

CRISIS REGIMES AND EMERGING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

IN cities of Southern Europe

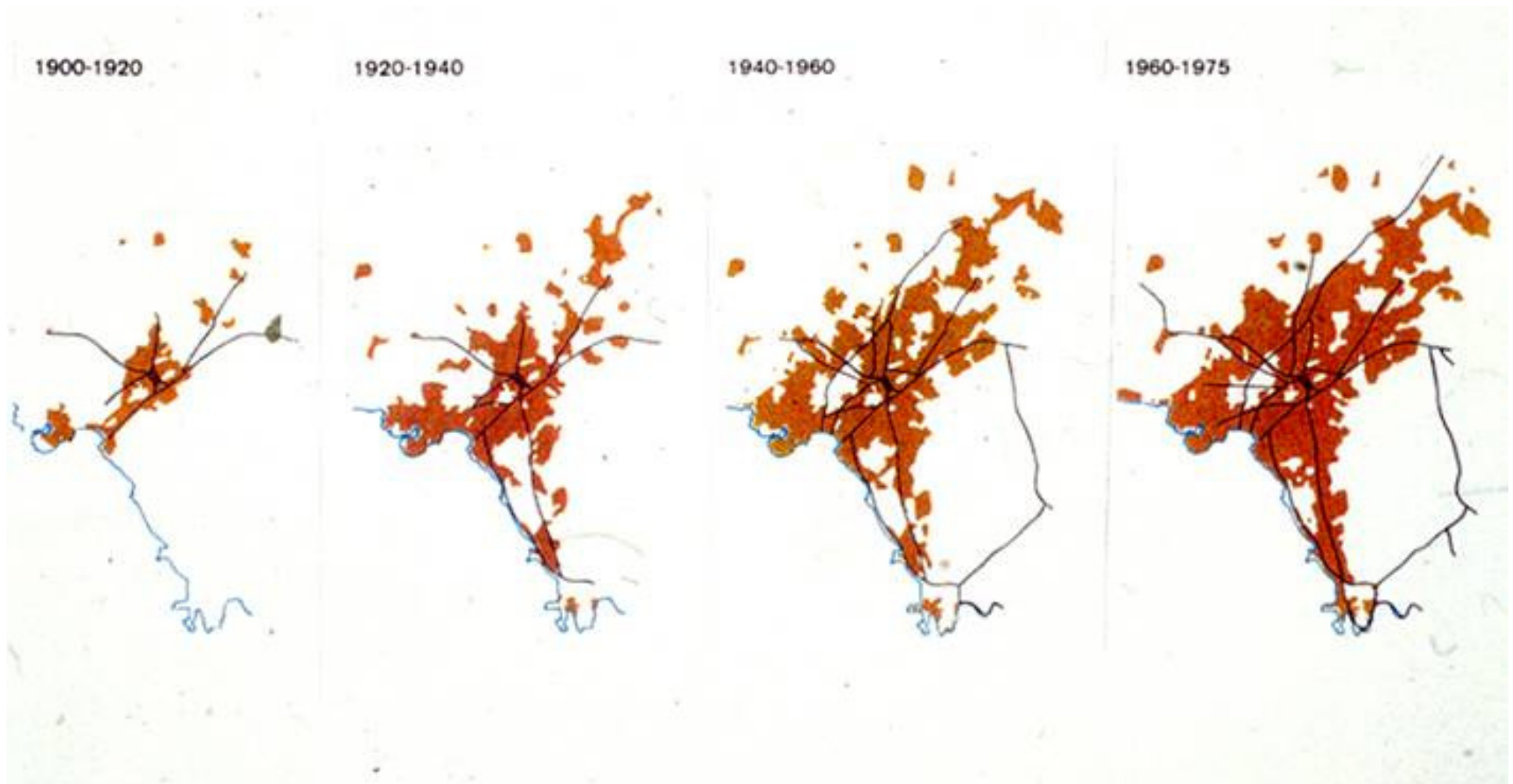
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**Crisis regime in Greece
and some notions for the role of space**

Encounter Athens

1. The specific context / general background information

- Rapid **urbanization**



1. The specific context / general background information

- Broadening and social integration of **middle class**
- **Small scale** capital / ownership / enterprises
- **Self built / informal housing** as a substitute of welfare state
- Significant development of the **tertiary sector**
- The **state** not providing welfare services or efficient regulation and tolerant towards informality
- Significant role of **family or local social networks**
- **Social mixture** and **multifunctionality** of urban space

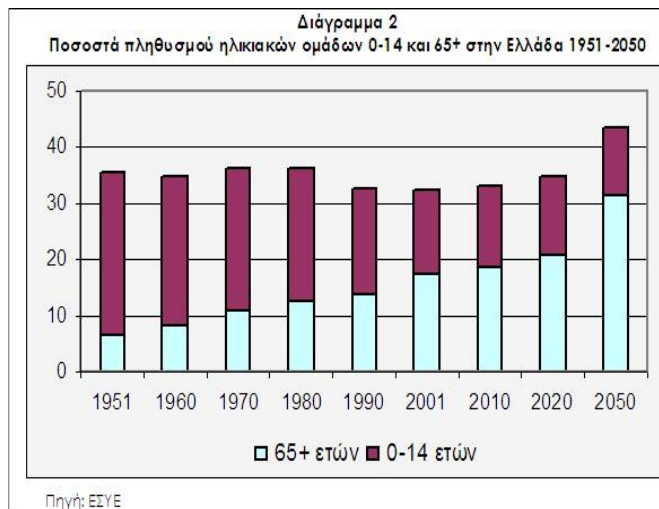


1. The specific context / general background information



More recently (80s and 90s):

- **Deindustrialization** and **population ageing**
- “Informality” starts being considered a slump in the road to “development”
- Higher living standards and **consumerist lifestyle**
- Retreating primary and secondary sector in favour of **services**



1. The specific context / general background information



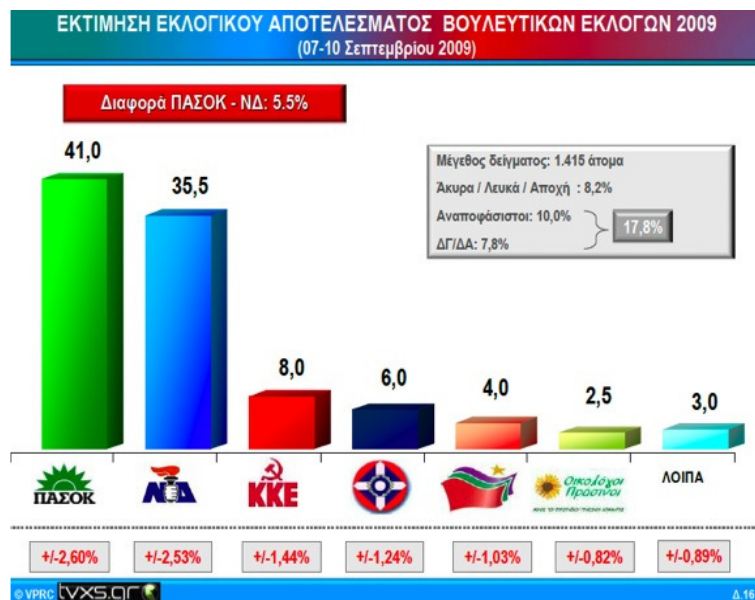
- New **construction boom**
- Involvement of **banks** in construction, real estate and speculation on land
- Further **suburbanization** / urban sprawl
- Significant influx of **migrants**
- Social integration of **immigrants as cheap labour** mainly in construction and personal services, mostly informally.
- Resurgence of **racist reflexes and practices**



1. The specific context / general background information

Ideology and (de)politicization

- **Ostensible interchange in power** between two major political formations
- Consolidation of particular socio-economic **elites**
- Gradual **depoliticization** of the discourse
- “**Modernization**” and “**experts’ authority**” revisited



1. The specific context / general background information

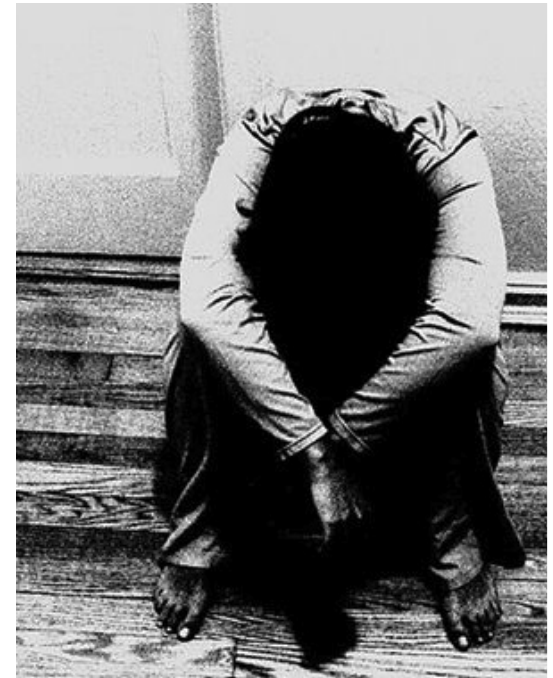
Ideology and (de)politicization

- Emerging **social movements** as agents of radical political perspective



2. Crisis in Greece: crucial transformations and processes

- Cultivation of **collective guilt** as reasoning for both crisis and its “therapy”.
- **Demonization of the “other”** (public servant, immigrant, syndicalized, etc.)
- Open and blunt recourse to **antidemocratic parliamentary procedures**.



2. Crisis in Greece: crucial transformations and processes

- “Adequate” rhetoric or legal framework provisions of **reactionary, racist or fascist orientation** in the name of “absolute lawfulness”, security, social peace and the like.
- **New forms of mobilization** of an unconventional social mix (e.g. Indignados and Movement of the Squares)



3. Promoted reforms and strategies in the context of crisis

- **Privatization** of strategic public sector companies and state owned real property
- New legislation framework that **deregulates space** production in the name of attracting investment
- Vast **cuts** of personnel, salaries and resources from all public sector (ministries, local government, education, welfare state, health services, etc.)
- Significant **tax increases** aiming at middle and lower strata / tax relief for the few high-income
- **Disintegration of labour rights** in the name of “flexibility” and “competitiveness”, increased precariousness esp. in the private sector



4. Main effects of crisis

Devaluation of labour and living standards

- Rapid increase of people below the **poverty** line (24,8% for 2013)
- Devaluation of **living standards**: access to food, housing, public services, leisure, education, health, etc.
- Increase of **private debt** due to new taxes, housing loans, and subsequent price increase: overall income reduction for employed and pensioners reaches 50% compared to 2008



4. Main effects of crisis

Devaluation of labour and living standards

- Substantial **degradation of public services**: health, education, transport etc.
- Rapid rise of **unemployment**, esp. for the young: right now, in 2013, unemployment of the young >50%, general unemployment's official estimates around 28-29%, with real unemployment reaching a 34%, i.e. 1,4 million people



4. Main effects of crisis

Devaluation of labour and living standards

- Significant **emigration flows**, esp. highly qualified young people: mostly doctors and engineers, greatest yearly increase in Europe (78% for the 1st semester of 2012)
- Internal reverse migration from big cities to small cities and villages
- Degradation of all **environmental standards** and / or indicators
- Gradual **disintegration of family networks** that stood as a substitute of welfare state provisions
- Rapid rise of **precariousness and un-affordability for small and medium scale property**
- New **inequalities** between generations



4. Main effects of crisis

Towards humanitarian crisis

- **Humanitarian crisis** : poverty, malnutrition, diseases, homelessness, inadequate housing, etc.: > 20.000 homeless (right now in Athens), 250.000 people resorting to church's sub-kitchens (estimates for 2011), etc.
- Increased vulnerability and precariousness for the **most vulnerable groups**
- Emergence of “**new poor**” social groups
- Increase of **marginalization**
- Rise of **insecurity** and **despair**, dramatic increase of suicides
- Rise of public resentment and social “depression”
- Further consolidation of a social **feeling of “unjust”**



4. Main effects of crisis

Polarization and violence

- Increased **polarization** between 'haves' and 'have-nots'
- **Polarization** based upon the questionable way out of the crisis: **pro- or anti- memorandum**
- Diffusion and adoption of **reactionary ideas and practices**.



4. Main effects of crisis

Polarization and violence

- Outright **fascist** and **racist social and political expression**
- Rise of **racist criminal attacks** against particular ethnic groups
- **Radicalization** of particular social groups



4. Main effects of crisis

Polarization and violence

- Increased **violation of human rights**, particularly of the most vulnerable groups
- Unprecedented recourse to **violence by the state police**





5. Athens in the spotlight

- “Multicultural” neighbourhoods of the mid-00s turn into examples of “ghetto” in the dominant public discourse
- **Spatial segregation, reproduction of fear and legalization of calls for “security”**
- More visible piazzas for **organized crime, prostitution, drug trafficking and use**
- **Dilapidated built environment, neglected public space, deteriorating environmental conditions, inactive real estate market**



5. Athens in the spotlight

- **Real estate and urban renewal visions** that emphasize on improving physical environment
- **Extensive and aggressive forms of policing**



5. Athens in the spotlight

- Evictions, foreclosures, auctions, closed shops, homeless people, drug addicts, etc.
- **Deterioration of public services:** street cleaning, transport, child care, education, health service etc.



5. Athens in the spotlight

- Revival of **wartime practices**: emergence of numerous pawnshops or fire-wood business, emergence of sub-kitchens, informal recycling business etc.



6. Some conclusive remarks and open questions

- **Dispossession** of both public (common goods, public property) and private property and personal rights, accumulation in the hands of the few
- Push of the dispossessed **towards the edge of the system**, social exclusion
- **Space stands central** either as a development factor or as an asset for the paying off of the debt
- **Deregulation** and **retreat of the state** from its own purpose



6. Some conclusive remarks and open questions

- **Space as shelter**, field of social inclusion, solidarity and interaction, **scene for collective expression and formation of collective claims**
- **Right to the City** : an important claim
- **“There Is No Alternative”** for societies than to defend space





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