

RE-HOUSING

The Refugees' Right To Housing: State Policies and Housing Commons in Istanbul, Athens and Belgrade



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REFUGEES
WELCOME

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Project Description

The ongoing refugee streams, that derive mainly from the Middle East and North African conflict areas, are a central issue to the growing socio-spatial debate on the different facets of contemporary crisis. The moving populations that cross boundaries heading to the European North, destabilize both territorial certainties and established governance politics. A noticeable body of literature is currently emerging, exploring aspects of social philanthropy, humanitarianism, NGOs' activities and State immigration policies related to the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe. In this literature refugees are often seen as passive recipients of state, NGO or philanthropy led practices. However, there is little attempt to research how the refugees themselves self-organize, and enact the production of collective housing and shared common spaces based on principles of self-organization and mutual help. The proposed project aims to fill this gap. Following the recent spatial approaches on "commons" and "enclosures" the research project intends to explore forms and modes of refugee led solidarity housing commons, and compare and contrast these with State-run refugee camps.

The project focuses empirically on Turkey, Greece and Serbia and in particular, in Istanbul, Athens and Belgrade. These cities are at the epicenter of the refugee crisis. Since, March 2016, when the borders in Balkan countries were closed for all third-country migrants and the EU-Turkey deal was signed, thousands of refugees were trapped in Turkey, Greece and Serbia. It is estimated that there are more than 500 thousand refugees in Istanbul waiting to cross the borders to Europe. Athens is the main refugee transit city in Greece with almost 20 thousand refugees whilst approximately 10 thousand refugees are currently trapped in Belgrade.



Main project objectives

The research aims to examine how the newcomers themselves challenge existing socio-spatial power relations and the provision of housing in State-run camps and produce solidarity and common spaces. The proposed project aims to move beyond current debates on philanthropy, humanitarianism, NGOs and State immigration policies, in order to research the refugees' self-organized practices and efforts to produce alternative housing

This research addresses the pressing academic and social need to:

1. Enhance qualitative and quantitative data availability in order to compare and contrast refugee housing conditions and rights in different geographical locations
2. Assess the impact and importance of alternative housing
3. Compare and contrast existing strengths and weaknesses in institutional frameworks at national and EU levels.

Responding to this need, this project aims to examine the refugees' right to housing as it is expressed by the Turkish, Greek and Serbian States housing policies and the way these policies relate to the solidarity housing practices in each country.

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Charalampos Tsavdaroglou is a Marie Curie Fellow - Postdoctoral researcher at the University of Amsterdam's (UvA). He holds a PhD in Urban and Regional Planning, from School of Architecture, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His research interests include critical urban theory, autonomy of migration, intersectional, decolonial and affective geographies.

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Maria Kaika is Professor in Urban, Regional and Environmental Planning at the University of Amsterdam's (UvA). She holds a PhD in Urban Geography from Oxford University. Her research focuses on three interrelated themes: urban political ecology, cities and crisis, and urban radical imaginaries.



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