks and associations, Christopoulou and Leontsini (2017) suggest that these practices “utilise scarce sources that multiply rather than diminish through sharing; they elaborate hybrid values created from the contingencies of migration and maximise the effectiveness of weak ties through solidarity”, maintaining that “communal networks function as substitutes for extended-family, neighbourhood or community ones” (p. 526). Building upon three previous chapters, I presented in this chapter a dynamic formation of such families within Athens, across Greece and overseas.

Through such presentation, I evoked a multi-layered understanding of social and physical structures of temporary homes in reference to my case study in Athens. The findings of this thesis situate lived experiences in Athens beyond humanitarian activities and humanitarian discourse, by focusing on formation of networks and how these are connected in the urban nexus. Doing so, this thesis reveals an ecology that goes beyond the division of an inside and outside at the border—from the building scale to the urban. This suggests a territorialisation that is not defined by the state or humanitarian organisations, but on the ground through local and trans-local relationships (Mitchell, & Sparke, 2018). The next chapter concludes this thesis by reflecting on the significance of this research and suggests directions for future research.
CHAPTER IX: Concluding Remarks

9.1. Introduction

In this thesis, I reframed the geographies of temporary living for forcibly displaced people as ‘temporary homes’ to explore the capacity of the socio-spatial transformations in Athens, Greece, to generate modalities of knowledge on spatialities of forced displacement. In order to do this, I first developed a framework of ‘temporary homes’ in Chapter 2.8 by drawing on Blunt and Dowling’s (2006) accounts of ‘home’ based on critical geography where ‘home’ is considered as a multi-scalar geography. Importantly, this thesis does not attempt to settle a definition of home, but deploys the concept as a tool to tackle the limitations of shelter and housing units in preserving the multi-scalar complexities that is found in geographical understandings of the multivalent concept of ‘home’. I then developed this further to challenge a notion of ‘home’ as familiarity in the context of displacement, and brought conceived boundaries of home into question in line with Ahmed’s (1999) accounts on ‘home’ and ‘displacement’. Displacement for Ahmed (1999) is “a spatial configuration of an embodied self” while the ‘new home’ is “the intrusion of an unexpected space into the body” (p. 342). In line with this suggestion, this thesis offered ways to explore how such intrusion has been manifested in post-2015 Athens, Greece, in relation to the temporary homes on multiple scales both for the former dwellers of the city and its newcomers.

Bringing together literatures on geographies of home, displacement, otherness, transience, boundaries and thresholds, I have emphasised the formation of complex social and spatial relationships through encounters on both the local and the trans-local levels on these geographies based on my fieldwork in Athens, Greece. While exclusionary politics and xenophobic attitudes continue to affect the lives of forcibly displaced people in Athens, I show in this thesis that micro-communities and social relations have been formed and appended to a solidarity culture, which, in principle, favoured non-hierarchical interactions
among members of the communities-in-the-making, and have been thriving in Athens and across various parts of Greece since early 2000s.

In this thesis, I argue that exploring emerging sites and activities in the geographies of arrival with a situated approach is critical to understanding temporary accommodation and lived experiences in the cities that are transformed by transnational forced migration. Looking ‘beyond the box’, the shipping containers, the housing units, I explore the changing texture of Athens interwoven with imperfect buildings and projects-in-the-making on multiple scales, and narratives that unfold around them. Besides these explorations, this thesis interrogates architectural tools and methods by incorporating ethnographic methods that follow people and the sites as they unfold through encounters on site. Derived from feminist methodologies, this mode of knowledge production allowed me to explore various subjectivities including my own as an architectural researcher. Throughout this thesis, I pursue a reflexive approach and interrogate my positionality as an architectural researcher on and off-site. Taking into account my positionality and specific encounters on site, I explore methods of representation which account for different aspects of my being on the site, my interaction with people and the sites, and the specificities of my interaction with people and engagement with activities. This way, I probe not only the temporary homes for forcibly displaced people, but also my temporary engagement with the subjects of my research.

9.2. Navigating my place

In this section, I reflect on my positionality, and the ways in which my identity may have influenced my research process and its outcomes. With this reflection, I aim to recognise and acknowledge my position in relation to my research and research subjects, and navigate through the dynamics of power and biases at play by setting out several aspects of my identity and my encounters.
I was born to a Turkish family in England, where my father was pursuing postgraduate studies, and spent my early childhood there before moving to Turkey. I spent most of my life in Turkey, where I attended school and university. While I had always felt a close connection to England as my place of birth, I often considered Turkey as my homeland. During the time of my research, I was navigating my return to the UK, this time to study in Scotland, and my relationship with it.

I identify as a Muslim woman who observes some Islamic dress codes, including wearing a headscarf. Wearing a headscarf has been a politically charged issue in Turkey, and its acceptance in universities and some workplaces across the country took place gradually only after the 2000s when I was studying for my master’s degree. I have long been familiar with the perception of headscarf as a distinct identifier for women as a result of the challenges I faced in my homeland since my early adulthood. While I have been aware that the struggles around headscarf ranged from its enforcement to its ban both within Turkey and across countries in their particular contexts, I have been more familiar with the struggles of Muslim women who were denied rights for wearing it through my own experience. Although an in-depth discussion of this issue is beyond my purpose here, I believe that being ‘a woman with a headscarf’ influenced how I was perceived by Greek authorities, national and international volunteers, and other people I interacted with throughout my research process. Incidentally, on my return from Athens after one of my fieldtrips, a security staff member at Athens International Airport called me in upon spotting me from among many other passengers after I had passed the security checks, and asked me about why I was there and why I was travelling alone, before subjecting me to an extra investigation of my passport.

At times, I also found myself in the position of a cultural mediator as a result of the combination of my identities as an ‘academic researcher’ and a ‘Muslim woman’ in my
encounters with local and international volunteers. I was thought to be able to provide cultural insights that would be useful for their interaction with refugee women. Besides, I was approached by several local people in Athens who felt comfortable to ask me about my headscarf, about Muslim women and Turkish politics during both my research-related activities and everyday undertakings. It was more challenging to determine the impact of my clothing on my interactions with refugee women as we never talked about it explicitly. While I considered this to be one of the factors that might determine whether people I encountered would be comfortable with my presence or interaction with them, I also realised that the factors at play were more complicated than this alone. During my encounters with some refugee women, I found language to be a prominent factor that opened doors for me. My mother tongue is Turkish, and I learnt English as a second language from an early age. I also developed an interest in world languages and studied Ancient Greek, Latin, Persian and Arabic to varying degrees during my undergraduate and master's studies. When I started my PhD and undertook my fieldwork, my knowledge of these languages was very limited. However, my knowledge of Persian allowed me to communicate with some women from Iran and Afghanistan who were suddenly eager to talk to me when I spoke to them in Persian during community activities. Most men I talked to, however, had either sufficient command of English to communicate and spoke to me in English, or had some knowledge of Turkish as they spent time in Turkey before arriving at Greece, and chose to speak in Turkish with me.

Another dimension of my positionality is rooted in my physical location as a Turkish person based in Scotland, conducting research in Greece. When the Syrian war started in 2011, I was residing in Turkey and watched the events unfold on the media to our southern neighbours. Soon, this has become more immediately visible to me as I started to come across Syrian families settling on the streets due to the lack of sufficient accommodation plans for newcomers in place in Turkey. When I decided to investigate this further and started my research in another continent, I assumed a particular familiarity to some cultures I would observe in Greece. Despite the difference in our languages, there was a geographical
proximity after all, including some similar religious backgrounds and overlapping customs. During my fieldwork, this expectation did not always hold, and I realised that each encounter had its own complexities with assumed similarities and differences on both sides. Over time, I have developed a more open mind in terms of my assumptions about the potential nature of my encounters, and allowed these to unfold through communications when this was possible.

While Greece is adjacent to Turkey, I was still an outsider in the country and completely new to it. Greece was the closest I have been to Turkey since I moved to Scotland a few years ago, and the similarities were welcoming—the weather, food, familiar temperaments, but also some things were vastly different—churches and non-functioning mosques across Athens, some bitter accounts on historical plates on Ottoman figures, and Greek letters on shop fronts. While I was exploring my position and my perceived identities in relation to the people I encounter, I was also discovering my relationship to this new geography I was navigating through. Most of my realisations were un conceivable prior to my fieldwork and only unfolded through my active effort to immerse myself in the city and engage with the communities I have been studying. These have revealed multiple layers of identities I contemplated throughout my research process, including my ‘immigrant look’, religious identity, gender, and belonging to a nation with a charged historical relationship with the country in which I was conducting research.

These discoveries have also been important to my relationship with the material that has been generated throughout my research. I allowed my encounters throughout the fieldwork to intervene with my expectations, facilitate unexpected turns and shape up my methodology. I refrained from exerting power or creating uneven relationships that would serve to create or maintain a form of inequality to my best ability, however, I was the one to put together the material to organise and interpret in the form of a research outcome as the researcher. I can only recognise and acknowledge this inevitable power dynamic I engaged
in as a researcher and reflect on how I approached the knowledges these activities produced.

I deemed it critical to highlight my situated and embodied position as a researcher through the (re)presentation of my research as a way to counter any attempt to make universal or objective claims to knowledge. To achieve this, I utilised vignettes and mapping practices that indicate the partial and subjective knowledges produced throughout my fieldwork, which relied on my embodied engagement with places and interactions with people. This approach was also reflected in the structure and organisation of my fieldwork chapters, which chronicled a particular journey into the geographies of forced migration through my encounters.

9.3. Key contributions

With the aim of exploring the geographies of temporary living in Athens, this thesis was driven by the following key arguments: (1) a reductionist approach to ‘shelter’ and universal solutions in temporary accommodation of forcibly displaced people fails to account for wider webs of relationships that emerge in the geographies of arrival (2) an exploration of everyday life on the geographies of arrival has a potential to account for the complexities of the temporary living experiences in these geographies and (3) developing a bottom-up architectural approach to site analysis and representation which account for such complexities can challenge the hegemonic notions of architecture. Issues discussed in this thesis are related to wider discussions on mobility, inhabitance and citizenship, while also bringing up questions on architectural tools and methods and pushing further a critical agenda for its direction in the future.
9.3.1. ‘Shelters’ to ‘temporary tomes’

A primary contribution of this thesis is offering a new perspective to analyse temporary accommodation of refugees through the development of a framework centred around the built environment and human geography. This approach departs from a growing interest in the provision and development of shelters as industrial products, instead focusing on the social, cultural, and physical interactions on the locations where refugees arrive. To address the limitations of product-based approaches to temporary accommodation, this thesis introduces the concept of ‘temporary homes’ as a means of conducting a multi-scalar, process-based analysis of areas impacted by forced migration. It engages with the activities of refugees, local people, national and international volunteers and solidarity networks, proposing temporary homes as ‘homes-in-the-making’. These contributions align with the suggestion by Fechter and Schwittay (2019) to prioritize citizen-led and grassroots humanitarian efforts as a potential future for humanitarianism. Additionally, the thesis opens up opportunities for re-evaluating the concept of ‘humanitarian’ in humanitarian architecture16 and opens up opportunities for expanding its practices by engaging local and trans-local practices of solidarity.

9.3.2. Methodological contributions: Pinning down the ephemeral

This thesis undertakes a methodological exploration that pertains to the work of architects, scholars of architecture and of relevant disciplines concerned with spatial practice. The methodology for the case study in this thesis borrowed from multi-sited ethnographic methods and feminist approaches that account for multiple subjectivities of the participants of fieldwork. In addition, I deployed a process-based approach which highlighted my discovery of particular ecologies across geographies of forced migration in Athens. These

16 Limitations of the term ‘humanitarian architecture’ are discussed in Section 1.3.
decisions informed a research that is situated, embodied and partial, giving voice to the sites and inhabitants as I encountered them.

Site analysis in this thesis is based largely on my recorded observations on the sites through multiple media and interviews with inhabitants and participants of the sites I visited. The decisions that informed the use of particular media is informed by the condition of the sites and ethical decisions upon judgment on the site. Appropriation of the tools of recording has added a further layer to the situational approach my site analysis, where the opportunities and limitations of media use is reflected on my various mapping practices I undertook both throughout my fieldwork and after. Each step of this research is underpinned by concerns regarding the particularities of the sites, activities, participants, and decision-making on a continuous basis during my fieldwork. These decisions included probing what to depict and what not to; what to record, what to photograph and what to simply observe with my full presence with no mediators. Allowing the sites and conditions to shape my case study and its trajectories—not only the opportunities but also the limitations—, I found out multiple temporal and socio-material layers that unfolded through my practices of mapping while engaging with these material.

An important purpose of this thesis was to bring out the historicity of experiences of forced migration. The mapping practices derived from preceding studies as presented above, I produced representations of emergent geographies in Athens that traced transient experience that once was, and might still be present today in some form. Shortly after my last fieldwork in Athens, in July 2019, the governmental elections in Greece resulted in the leadership of New Democracy, known for its centre-right position, which was elected after SYRIZA’s leadership in the country since 2008. Since the last general election, most of the squats I visited were evicted which means that the housing conditions began to change considerably with the policies the new government introduced. In 2020, the pandemic
affected the activities of some of the organisations I explored which came to a halt or were paused.

The developments from 2019 to 2020 that significantly affected the geographies of forced migration in Athens, Greece, demonstrated how vulnerable some of the structures I presented throughout this thesis can be in the face of political and environmental changes. While the impact of such transformations can inform further research on geographies of forced migration, these developments suffice to show the transient nature of the experiences of displaced people who live in-between, and how these can go unnoticed in our understanding of their journeys, their relations with and transformation of the city with their activities. Tracing and reflecting on these experiences, this thesis contributes to an understanding of cities as informed and enriched by experiences and histories of forced migration through the activities of both its regular and temporary citizens that are easy to go unnoticed and untold.

9.3.3. Spaces of encounter in the making: Incompleteness

One of the key findings in this research is the instances of community building by appropriation of old buildings which offer possibilities to gather, engage in social and creative activities. These spaces are managed by people with various profiles including local activists, international volunteers and forcibly displaced people. Most of the buildings I visited were operating either upon minimum maintenance and renovation or were in progress, such as ANKAA, Communitism or 2nd School Squat, or undergoing transformations in terms of their physical facilities such as KHORA, or were designed precisely to allow a constant transformation, such as Victoria Square Project. A common theme for these sites was incompleteness and sense of ephemerality, which also created a level of openness for contribution, intervention and improvisation. These community-focused projects were far away from being exact, precise or complete projects, but often allowed negotiations, and facilitated new initiatives and projects to flourish.
9.3.4. Thinking beyond boundaries: Connections and assemblages

This thesis shows connections beyond that which catch the eye both in terms of local community building endeavours in Athens, across Greece and beyond mostly through solidarity networks. As presented in the Chapters from V to VII, my formal and informal conversations with people in Athens revealed connections across sites that are enacted through human mobility, social activities and community projects. Chapters V and VI, some of these are presented in forms of assemblages where these connections unfold. In Chapter V, P8’s daily routine links Eleonas Refugee Camp to ANKAA through his everyday activities, where P8 prefers not only to work (as a volunteer) as a receptionist but also socialise, craft furniture in the workshop and do gardening as he used to do in Syria. P9, on the other hand, came from Luxembourg to volunteer in the hotspots of Greek islands, who then brought her insights and experiences to Athens to found ANKAA which focuses on training and skill-building. In Chapter VI, Victoria Square Project expands with the activities of a KHORA member, while expanding also spatially with the visits of ECHO Mobile Library. Social centres in downtown Athens, and community activities that were open to public set conditions for exchange of knowledge. Volunteers and other people who work with refugees drew upon each other’s experiences and expertise in developing their projects and amending facilities through these social activities and open assemblies. This was especially evident in a general shift in direction from endeavours that relied heavily on provision of aid and basic services to empowerment through seeking ways to increase the agency of forcibly displaced people—with focus on training and skill-building.

Attempts at registering sites that have emerged or were transformed upon migratory flows since 2015 in isolation would not only miss out on the larger influence of these connections in shaping the political and social culture that have evolved across Athens, but also how these interactions informed the design of new projects and programmes. Chapter VI demonstrated that alongside connections that spanned various localities, some sites and
projects such as *Victoria Square Project* and *Jafra* particularly extended beyond their walls to their immediate surrounding and neighbourhoods they are located within. Both by way of their operation and the physical and social intermediate zones they provided, these projects welcomed interaction with their neighbourhood. In addition, for projects such as *Victoria Square Project* and *Jafra*, the neighbourhood was a significant input determining the directions of the projects, subject to an on-going conversation beyond the confines of the buildings.

The different roles refugees took both allowed multi-directional exchange of knowledge, and rendered diverse ways in which forcibly displaced people live across Athens. As the former refugees welcomed newcomers, many refugees were teachers as well as students, and some of them undertook managerial duties in the initiatives working with refugees and co-founders of new projects, their subjectivity could hardly be confined to refugee status. Through their multiple ways of interacting in the social, cultural and political geographies of Athens, categorical distinctions blurred even further while more layers began to emerge.

Despite the presence of legal restrictions and drawbacks of being categorised as ‘asylum seekers’, ‘refugees,’ ‘migrants’, or ‘illegal migrants’, people have varied level of engagement in activities, and these include actively contributing to the betterment of experiences of refugees through initiating projects such as the *Handala Project* and *Syrian-Greek Youth Forum*. As in the case of *Jafra*, former refugees and migrants who lived in Athens for longer helped new incomers navigate through their lives in the city. This way, their influence was both underpinned by their migratory journeys and relative familiarity to the city as longer-term citizens.

### 9.3.5. Learning Athens as a threshold

Athens is often referred to as a ‘gate’ to Europe for people who are willing to reach middle and northern European countries. This research presents Athens as a threshold instead,
where people find themselves in a particular situation informed by an existing context in the city, stop and look around, try to make sense of their being in Athens, and make plans ahead when possible. It unfolds as a place where people engage with life in various ways, acting and forming relationships despite hardships and ambiguities. Understanding Athens as a threshold in this thesis allowed accounting for social encounters among people with different backgrounds and journeys which move beyond categorical limitations, whilst following people with different backgrounds who inhabit the sites in Athens that have transformed for the past two decades mainly due to migration.

This research follows particular narratives of people and sites which are informed by my encounters throughout my fieldwork in Athens. This way, it reveals a particular ecology that was revealed to me in a particular period of time in Athens. As mentioned above, most of the sites I visited changed drastically after the general elections in Greece, and during the COVID-19 pandemic which began in 2020. This thesis therefore pins down transient moments in the city, which are now partially erased from the city texture, transforming into abandonment, appropriation or adjustments. The evicted buildings and sites, Hotel City Plaza, the Jasmine School (2nd School) Squat and other squats, and emerging conditions in the refugee camps and facilities that began to accommodate the evicted people, remain to be curious sites of exploration for further research. Pursuing an approach that argues for the historical relevance of these transformations, this thesis moved beyond an abstracted conception of temporary experiences, acknowledging to the city as an unfixed, unstable home in the making, and its inhabitants on the move, protagonists of these histories.

9.3.6. Trans-disciplinary contributions
This thesis develops an interdisciplinary theoretical framework by drawing upon critical human geography and anthropology alongside architecture. It also engages with feminist critique and ethnography as its modes of inquiry. It then develops a methodology that is
informed by such interdisciplinarity, bringing tools of architectural representation into conversation with geography and anthropology through alternative mapping practices. This way, it does not only expand the grounds of knowledge for architecture, but also interacts with disciplines that interrogate space and its inhabitance through other means. Specifically, the architectural representation techniques developed in this thesis can benefit anthropologists who conduct ethnographic fieldwork to approach mapping/cartography by engaging various layers based on qualitative methods and in-person interaction.

9.4. Situating the thesis as academic research

One key significance of this thesis in relation to the discipline of architecture has been the decision to engage in the contemporary architectures of forced displacement on site, attempting to account for inexact, unstable geographies marked by tempomrpoality. Undertaking such an endeavour, this thesis contributes to the contemporary critical discourses of architecture. It relates to a tradition in architectural theory which is rendered by an engagement with critical theory. Its notions based in Frankfurt School, critical theory embodies poststructuralist thought that unsettles an essentialist approach, which applies also to architecture (Heynen, 2011). Through applications of critical theory to architecture, the long-standing premises of architecture, which recurred in different forms since Vitruvius’s first treatise on architecture, have been questioned. Till (2008) contends that a Vitruvian notion which relied on “commodity, firmness and delight” persisted to a large extent beyond the 18th century with slight appropriations (p. 121). According to Till (2008), the limitation of Vitruvian legacy does not lie so much in a search for functionality, beauty and order, but the imposition of order inherent in it, which does not only concern the forms of the building, but also the production of knowledge and the dynamics of architectural practices.

This thesis, instead, dealt with lack of order, formal imperfection, and more importantly, absence of the figure of an architect while exploring the emerging architectures of
displacement. Focusing on the inhabitants of the geographies visited which included migrants, refugees, local and international residents and volunteers—all with multiple layers of identity beyond any of these—it focused on how their engagement, activities and imaginaries shaped the architectures of Athens. The findings of this thesis contribute to an understanding of mobility and its spatial implications in the contemporary geographies marked by transnational migration based on the subjectivities of their human dwellers. Drawing upon transdisciplinary methods, it contributes to the questions of spatial dynamics and representation in the studies of architecture.

9.5. Relevance of the thesis beyond academia

This thesis captures transitory moments in Athens’s recent history. Many informal settings I visited throughout my research including Hotel City Plaza and other squats have since been evicted. On the other hand, the on-going pandemic affected the activities of solidarity initiatives, forcing the course of activities to change, and digital forms of announcements gained further importance. Despite these conditions, many initiatives including Communitism, ANKAA, Victoria Square Project keep operating. Some of the initiatives and projects such as the Syrian and Greek Youth Forum and Kids’ Club are also pursuing their activities. This thesis presents an ecology that has unfolded throughout my fieldwork in/on Athens. The overarching questions remain as to how to tackle the political ramifications and precarity of the temporary solutions provided.

9.6. Concluding remarks: Cracks for opportunities

In her thesis, Awan (2011) points out the populist rhetoric which urges immigrants to go back ‘home’ but “fails to answer the simple question-which ‘home’?” (p. 7). While she focuses on diasporic populations of Europe including second and third generation of immigrants, this question has useful implications in excavating alternative notions of home and imagining the cities transformed by migratory flows in more recent cases of forced migration to Europe.
The case of Greece, which constitutes the empirical part of this research, is especially interesting for it is often not the country to settle in for the displaced populations, but a gate through which people enter Europe. This gate, however, is far from being a mere mechanism where people pass through without a trace. Instead, it represents a ‘threshold’ on which people stay while engaging with it in various ways for various durations, change locations, engage with the city and the people, leave traces, transform it and be transformed.

In this thesis, I explore geographies in Athens transformed by these migratory flows, and present the presence of migrants as transformative forces which contribute to the imagining of the city in relation to its materialities and the communities. I consider these geographies as ‘geographies of arrival’, as Athens is not necessarily conceived to be the final destination for many refugees. Exposing these geographies and reflecting on relevant social and material transformations as encountered throughout my fieldworks from 2018 to 2019, I argue for the inconvenience of approaches which conceive of the accommodation of refugees in an abstracted manner which is embedded in the processes of ‘sheltering’ and ‘encampment’ as evident in their material and procedural forms.

This thesis challenged a conception of ‘shelter’ as an enclosure abstracted from transcending experiences of wider geographies of arrival. Drawing upon a concept of home as a permeable geography in the making, it explored thresholds, intersections, overlaps and connections in the geographies rendered by forced displacement. This dissertation dwells on a fragile territory where it recognises the evanescent character of the experiences encountered throughout the study in Athens, but also argues for the fundamental importance of these experiences as part of a continuum that makes histories. It suggests that the unfixed and temporal character of geographies of forced displacement challenge us to bring the unforeseeable and hidden aspects of the built environment or “cracks” (Makrygianni, 2018, p.251) into our analysis in spatial practice.

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City plaza: living resistance [booklet].


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Google Maps 3. (Retrieved: May 19, 2020),
https://www.google.com/maps/place/Victoria+Square+Project/@37.9894598,23.7339158,2766m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x14a1bdc31d10bff1:0x4810a4b88fb92db4!8m2!3d37.9944631!4d23.7298336.


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**Interviews**

P1, (Jun 13, 2019). Personal interview.

P2, (Jun 13, 2019). Personal interview.

P3, (Jun 11, 2019). Personal interview.

P4, (Jun 11, 2019). Personal interview.

P5, (Jun 2, 2019). Personal interview.

P6, (Feb 14, 2019). Personal interview.

P7, (Feb 14, 2019). Personal interview.

P8, (Jun 10, 2019). Personal interview.

P9, (Jun 10, 2019). Personal interview.
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APPENDIX A

(Chapter III: Forced Migration and post-2015 Athens)

Appendix A.1: Temporary accommodation centres per region as of 1 August 2017

Table A.1.1: Temporary accommodation centres per region as of 1 August 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporary accommodation centre</th>
<th>Nominal capacity</th>
<th>“Guests” at 1 Aug 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Greece</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polykastro (Nea Kavala)</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serres (Former KEGE)</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pieria (Iraklis Farm)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veroia Imathias (Armatolou Kokkinou Camp)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra Imathias (Pelagou Camp)</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diavata (Anagnostopoulou Camp)</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thessaloniki (Derveni-Alexil)</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thessaloniki (Sindos-Frakapor)</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thessaloniki (Kordelio-Softex) – now closed</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

17 Retrieved from: https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/housing/types-accommodation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Unemployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thessaloniki (Sinatex-Kavalari)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thessaloniki (Derveni-Dion Avete)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama (Industrial zone)</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kavala (Perigiali)</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konitsa (Municipality)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ioannina (Doliana)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preveza-Filippiada (Petropoulaki Camp)</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagadikia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central Greece</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,910</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,399</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larissa-Koutsohero (Efthimiopoulou Camp)</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volos (Magnesia Prefecture)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trikala (Atlantik)</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oinofyta, Voiotia</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritsona, Evoia (A.F. Camp)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiva (Former Sagiroglou Textile Factory)</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermopyles-Fthiotida</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Greece</strong></td>
<td>300</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andravida (Municipality)</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attica</strong></td>
<td>10,666</td>
<td>7,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaionas</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>2,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schisto</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skaramangas</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>3,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elefsina (Merchant Marine Academy)</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malakasa</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafina</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavrio (Hosting area for asylum seekers)</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavrio (Ministry of Agriculture Summer Camp)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total</strong></td>
<td>30,786</td>
<td>14,281</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix A.2: Occupancy of temporary accommodation centres in Greece as of December 2019

Table A.2.1: Occupancy of temporary accommodation centres in Greece as of December 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Popul.</th>
<th>Occupancy</th>
<th>Nationality (%)</th>
<th>Age / Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandreia</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>102.28%</td>
<td>36.57</td>
<td>28.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andravida</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>101.28%</td>
<td>96.52</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diavata</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>105.60%</td>
<td>14.18</td>
<td>44.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doliana</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>103.10%</td>
<td>68.28</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>86.90%</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elefsina</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>105%</td>
<td>58.76</td>
<td>8.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaionas</td>
<td>1,839</td>
<td>99.41%</td>
<td>32.79</td>
<td>37.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipiada</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>88.32%</td>
<td>28.26</td>
<td>42.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grevena</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>103.10%</td>
<td>57.25</td>
<td>9.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(SMS Hotels)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kato Milia</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>91.18%</td>
<td>51.29</td>
<td>15.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katsikas</td>
<td>1,064</td>
<td>92.36%</td>
<td>24.55</td>
<td>34.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kavala</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>73.24%</td>
<td>12.91</td>
<td>62.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korinthos</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>95.79%</td>
<td>29.05</td>
<td>37.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koutsochero (Larisa)</td>
<td>1,456</td>
<td>86.77%</td>
<td>36.40</td>
<td>31.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 Source: IOM, Improving the Greek Reception System through Site Management Support and Targeted Interventions in Long-Term Accommodation Sites: Factsheet December 2019, retrieved from: https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/housing/types-accommodation

A6
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
<th>Water Use</th>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Corn</th>
<th>Soybean</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
<th>Other Crops</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lagadikia</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>102.19%</td>
<td>34.76</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>52.79</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavrio</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>89.22%</td>
<td>47.50</td>
<td>23.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>24.99</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malakasa</td>
<td>1,767</td>
<td>111.20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nea Kavala</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>86.97%</td>
<td>16.62</td>
<td>48.61</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>25.57</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oinofyta</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>97.26%</td>
<td>75.83</td>
<td>19.70</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pirgos SMS facilities</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>97.50%</td>
<td>24.36</td>
<td>62.82</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritsona</td>
<td>1,579</td>
<td>59.05%</td>
<td>56.36</td>
<td>16.92</td>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schisto</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>86.73%</td>
<td>27.49</td>
<td>57.94</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serres</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>65.93%</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skaramagas</td>
<td>2,534</td>
<td>79.29%</td>
<td>48.82%</td>
<td>26.84%</td>
<td>11.92%</td>
<td>12.43%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermopiles</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>76.43%</td>
<td>61.68%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23.83</td>
<td>14.49</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiva</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>85.74%</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>45.15</td>
<td>15.90</td>
<td>9.71</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagiochori</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>97.35%</td>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>81.84</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veria</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>92.84%</td>
<td>63.44</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25.53</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volos</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>95.33%</td>
<td>27.97</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20.98</td>
<td>51.05</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volvi</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>101.50%</td>
<td>29.49</td>
<td>29.74</td>
<td>15.61</td>
<td>25.19</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand total</td>
<td>24,110</td>
<td>33.75%</td>
<td>35.85%</td>
<td>17.23%</td>
<td>13.17</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix A.3: National Picture Regarding the Islands at Eastern Aegean Sea

(31.12.2019)

#### National Situational Picture Regarding the Islands at Eastern Aegean Sea (31/12/2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place/Location</th>
<th>Lesbos</th>
<th>Chios</th>
<th>Samos</th>
<th>Leros</th>
<th>Kos</th>
<th>Other Islands</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R.C.</td>
<td>18348</td>
<td>2840</td>
<td>5782</td>
<td>2154</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>2499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.I.C.</td>
<td>8347</td>
<td>1390</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>1615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Accommodation Facilities</td>
<td>2128</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>1099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellenic Police Facilities</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.O.C.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.H.H.C.R.</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>1255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.H.H.C.R.</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C.S.S.</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrants Present on the Island</td>
<td>30765</td>
<td>6078</td>
<td>8564</td>
<td>2757</td>
<td>4519</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>40995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrivals</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transports to the Mainland</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departures (EU FMM Statement)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departures (LOCM)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure A.3.1:** Occupancy and capacity of Reception and Identification Centres and other facilities

---

Appendix A.4: ESTIA Accommodation Update as of 31 December 2019

![UNHCR Greece Logo](https://estia.unhcr.gr/en/estia-accommodation-capacity-weekly-update-31-december-2019/)

**ESTIA Accommodation Capacity Weekly Update**

**SUMMARY STATISTICS**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of places</strong></td>
<td>25,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actual capacity</strong></td>
<td>22,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current population</strong></td>
<td>21,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupancy rate</strong></td>
<td>98.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DETAILED STATISTICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Occupied units</th>
<th>Current places</th>
<th>Current population</th>
<th>Actual capacity</th>
<th>Occupancy rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>4,523</td>
<td>4,254</td>
<td>24,464</td>
<td>20,897</td>
<td>20,953</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,302</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,537</td>
<td>4,268</td>
<td>25,768</td>
<td>21,820</td>
<td>22,060</td>
<td>98.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Occupied units</th>
<th>Current places</th>
<th>Current population</th>
<th>Actual capacity</th>
<th>Occupancy rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>1,765</td>
<td>1,569</td>
<td>1,659</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,302</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>1,765</td>
<td>1,569</td>
<td>1,659</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Occupied units</th>
<th>Current places</th>
<th>Current population</th>
<th>Actual capacity</th>
<th>Occupancy rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>4,180</td>
<td>3,928</td>
<td>22,699</td>
<td>19,128</td>
<td>19,294</td>
<td>99.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,302</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,194</td>
<td>3,942</td>
<td>24,001</td>
<td>20,051</td>
<td>20,401</td>
<td>98.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Actual capacity is calculated as the subtraction of current places minus 15% which is the week's estimated average natural loss for mainland and 25% for islands. Natural loss is the number of places that cannot currently be used because of damages, repairs, protection issues, family size, etc. The formula applies to all type of accommodation. Actual capacity is a close estimate of available places to be used as reference. In some cases, current population may exceed the actual capacity due to the estimation of the natural loss.

2. Occupancy rate is calculated as the percentage of current population over actual capacity. The actual available capacity is estimated to be 419 places (mainland: 334 / islands: 85).

As of today 204 places have been reserved for planned transfers (mainland: 175 / islands: 29).

Considering an average natural loss (15-15%) the remaining available places are 207 (mainland: 137 / islands: 70).

For feedback please contact UNHCR-GREECE Information Management Unit, greeim@unhcr.org

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Figure A.4.1: ESTIA Accommodation capacity weekly update as of 31 December 2019

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Figure A.4.2: Population breakdown in ESTIA Accommodation Scheme as of 31 December 2019

Appendix A.5: ESTIA Accommodation Update as of 9 November 2020

Figure A.5.1: ESTIA Accommodation capacity weekly update as of 9 November 2020

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Population breakdown in ESTIA II Accommodation Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attica</td>
<td>11,935</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Greece</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Macedonia</td>
<td>4,374</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crete</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epirus</td>
<td>1,089</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Aegean</td>
<td>1,187</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peloponnese</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Aegean</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thessaly</td>
<td>1,136</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21,763</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>8,019</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>6,150</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>3,330</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR Congo</td>
<td>1,033</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2,699</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21,763</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUMMARY STATISTICS

By location, nationality, and age & sex breakdown.

ESTIA ACCOMMODATION SCHEME TREND

Total population in ESTIA accommodation scheme

Figure A.5.2: Population breakdown in ESTIA Accommodation Scheme as of 9 November 202023

APPENDIX B

(Chapter IV: Building Methodology)

Appendix B.1: interview Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

Research project title: An investigation into spatial agency in the cases of forced displacement: The case of Athens

Research investigator: Hafsa Olcay

Participant (interviewee): ____________________________

The interview is intended to take approximately 30 minutes, with possibilities of flexibility. We don’t anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced
- you will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors
- the transcript of the interview will be analysed by Hafsa Olcay as research investigator
- access to the interview transcript will be limited to Hafsa Olcay and academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- the actual recording will be destroyed upon transcription.
any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

Or a quotation agreement could be incorporated into the interview agreement

**Quotation Agreement**

I also understand that my words may be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree to be quoted directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotations by me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All or part of the content of your interview may be used;
- In academic papers, policy papers or news articles
- On our website and in other media that we may produce such as spoken presentations
- On other feedback events
- In an archive of the project as noted above

By signing this form I agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don’t have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the Information sheet;
4. I don’t expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
5. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.
Contact Information

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Edinburgh University Research Ethics Board. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Name: Hafsa Olcay
Address:

e-mail: 
phone:

You can also contact Hafsa Olcay’s supervisor: Miguel Paredes Maldonado

Name: Miguel Paredes Maldonado
Address:

e-mail: 
phone:

What if I have concerns about this research?
If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can contact the Research Ethics Sub-Committee of Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh, 74 Lauriston Place, Edinburgh, EH3 9DF (or email at ECA.RKEO@ed.ac.uk).
Appendix B.2: Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Research project title: An investigation into spatial agency in the cases of forced displacement: The case of Athens

Research investigator: Hafsa Olcay

Address & contact details of research investigator:

Address:

e-mail:

phone:

About the Project

• This research aims at investigating the emerging experiences in the city of Athens as a result of recent cases of forced displacement. The contemporary experiences in Athens challenge architecture’s methodological tools to address the lived experiences of the city, and this research addresses the emerging social and material complexities in relation to this.

• The main aim of this research is to gather data to develop alternative mappings of Athens based on subjective accounts and experiences of it, emphasizing a bottom-up approach to spatial analysis.

Who is responsible for the data collected in this study?

• Hafsa Olcay – PhD Student

• Data collection will consist of conversational interviews which will be audio recorded, and other forms of reflection (i.e. drawings and markings on maps) when appropriate/desired, and when the participant is willing. It is expected that the interviews will be accompanied by photo taking which will provide visual evidence to the matters of the conversation.

• The audio data will be collected on mobile devices and will then be transferred on a personal computer to be stored safely with password protection. A paper copy of the transcriptions of audio recordings will be
stored in a locked personal storage. It will be stored until the publication of relevant academic work and will be destroyed once they are no longer intended to be used for the purposes mentioned.

- The data will be used for the production of the dissertation and relevant publications. The raw data will not be shared by third parties.
- This research has been reviewed and approved by the Edinburgh University Research Ethics Board.

**What is involved in the study?**

The data will be collected during 10-23 February 2019 through visits to several sites in and around Athens, Greece. This might be followed by further visits if deemed necessary. Contact at distance (i.e. e-mail exchange) might be needed on certain occasions. Although the data collection duration is flexible, the main form of data collection is intended as 30-minute interviews. It is possible for the participant to opt-out at any point if they are no longer willing to participate.

**What are the risks involved in this study?**

We don’t anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

**What are the benefits for taking part in this study?**

There are no benefits or payment involved in participation in this research.

**What are your rights as a participant?**

Taking part in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or subsequently cease participation at any time.

**Will I receive any payment or monetary benefits?**

You will receive no payment for your participation. The data will not be used by the researcher for commercial purposes. Therefore, you should not expect any royalties or payments from the research project in the future.

**For more information**

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Edinburgh University Research Ethics Board. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Hafsa Olcay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>Minto House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-22 Chambers Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edinburgh EH1 1JZ, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-mail:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:h.olcay@sms.ed.ac.uk">h.olcay@sms.ed.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phone:</td>
<td>+447762206265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You can also contact **Hafsa Olcay's** supervisor: Miguel Paredes Maldonado

Name: Miguel Paredes Maldonado  
Address: Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture  
The University of Edinburgh  
United Kingdom  
e-mail: miguel.paredes@ed.ac.uk  
phone: +44 [0] 131 6502299

**What if I have concerns about this research?**
If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can contact the *Research Ethics Sub-Committee of* Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh, 74 Lauriston Place, Edinburgh, EH3 9DF (or email at ECA.RKEO@ed.ac.uk).
Appendix B.3: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

1. General information about site conditions: with people working with refugees
   - What structures are employed/deployed in the site as housing units?
   - What has been the process of the provision of these structures/who were involved?
   - What functions do these structures serve?

2. Experience and intervention: with refugee residents & people working with refugees
   - How are the structures of camp lived/experienced?
   - What do their residents think about these structures?
   - What resident appropriations/interventions do/do not take place with regard to the structures? What do they mean to the residents?

3. Wider connections: with refugee residents & people working with refugees
   - What every day and special activities take place on the site?
   - Where do people gather, what objects/activities attract gathering?
   - What are the limitations of access/engagement to the city, if any?

These aimed at revealing:

1) the agency of the physical structures
2) the community-making within the site (the agency of people)
3) the connections of interior/exterior, private/public and digital/physical space (spatial relations)