



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN  
ARCHITECTURE CONSTRUCTION CITY

*Abstract*

## **Housing Practices in the City of Crisis**

**From the vertical social differentiation to the everyday life of austerity in  
the Athenian apartment buildings**

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According to Bernardo Secchi «the spatial structure, the way of operating, the relations between the rich and the poor and the image of a city, are always different following a big crisis» [Secchi, 2013, p. 8]. The purpose of this thesis is to study and try to analyze the changes of socio-spatial relations through housing practices in the city of Athens, mutations that, as reported by the same author, define the «new urban issue» [*ibidem*], based on the theory of the *Right to the City* and the focus on everyday life. Therefore, in order to achieve this target it is essential that we recognize those everyday practices which, having been shaped in the context of *memorandum* and conditioned by the dissolution of fundamental rights, little by little create the new ways of living the city.

In order to study the consequences of the current financial recession on the socio-spatial interactions, the vertical social differentiation has been set as a starting point, a phenomenon developed after the intense densification of the Athenian city center during the sixties. Following the gradual degradation of the apartments on the lower floors and the relocation of a large part of the middle class to the suburbs, the social profile of the *Polykatoikia* started to re-shape and present important income differences based on the floor of residence. Taking account of this particular social distribution in the Athenian apartment buildings and of the effects that the austerity measures have had on the lives of Greek citizens, this study endeavors to understand if, and how, this characteristic form of segregation has been affected by the current crisis.

The dissertation is divided in three parts: the first one introduces the reader to the context of the research through the study of socio-spatial processes in the Greek capital and the expansion of the Athenian *Polykatoikia*. It is an analysis of the past which permits a better comprehension of the phenomena taking place today in many Greek cities, as well as the behavior and the events that are identified in the next steps of the work. In the second phase of the research the attention is focused on an in-depth analysis of Henri Lefebvre's and Michel De Certeau's thesis based on the studies of the *Right to the City* [1968, 1972] and those of *The Practice of the Everyday Life* [1990, 1994]. In this section, effort is being made to draw a continuous comparison between the phenomena highlighted by the two authors and what has been observed in the everyday life of Athens. Based on the concept of the right «seen as a yell, a reaction to the pain for the devastating crisis of the everyday life in the city, and as a request, an order to construct an alternative urban life» [Harvey, 2011], the third part of the work tries to map those behaviors which are generated by this kind of «devastation». These acts are translated into racist attacks and solidarity practices, two contradictory phenomena which, however, coexist and occupy a relevant position in the Greek crisis. The zones of the Athenian city center which have been influenced most by the recession and in which we find the subject apartment buildings, have been identified, therefore, through the visual representation of intolerance and solidarity areas. The work ends with field observation which is developed in two phases: the first one related to the exploration of the space (the apartment buildings themselves) and a second phase of direct contact with the inhabitants through interviews and discussions.

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