

# Hostile vs solidarity cities

THE NEWCOMERS' RIGHT TO MOVE AND RIGHT TO STAY IN BALKAN GEOGRAPHIES

# Introduction

In 2016 after the EU-Turkey Common Statement, the European countries sealed their borders and thousands of refugees found themselves stranded in Turkey and Greece.

The presentation is based in participatory ethnographic and militant research and aims to highlight that acts of solidarity have opened up new possibilities to challenge State and EU migration policies while aim to unveil three questions

- **post-democratic governance in refugee camps**
- **newcomers' commoning practices and decolonial common spaces**
- **newcomers' right to the city and the right to move**



# Solidarity Cities

The refugees' right to the city, to housing and to public services is recognized by several international, European and national statements, agreements and laws.

Also, during the last decade several cities in the Global North are promoted as “tolerant”, “cosmopolitan” and “superdiverse” cities and embrace migration and diversity as an asset that strengthens their global positioning

Some others endorse pro-immigrant policies in ways that allow them to self-proclaim “**solidarity cities**” (Agustín and Jørgensen, 2019; Christoph and Kron, 2019) in Europe or “**sanctuary cities**” in UK, USA and Canada (Bagelman, 2016; Darling and Bauder, 2019). The common feature of these cities is that they advocate for refugee inclusion at the urban scale, sometimes in the absence of a national response or against restrictive state immigration policies.

# Solidarity Cities

The concept of solidarity cities usually refers to:

- a) **grassroots self-organized practices of solidarity,**
- b) **humanitarian and civil society activities and**
- c) **municipal and local authorities policies that undermine restrictive state migration policies.**

These three aspects of the solidarity city correspond to a form of **autonomous solidarity**, a form of **civic solidarity** and a form of **institutional solidarity** (Fisher and Jørgensen, 2021).

# Post-democratic governance in refugee camps

‘**post-democratic society** is one that continues to have and to use all the **institutions of democracy**, but in which **they increasingly become a formal shell**’ (Crouch 2013)

‘**post-democratic arrangement** [...] **has replaced debate, disagreement and dissensus** with a series of technologies of governing that fuse around consensus, agreement, accountancy metrics and technocratic [...] management’ (Swyngedouw, 2009)

‘although the **formal institutions of democracy remain**, **its living substance is being exhausted** in favour of a different regime that can no longer properly be called “democratic”’ (Esposito, 2019)

# Post-democratic governance in refugee camps

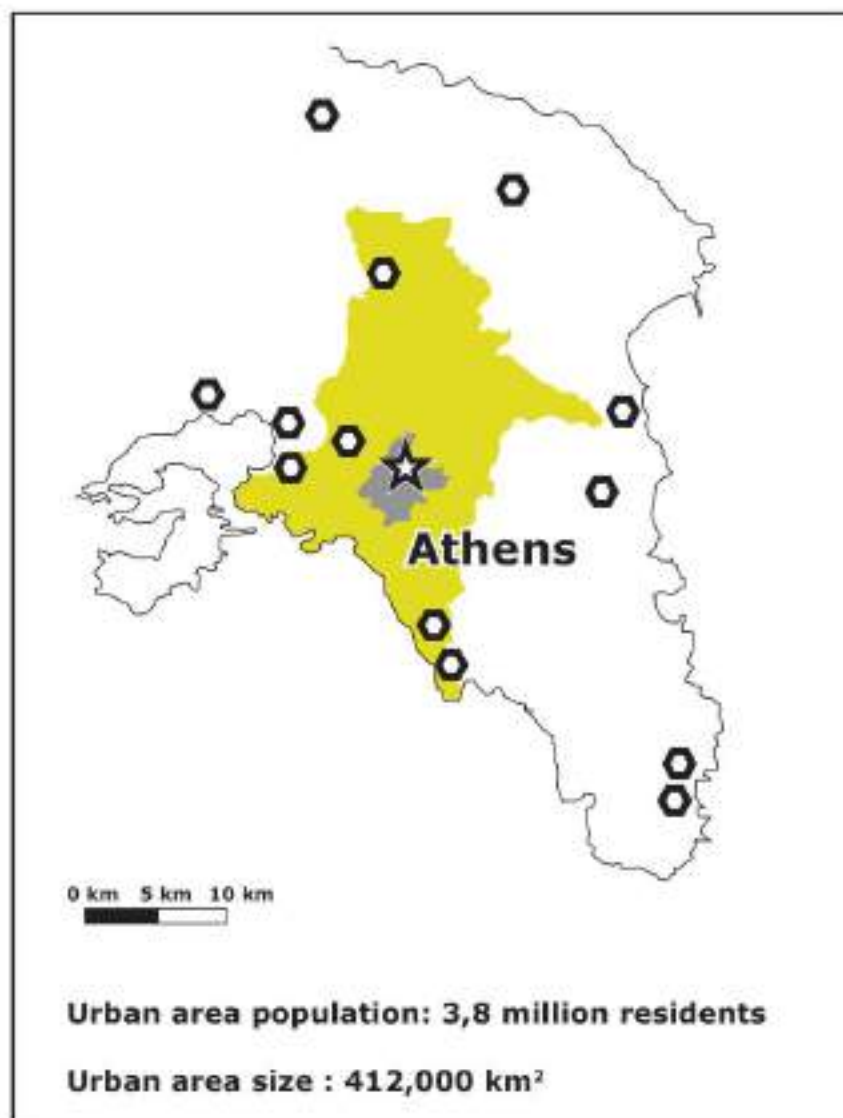
- the diminishing role of the state in guaranteeing universal rights of citizenship (Crouch, 2004)
- the intensification of mechanisms of policing, control, and surveillance (Swyngedouw, 2011)
- the replacement of public participation by an expert-centric administration (Žižek, 2005)
- the exclusion from participation processes especially of residents who have been deprived of a voice (Mullis, 2021)
- and the increasing fragmentation, splintering, and depoliticisation of urban space (Swyngedouw, 2011).



# State-run camps

Several scholars depict migrants' camps as state of exception, regimes of control, marginality and invisibilization of displaced people (Agier, 2011; Turner, 2016; Wacquant, 2007). Bauman already from 2000 argued that the twentieth century was “the century of camps”. In the so-called “camp studies”, several scholars (Diken and Laustsen, 2004; Edkins, 2000; Pasquetti, 2015), inspired by Foucault’s “panopticon” theory and by Agamben’s notion of “bare life”, conceptualize camps as biopolitical structures of confinement, securitization and foster control over migrants. However, in recent years a conceptual shift emerged as many scholars (Katz, 2017; Martin et al., 2020; Sanyal, 2010; Sigona, 2015; Tsavdaroglou and Kaika, 2022; Turner and Whyte, 2022) focused and highlighted the potentialities for agency-building and subjectification of migrants inside the camps. In light of this turn, many scholars propose that the camps constitute “hybrid”, “contested” and “ambiguous” spaces (Kreichauf, 2018; Maestri, 2017; Oesch 2017; Ramadan, 2013).





⬡ State-run camps

★ Area with refugee squats

■ Central Municipality

■ Urban area

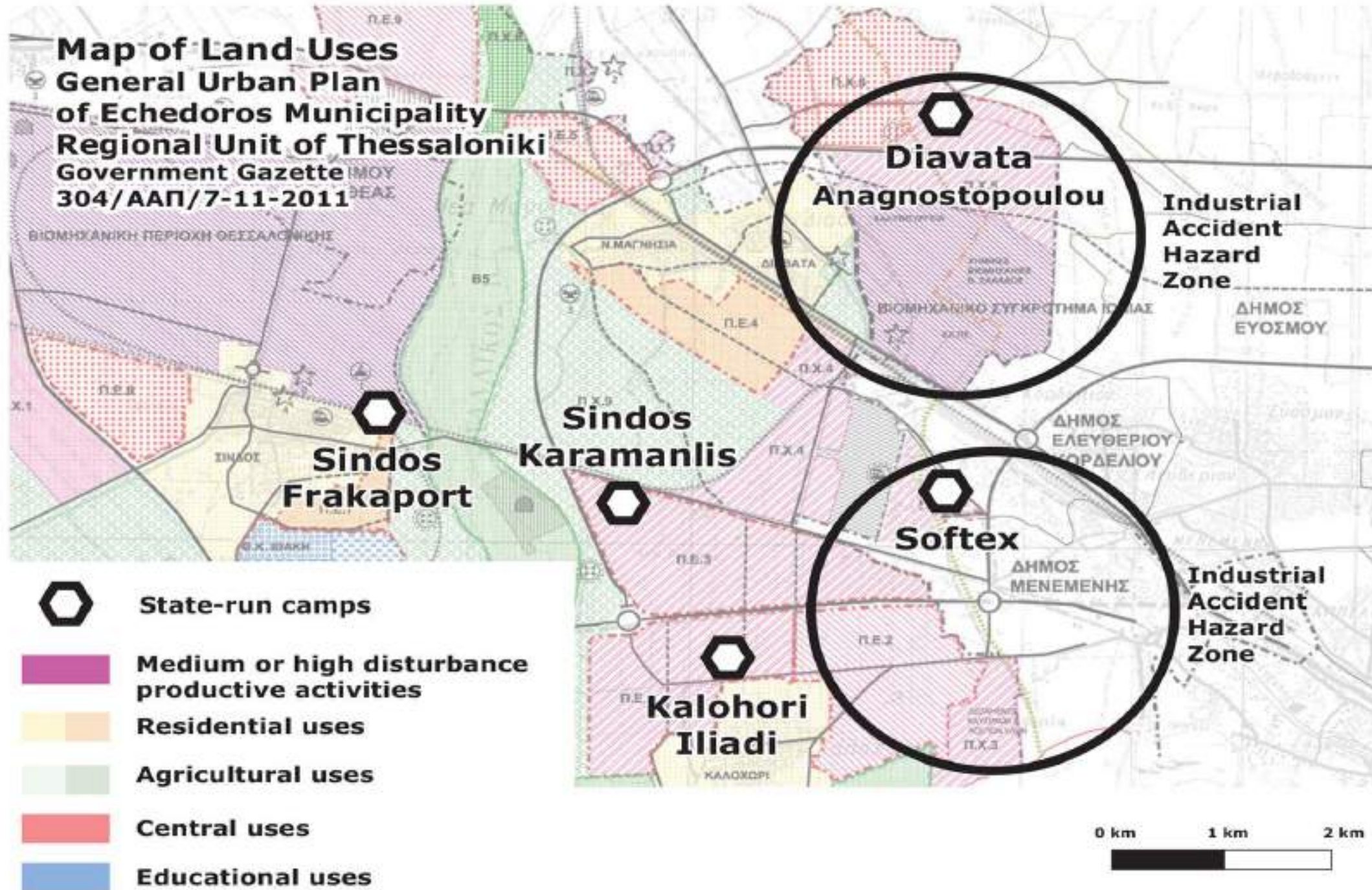


The refugee camps are places where life, social relations, mobility and dissensus are controlled and managed by a postdemocratic apparatus. State mechanisms of police, army and bureaucratic services, supranational institutions like the European Union and the UNHCR and international humanitarian organizations, are responsible for the management of the newcomers. Yet, democratic processes like voting, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, participation in decision-making are not included or prohibited. Thus, we argue that the refugee camps constitute an emblematic place of a postdemocratic model of governance. Although the camps and their residents fall under the jurisdiction of a country that follows democratic processes, they are places of exception, exclusion and deviation from established legal, political and democratic standards.





**Map of Land Uses**  
**General Urban Plan**  
**of Echedoros Municipality**  
**Regional Unit of Thessaloniki**  
**Government Gazette**  
**304/ΑΑΠ/7-11-2011**





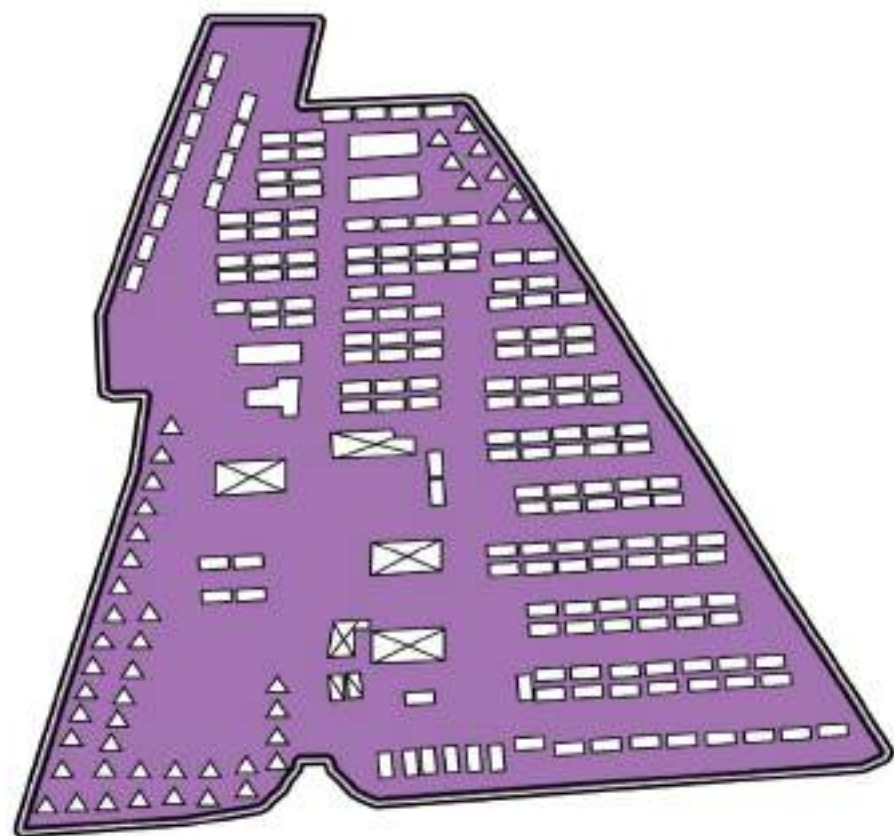


State-run refugee camp Diavata - Anagnostopoulou in Thessaloniki





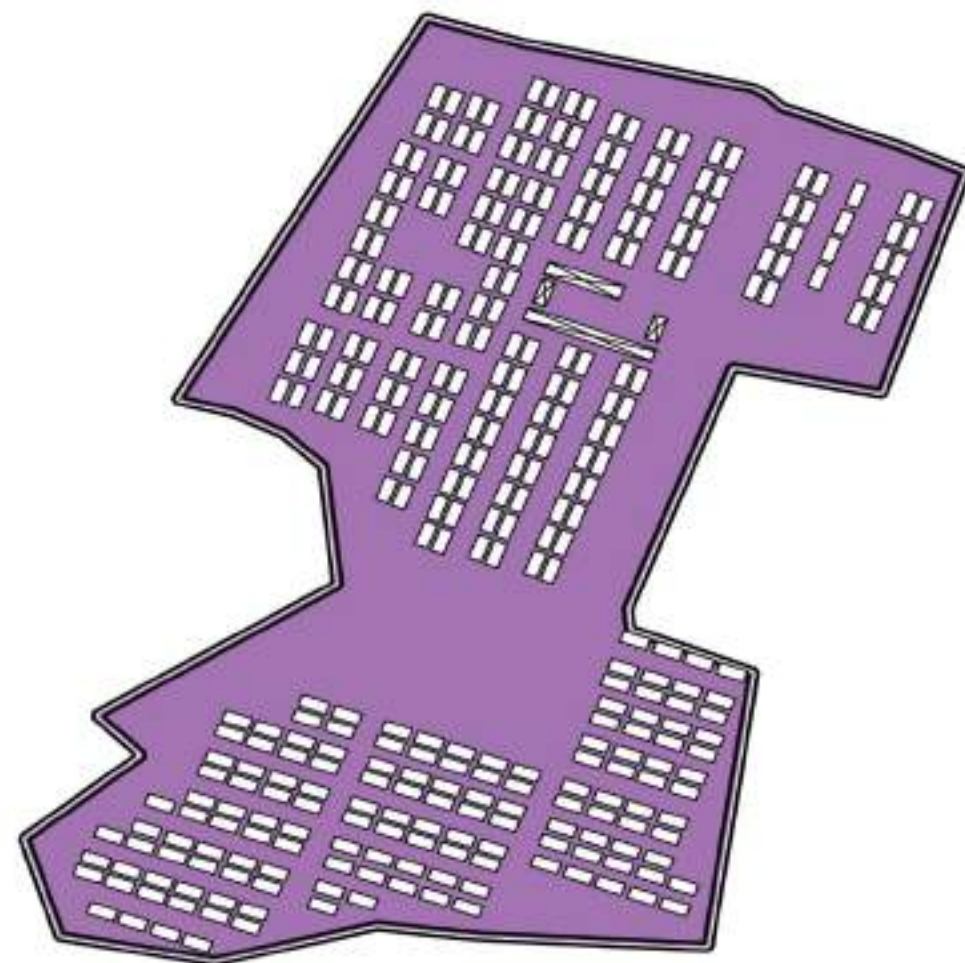
Construction of walls in the perimeter of Diavata-Anagnostopoulou state-run refugee camp in Thessaloniki



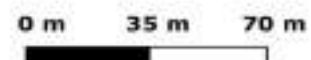
**Diavata camp**  
**Thessaloniki**



△ Tent    □ Container    ⊠ Administration building



**Eleonas camp**  
**Athens**



□ Container    ⊠ Administration building



UN

We are not caged  
animals

WE ARE HUMANS



‘People who leave the camps have psychological problems and traumas, because they spent most of the time inside the container looking out through the little windows, like prisoners, desperate, disappointed, without having anything to do to keep themselves busy and distracted.’ (Personal interview, September 5, 2020).





DOWN WITH THE  
WALLS  
DOWN WITH THE  
PRISONS  
✿

HOUSING  
PAPERS  
FREEDOM

# **Newcomers' commoning practices and decolonial common spaces**



# From the right to squat

‘Here, in Spirou Trikoupi 17 we have lived more than 2.000 people, coming from more than 10 different countries, and that we have crossed, at least, 3 borders till here. This wall that the State is building to seal the entrance will never be able to stop us!

Exarcheia is more than a place of immediate shelter and basic humanitarian aid for migrants and homeless. It is a place where the vulnerable can find community. Where those that have been robbed of all agency and ostracized by the State can decide - together - how they wish to live their lives.’ (squat residents’ public announcement Sep. 2019)



# ... to the Common space

**Common space needs to include newcomers**, and this objective reconfigures it incessantly as a network of contested, reinterpreted and re-evaluated spatial relation.

[Common space] ‘happens’ in specific sociohistorical contexts and it expresses the intricacies of its emergence in and through commoning practices which have to struggle against dominant practices of enclosures. (Stavrides, 2016, p. 262)





Housing Squat for Refugees Orfanotrofeio (Thessaloniki)





‘At the squat we are like the fingers of a hand. Each finger is different from the other, although all together create the palm. Thus, we have different countries, languages, religions, genders, but we are all together, united, we are fighting together, so we are not weak. If you are alone in an isolated camp out of the city, you are weak. There is care and love here, people care if you need a lawyer, if you need a doctor and most of all they look you in the eyes with love. The walls of your container residence in a camp will never look at you with love.’ (Personal interview, April 12, 2019).



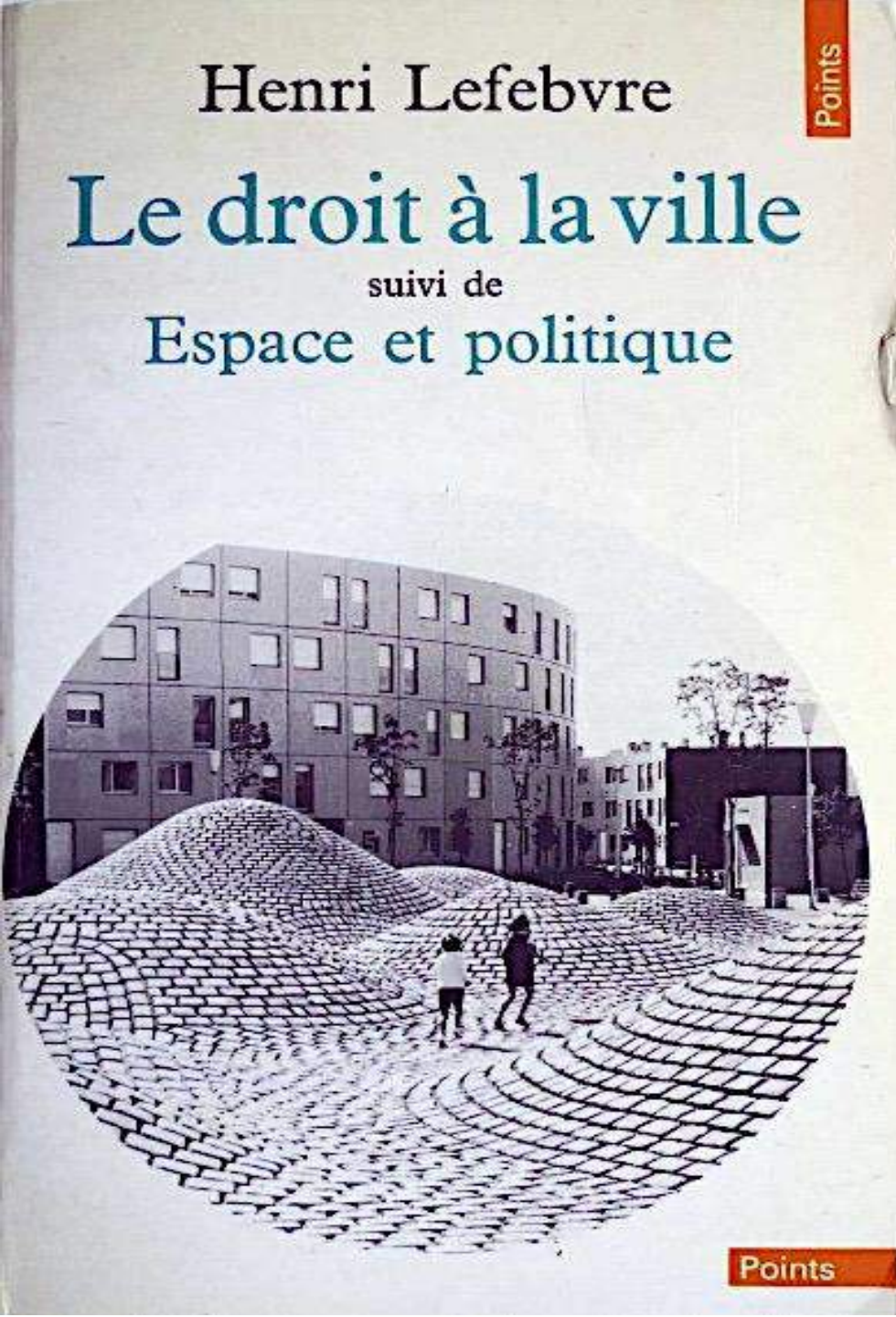




organized camp

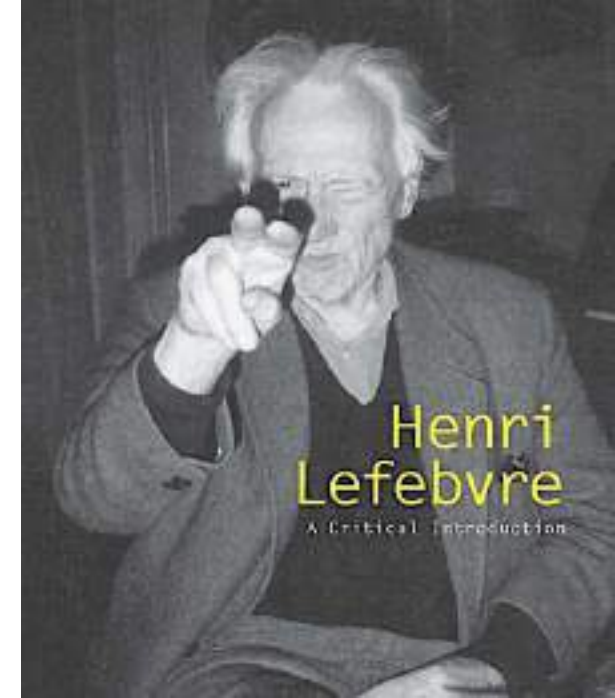
Α – Lesbos



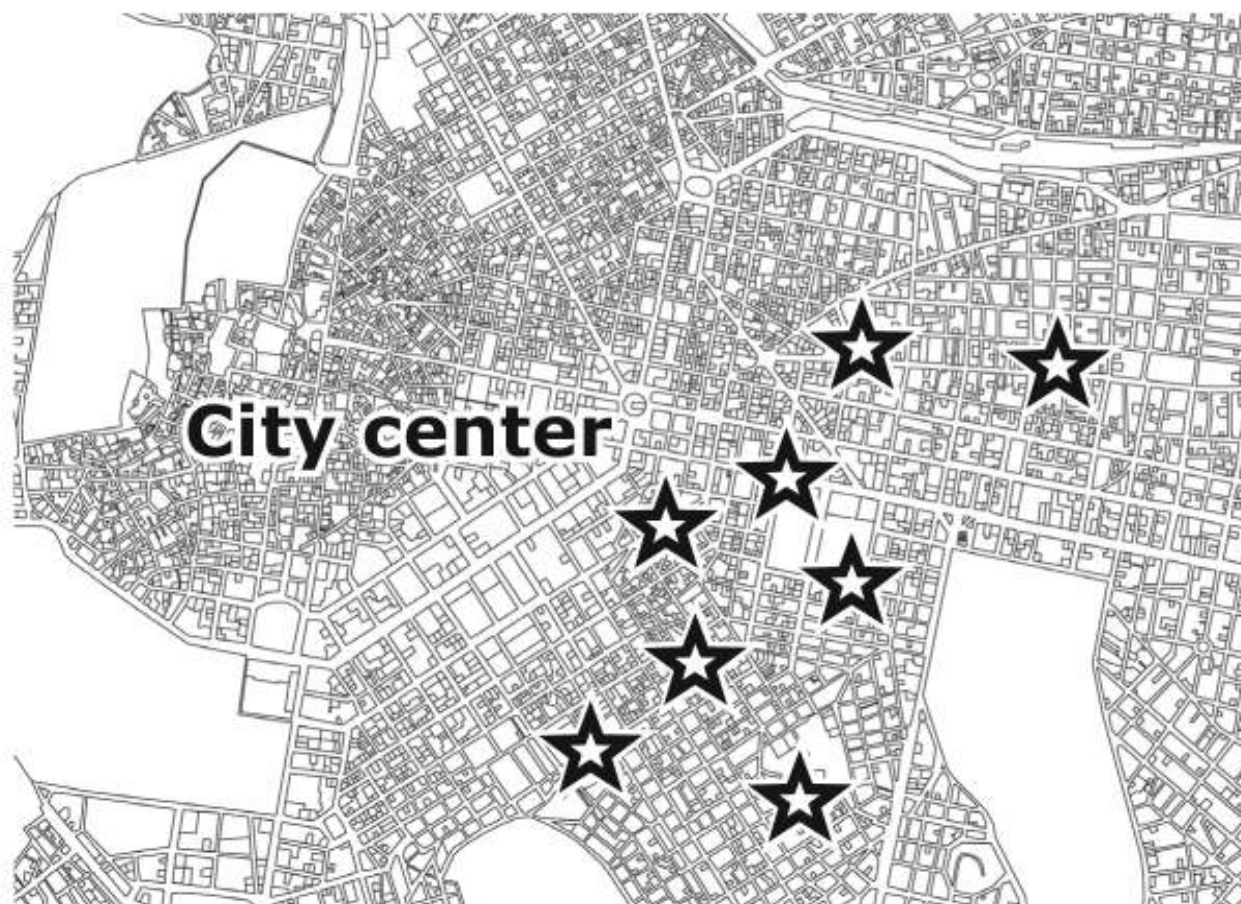


## The Right to the City

Henri Lefebvre 1968



the right to the city is “a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit” (Lefebvre, 1968/1996, p. 173) and “would also cover the right to the use of the center, a privileged place, instead of being dispersed and stuck into ghettos (for workers, immigrants, the ‘marginal’)” (Lefebvre, 1968/1996, p. 34).



**Athens**

0 km 0,5 km 1,00 km



★ Refugee housing squats and common spaces



**Thessaloniki**

0 km 0,5 km 1,00 km



Newcomers squats broaden and extending the concept of commons. Usually commons refer to homogeneous social groups, in terms of ideology-ethnicity-citizenship-social position and there is a relatively lack of examination of commoning in relation to intersectional interrelations across the social categories of religion, ethnicity, language, race, and culture. Thus, our case studies refer to non homogenous groups, actually they are based on heterogeneity-otherness.

Housing commons do not entail an absence of governing principles and rules, but they invent their own 'institutions of commoning'. In contrast to the top-down management model of state-run camps, the principles here are co-decided and there are mechanisms developed and established in order to prevent the concentration of power, through for instance the constant rotation in roles and duties, co-responsibility, and collective accountability









Evicted and brick walled  
entrance of immigrants' squat  
5<sup>th</sup> school in Athens

# the right to move and the right to (opa)city



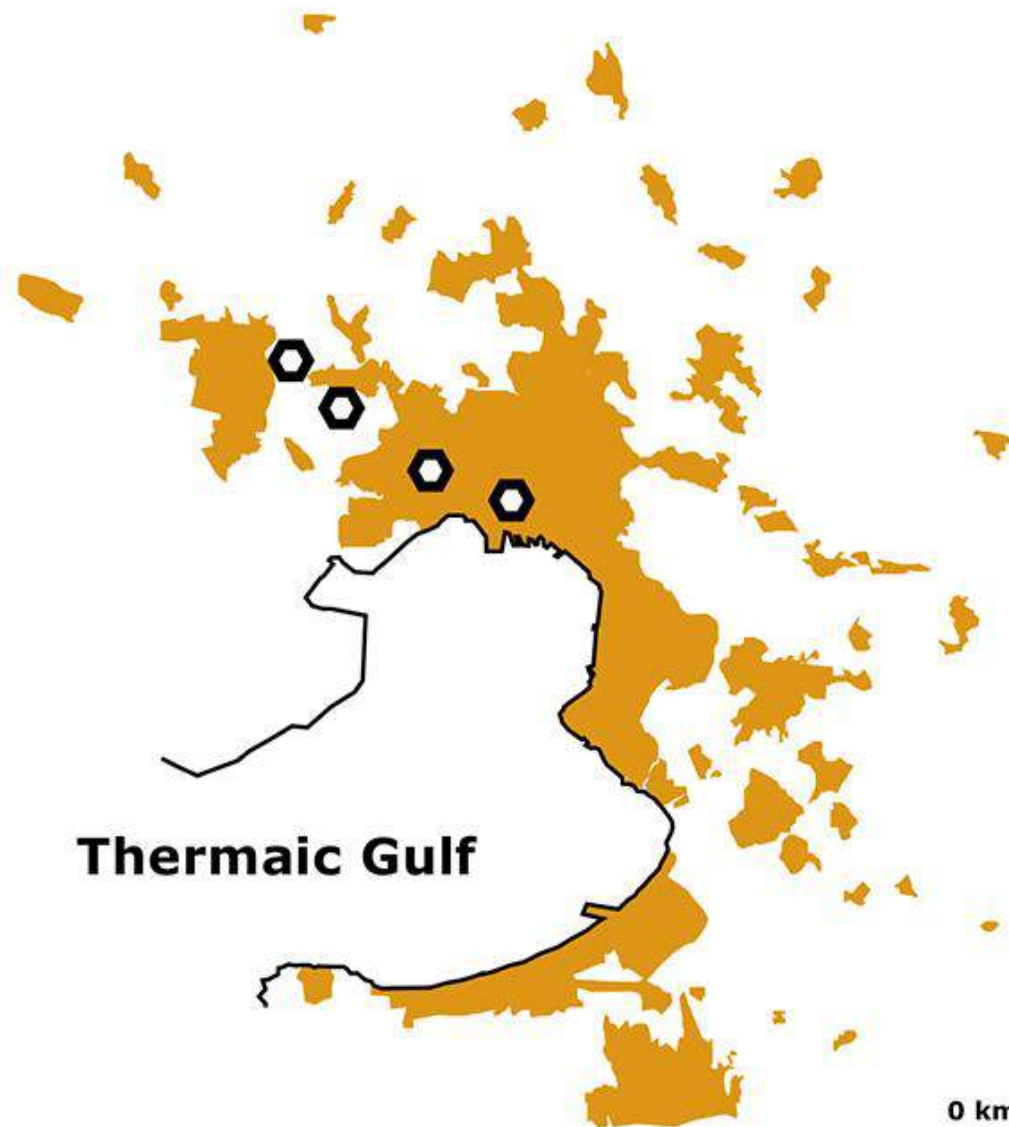
‘The right to opacity is the right to refuse being understood on the coloniser’s terms, to not stand under. Refusing to be understood and resisting the demand of transparency, remaining incomprehensible, entails potential for action and offers the potential emergence of subversive subjectivities. Opacity is the weapon of the subaltern.’ (Khosravi, 2020)

Graffiti in an abandoned train wagon in the west side of Thessaloniki. On the backside, an Austrian freight train can be seen. At the time of the photo a group of people jumped on it to continue their journey to the next countries.



Map of Greece

## Thessaloniki




 Areas with  
abandoned  
train wagons

 Urban area

Thermaic Gulf

0 km 2,5 km 5 km







Bag, clothes, shoes and biscuits left in an abandoned train wagon by migrants who have left, probably for the next newcomers to take them.



Sign in the area of the abandoned train wagons written in Arabic and English warning migrants trying to pass the railway lines that it is dangerous because of electricity.

**Solidarity** can be enriched by the concept of **mobile commoning**, which can be perceived as **‘actions that are shared through acts of co-mobilization’** (Sheller, 2018, p. 169), hence, they are commonly produced by people on the move and according to Papadopoulos & Tsianos, (2013, p. 179) they are based on **‘shared knowledge, affective cooperation, mutual support and care between migrants when they are on the road or when they arrive somewhere’**.

# **Practices of Stasis vs. practices of Resistance**



Last decade several scholars adopt the ancient Greek word of “stasis” in order to analyse the social movements in the era of crisis.

According to Douzinas (2011: 204) ‘the “Stasis Syntagma” is a **gathering of bodies** in space and time, **who think, discuss and deal with commons** (...).’

Athanasίου (2013: 151) proposes that ‘the very practice of stasis **creates both a space for reflection and a space for revolt**, but also an affective comportment of standing and standpoint.’

Dalakoglou and Kallianos (2014: 531) claim that stasis can refer to ‘stasis is perceived as **a process that challenges the neo-liberal normality** and its productive rhythms’.

Finally according to Dikeç (2013) ‘Stasis means **“standing up against”, “standing for,”** and, following perhaps unsurprisingly from these two meanings, **“uprising.”**’.

Consequently, the concept of “stasis” could be the precondition of the movement and is linked to the revolt, the personal and collective stance, standpoint and self-reflection.

The concept of Stasis includes, since ancient Greek years, four main meanings:

### **Stasis as the Middle between of two Motions**

Stasis is the point of reversal, at which both the end of the prior upward motion and the beginning of the subsequent downward motion co-exist, consist or stand still together.

### **Stasis as a Revolt;**

Most historians of ancient times construes Stasis as revolt, sedition, or rebellion against the sovereign power.

### **Stasis as Nosos and Crisis – the crucial time of a disease**

Plato (Cratylus, 426d) construes Stasis as ‘the decision (crisis) of being.’ Indeed, the etymological root of Stasis is the verb “ἵστημι/ἵσταμαι,” from which came the Latin verb *existo* (ex-isto). Consequently, Stasis can be interpreted as the critical time of someone’s existence-presence.

### **Stasis as political stance.**





Belgrade, old train station,  
April 2017





Idomeni, border Greece-North  
Macedonia, April 2016





Thank you for  
your attention

### **Vignette (400-500 words)**

1. Who are the characters?
2. Where did it take place?
3. What's the story?
4. Why was it important?