

**Rubbish Stuff, Thick Skins, and Drifters:  
Making Homeless Geographies  
in Athens City Centre**

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**Rubbish Stuff, Thick Skins, and Drifters:  
Making Homeless Geographies in Athens City Centre**

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## ABSTRACT

Being a city *in* and *of* crisis, Athens, Greece, undergoes dramatic changes in its spatialities. Amidst severe economic austerity, a new poverty management is being established in the city shaping contested landscapes of homelessness, composed by spatialities of homeless stigma. This dissertation is about these very spatialities and the subjectivities shaped therein. And it poses two parallel, dialogic and inextricable questions under one common question mark: *how are the homeless geographies of Athens made* and *how are homeless subjects made along with these geographies?* Seeking answers, this work draws from (post-) phenomenological geographic accounts in order to make the *human* geographies of homelessness of central Athens in practice-oriented, power-ridden and evidence-based manners. A multi-sited ethnographic research practice has been conducted throughout what has been called ‘machinic archipelago’ of provision and care: homeless hostels, a day centre, a night shelter as well as other organisational spaces that aim to address homelessness.

The empirics revolve around a conceptual triptych that proves critical for the practical making of Athens’ homeless geographies: *Materialities*— *Bodies*— *Mobilities*. These are (some of) the critical geographic ingredients that produce social difference and ground it in space: they show how homelessness is not a fixed and static category but is lived, embodied, material, discursive, *spaced*. When spaced through the interrelations of these three elements, homelessness is marked as one —another— of society’s ‘Others’. Yet, what matters is that materialities, bodies and mobilities do not simply co-exist in these geographies; they are *practiced* therein, in specific possible ways. But they do not statically mark social difference once and forever; they constantly *perform* social difference and thus position it in broader social and cultural dynamics. And along with these/their geographies, homeless subjectivities are in the making too.

*Materialities* refers to the homeless’ possessions as ‘absent presences’ as well as the ‘objects of care’ that are provided in the machinic archipelago. In an interplay between material divestment and investment, specific objects relate to ideas of stigma; others are involved in specific political economies of provision; others undergo processes of becoming rubbish; and others, like the homeless’ own belongings, acquire emphasised importance for distinct, non-stigmatised subjects that find themselves in spaces of limited materiality. *Bodies* concerns homelessness as a bodily condition situated in space. In a cleanliness-dirt interplay, the machinic archipelago enables certain bodily practices for the homeless: bodies become personal maps of the past; they are the primal instrument for adjusting to everyday survival; they receive and ingest provided food; they are made through clothes as their extensions; and they perceive critical affective atmospheres produced by the new poverty management. Lastly,

*mobilities* concern the homeless patterns of mobility and friction that take place in the archipelago. Mentalities of managing the poor materialise in a specific 'sense of mobility' that is practiced as forced mobility; the homeless experience this mobility as 'drifters', through affect and the materiality of their bodies but also negotiate it; frictions perform ideas of stigma; and through outreach work, the machinic archipelago externalises its practices and may contribute to the making of homeless stigma.

Overall, the dissertation attempts contributions to existing scholarship in both theoretical and empirical terms. Theoretically, it brings to the fore the role of space and Human Geography in the practice-oriented and relational making of homelessness and homeless subjectivities by bringing together three geographical concepts, namely materialities, bodies and mobilities. Empirically, its contribution rests in the multi-sited qualitative research methodology conducted throughout some of Athens' homeless spatialities that have escaped academic attention, and in the centrality of human experience thus allowing homeless subjectivities to emerge along with space. Above all, by focusing in such institutionalised spaces, homelessness is presented not as an isolated social construct but located in wider socio-cultural dynamics whereas the critical role of academic practice is highlighted in the making of homeless geographies.



# CHAPTER ONE

## Of Lines

### ABSTRACT

Starting with an ethnographic vignette and after a brief description of the overall structure, the chapter mainly attempts to draw three lines that, either intersecting one with another or shaping a vague frame, are essential for the homeless geographies to be later performed. First, a 'contextual line' sketches the local context wherein this research has been conducted and therefore seeks to respond to. Second, an 'epistemological-ontological line' clarifies the fundamental starting positions behind this work and explains the form of the text as well as the pivotal role metaphors play in it. These two lines intersect with each other and penetrate together the rest of the text. Finally, a third, thin 'conceptual-imaginative' line, which frames the whole work and gets diffused in it, introduces the concept of homeless stigma and invites the readers to attune their imagination to stigma while wandering in this work's geographies.

*Μπορεί λοιπόν κανείς να αναγνωρίζει τα προβλήματα, αλλά να έχει αλλεργικές αντιδράσεις στην κωδικοποιημένη εκφορά, στην τυποποιημένη διατύπωσή τους. Δεν είναι πρόβλημα, φερ' ειπείν, ότι η ανθρώπινη κατάσταση, το ευτυχείν ή το δυστυχείν, δεν μπορεί να απορροφηθεί και πάντα ξεχειλίζει ή υπολείπεται ως προς τις γενικευτικές κατηγοριοποιήσεις της μόδας («φτωχοί», «πλούσιοι», «άνεργοι», «αποκλεισμένοι» κτλ.);*

Βασίλης Παπαβασιλείου, 2006,  
*Το Δύσκολο Ανάμεσα*, Αθήνα: Καστανιώτης

*It is possible then that somebody indeed recognise the problems, but may have allergic reactions to their codified enunciation, to their standardised wording. Is it not a problem, for instance, that human condition, the being-fortunate or the being-unfortunate', cannot be absorbed and always overflows or falls short regarding the fashionable generalised categorisations ('poor', 'rich', 'unemployed', 'excluded' etc.)?*

Vassilis Papavassileiou, 2006,  
*The Difficult In-Between*, Athens: Kastaniotis

Athens, Ermouí street, Thisseío neighbourhood. It is the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 2017. A warm Sunday evening. In the leafy backyard of ‘The Archaeological Society at Athens’ a dinner is taking place. And we are invited, about twelve people around the big table. But we do not know each other. Anyway, we are sharing this table and whatever there is on it: Greek salad, moussaka, red wine, bread, cheese. Everybody seems reticent, the only thing moving is our gazes; constant encounters of gazes—and of some gentle smiles. My friend Myria and I are sitting closely together, our bodies leaning secure against one another. And everybody is hesitant to start eating; we are looking at the food, looking each other *through* the food.<sup>2</sup> But, after counting a few minutes with gazes, smiles, and fingers playing with the cutlery on the table, some of us begin offering and serving to some *others* of us; ‘Red wine, dear?’ ‘Moussaka or salad? Or maybe both?’ With the food in the plates now, some are still hesitant. ‘Please, go ahead, eat!’ a lady encourages me. May the dinner begin.

Then, a fifty-seven-year old man stands up. With his arms perching on the table’s edge, his body bowing towards us altogether, and his gaze pointing successively to each one of us above his glasses, he says:

When this happened... *Everything* changed. *Everyone* changed.

Forks suspended. Then, stretching back upwards, looking at himself, touching his body slowly and rhythmically above his checkered red shirt:

I was still myself, I was the same person. Yes. I knew this! But something had changed, something had got stuck on myself. *Retsinià*. The same person, *myself*, but different. Myself, with this *retsinià* on myself.

Sitting down more relaxed now, he gets a generous bite of moussaka with his fork. Words put out by taste. But *our* forks still suspended. In Greek ‘retsinià’, *ρετσινιά*, means the stain of the resin. A stain so hard to remove that may leave marks forever. Thus, and mostly referring to persons, *retsinià* means stigma: a stigma coming from the outside, like a drop of resin falling on one’s shirt; and a stigma that is eventually incorporated as a foreign body, like that drop of resin drying out on the shirt—incorporated but still foreign body, a matter on another matter; in the end, a foreign matter marking one’s self.

The man above with the *retsinià* on himself is Sotírís, former rough sleeper, now a resident at a municipal homeless hostel. The ‘this’ in his words ‘When *this* happened’ is his becoming as homeless, when his own self has been marked as

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<sup>2</sup> Inspired by the book-poem of Odysseas Elytis ‘Maria Nefeli’: ‘We were both looking at the same stone. We were looking each other through the stone’. 2008 (tenth edition), Athens: Ikaros.

'homeless'. The dinner we are attending is a theatrical performance<sup>3</sup> that brings together in the same place, around the same table and sharing the same food, homeless and non-homeless people. Thus performed, 'The Dinner' is a temporary spatial entanglement of three, amongst others, elements: first, of *materials*, such as the food; second, of *bodies* marked differently, as homeless and as *non-homeless*; and, third, of different *mobilities* that bring together right here these materials and bodies before they start moving again to other, different places — possibly to somewhen encounter each other again; or possibly not.

This dissertation is about these three interrelated elements meeting in spaces, making these spaces and being made by these spaces. Precisely, this dissertation is *a(nother)* place made through this triple encounter. Above all, it is about human subjects in their continuous becoming within these spaces. But these spaces and subjects are neither *any* spaces nor *any* subjects; they are marked with the same *retsinià* experienced and described by Sotírís: the *retsinià*, or stigma, of homelessness that is underlying in this work. This text is the final vivid product of intensive ethnographic fieldwork with homeless people and places in Athens, Greece. The homeless who took part in the research all share one common characteristic: a clear will and continuous effort during our encounters to emphasise their individuality, to stand out as subjects beyond pre-defined, externally imposed and seemingly static categories, to sketch with words and deeds their own distinct human contours —to 'scratch the homeless stigma off of themselves.

However, the homeless geographies of central Athens that this work draws from and makes are composed by an archipelago of spaces in the city wherein the homeless stigma, hidden from the public eye, is accepted, manifested, managed, reproduced, embodied, negotiated and contested. A night shelter, day centre, two hostels for homeless and other spatialities are such spaces —where homelessness is spaced. And the reason they are important, I contend, is that they all relate to different social institutions and organisations reflecting a broader socio-cultural sphere. Let us take a more careful look at Sotírís' words above: 'Everything changed' when he became homeless: his life, habits, material conditions, sense of time and space; but also 'Everyone changed': the *retsinià* that marked him changed also the others, the non-homeless, towards him. Precisely, *they* marked him with *retsinià*.

*They*, roughly the non-homeless society, produce spaces for one of their stigmatised 'others', in this case 'the homeless'. A leap inside these spaces shows us how society deals spatially with the stigma that it produces. And it shows us how 'the homeless' as stigmatised subjectivities may be made and re-made spatially, through the multiple relations, discourses and practices that are made possible and enacted in these spaces. This dissertation poses two parallel, dialogic

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<sup>3</sup> 'The Dinner' was part of the 'Mind the fact' festival, that took place in Athens from 27 to 29 of May, 2017 and has been curated by choreographer Sofía Mavragáni. I would like to thank Sofía for discussing the ideas, processes and experiences of the performance.

and inextricable questions under one common question mark: *how are the homeless geographies of Athens made and how are homeless subjects made along with these geographies?* It seeks to give answers by being attentive to a triptych of apparently distinct but highly interrelated and interdependent spatial elements: homeless *materials*, homeless *bodies*, homeless *mobilities*. Therefore, a two-fold contribution to existing knowledge is possible: a theoretical and an empirical one. The theoretical brings to the fore the role of space and Human Geography in the practice-oriented and relational making of homelessness and homeless subjectivities by bringing together in this work three geographical concepts, namely materialities, bodies and mobilities. The empirical contribution rests in the multi-sited qualitative research methodology conducted throughout some of Athens' homeless spatialities that have escaped academic attention, and in the centrality of human experience thus allowing homeless subjectivities to emerge along with space.

This introductory chapter is the place where three specific lines are simultaneously drawn and, due to their simultaneity, form the dissertation's basic contour. Two of these lines intersect one with another, in the two successive parts. The first of these intersecting lines is a 'contextual line': it draws from recent research in order to shape this work's broader spatial context, that is the Greek capital city, Athens, in (its) social and economic crisis. The second is an 'epistemological-ontological line' that clarifies some essential starting positions for this work, positions that are then reflected in the ways and forms the text has been crafted to perform the homeless geographies in quest(ion). The third line does not (necessarily) intersect with the other two but, rather, finely frames and embraces the overall work: it is a thin 'conceptual-imaginative line' that presents a spatial idea of stigma, which implicitly pervades the rest of the dissertation — the same way *retsiniá* pervades Sotiris' way of being. Both intersecting and framing lines work altogether in order to shape a contour that is not restricted to an external boundary but gets diffused and becomes omnipresent throughout the overall body of the dissertation.

After these lines have been drawn in this chapter and having gained a common momentum to penetrate the rest of the text, the dissertation unfolds as follows: Chapter Two provides a review of mainly geographic literature on homelessness posing the question 'how is homelessness spaced?'. It then discusses recent academic work on homelessness in Athens, seeking to eventually locate this dissertation in relation to both international (geographical) literature and local homelessness research. Chapter Three is a detailed, highly empirical description of the methodology developed during the research practice. Precisely, it highlights the importance of multi-sitedness in homelessness geographic research; it shows the ways in which the field has been selectively crafted and practiced; it looks through a 'pervasive mirror' to discuss complex issues of positionality and reflexivity as emerging in more or less institutionalised spatial contexts and through encounters with the homeless; and it points towards ethical

and political dimensions that call for constant attention, before it states some practical issues.

Chapter Four presents the dissertation's more precise metaphorical scenography: 'machinic archipelago' of Athens, as will be called the central city's network of spaces made by various institutions to serve the homeless. Then the most central to this work archipelago's spatialities are described and vivified, its 'machinic nature' is illuminated through empirical evidence, whilst a first, discursive sketching of the city's homeless subjectivities is attempted. Chapter Five focuses on the triptych's first element, namely materiality or the homeless stuff. It begins by highlighting the material divestment of homeless subjects and then traces various practices of material investment possible in the archipelago. Such practices relate to different conduits, material qualities, and rules that affect materially the involved homeless, while, in some cases, belongings may undergo critical processes of becoming rubbish.

Chapter Six deals with homeless bodies. It argues for pluralising, materialising and grounding the so-called 'homeless body' by being attentive to empirical evidence. Becoming homeless means becoming a new body. In the machinic archipelago, the homeless find themselves in a constant interplay between cleanliness and dirt, wherein they attempt to keep their bodies sealed; and homelessness may be embodied through food, clothes and affect. The last empirical chapter, Seven, presents the homeless mobilities taking place in the archipelago. It discusses a certain prevailing sense of mobility and focuses on the night shelter as the place that materialises this very sense. Then it turns to the frictions that are critical to mobilities and, eventually, shows how the archipelago may be practiced on the move through mobility-friction interplays. In its afterword, the dissertation closes by opening up to some critical geographic remarks.



FIGURE 1: 'CRISIS..what else?' Koumoundourou street. Omónoia, December 2016.

## CONTEXTUAL LINE: A CITY IN/OF CRISIS

A city in crisis is a city on the move, which undergoes radical change. Greece, and especially its capital city, Athens, is found 'at the epicenter of the current sovereign debt crisis in Europe' (Souliotis, 2013, p. 237). But this epicenter is not a peaceful place; rather, it is 'the eye of the crisis-storm' (Brekke, Dalakoglou, Filippidis & Vradis, 2014, p. 7). Therein, Athens is changing in rapid, unpredictable, and complicated ways; and is changing materially, discursively, politically, economically, culturally —socially. Soaked under the crisis-storm, the city is slowly becoming softer allowing, amongst others, civilian performances of resistance and political street art to alter its visuality and materiality. (Tsilimpounidi, 2012). Whilst the multiple consequences are spread all over the urban space reshaping its geographies and further deepening its social inequalities (Maloutas, 2014), the city centre of Athens possesses a socio-spatial gravity that renders it the place *par excellence* for the crisis' multiple manifestations —the epi-centre of the epicentre. Thus, the city centre turns into a 'political stake' for various competing actors and in various spatial spheres: housing and socio-demographics, commerce and entertainment, neighbourhood level and everyday coexistence, urban contestation and movements, and policy making for coping with the crisis (Maloutas, Kandylis, Petrou & Souliotis, 2013).

In Athens, even crisis itself changes nature: from 'debt' or 'financial crisis', it becomes a '*humanitarian crisis*', which signifies a 'state of exception' that expands from touching few minority groups to affecting wider and wider social strata (Dalakoglou, 2013). The mainstream seems now different and Europe can encounter its 'suffering other', like, till recently, Africans or Latin Americans — there— in the faces and bodies of this new *poor* mainstream that populates central Athens —here— in a dramatic shift of the view, materiality and affective qualities of its landscape (Kaika, 2012; see also Philippidis, 2014). Then, such radical changes inscribe a stigma on certain areas and the population groups that inhabit them; this stigma is ready to get 'incorporated' by specific groups that claim an appropriation of the 'stigmatised' city space against the 'stigmatised' (Koutrolikou, 2015b).

Nevertheless, a stigmatised city centre in humanitarian crisis cannot be left ungoverned; rather, the crisis 'is both embedded in, and employed as, a governance technique' (Koutrolikou, 2015a, p. 188). According to Koutrolikou, the recent making of central Athens in terms of a humanitarian crisis ought to be seen as another critical moment in a sequence of other crises and their discourses that define the new governmentalities of the city centre. The humanitarian crisis, then, calls for a new emergency in the city (for its economic recovery); produces fear(s) (of a further impoverishment); divides the public from its 'enemies' (who may oppose 'necessary' reforms); and may violate the constitution and human rights (by legitimising, amongst others, the role of 'technocrats' for dealing with the crisis' 'urgencies'). A major part of the overall governance technique is exercised in the centre's most 'stigmatised' through media discourses

neighbourhoods: around and east of Omónoia square; where the drug addicts, the migrants, the homeless —the crisis' 'Others'— may be located.

This new governmentality and management of a humanitarian crisis signifies too 'a structural shift in terms of processes of subjectification' (Philippidis, 2014, p. 65) in Athens (see also Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017). Processes of neighbourhood quotidian mobilisation (Arampatzi, 2017), emancipatory movements and practices on squares (Hadjimichalis, 2013) and the city streets (Kallianos, 2013), and other, more spontaneous spatialities (Leontidou, 2014) give rise to new subjectivities that oppose from below dominant practices and discourses that seek to reshape the city and profit from a city centre as a political stake. Yet, at the same time processes of subjectification during the crisis may be less utopic as (different) subjects may be at (different) risk (Athanasidou, 2014). For example, consumer-citizens now fail to consume, at least as much as they once could, witnessing a severe downfall of their economic capacities (Chatzidakis, 2014); women embody subjectivities that loudly remind us, through their 'flesh and blood', that the so-called, general 'Greek crisis' is experienced differently throughout urban space (Vaiou, 2014, p. 6); and the visible emergence of what Kaika (2012) calls 'the *nouveau* poor' in Athens highlights how the city and the/its crisis intersect resulting in the shaping of brand new subjectivities that reshape too the preexisting boundaries (between 'us' and the 'other') and marks social difference in novel ways (such as deserving and non-deserving citizens).

The city *in* crisis is eventually the city *of* crisis. In the case of Athens, city and crisis are thus inseparable, one single glutinous unity of high social and spatial temperatures. Athens and its crisis shape the spatial present of, perhaps, a historical moment of constant, unprecedented change which follows, though, various directions and meets acts of both intended and unintended opposition. Yet, in its dangerous proximity to a 'crisis fetishism' that we, as academics, ought to be aware of, academic attention has been so far relatively selective and thus inevitably limited. Although significant directions have been indicated, such as the above cited works of Kaika (2012) and Vaiou (2014), there are other subjectivities that call for attention in the city of crisis. Subjectivities that are perhaps situated away from the squares where bottom-up politics play out — some meters away, but away; and subjectivities that are made below abstract theorisations —in and through the spatialities of a city of crisis that is material, embodied and on the move. Homeless people may be, amongst others, the subjectivities that allow us to finally 'name neglected spatialities and invent new ones' (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p. 4), spatialities neglected by both Academia and Athens itself. What is neglected along with these spatialities are the experiences of the homeless subjects that find and make themselves therein: in the stigmatised backyards —as Goffmanian 'back places' (1963)— of a contested city centre. Backyards as 'spaces of poverty management' that are vital 'in the construction of multiple forms of agency and the making of the poor into governable subjects' (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017, p. 25)

## EPISTEMOLOGICAL-ONTOLOGICAL LINE: STARTING POSITIONS, FORM AND METAPHORS

Overall, this work is highly empirical. That is, it does not depart from any ‘grand theory’ in order to ‘see’ the homeless geographies of central Athens and re-present them; theory is not placed before evidence, evidence is not kept within any rigid boundaries of theory. But, overall again, this work simultaneously espouses different theories in order to generate itself and make sense out of the empirics soaked in its ground. What happens eventually is that the empirical and the theoretical lead each other; the lived and the abstract are becoming in a mutual togetherness. The aim is twofold: to avoid ungrounded theorisations or overly theorised accounts of people and places; and to let theory and evidence (both mine *and* of other scholars) merge into one another in order to produce geographical knowledge that respects, critiques and revives, to the possible extent, the socio-spatial contexts it derives from. For this reason, this work draws from phenomenological and post-phenomenological geographical accounts. And these accounts thus result in a specific form, structure and style of text as a critical academic artifact, as discussed hereafter.

Ihde’s ‘interrelational ontology’ becomes the starting position: ‘the human experiencer is to be found ontologically related to an environment or a world, but the interrelations are such that both are transformed in this relationality’ (2009, p. 23). Then, and more specifically, attention here is paid to specific elements that are central in recent post-phenomenological discussions in Human Geography, namely *materiality* as multiple relational capacities, and *bodies* as lived and in constant composition with (their) subjects (Ash & Simpson, 2014). Yet, besides bodies and materiality, there is a third element to be added in and suggested by this work; that is *mobility*. The reason for choosing these three specific elements is three-fold: they all emerged in the field, claimed essence in the homeless lives and thus called for adequate research attention; they are central issues in current Social and Cultural Geography, which this work attempts to engage with (see, for example, Longhurst, 2005; Tolia-Kelly, 2013; and Cresswell, 2014, respectively for each element); and they all are essential ingredients for making geographies in non-representational ways (Thrift, 2008; also Anderson & Harrison, 2010). Thus, through the triple interplay of bodies, materiality and mobility, this work is post-phenomenological in a way that it stresses the ‘being-with’ rather than a ‘being-there’ (Ash & Simpson, 2014, p. 16), pointing at a more dynamic and multiple embeddedness of human subjectivity inevitably performed in space.

At the same time though, and to preserve a political sensitivity, this work follows Simonsen (2012) in her (phenomenological) ‘quest of a new humanism’: pursuing a practice-oriented, power-ridden and evidence-based geographical account wherein the emergent subject—be it the researched and the researcher—is central and simultaneously open to whatever constitutes her/his spatialities. In Simonsen’s own words, the ‘*experiential dimension* of social life [becomes] a precondition for critical analysis – emphasizing the significance of modest, situated experiences of everyday life’ (p. 14, original emphasis). Especially in

reference to the ‘urban poor’, experiential situatedness goes beyond the blindness of a ‘logic of calculation’ often embraced by official institutions (Amin & Thrift, 2017, chapter 5) as well as, we may add, much of academic practice and production. The centrality of these modest and situated experiences of everyday life in Athens’ homeless geographies, as made through these pages, are reflected in an organic textual form that allows theory to unfold through and mingle together with the empirical evidence that is this work’s and these geographies’ primal matter —evidence that at the same time relates to other empirical and theoretical research.

With the phenomenological origins made clear, I would now like to turn to the ways in which this empirical primal matter takes the shape of a text, the latter being subject to criticism for its limited representational powers (see Barnes & Duncan, 1992; Thrift, 2008). To begin, a ‘nomadic’ way of writing is chosen, ‘grounding everyday events in cultural forms and political realities, and ragpicking through a crowd of objects, surfaces, voices, bodies, images, and stances to detail their makings’ (Desjarlais, 1997, p. 6). Building textual fragments around the materiality-bodies-mobility triptych, the dissertation takes the form of what Crang and Cook (2007) call ‘writing montage’, through which meaning is not generated by the fragments as isolated pieces of evidence but, instead, ‘from the way [fragments] work with and/or against one another’ (p. 177). What I wish to do with making the homeless geographies as ‘writing montage’ is keep hold of the complexity, messiness, contradictions and dynamic interrelations of everyday life, spaces and subjects, and to reduce them as little as possible to their academic re-presentations.

The *composition* of this writing montage deserves further attention though; for its form, structure and style, being the text’s substance (Ward, 2014), is so important that may deserve attention equal to that paid to, say, methodology (Rabbiosi & Vanolo, 2016). What I would like to focus on, in other words, is the component ‘graphy’ of ‘geo-graphy’, since the word’s origin reminds us that *geography* is made —is a product of the *geographer’s* action, who writes the earth. Writing is then quintessential in geographical practice and knowledge (DeLyser & Hawkins, 2013). More specifically, central to the hereby writing montage are metaphors, a pivotal and historical tool in the practising of Human Geography (Cloke et al., 2004, p. 360; also Barnes & Duncan, 1992).

Barnes (2009) proposes two sorts of metaphors: small ones, which ‘are part of the very infrastructure of language construction’; and large ones, which ‘structure entire research paradigms’ (p. 360). In this dissertation, the main metaphor is the ‘machinic archipelago’ that, as will be shown later, refers to the services that compose the homeless geographies in Athens city centre. Yet, and with regard to Barnes’ dipole, this metaphor is located somewhere in between: it is larger than ‘small’, by being more than just an unquestioned part of the text’s infrastructure; and is definitely smaller than ‘large’, by not aspiring to establish any entire, grand research paradigm. Instead, in between the small and the large, this metaphor along with other less central but certainly significant metaphors (such as ‘pervasive mirror’, ‘body-maps’, ‘paper subjects’ and many others), are used *intentionally* due to the ‘generative potential’ they carry (Noxolo, Raghuram & Madge, 2008, p. 148), a potential hopefully transfused from the metaphors to the overall text so that geographies are generated. If, as Barnes and Duncan put it, a metaphor is not only a linguistic trope but the ‘creative spark for something much

more' (1992, p. 10), in our case this 'something' is hoped to be the homeless geographies and subjectivities.

Acknowledging the metaphors' limitations (Barnes, 1992), mobilising them here is thus a well-orchestrated, careful, intended methodological technique that affects the form and organicity of this work as ingredient of the overall research practice. The logic for this choice unfolds as such: following Cresswell (1997), metaphors are first recognised as *acts*, not just rhetorical devices, that have geographical and political implications; then, they have the potential to enact knowledge in new human and political ways; and they are utilised in 'productive ways of thinking of connections, dynamic relationalities, and responsibilities' (Noxolo, Raghuram & Madge, 2008, p. 148). By and large, the aim of utilising metaphors is to vivify the text (see also Caulley, 2008), provoke and even switch the readers' (as well as the author's) imagination; to make the city's homeless geographies in a non-representational fashion (Thrift, 2008), which this work draws inspiration from, hoping to 'develop a fuller appreciation of human action in space' (Cresswell, 1997, p. 343); and to emphasise the role, potential and necessary responsibility of academic practice in the production of knowledge. Above all, metaphors are hoped to act in the word's literal original meaning:<sup>4</sup> to, first, create and, then, move us to *another place*; where homeless subjects are made.

To conclude, and despite the metaphors as active elements of the text, and the knowledge and geographies performed therein, the overall writing montage responds to a recent call in Cultural Geography to engage with creative forms of writing (see, for example, the special issue of *cultural geographies* 2014, Vol 21(1); Rabbiosi & Vanolo, 2016; Vannini, 2014; Ward, 2014). Seeking to 'animate rather than simply mimic' (Vannini, p. 2) what has happened in the field, I organically weave throughout the text what could be called 'geographical moments': fragments of the text, often composed by more than one 'real-life' moments, written in a non-friction prose (Marston & De Leeuw, 2013; Ward, 2014), in present, often continuous tense, including details and elements of the environment and reviving the practices and affects observed and lived *in situ*. Along with the diffused geographical moments, visual material, diary excerpts and punctuation all contribute to the making of a geographical text that aspires to perform vivid, incomplete meanings; to somehow 'affect the reader' (Cameron, 2012, p. 584) and open up new and critical possibilities in the writing as well as reading of geographies (Rabbiosi & Vanolo, 2016; Ward, 2014). There will be always subjects being made throughout these geographies —and this 'being made' through academic practice does matter.

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<sup>4</sup> From the Greek 'μεταφορά' [metaphorá], literally meaning the act of transferring so that something or someone is found in a different place.

## CONCEPTUAL-IMAGINATIVE LINE: A SPATIAL NOTE ON STIGMA

Following the issues of textual form discussed above, the aim of this note is to draw a third line, inspired by the idea of ‘stigma’ and extending from the opening of this chapter hoping to get diffused in the rest of the text —to get absorbed by its form. Stigma has not been the starting point of this work, something that would increase the risk of romanticising its subject(s), neither has it been a central theoretical concept in the analysis of its empirical material; another entire dissertation would be needed. But homeless stigma has emerged during research practice organically, as organically it is experienced by the people who embody it. In my contacts with the homeless in ‘their’ spaces, a continuous effort from their side to take a secure distance from the homeless-as-a-group, mark themselves as different, emphasise and finally preserve, to the possible extent, their individuality —an individuality threatened by the label ‘homeless’— was giving away the underlying but decisive omnipresence of stigma. All our common encounters have been characterised by this: the smell, touch, sound, words, practices of stigma. The empirics of the geographies and subjectivities performed here are saturated with the (feeling of the) homeless stigma and the various corresponding efforts to ‘scratch it off’ of one’s self and body. And as stigma has been the underlying omnipresence of the empirics backing this work, so it has to be in its textual product —if the empirics and their subjects are to be respected. Drawn from the empirical towards the readers’ imagination then, this is the aim of this third line: to finely frame the whole text conceptually and then to get diffused everywhere, creating a sort of atmosphere that marks the geographies enacted therein. Stigma is (in) the air of the homeless geographies and so ought to be imagined as such.

To ground this idea theoretically, I suggest a turn to Erving Goffman’s seminal work *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963) and reflect upon certain elements. In his strongly social constructionist approach, Goffman suggests that social stigma not be either pre-existent or given or static; rather it is about ‘relationships, not attributes’ (p. 3). And these relationships concern not just the stigmatised person but equally the non-stigmatised, namely the ‘normal’. Remember Sotiris above, he was not alone in having the *retsinià* on himself — ‘Everyone changed’. Then, it is in what Goffman calls ‘mixed contacts’ that the stigmatised and the ‘normal’ dynamically relate to one another and produce stigma. Mixed contacts provide the space and time for the stigma’s production. ‘The normal (sic) and the stigmatised are not persons but rather perspectives’, in his own words (p. 138). And being so, stigma can be produced, reproduced, negotiated, confirmed, contested, opposed, temporarily freed from. For, in some way, spoiled identities can be managed.

Regarding the *homeless* stigma specifically, Wasserman and Clair (2010) word it quite illustratively: ‘one’s identity as homeless eclipses all other biographical features because it is at the time the most visible feature of one’s life course’ (p. 99). Or similarly, according to McCarthy (2013), ‘No matter how multiple and fluid [the homeless] identities may be, it is their “homeless” attribute which is

seen as the ultimate “self” by others’ (p. 51). In many ways, Goffman’s ideas have not been absent in research that addresses the pivotal issues of stigma and identity formation in the lives of the homeless (for instance, see Lancione, 2014c; McCarthy, 2013; Parsell, 2011; Rayburn & Guittar, 2013). But this note attempts a move beyond the homeless stigma as ‘a thing’ embodied only by the person, in order to propose a spatial understanding. Space is not untouched by stigma as persons are not untouched by space. In a series of articles, Takahashi (1996, 1997), and later Takahashi, McElroy and Rowe (2002), has elaborated on the relationship between homeless stigma and space, stressing how stigmatisation is not only *embodied* (by the homeless) but also *emplaced* (in certain areas) (1997). Through a partitioning of both people and places then, the homeless stigma is continuously passed from people to places and back in a process of mutual continuous stigmatisation.

To enrich this spatial understanding, and to finally draw this conceptual-imaginative line that will forge the atmosphere of the geographies hereafter, let us go back again to Goffman’s thesis, this time to focus on a spatial imperative that has been largely ignored in literature that investigates homelessness geographically. Goffman identifies three types of space that matter for social stigma: ‘forbidden or out-of-bounds places’, wherein the stigmatised are simply not allowed to be; ‘civil places’, wherein the stigmatised are not fully accepted and are thus treated carefully or even painfully; and ‘back places’. It is the latter that are of relevance to the research and geographies made here. Inside back places the stigmatised persons ‘stand exposed and find they need not try to conceal their stigma, nor be overly concerned with cooperatively trying to disattend it’ (p. 81). Put differently, the stigma is not hidden any more, is released in places ready to tolerate, accept, correspond to it. The night shelter, day centre, hostels and other places of this dissertation are, and ought to be imagined as, Athenian back places for the homeless: drawn back from ‘normal’ society and its spatialities, they are where the homeless stigma is found ‘in (its) place’ (cf. Cresswell, 1996). Allegedly no shame for the stigmatised. And the homeless stigma is set free. Precisely, stigma is a prerequisite for acquiring access there and hence becomes legitimate (see also Johnsen, Cloke & May, 2005). However painful, the possession of the stigma has to be declared.

Moreover, another reason to relate these places with stigma is that they are where the Goffmanian mixed contacts happen, contacts so essential to the construction of stigma: between the stigmatised homeless (in need of ‘something’) and the ‘normal’ staff and volunteers (who are there to provide them with this ‘something’). Yet, I would like to suggest a broader understanding of mixed contacts. The mere involvement of the homeless in these places is in itself a meaningful mixed contact because the homeless find themselves in material, discursive and practiced environments that ‘normal’ society has created *for them*. The homeless as subjects are folded within these environments (Hetherington, 1997): homeless-place-stigma-homeless-place-stigma-homeless-...-place-stigma. Homeless stigma *embodied*, homeless stigma *emplaced*, to remember Takahashi. And this is why, in my view, the importance of these places is undeniable: they materialise the broader social and cultural politics that society’s ‘others’ are made through —*by* society.

Past the practices that they render possible, the night shelter, day centre and hostels perform a sequence of spatial actions: they *absorb* the homeless stigma by

temporarily accepting the subjects who embody it; then, given that there is no need to be concealed, the stigma can be *exercised*: expressed, reproduced, managed, negotiated, opposed, scratched off; and, finally, it is *ejected* again along with its subjects, in the city streets or elsewhere. Absorb, exercise, eject. Absorb, exercise, eject. Absorb, exercise, eject. Along with the subjects. And again: homeless stigma absorbed, homeless stigma exercised, homeless stigma ejected. And constantly transfused from place to person and back. This is the imagination this line seeks to provoke. A spatial practising of the homeless stigma. So, dear readers, bear in mind this note while wandering in the homeless geographies that follow. Bear in mind the stigma being absorbed, exercised and ejected, transfused from person to place and back. Again. The stigma *in* the air of these geographies—inhaled by the subjects found therein.



FIGURE 2 'WHAT LIES HIDDEN REMAINS UNFAMILIAR'.  
Leonídou street. Metaxourgheío, November 2016.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Locating this Work and its Geographies

#### ABSTRACT

The chapter provides a literature review on homelessness in order to sketch how the topic has been addressed principally in geographical research and what kind of knowledge this research has so far produced. It is organised in two general themes that structure the field, which could be labelled as ‘punitive’ and ‘post-punitive’ respectively. Then, from the international context we move to the local dynamics, central to the geographies discussed here. We first see how homelessness in Athens has been researched the last years, given the acknowledged rise of its visibility. The focus then switches to the works that are of considerable relevance for this dissertation and can empirically frame it. The chapter’s overall aim is to attempt a certain positioning of the dissertation in relation both to the international academic debate and its Greek counterpart. A last yet important note aspires to let the homeless subjectivities hold sway in what follows.

**Y**ou must have listened to incredible *stories!*' Colleagues, friends and relatives have addressed to me numerous such phrases, along with dozens of similar others, often in a mixed, contradictory tone of guilt and excitement —like with an 'attraction-repulsion dynamic' (DeVerteuil, 2014, p. 3). The stories of homeless people (research companions, in my case) seem to satisfy a mainstream starving curiosity about how some people end up in this extreme and highly visible form of social —and spatial— marginality, a curiosity fed to a big extent by the press and media as public debate forums (see May, 2003). For many, such stories are sufficient to provide an explanation for a condition never experienced personally, often in parallel with, and reinforced by academic debates (for example, in the form of 'pathways' for some scholars; see Clapham, 2003). However, the work presented here does not claim any explanatory position towards homelessness; neither looks for causal relations between clearly distinguished agents and systems. For it feeds rather different curiosities. No 'new orthodoxy' (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Somerville, 2013) pursued then, let alone an old one. Instead, this work is at pains to explore how homelessness is grounded, now; how, as a situation, it plays out in space(s), now. In other words, instead of dealing with *stories*, it deals with *presents*, which inevitably take place somewhere; and somehow.

This is to say that a specific scholarship is engaged with here. In order to locate this work more accurately then, to engage with literatures and to contribute to ongoing debates, this chapter provides a review of studies that approach homelessness geographically. For this reason, the reviewed material derives chiefly, but not exclusively, from journals and books in the fields of Human Geography and Urban Studies.<sup>5</sup> When necessary, desk research has expanded towards other fields too (such as Urban Sociology and Anthropology) embracing further studies that can prove enriching. Moreover, expanding the review's scope, it is believed that there exist implicit interconnections between this dissertation and the 'geographies of home' scholarship, although the latter is not discussed here. Specifically, (cultural) geographies of home embrace a quite wide thematic range such as residence, dwelling and cohabitation (see Blunt, 2005). However, and as Brickell (2012) notes with regard to homelessness, 'literature on the meanings and materialities of such *domestic loss* is sparse' (p. 231, emphasis added). Therefore, I suggest two basic ways in which contribution to this literature may be achieved. First, with domestic loss being inherent in homelessness, the *lost* geographies of home are still present in the homeless bodies through memory, still shaping the homeless self. And, second, this domestic loss given, the lost geographies of home are inevitably replaced by other, *substitutive* geographies: those of shelters, hostels, day centres and soup kitchens.

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<sup>5</sup> The review covers mostly publications from year 2000 to date but includes also older references that are relevant for this study and enhance it historically, such as Dear and Wolch (1987), Hopper (1991, 1994), Mitchell (1997) and Smith (1996).

Overall, the chapter asks the existent literature: *how is homelessness spaced?* Before proceeding though, I would like to make two general observations that frame the following review. First, that homelessness, as a research object, seems to be an urban thing (see, though, the work of Cloke, Milbourne & Widdowfield, 2000, 2003; Peters & Robillard, 2009). And second, that the homeless geographies speak English; with either a North American or a British accent. The vast majority of geographical research on homelessness has been conducted in Anglophone places leaving thus the rest of our world almost mute and hazily mapped, if at all (see, though, the works of: Aoki on Osaka, 2003; Arapoglou on Athens, 2004b; Lancione on Turin, 2014a; Von Mahs on Berlin, 2011). This section is organised schematically in two major parts: one focusing on a 'punitive' spacing of homelessness; and another one focusing on what could be called 'post-punitive spacing'. In this way, I suggest, it is possible not only to track (also chronologically) the research developments in the field but also to clearly state, in the chapter's conclusions, the directions and aspirations of this dissertation; towards nuanced, complex, situated, material, dynamic, experienced and practical understandings of the spatialities and subjectivities of homelessness in Athens.

## PUNITIVE PUBLIC SPACE

The first strand of literature examined can be put within what DeVerteuil, May and von Mahs have called a ‘punitive framing of homelessness’ (2009, p. 647; or ‘punitive *turn*’ according to DeVerteuil, 2005, p. 110, my emphasis). Framed punitively, urban space has become increasingly hostile for homeless people and the geographies of their survival; the homeless are ‘punished’ for their mere presence and survival in public space has become a hard task (see also Takahashi, 1996). Neil Smith (1996) is amongst the first geographers to sketch this framework with his thesis on the ‘revanchist city’, which, driven by a fear of loss felt by urban economic elites and the middle classes, ‘takes revenge’ by forcibly removing the homeless and other poor groups from New York public spaces. This removal is seen as annihilation by Mitchell (1997), a spatial annihilation orchestrated by law. Through a ‘new legal regime’ (ibid., p. 305), the essential for the homeless’ survival public space is erased for them, becoming more hostile. Instead of preserving and manifesting the privilege of citizenship for everyone then, public space has undergone a severe aesthetical reform that aims to attract capital through investments; but, unluckily, the visibility of homeless is incompatible with the new aesthetics and thus urban space turns into a brutal space where specific groups and actions are criminalized by law (Berti, 2010; Stuart, 2015; Udvarhelyi, 2014).

These punitive, perhaps dystopic, geographies though are not isolated but contribute to a more general re-making of urban geographies that matter for homeless lives. Parallel to the exclusion of the homeless from public (but also private) space, the latter has been re-valued not only on the basis of use and exchange value but also ‘on political or symbolic grounds’ (Snow & Mulcahy, 2001, p. 156). The result of this spatial formulation and valuation is that public space becomes tripartite, made up mainly of prime, marginal and transitional spaces (DeVerteuil, Marr & Snow, 2009; Snow & Mulcahy, 2001; see also Langedger & Koester, 2016). It is within these threefold spatialities that the punitive takes place differently in the form of social control that, accordingly, takes different forms, such as policing (Stuart, 2015), and containment, displacement or exclusion of the homeless (Snow & Mulcahy, 2001). But this tripartite geography calls too for a cautious reconsideration of the ‘place-homelessness survival nexus’ (Marr, DeVerteuil & Snow, 2009), with the homeless taking different actions of resistance that vary according to the type of place they are found in (DeVerteuil et al., 2009; Snow & Mulcahy, 2001).

When homelessness is spaced in a punitive fashion, the spacing is not random or spontaneous but rather a product of a spatial governmentality of homeless management (Sparks, 2012). Either through a combination of urban workfare regimes and policing (Hayashi, 2013; Hennigan, 2016), or through aesthetics

(Walby, 2012), or through ‘alcohol management’ (Evans, 2012), homelessness is spatially managed. And removal is just one element. Murphy (2009, p. 311) states that

amidst the mobilization of space for capitalist expansion, a progressive political landscape renders it unacceptable to simply remove the poor. Thus the state engages in a process of management, [which] produces particular geographies that enable the ongoing mobilization of space while ostensibly addressing homelessness.

To discuss such ideas of management, Stuart (2013) shifts the focus from prime space, where the punitive scholarship mostly looks at, to marginal space. There, he argues, a ‘recovery management’ is exercised, which, contrary to the ‘rabble management’ found in these spaces’ prime counterparts, does not push the homeless out but manages them *within* (marginal) space; this is how ‘recovery zones’ are produced (mainly through the insertion of service organisations) and added to the homeless geographies, zones ‘for (re)training homeless individuals in the attitudes, values and behaviours that will allow them to rejoin mainstream society’ (p. 1914).

However, marginal space and the marginality produced by punitive practices takes primarily one specific form in geographic research: that of the camp, as found in US metropolises. The geography of tent cities is part of an urban poverty governance that, complementing older policies, secludes and controls the homeless within specific areas (Herring & Lutz, 2015; see also Smith, 2014). An inherent contradiction in the generation and management of homeless encampments is that, albeit products of broader, often highly punitive, urban policies, at the same time they may function as magnets for legal camping bans. For the case of Denver, for example, the city’s ban law makes visible and thus disrupts the privacy achieved by the homeless within the encampment; like this, the ban ‘fortifies perceptual boundaries between domiciled people and homeless individuals’ (Langegger & Koester, 2016). Later, the same authors push the idea of the camp a bit further; the camping ban radically transforms the city’s geographies by defusing the typical camp into a ‘spatiotemporal camp’ that expands throughout the whole city (Langegger & Koester, 2017). In the spatiotemporal camp, which has neither fixed time nor fixed space, the homeless are in constant motion in search of services and privacy and, due to this motion, are rendered invisible.

Last but not least, and regardless of the punitive framework discussed so far, the marginal geographies of homeless encampments ought not to be seen solely as *negatively* marginal because camps may be positive alternatives to other marginal places by providing ‘a semblance of community and mutual support’ (Williams, 1996, p. 100). A recent and small stream of scholarship looks inside these spaces in a way that goes beyond their punitive production and starts to consider the

collective agency<sup>6</sup> and identity of their homeless residents. In this view, camps are chosen by the homeless because of the sense of humanity, community, safety and dignity they may generate (Smith, 2014; Sparks, 2016; Wasserman & Clair, 2010). When camps are seen not only as marginal, but also as domestic spaces, the housemaking practices of the homeless that take place therein challenge dominant capitalist ideas of domesticity and, through creative appropriation, can establish an alternative sense of 'home' for their residents (Speer, 2016a). Similarly, the lack of sanitary infrastructure in tent cities and the demand for it, expressed actively by the residents, not only reveal the critical role of (the lack of) infrastructure in the reproduction of homeless stigma but also help us reconsider the 'right to the city' beyond solely the 'right to housing' (Speer, 2016b).

By and large, when homelessness is 'spaced punitively', it happens majorly through 'grammars of urban injustice' (DeVerteuil, 2014, p. 2). The resulting geographies are often annihilated, not only by law but also by various 'revanchist' spatial practices that first criminalise and then violently push away the poor and the homeless from urban public space. Further, homeless geographies are fragmented (such as in prime, marginal, and transitory spaces) and 'the punitive' takes different manifestations and responses in each fragment. Accordingly, these fragmented geographies and the therein homeless are not left alone but are rather regulated through various poverty management techniques. Urban encampments, as forms of marginal space, are a visible outcome of this management and the locations where punitive practices are continued, although signs of active agency for the homeless may occur, as the last paragraph stressed. Besides the importance of this scholarship though, the following section looks at a different spacing of homelessness; one happening slightly away from the visible and strictly punitive urban public space; and having a different grammar.

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<sup>6</sup> In a sense, this stream seems to respond implicitly to critiques against the punitive framework and its neglected homeless agencies, something which will be discussed in the next section.

## POST-PUNITIVE OTHER SPACES

Resisting the temptation to see homelessness ‘through a “default” revanchist lens’ (Johnsen & Fitzpatrick, 2010, p. 1718), the geographical research discussed here responds, often in a quite explicit manner, to the punitive framework and its grammars that have become ‘mainstream’ (DeVerteuil, 2014) and hence may dominate current knowledge production. For this scholarship, the homeless geographies of the new poverty management (DeVerteuil, 2005) —or ‘new governmentality’ (Del Casino & Jocoy, 2008)— are not *simply* and not *only* punitive; they are more complex, messier, spatially differentiated, and individually experienced. In their call for academic attentiveness in homelessness research, May and Cloke (2013) criticise the punitive framework and base their criticism on three main weaknesses: the on-the-ground experiences are ignored; the ‘punitive language’ is so emotive that dictates interpretations and leaves no space for alternatives; and differences within and between different states are not considered. It seems then that the punitive framework is so tight that only public space, and only a punitive one, fits therein, leaving ‘*other* [homeless] spaces’ (DeVerteuil et al., 2009, emphasis added) outside. Along with these other spaces though, what are left outside as well are other subjectivities, other practices, other agencies, and other discourses that may complement, challenge, overturn and finally go beyond ‘*the* punitive’ —this is why this section’s title reads ‘*post*-punitive’ (or ‘post-revanchist’, Murphy, 2009).

Before moving on to these other spaces of the homeless city, a brief genealogy of this ‘city’ is necessary. In *Landscapes of Despair. From deinstitutionalization to homelessness*, Dear and Wolch (1987) describe the changing geography of the Northern American city in the rise of homelessness. Tracing the constant interrelations between social forces and spatial forms, and between structure and agency, the Authors argue that a deinstitutionalization process has resulted in the ghettoisation of inner-city areas, wherein the homeless concentrate. Through a complex nexus of agents (such as professional care-givers, service operators and recipients, local communities, market forces, planners), this new urban geography of deinstitutionalization and ghettoisation congeals in what they call the ‘public city’, that is ‘the spatial concentration of service-dependent populations and the agencies and facilities designated to serve them’ (p. 9).

These spatial outcomes of rising homelessness in Northern American cities after the 1970’s result, according to Hopper, in a ‘geography of emergency relief’ (1991, p. 767) composed mainly by shelter facilities. Therein, the homeless as ‘surplus populations’ are in touch with ‘the institutions and practices pressed into service to accommodate them’ (Hopper & Baumohl, 1994, p. 524). But this accommodation is realised through what Hopper and Baumohl call ‘abeyance process’; namely a spatial constraining of social groups that are not ‘needed’ but

can threaten the social order and (the others') established social positions. In these geographies of emergency relief then, enacted through resources, expert knowledge and connections, the homeless are concentrated and served —yet in abeyance. This brief spatial genealogy presented, it is time to move to the multiplicity of the post-punitive other spaces in the homeless city as addressed by geographic research so far: the shelters, spaces of care, and other 'other spaces'.

## **SHELTERS**

Shelters have been rather central in these homeless geographies of difference. Seen as institutions complementary to the state's efforts to spatially control marginal populations, shelters function as 'temporary and usually free lodging for those down on their luck, [as] warehousing of the poor and socially undesirable, and [as] refuge for the sick, the destitute, and the mentally ill' (Desjarlais, 1997, p. 29). At the same time, however and perhaps paradoxically, shelters seem to counter revanchism (DeVerteuil, 2005); thus, these spaces are much less static and do much more than lodging, warehousing and refuging the homeless. Stressing the socio-political dynamics at play, Veness (1994) suggests that the design of homeless shelters matter. In what she calls 'model environment' (p. 161), homeless residents learn how to leave behind their own desires and lifestyle and to embody middle-class notions of domesticity. Therein the homeless are, first, unmade and, then, remade in order to be finally rehoused (if possible) according to middle-class principles. The design's role is not limited to the shelters' interior though. In the case of mega-shelters in Los Angeles, the old, typical institutional, and maybe stigmatised we may add, aesthetics is abandoned in favour of a 'visual alteration [of the shelters] in order to fit with commercial culture' (DeVerteuil, *ibid.*, p. 116).

But shelters are not modelled only in physical ways; various forms of regulation take place too. For example, staff members may choose to accept homeless 'clients' that fulfill specific criteria or seem adequately 'motivated' to step out of homelessness; or homeless residents become 'cases', 'files' in the hands of social workers, an act that individualises and medicalises the problem and its social roots (Williams, 1996). Either as physically designed or as surveilled by staff and regulated through rules, the shelter becomes a contradictory place for its residents: it is (designed and practiced as) a *home* whereas, at the same time, the homeless are reminded that it is *not their* home.

But, so far, shelters as 'other spaces' of the homeless geographies do not seem to go that far from the punitive framework, due to a one-sided focus on regulation and control that normally ignores a view from 'the inside' and its residents. Other than a spatial move away from public space, neither complexity (DeVerteuil et al., 2009) nor attentiveness (May & Cloke, 2013) seem to have been adequately

achieved so far apropos the homeless spatialities. A punitive shadow still takes over these geographies, making nuances still hard to detect. DeVerteuil (2005) takes a first step. Within the new poverty management, he says, shelters do not simply make the homeless invisible by removing them from prime public space, as perhaps a strictly punitive approach would have it. Instead, put within their local institutional contexts, shelters become 'contradictory and nuanced institutions that contain/conceal/manage the homeless while also providing basic subsistence needs and hopefully some prevention' (ibid., p. 119). Paying a similar attention to local context, through a 'grounded governmentality' based on situated and specific evidence, Evans (2012) analyses shelters as 'regimes of living' (following Collier and Lakoff, 2005), namely specific, located ways of living that become possible when a 'problematic' or 'uncertain' situation (e.g. homeless street drunkenness) is normatively, technically and politically regulated. The biopolitical, governmental and ethical aspects of these regimes of living render shelters ambivalent spaces: on the one hand, they help to mitigate homelessness; on the other, though, the homeless subject is asked to achieve a certain transformation of the self.

## **SPACES OF CARE**

Nevertheless, the homeless city needs to further expand its spatialities beyond the shelter. In this direction, Johnsen, Cloke and May (2005a, 2005b) draw on Conradson's notion of 'spaces of care' (2003; see also Evans, 2011; DeVerteuil, 2014). Understanding 'care' as the practical articulation of one person's interest in another person's well-being, Conradson defines as space of care 'a socio-spatial field disclosed through the practices of care that take place between individuals' (p. 508). Whereas his empirical focus is a drop-in centre of a peripheral estate in Bristol, UK, Johnsen et al. mobilise his idea to suggest that, however punitive, the revanchist city produce also spaces of care for the homeless, such as day centres (2005a) and soup runs (2005b). Distinct, but not isolated from 'the street', these other spaces materialise 'more supportive responses to homelessness' (DeVerteuil, 2005, p. 111; 2014); express complex moralities and ethical practices (Cloke, Johnsen & May, 2005); activate various entanglements of discourses, practices and homeless subjects (Lancione, 2014b); and allow the homeless to perform resistance, resilience and reworking of power relations (May & Cloke, 2014). It is through these messy spatialities that we can critically negotiate the binary of inclusion/exclusion and its spatial expression in marginal/prime spaces (Hodgetts et al., 2008).

More specifically, as spaces of care, both day centres (Johnsen et al., 2005a) and soup runs (Johnsen et al., 2005b) provide the homeless with necessary material resources difficult to access elsewhere, such as food, coffee, and clothes, as well as refuge from difficult street conditions. At the same time, they are also 'spaces

of licence' (see Parr, 2000), wherein behaviours and practices perhaps unacceptable in 'common society' can be legitimate and thus tolerated; put differently, the 'homeless status—conferred "other" in most contexts—becomes the "norm"' (Johnsen et al., 2005a, p. 796). Yet significant differences, mainly stemming from the visibility and physicality of spaces, further complicate these geographies. For example, the day centre is a closed space; therefore, it provides refuge also from the stigma associated with the homeless presence in public space, by making this stigma invisible. Being closed though, forms of social control, such as rules and surveillance or design, but also relationships between service providers and service receivers as well as amongst receivers themselves, and practiced ethos, which dictate how the homeless have to be in order to be accepted, signal that the day centre may not be only a space of care and licence but also a space of *fear*, for some at least. On the other hand, taking place outdoors, the soup run is a *visible* space of care. This means that what is enacted too—and reproduced—is the homeless stigma, which makes many service receivers feel uncomfortable or even reject the provision. Nevertheless, this very openness of the space allows specific ethics of 'unconditional' acceptance to play out, rendering the soup run perhaps a post-secular homeless space *par excellence*; for it 'involves momentary encounters between volunteers and service users that, of all service-related encounters, are the least likely to involve the intentional (re)construction of the "other"' (Johnsen et al., 2005b, p. 334). By and large, in both the day centre and soup run a complex interplay of inclusion and exclusion takes place, the line between the deserving and the undeserving is constantly drawn, and the 'other' is made and remade in various degrees and manners.

## **OTHER 'OTHER SPACES'**

If spaces of care, as 'other spaces', show us some of the nuances, complexities and contradictions of institutional homeless geographies in the revanchist or punitive city, there exist *other* 'other spaces', outside of the official institutional circuit for the homeless, that need to be considered (see also Cloke et al., 2008). For example, Perry (2012) looks at what he calls 'urban hybrid space', where, on the one hand, a legitimate economic activity is established while, on the other hand and at the same time, homeless people frequent it and are therefore tolerated. A 24-hour donut place allows its homeless visitors to engage with more-than-homeless identities (Cloke et al., 2008), such as that of clients, that give a sense of empowerment and negotiation. Thus, the donut place provides a spatial context 'where the "master status" of homelessness is attenuated and the unhoused may lay claim to the subjectivity, autonomy and dignity afforded [by] housed individuals' (Perry, 2012, p. 448; see also Parsell, 2011). The library can function in similar ways (Hodgetts et al., 2008). Whereas as representational space produced by the media, where the homeless presence is threatening, the library as a material space allows homeless people to negotiate their stigmatised

identities, mix with the housed population and finally achieve feelings of inclusion. Like this, in the library as a public space of care, the homeless may regain their lost citizenship, something they are denied of in prime urban space.

Nevertheless, to remap the homeless city means much more than solely to integrate these previously ignored ‘other spaces’ and the logics enacted therein; for we need to change the remapping itself in order to reveal new homeless geographies, instead of integrating new spaces into *old* geographies. Put differently, other grammars are needed. A new stream of literature engages with recent theoretical developments in geography in order to propose new, dynamic, complex, agentic ways to do homeless geographies that are affective, emotional, practiced, performed, embodied, post-human. In their seminal paper (2008; and later in their book, 2010), Cloke, May and Johnsen argue for a performative and affective take on homeless geographies, one that considers not (just) the tactical practices of the homeless, as if in a punitive fashion, but (also) the less tactical sides of homeless lives. Drawing on theories of Goffman, Butler and Thrift, and using empirical evidence, they show how a variety of more or less ‘hidden’ places of the homeless city emerges and becomes meaningful through movement, routines, impression management, embodied and prediscursive practices. Places to sleep, to eat, to earn, and to hang out are places out of institutional reach — ‘neglected cartographies of the homeless city’ (2008, p. 260)— where the homeless selves are made and remade continuously. And all places matter in how these selves are physically enacted (Parsell, 2011), either as entanglements of discourses, practices and subjects that activate ‘emotional responses and affective atmospheres’ (Lancione, 2014c, p. 3066); or as assemblages where encounters with the ‘other’ happen through common practices (Lancione, 2016), and where homelessness is experienced through both discourse and practice (Lancione, 2014b).

All these complex affective and performative accounts critically contribute to previous punitive understandings by bringing to the fore the agency and humanity of homeless people (Cloke et al., 2008). Indeed, this new direction in geographical research rejects any unidimensional, homogeneous, sometimes perhaps ‘heroic’ when deciding to claim his<sup>7</sup> right to the city, homeless figure of the punitive framework. Criticising the way punitive views objectify homeless subjects and ignore their emotional and relational aspects, for example, Daya and Wilkinson (2013) present the body, the shelter, and the tavern (‘shebeen’ in local South African culture) as crucial spatial components of complex homeless geographies of affect: the body is the personal space where the loss of home, and whatever this involves, is felt by the individual; the shelter is a stressful environment of both (felt) care and (felt) control where the homeless may seek to emotionally distance themselves from; and the tavern, where stigmatised practices such as drinking are legitimate, becomes a space of belonging, relaxing

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<sup>7</sup> This figure is mainly male in literature (for a discussion on the ‘gender gap’, see Crystal, 1984; for exceptions see Gonyea & Melekis, 2017; Klodawsky, 2009; May, Cloke & Johnsen, 2007; Radley, Hodgetts & Cullen, 2006; Takahashi, McElroy & Rowe, 2002).

and emotional liberation for the homeless. The agentic sides of these geographies may be so powerful that affect not only marginal but also prime public spaces, so that the latter become meaningful for the homeless. Practical everyday appropriation of, say, a historical public square can result in valuable senses of home and workplace through which the homeless can achieve their lost time-space continuity and negotiate the homeless experience in productive and desired ways (Sheehan, 2010). If then for the punitive scholarship homelessness 'is not the experience of being homeless [but rather] names a social condition' (Mitchell, 2011, p. 933), for this post-punitive scholarship homelessness is an embodied, affective and experienced 'symbolic burden' (Farrugia, 2011) that needs to be dealt with.

Generally, what has been called here 'post-punitive' scholarship suggests a different grammar in researching homelessness and its geographies. It often steps outside of the street and the therein located punitive practices, seeking nuances, differences, complexities and politics in shelters, day centres, hostels; namely in spaces of care. In this relatively recent quest, scholars highlight the importance of performative, practice-oriented and affective (academic) approaches that let homeless subjectivities and agencies emerge in spaces that, albeit widely rejected in research, do matter for the homeless lives and offer novel, at times less dystopic and certainly messier and more complete understandings of the field.

## HOMELESSNESS IN ATHENS

Homelessness in Greece is a phenomenon that has recently received an amplified visibility and ‘recognised’ in public discourse and politics as a ‘problem’ (see Sapounakis, 2001). This fact is reflected in the absence of any official mechanism of collecting homelessness-related data (FEANTSA, 2017) and thus in estimations based on secondary resources (Pertsinidou, 2017). For example, in the beginning of the 2000’s, Arapoglou (2002) has estimated that about 700-800 Greeks were sleeping rough and about 8,000 migrants and refugees in need of temporary accommodation in Athens; and FEANTSA (2017) suggests a 25% rise in homelessness only during the first two years of the crisis (2009-2011).

The phenomenon’s recent visibility is possibly related to the emergence of what some have labelled ‘the new homeless’, namely a homeless population marked differently than what has been perceived as ‘traditional homeless’, namely migrants, asylum seekers and people with mental health problems (Theodorikakou, Alamanou & Katsadoros, 2013; for an international perspective, see Takahashi, 1996). According to this debatable separation, the ‘traditional homeless’ are present, yet relatively invisible, *before* the current socio-economic crisis —and this seems to mark them differently. On the contrary, the ‘new homeless’ are a (visible) product of the crisis, a product coming out of the middle and low-middle social strata.

Although in the past the absence of an official definition of homelessness allowed different institutions, such as the State, the Church and the NGOs active in the field, to produce different discourses and definitions about who are ‘the homeless’ and thus serve specific homeless groups as ‘deserving’ (Arapoglou, 2004a; 2004b), the recent debt crisis brought about such a critical situation that the Greek government recognised and defined homelessness in a Law published on February 28, 2012. In today’s context of social and economic crisis then, Kourachanis (2016) stresses three main factors that, concurring and interrelating with one another, are responsible for the worsening of homelessness in Greece: long-term unemployment; weak or lack of supportive kinship networks; and absence of state policies to protect tenants from getting evicted (see also Kourachanis, 2015).

Perhaps reflecting the phenomenon’s above discussed recently increased visibility, research on homelessness in Athens has been limited. The ways the local scene of homelessness has been developed have been documented the last years by authors such as Arapoglou (2004a; 2004b), Arapoglou and Gounis (2015; 2017), Kourachanis (2015; 2016), and Papadopoulou and Kourachanis (2017). Holding a sociological standpoint and attempting an overt policy-oriented critique, these authors mostly, but not only, shed light on how local policies respond to the disproportional needs of a growing urban poor and

homeless population, as well as how the Athenian context is shaped through the complex entanglements of limited resources, interactions of various different local, national and supra-national actors, and dramatically increased poverty levels. Precisely, the recent work of Arapoglou and Gounis (2017) offers an extensive view on Athens' local homeless scene with significant geographical and urban implications that may prove relevant and even essential to situating this dissertation. And hence their work is hereby briefly discussed.

The Authors' general thesis is that 'the complex dynamics between visible poverty and invisible poverty and [the] competing strategies on how to address them' shape the 'contested landscapes' of poverty and homelessness in Athens (p. 2). It is in these landscapes that different mentalities, policy discourses and responses, institutions, subjectivities and their positions, and spaces relate to each other by relating altogether to homelessness. According to their estimations, 21,500 people have experienced some formal or informal form of visible homelessness in 2016, in the Athens metropolitan area (chapter 4), whereas the same number for the year 2013 has been 9,100. The rise is majorly attributed to the big influx of asylum seekers and, to a lesser extent, to Greeks as new entrants to homelessness, especially in the previous years. Moreover, the growth of invisible poverty occurs alarming whereas Athens' centre is the major concentration pole for both formal and informal forms of the city's homeless. Along with the pressing necessity to cope with such a situation, the rescaling of the country's welfare system (see also Arapoglou, 2012; Matsaganis, 2011) followed two simultaneous directions: first, a social policy residualisation; and, second, the transfer of central state powers to local government. Therefore, in an environment of neoliberal austerity, the making of the contested landscapes is paradoxical: on the one hand, increasing visible and invisible poverty and homelessness; on the other, local actors are called to respond with extremely limited resources.

According to Arapoglou and Gounis, as a result of all this comes the rise of a 'roll-with poverty management' strongly defined by a logic of emergency, that is 'a way of rolling-with neoliberalisation, confining anti-poverty and social inclusion policies to managing the poor' (2017, p. 90). As it is being concretised, this logic of emergency has significant spatial outcomes in the city's contested landscapes: shelters, day centres, hostels and reception centres are the 'concrete spaces of assistance' (p. 67) wherein the consequences of the EU-led social and economic restructuring are sought to get ameliorated in ad hoc, ex post, and temporary manners. All together, these spaces form the network of poverty management of Athens, 'an emergency-oriented system of limited, inadequate resources that homeless people have to compete for, caught up in an unyielding circuit of agencies and services' (p. 72) —similar to what, thirty years ago, Dear and Wolch called 'new apparatus of the Welfare State' (1987, p. 17).

A pivotal point in the Authors' analysis is that, by enacting different moralities and discourses, these spaces perform specific ways of caring for and managing the poor; ways that draw lines of division between 'deserving' and 'non-deserving'

homeless or between Greeks and marginalised ‘others’, ways that risk to de-politicise homelessness. Last but not least, it is inside these spaces of new poverty management that new subjectivities are made and remade: in certain spatial settings that render possible certain discourses and processes of ‘normalisation’ for the homeless, involving ‘a novel imaginary of social integration aspiring to render the homeless “similar” to the rest of the population’ (p. 99).

The work of Kourachanis (2015; 2016) provides some critical points that contribute to the abovementioned contested landscapes of homelessness. Focusing on the domination of non-governmental organisations, he criticises the dependency that the homeless may develop upon these services, which respond to their everyday survival and fail to attempt long-term solutions or embrace more inclusionary logics. Dependency is gradually shaped through perpetual contact with these NGOs and consequently ‘any problem [the homeless] face is dealt with in terms of charity’ (2015, p. 122). Overall, by only serving daily needs and offering a minimum care (2016), the spaces of the new poverty management may become ‘human warehouses’ (2015, p. 124; see also Desjarlais, 1997) that reduce homeless lives to a mere state of survival (see also Papadopoulou & Kourachanis, 2017).

The above discussed existing research is a first, essential step to understand the emerging —as well as emergent— ‘contested landscapes’ of homelessness in Athens. The scholars sketch boldly the complex local context as shaped by an EU-imposed austerity regime, state welfare and administrative restructurings, increasing poverty and social precariousness, distinctive emergent moralities and practices, a variety of institutions, and roll-with-neoliberalism policy responses. The latter are crystallised in the city’s spaces of care as spaces of poverty management. Nevertheless, what these works may obscure from their standpoints is the very making of these spaces along with the practical making of homeless subjectivities. Put differently, they may lack the *how* of the *spatial* enactment of the new poverty management as experienced in spaces of marginality that have so far escaped attention of both mainstream and critical scholarship on Athens. Perhaps this is the reason why Arapoglou and Gounis (2017) close their book calling for studies ‘with ethnographic orientation, focusing [amongst others] on the *experiences of the homeless* themselves’ (p. 141, emphasis added). So, the study presented here seeks to give a fine-grained geographic response to this call (see also DeVerteuil, 2014); it delves into different homeless spatialities —the stigmatised backyards of a new poverty management— and puts together their messy, practiced, everyday materialities, bodies and mobilities along with the homeless subjects emerging with them. For landscapes are both made and lived, let alone the contested ones.

## LOCATING THESE GEOGRAPHIES AND THEIR SUBJECTS

From its birth, this work has aimed at responding to calls to study homelessness beyond the normative and the canonical (Lancione, 2016b) and thus attempts to leave rigid definitions of homelessness behind (Wasserman & Clair, 2010) in order to not essentialise homeless people, to the extent this is possible in academic practice. What Hopper (1991) calls ‘the definition quandary’ is for now overtaken. Therefore, it seeks to escape as much as possible pointing at the homeless people directly, something that would define subjects as ‘homeless’ in advance and locate them as the ‘subject (or object) of study’. Instead it approaches homeless subjects *through space*; specifically, through spaces that are produced by official social institutions and organisations, in order to serve, in various ways, the city’s homeless. Therein homeless subjectivities may emerge through a research practice that respects individuality and remains open to the possibilities shaped in these spaces. Furthermore, through the materialities-bodies-mobilities triptych, the approach draws from (post)phenomenological geographic accounts to address the mutual making of space and subjects in Athens of crisis and a new poverty management.

The importance of such an approach, I argue, rests in that looking at the ‘immediate institutions that mediate the experiences of homelessness’ is essential for what Gowan calls ‘critical homelessness studies’ (2010, p. 5; see also Lancione, 2016a). Institutions are inevitably spaced and this is why critical homelessness studies have to be in some way also geographical. Moreover, looking at these institutionalised spaces allows us to reveal broader ‘social and cultural [and spatial] dynamics within which homeless subjectivities are mobilised’ (Farrugia & Gerrard, 2016, p. 279; see also Lancione, 2016a). Spaced therein then, homelessness is not an isolated phenomenon with ‘its own culture’ and ‘its own place’; instead, it is in direct, inescapable contact, and hence mutual making, with the so-called ‘mainstream’, the ‘common’ —in the end, the ‘other’s’ ‘other’. To recall Goffman, stigma is not just about the stigmatised as it equally demands the ‘normal’ in its construction.

The ethnographic evidence lying at the foundations of this dissertation proposes a making of the homeless geographies of Athens drawing from and relating to what has been labelled above the ‘post-punitive’ by delving into spatialities beyond the street, without excluding the street. With the new management of the poor and the homeless in Athens producing its own particular geographies (Murphy, 2009), composed by day centres, soup kitchens, night shelters, and other spaces, these geographies activate the specific, local contexts (DeVerteuil, 2005) wherein homelessness in today’s city is performed *as homelessness*. A triptych of three elements becomes the focus of the making of these geographies:

*materialities*, meaning mainly the ‘things through which [care] is enacted’ (Lancione, 2016b, p. 373) as well as homeless things as ‘absent presences’ (Hetherington, 2004); *bodies*, as pivotal elements in the homeless condition (Kawash, 1998); and *mobilities*, stressing how these spaces are involved in the homeless’ ‘routines of movement and pause’ (Cloe, May & Johnsen, 2008, p. 244). Besides the spatialities they are involved in and constantly produce, what these three elements have in common is that they are *practiced* (see Anderson & Harrison, 2010). Materialities, bodies and mobilities then are the primal matter of the practices that unfold in the different homeless spatialities and thus make the city’s homeless geographies.

These spatialities though, along with the materialities-bodies-mobilities triptych and the involved practices, co-constitute also *homeless subjects* in place-specific and praxeological manners (Warnier, 2001). Homeless subjects, all together and each one distinctively, stand at the centre of this study. The latter becomes hence a little, perhaps contradictory in itself, effort to ‘map the [homeless] subjects’ (Pile and Thrift, 1995) in central Athens in a way that opposes and struggles to slightly restore a ‘universal homeless subject’ (DeVerteuil, May & von Mahs, 2009, p. 650) as may be constructed and diffused by both the media and the Academia. To do so, first, it sees homeless subjects not as static or predefined but in their continuous making. This is why the word ‘subjectivity’ is often preferred in this work, suggesting ‘something more provisional, emergent, and potentially open to change’ (Simpson, 2017, p. 4). Yet, the subject is not cast away because of (her/his) subjectivity. Although the two terms may be used in a seemingly interchangeable manner hereafter, ‘subject’ refers to the homeless person in a specific moment —Agathí, Hamza, Márkos, Kalliópi perceived in the here and now— whereas ‘subjectivity’ refers to the same persons but stressing their dynamic making-as-homeless —Agathí, Hamza, Márkos, Kalliópi under formation. Put differently, the (homeless) subject can be considered as a momentary, almost impossible freezing of the continuous making of the (homeless) subjectivity.<sup>8</sup>

Second, if ‘subjectivities are performed not simply in but *through* space’ (Longhurst, 2003, p. 286, original emphasis), then the spatialities that make the homeless geographies of Athens and of this research are the constitutive ‘wheres’ (Pile, 2008) of homeless subjectivities. Spaces and subjectivities become one in a mutual making; subjects are spaced through ‘an active and ongoing process’ (Simpson, 2017, p. 6). Therefore, the day centre, night shelter, hostels and other places, become here the ‘material contexts which allow and delimit individual and collective performance of [the homeless] selves’ (Probyn, 2003, p. 291). The materialities, bodies, and mobilities made through these contexts are considered pivotal in the practical making of homeless subjectivities in Athens.

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, homelessness, or the homeless identity (Parsell, 2011), is only *one* element composing the subjectivities of these people. With the focus of this research being the geographies of homelessness though, the difficulty to avoid essentialising ‘the homeless’ has to be acknowledged albeit the intentions and tactical and continuous efforts mentioned in this section’s opening.

Acknowledging that ‘it is difficult, and not always politically strategic, to examine simultaneously multiple axes of subjectivity’ (Longhurst, 2003, p. 286), the materialities-bodies-mobilities combination, as three axes along which homeless subjectivities are spaced, may prove one of the ‘enlightening instances’ Longhurst eventually leaves space for.

To conclude this note, the reason why homeless subjects and subjectivities are central to this work is to deal with the risks of producing a(nother) de-humanised, non-pluralistic account of homelessness, risks gestated in much current human geographical practice (Simonsen, 2012; Tolia-Kelly, 2006). Thus, homeless subjectivities are located in the centre not as fetishized ‘others’ but as human, contradictory, nuanced, material and political subjectivities shaped in space—a space not in isolation but inherent to the social and material space that makes the overall society in specific, often normative, ways. In this way, the homeless subjects are, first, *de-centred*, following Pile’s and Thrift’s (1995) road, and then decisively *re-centred*, following their own roads, as spatial multiplicities of materialities, bodies and mobilities, which constantly and inevitably relate to each other in fluid and, above all, human manners. For homeless people may have been already too much dehumanised *out there* to be further dehumanised *in here*, through the production of a tiny piece of academic knowledge. In the end, what we need—and should *make*— are ‘*human geographies of homelessness*’ (Cloke, May & Johnsen, 2010, p. 8, original emphasis).

## CHAPTER THREE

### **The Method: Multi-sited Research Practice *for* and *in* Homeless Geographies**

#### ABSTRACT

The chapter provides a detailed empirical account of the practice this research and knowledge have been produced through. It begins by discussing the need to engage with multi-sitedness in order to achieve an adequate and relational empirical account of homeless geographies. For this, it illustrates how the different and complex research spatialities have been eclectically crafted in a 'mosaic-field' consisting of core-fields, intermediate-fields and lateral-fields. Further, issues of positionality and reflexivity are discussed through the 'pervasive mirror' metaphor that allows us to see these processes as relational, unstable, contested. What follows is a sequence of encounters that affect the research practice: first with the institutions that 'orchestrate' the spaces and then with the homeless people themselves. The overall methodological evidence amounts to some critical points on politics and ethics before the chapter closes with some practical issues.

*[Discussions] of fieldwork relate directly to the geographical condition and, as such, to attempts to refashion disciplinary dialogue.*

Powell, 2002, p. 261



*Gradually, there have been emerging in our discussions [with the homeless] new places [...] signaling that the geographies of this research need to be respectively expanded. Research participants constantly prescribe new directions: they point at here, point at there, point at here again, then point at another 'there', point at another 'here'. A further diffusion of the spaces where their everyday lives and experiences evolve in —or spaces that affect these lives less directly but do affect them. Research practice has to respond to, carefully follow and organically integrate the dynamic geographies that make the situation in focus [...] Now it's obvious, I need to look at the more or less neglected spaces too [...] For I have to acquire a sense of these spaces [...] to achieve an ample geographical sense that embraces too the apparently more or less lateral spaces.*

Field notes, March 7, 2017

Investigating homelessness can never be a simple monolithic thing. Not only because any research dealing with vulnerable groups has to be ‘sensitive’ (Liamputtong, 2006) to limit to the possible extent exploitation and disempowerment (Pittaway, Bartolomei & Hugman, 2010); neither only because of the ethical and reflexive complexity of the process (Cloke, Cooke, Cursons, Milbourne & Widdowfield, 2000; Cloke, May & Johnsen, 2008). These aspects are absolutely pivotal to the work presented here. Yet, what this chapter mainly attempts to illustrate and contribute to is that, investigating homelessness *geographically* demands an elaborated research practice that considers space seriously and is constantly open to the phenomenon’s numerous spatialities, complexities and challenges.

From the very initial stages of fieldwork, while trying to carefully approach homeless people in Athens, the common stereotype of ‘the street’ as *the* place of homeless lives collapsed: the street was only *one* of the spaces that made homelessness what it was, a space inter-related to and inter-dependent from various other spaces.<sup>9</sup> As the excerpt above reads, the research practice described hereafter has been considered a necessary methodological response (with its inevitable limitations) to the expanding homeless geographies of my research companions. In other words, and as this chapter is at pains to show, the geographies of the research had to follow the geographies of the people involved in a research practice that allowed sensing and following the spatial dynamism and multiplicity of homelessness in central Athens.

Being very hesitant, mainly due to moral questions, to approach rough sleepers on the street for research purposes, I decided initially to ‘use’ public and non-governmental institutions as ‘gateways’ to the people and places of my interest. Put differently, to *follow places* in order to *follow people*, a fact that critically shaped my curiosity for these institutionalised spaces and thus made them central to my research questions. Hence, and since the aim of this research was not only street homelessness but its various geographical expressions, I soon found myself in the middle of what will be termed ‘machinic archipelago’, made up of different places of provision and care for the poor and the homeless, concentrated mainly in a very specific (highly stigmatised) area of the city, around Omónoia square and eastwards, but definitely expanding beyond that.

None of these institutional places could be seen in isolation; each one would open up to others, where supplementary practices of homeless lives would unfold: from outreach work and showering, to food provision and emergency shelter during the snow days of winter 2016-2017. The inter-relations of these spaces can be exemplified by the homeless themselves who, using their own bodies-as-vehicles, connect the spaces at different times of the day or the week or the year, seeking

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<sup>9</sup> Although this work avoids to adhere to categorisations, it is remarkable that the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion suggests a broad definition of ‘the homeless’ ranging from the roofless, hence being visible in the street, to people residing in inadequate housing (see Amore, Baker & Howden-Chapman, 2011).

to fulfill their needs. Simply put, if the aim of this research has been *not* to present any (homeless, in our case) ‘culture’ as spatially bounded, something that would run the risk of ‘substantialism’ (Desmond, 2014), but rather as a multi-sited social *process* (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992), this had to be translated in a multi-sited research practice.

To offer a sound methodological account, an adequate elaboration of the concept of multi-sitedness in this research practice is necessary. For this reason, it is fruitful and almost inevitable to link this methodology with discussions on multi-sited ethnography, mainly deriving from anthropology. In his 1995 paper, Marcus inaugurated the term ‘multi-sited ethnography’ arguing that a new research design was needed in order to ‘examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse space-time’ (1995, p. 96). Connections, routes and juxtapositions between locations should now be seriously considered in conducting fieldwork, given the new global conditions of circulation, mobility and inter-connectedness. What is striking and, at the same time, potentially problematic is that so far this method mostly refers and applies to the global scale, aspiring to achieve a certain holism of the so-called world system (for instance, see Falzon, 2009; Hannerz, 2003). The aim of this chapter is to re-spatialise this ‘research imaginary’ (Candea, 2007), and to propose a geographical re-scaling of multi-sited research by applying it empirically to the homeless geographies of Athens city centre, signaling one way to reconsider and re-theorise our fieldwork practices as human geographers (Powell, 2002).

Questions of space and place are mostly implicit in the discussion about multi-sited ethnography, with a few exceptions. For example, Gustavson and Cytrynbaum (2003) use De Certeau’s notions of space and place in order to stress the role relational spaces play in the writing of multi-sited ethnography. And Crang (2011) reminds us how much place matters, highlighting the necessity for this type of ethnography to be sensitive to the particularities of different places. Similarly, this empirical evidence illustrates that employing multi-sited methodologies for geographical research may successfully correspond to current critical geographical scholarship that sees space not as unidimensional, static or given but, on the contrary, as created through interrelations, allowing multiplicity and being always under construction (Massey, 2005). Or, put in a post-structuralist fashion, it pays particular attention to heterogeneity as Geography’s pivotal concern (Murdoch, 2006). Therefore, a clear and nuanced description of the spaces composing ‘the field’ —or the ‘mosaic-field’— is the foundation for this chapter’s central argument: that different spaces or types of spaces shape specific contexts that prescribe different research methods and further complicate the overall methodology.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In a more general framework, it may be useful to recall here Powell’s discussion on the coming-together of geographical and anthropological fieldwork, with the latter borrowing metaphors from the former, such as ‘a reconstitution of fieldwork [...] as *shifting locations*’ (2002, p. 265, original emphasis).

Even prior to the embodied, full immersion in the fields (for instance, while contacting organisations from my desk in L'Aquila to negotiate access to their spaces), it soon became evident that the research practice should be neither homogeneous nor rigidly designed *a priori*: entering a place, getting more or less involved, approaching homeless people, finding a gatekeeper or becoming *my own* gatekeeper, all had to be carefully crafted according to each context. During fieldwork, the very plurality of spatial contexts would constantly call for a flexible, ever-adapting research praxis reflected in the methodology as well as its heterogeneous results.

Before proceeding, an epistemological clarification: by presenting this methodology as 'multi-sited', the intention is not to argue for a 'radically new' or 'innovative' research practice. Too early to celebrate. For I acknowledge the danger of using such research buzzwords superficially and uncritically (Hage, 2005); and I, similarly to Crang (2011), believe that fieldwork has always been multi-sited, expanding from more or distant locations 'out there' to the room where I am typing these words right now, months after the fieldwork's end. However, with this explicit reference and elaboration of multi-sitedness I would like to emphasise the 'crafting' of the field composed by different spatialities and practices that shaped a spatially and methodologically diversified context for the research practice, which took place in what can be imagined as a 'mosaic-field'.

Multi-sitedness becomes here a conceptual and methodological exercise for the 'cultivation of a conceptual topology' (Coleman & von Hellermann, 2011, p. 1) helpful enough in the exploration of homeless geographies. It is a conceptual topology that remains open to possibilities remaining, simultaneously, inevitably eclectic. If multi-sitedness does not signify 'just sites, but [rather] spatialized (cultural) difference' (Falzon, 2009, p. 13), in this exercise difference should not be seen in contradictory terms (e.g. with different places 'contrasting' each other as if in a comparative study); instead, spatial difference is necessarily complementary to the 'culture' that is shaping the city's homeless geographies and is shaped back by them. I believe that multi-sitedness will allow us to embrace spatial difference in a context-sensitive research practice and help us critically reflect upon and change the ways in which social research constructs its objects as clearly bounded (see Farrugia & Gerrard, 2016; Desmond, 2014).

After this introduction, the chapter is structured in six parts. First is discussed the field's crafting, with its inevitable selectivities, and the locations of the research are presented. Then is introduced the notion of 'reflexive positionality', which conceptually traverses the following parts. The third part provides a concrete, located account of the pivotal role institutions play in the research practice both by providing possibilities and posing limitations, and the fourth focuses on the practice of encountering homeless people and its complexities. The fifth summarises the ethical and political imperatives of this —and not only *this*— methodology, before the chapter closes with a 'practical' take on the conducted interviews.

## ECLECTIC CRAFTING: CORE-FIELDS, INTERMEDIATE-FIELDS AND LATERAL-FIELDS

This section is a presentation of the different spatialities that made up ‘the field’ during the seven-month fieldwork period (November 2016- June 2017). However, given that this work’s emphasis is on the multiple spatialities of homelessness in Athens —the homeless geographies, rather than the homeless geography— talking about ‘the field’ as one single site of research practice would be dramatically reductive. Such a choice would produce a misleading representation of both the multiple spaces and the respectively multiple research adaptations, whereas one side-aim of this work is to question simplistic representations of our lifeworlds and produce more nuanced alternatives (through a non-representational fashion). After having discussed the role of multi-sitedness and multi-sited ethnography, what follows is a basic presentation of *fields*, which all together compose what we could call the ‘mosaic-field’, their basic functions in the homeless geographies as well as their positioning and inter-relations in the research practice. The aim is to provide the reader with a first picture of the machinic archipelago,<sup>11</sup> the latter being the general site (of sites) where evidence for this dissertation has been constructed in. A more detailed and dynamic description of the archipelago’s most central to this work places will unfold in the following chapter.

Let us, though, state clearly the inevitable ontological limitations that result in some conventions regarding the fieldwork and its methodology as representation; for ‘there is much that lies between the hyphen of re-presentation’ (Nayak & Jeffrey, 2011, p. 301). First and foremost, the sites that make the homeless geographies of Athens cannot be limited only to the spatialities that participate in this work; the earlier use of the plural ‘fields’ implies the potentially infinite spatialities, which were not possible to be considered both for practical and theoretical reasons. This bounces back to the discussion about multi-sited ethnography. Multi-sitedness can potentially be infinite, consisted of uncountable locations. Marcus’ (1995) research persona as a ‘follower’ (of people, things, stories) may contribute to a problematic, in my view, imagination of a research practice that keeps spatially expanding and expanding and expanding as if the researcher does not make choices in all this (Coleman & von Hellermann, 2011). Indeed, the multi-sitedness of the homeless geographies studied here can be a

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<sup>11</sup> Although the mosaic-field and the machinic archipelago may appear as congruent in many cases, it is important to underline that the former is an epistemological concept corresponding to this specific research practice, whereas the latter is a metaphor that describes the general geographical context (including a multiplicity of places, many of which had to be methodologically excluded).

chaotic, infinite assemblage<sup>12</sup> that expands all over the city (and beyond it) and embraces places that may be excluded here, although they crucially contribute to homeless lives.

How to deal with all this messiness then? Candea (2007) has a response. Reminding us the need to bound multi-sitedness, he describes this bounding as an 'arbitrary location' that is a product of self-imposed limitations by the researcher and serves 'as a "control" for a broader abstract object of study' (p. 180; see also Cook, Laidlaw & Mair, 2009). Indeed, rejecting the fallacy of holism, this multi-sited research practice involved numerous self-imposed (spatial) limitations and hence has to be understood as an 'eclectic crafting' of both inclusions and exclusions of places in central Athens. This interplay has been the result of two types of 'following': a *spontaneous* and a *deliberate* following, without always clear boundaries in between them. 'Spontaneous following' refers to the researcher's sticking to the various inter-connections that were constantly appearing between places of the field and were opening up new possibilities for other places and practices. To give an example: Arriving at the night shelter for my shift on a freezing evening of late December, I found the place closed due to electricity problems. No information was given and a man who had arrived the same moment as I did, told me: 'Follow me if you want'. Like this I discovered and had access to one of the places the Municipality had emergently opened for the homeless because of the extreme cold. There I met many shelter users who ended up there for the night.

On the other hand, 'deliberate following' involved carefully selected inclusions and important exclusions of places according to my own research interests and theoretical lines that had to be respected. For example, my interest in the materialities of homelessness rendered necessary a planned visit (requiring calls, documents, official requests) at the municipal Department of Cleanliness and Environment, a lateral-field of the overall mosaic-field that nevertheless provided critical research insights. This latter type of following had the decisive effect of self-bounding in the fields. And to return to Human Geography, deliberate following highlights the role of confinements, connections and context when thinking space relationally (see Jones' (2009) example of 'phase space').

This first limitation ought to be concluded with an explicit statement regarding the spatialities that have been left *outside* of the eclectic crafting: the Church and other religious institutions, solidarity soup runs disconnected from any NGO, neighbourhood-based actions of civilians, NGO- and municipality-run day centres throughout the whole Athens metropolitan area (and not only its centre) shape important, interconnected spaces for the city's homeless scene. And not only this. 'Come on, let's see if there is any luck today!' Medi suddenly said while we were walking past a lottery place on Omónoia square. Several other times I have met

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<sup>12</sup> Although not discussed here, seeing the homeless city as an assemblage may correspond to broader debates about 'assemblage urbanism', offering important contributions to critical urban theory (Brenner, Madden & Wachsmuth, 2011; McFarlane, 2011).

research participants outside lottery and gambling shops, something that suggests their possible importance as places where hope may be enacted for the homeless. These are just some of the field's inevitable exclusions but, although very basic and indicative, referring explicitly to them may aid to not present the machinic archipelago as a unique and isolated spatial construct of the homeless geographies made in this work. For the fields' inclusions relate to the fields' exclusions.

The second limitation to be discussed concerns the re-presentation of the fields. Acknowledging the different levels of 'translation' entailed in the production, communication and perception of field research (Jordan, 2002), the following description will take a schematic form: some spaces will be represented as core-fields, others as intermediate-fields, others as lateral-fields. The criteria for mapping these fields have been: dedicated time; accessibility (more or less direct, mediated etc.); involvement (ranging from strictly research-related to general involvement in each field's practices); and the research methods that were used (e.g. participant observation has not always been permitted; or, in other cases, the conditions did not allow interviews). All this has been ingredient of the aforementioned eclectic crafting. Therefore, core-fields stand for the most intensive fieldwork sites, where ample time has been devoted to, high access and personal involvement by the researcher has been possible, and a variety of methods has been applied. On the contrary, lateral-fields, as the core-fields' extreme counterpart, stand for sites where time, access and involvement were restricted. In other words, the core-lateral distinction is nothing but a methodological and representational convention: A '*schematic* translation' through which the reader can imagine and comprehend the fields and the research practices shaped through them.

The intention here is not to put different places of the homeless geographies in a hierarchical order but to re-present the research practice, make it comprehensible and stress that some places have been inevitably more pivotal than others. Put differently, the core is not more important than its lateral areas; the core is where research practice has been more *intensive*, whereas the lateral indicates how *extensive* the fieldwork has been —or, in Marcus' (1998) terms again, the core should be imagined as *thicker* whereas its lateral part as *thinner* in terms of research material. A horizontal imagination highlights that the core is in constant and direct interrelation with its lateral areas and that, at the same time, the lateral makes the core. To exemplify: there is no real distinction between the lateral-field of 'the street' and the core-field of the night shelter as it's users spend the biggest part of the day on the street; or, within the lateral area, we have to continuously consider the material flows that connect the street with the municipal Department of Cleanliness and Environment, where the homeless' possessions may often end up. The three different areas of the mosaic-field are anything but hermetically sealed. The remaining of this section illustrates how the fields have been crafted as core-, intermediate- and lateral-fields, as well as the ways in which they have been involved in the research practice.



FIGURE 3 'Schematic translation' (from the centre outwards):  
core-, intermediate-, and lateral-fields.

## CORE-FIELDS

The night shelter and the day centre are the spaces that shape the very core of this research. Due to their contexts, both spaces have allowed direct access and involvement. As a volunteer, I had the chance to bodily engage with these fields, be regularly in direct contact with the homeless people involved, develop relationships of mutual trust up to different degrees, be able to approach myself people for research purposes, observe practices, discourses and relations unfolding *in situ*, feel the places' dynamics—in the end, to become part of these places. Methodologically, this involvement resulted in this work's thickest material stemming from regular participant observation as well as both informal conversations and semi-structured interviews.

Nevertheless, and besides their methodological privilege, it is important to stress that the night shelter and day centre are something more than simple spaces where fieldwork was carried out. Linked to specific NGOs, they are also powerful institutional settings, parcels of a broader setting, which allow specific practices, reproduce specific rhetorics and often enact specific ethoses. Often, and for various reasons, all this did not comply with my own ideology and beliefs, neither with my personal ways of being and doing social research. This contradiction—i.e. a privileged, active involvement, on one side, and an ideological and practical opposition, on the other— complicated issues of positionality, which will be discussed later on. For now, let's take a quick look at the two core-fields.

### *The Night Shelter*

During the seven-month fieldwork, I have been involved in the place through volunteering for at least four days per week, during the shelter's entrance hours, that is, from six to ten o' clock in the evening.<sup>13</sup> Practically, these have been the only hours that volunteers are needed: along with entering, all other services (e.g. showers, laundry, tea serving) happen then, before people start going to their beds, around ten. Before starting participating at the shelter, a semi-structured interview had been conducted with the head of the NGO's Social Services Department, who is the shelter's responsible.

### *The Day Centre*

I volunteered for two days a week, one day during the morning shift and the other day during the afternoon shift (for approximately three hours each day). The reason for choosing these two specific days has been deliberate: these are the days of the week *not* dedicated to any specific group (such as families or women). Therefore, and since I had no interest in previously defined categories, those days I was able to be in contact with a diversified group of homeless people. Moreover, this has been the 'safest' choice given my positionality as white, male and Greek, which probably would have placed me in more complex positions in encounters

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<sup>13</sup> Entrance hours have been altered by the shelter's administration during the fieldwork period. Such changes, with a significant impact both on the research practice and the lives of homeless people over time, will become evident later on in the text and are hence not presented in this part.

with women or foreign families with little kids, visiting the centre on other week days. The reason for choosing one morning and one afternoon shift was to try to grasp the dynamics of the day centre throughout the entire day span. My role as a volunteer has been to organise and help the centre's users with the laundry, provide clean towels, toothbrushes, razors and shampoo before taking a shower, distribute food portions and other available products, and wash and dry towels.

## **INTERMEDIATE-FIELDS**

If we move outside of the fieldwork's core, we find ourselves in the area of the intermediate-fields. The two places located here, namely a municipal hostel and an NGO-run hostel, have provided a considerable number of research participants, and have therefore largely contributed to this research. However, what locates them not in the core is the fact that my access has been significantly controlled, and that any involvement was strictly limited to a narrowly defined research practice, that is meeting people only for the process of interviewing without any other participation in the practices of these spaces. Access there has been allowed only while interviews were lasting. Consequently, semi-structured interviews have been the major research tool since the possibility for observations has been limited only to the moments of entering the places, waiting for the research participants to arrive, and leaving —moments that I tried to prolong as much as possible in many ways (e.g. arriving much in advance for an interview or walking slowly while entering and leaving the place).

Moreover, the institutions responsible for the two hostels have been defining the conditions of the research carried out there by being the powerful mediators between the researcher and the homeless: members of paid staff, i.e. psychologists or social workers, would choose the residents to be asked for participating in the research. Nevertheless, I must stress that, even within such controlled environments, regular visits in order to arrange and conduct interviews resulted in a relative flexibility and familiarity with these places as relationships with the staff were gradually developing. These processes critically defined my positionality and called for specific negotiations, elements to be discussed later. By and large, six interviews with homeless residents have been carried out at the municipal and five at the NGO-run hostel. As well, both the hostels' heads have been interviewed and various informal conversations have taken place before, during and after fieldwork, and during unscheduled visits.

## LATERAL-FIELDS

This is the area of the mosaic-field that overall consists of a big number of fields. As the following listing will show, the area appears quite fragmented and heterogeneous. The reason is twofold: First, some spaces may have only occasionally contributed to research either because of their temporary emerging (depending, say, on weather conditions) or because some of them allowed very limited access; and, second, visits to some other spaces were considered critical for understanding the city's local homeless scene but no intense involvement was necessary if the theoretical lines guiding this work, such as the materialities-bodies-mobilities triptych, had to be respected. In this sense, the lateral-fields make another 'arbitrary location' within the overall mosaic-field of this research practice. However limited or occasional, research material deriving from here provides significant research insights and shapes the 'largest picture' of the homeless geographies by contextualising them or give a temporal sense in the geographies' making. Furthermore, this spatial expansion of the research practice served as a significant tactic to achieve a faster, deeper and more holistic familiarisation with the people and spaces that were making the overall landscape of homelessness in Athens. To repeat, the lateral-fields listed hereafter are only *methodologically* lateral; their importance is huge. What follows is a short list with the lateral-fields that will somehow appear as this work's scenography.

### *The City of Athens Homeless Shelter (KYADA)*

Given KYADA's centrality both in geographical and functional terms, being the City's official body dedicated to extreme poverty and homelessness, it has been a place of frequent informal visits for research reasons; these visits have been critical for the understanding of homelessness and its institutional management through interviews with staff members, informal chats, direct observation and updates about what has been happening in the field in general. KYADA conducts also outreach work that has been followed on a regular basis as part of the research practice (see chapter seven).

### *Solidarity night shelter at the municipal kiosk of SynAthina.<sup>14</sup>*

Organised by two NGOs, every Friday evening, a group of volunteers offers tea, snacks, consultancy and psychological support as well as material goods (mainly clothes and shoes) to the city's homeless and dispossessed. Frequent visits there allowed me to observe the NGOs' practices in situ, have informal conversations, establish contacts with volunteers and staff, shape an image of how civil society gets institutionalised and responds to homelessness in city space, and familiarise with homeless people at the fieldwork's very first stages.

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<sup>14</sup> SynAthina is a City of Athens initiative, currently under the Vice Mayoral Office for Civil Society and Innovation. It aims at facilitating the coming together and cooperating of civil groups engaged in improving the quality of city life (<http://www.synathina.gr/en/synathina.html>, last access October 24, 2017). The platform uses as its physical space a kiosk located opposite to Varvákios market, Athinàs street.

### *Non-Governmental Organisations for outreach work*

I have been involved in two major NGOs' outreach work in central Athens as a volunteer-observer on a regular basis, once per week with each organisation (Monday nights, Thursday evenings). Although lateral, this involvement allowed observations and understandings of the highly visible practices of NGOs on the street, explorations of the homeless geographies that are shaped *on the move* through outreach work for the homeless, and safe access and moving through some of the city's 'darker' neighbourhoods that significantly make the homeless city. Additionally, a third NGO focusing on mental health issues and homelessness has been contacted several times in order to collect several information for the field. The heads of all three NGOs have been interviewed in the beginning of the research as well as in subsequent moments.

### *The street*

Street homelessness has not been this work's focus, as already stated. This is the reason why 'the street' is located in the lateral area of our mosaic-field. Yet, it has been a crucial and constantly present spatiality in this research practice. Not only as the location of, say, outreach actions and forms of homeless provision, but also because the streets absorbed a massive amount of fieldwork time while moving from one space of research to another. This time-and-space in motion has been methodologically important: first, by offering numerous opportunities for observations of practices of homeless people as well as the city's interactions with them; second, through occasional but meaningful interactions with some of them; and third, through the random meeting and further socialisation with homeless I already knew thanks to my involvement in other spaces. By and large, the streets are both the vital links between different spatialities as well as where the city's homeless geographies are made and diffused through movement and practices such as dwelling and caring.

Several other places compose the fields' lateral areas, where interviews and/or observations have happened, that are not discussed in detail here. These places are: the homeless street paper of Athens; the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA); the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (EL/FEAD); the Department of Cleanliness and Environment of the Municipality of Athens; a solidarity soup kitchen; and metro stations and friendship clubs as emergent spaces for the homeless.

These are the bits and pieces of the spatialities that contribute to the mosaic-field of the homeless geographies made here. To sum up, involvement (of various levels) in all the aforementioned places, with the openness and selective crafting of multi-sited ethnography, has crucially contributed to the researcher's deep engagement with the fields. The fruitful frictions have been multiplied as more people were encountered and the spatialities of research were expanding farther and farther. Challenges ought to be recognised too though. Multi-sitedness demands often an exhausting physical presence and mobility between different places, something that may pose decisive limitations to researchers with physical

disabilities, and complicates questions of gender and race as not every place is equally accessible and experienced; it may be destructive in respect to research purposes as its focus can easily become blurry; and it runs the risk of creating superficial or/and fragmented relationships with people and places. But, if multi-sited ethnography is practiced carefully and consciously, besides the ‘relational depth’ (Desmond, 2014, p. 570) it can achieve, it can critically intensify the bodily aspects of field research and result in a more complete, both material and immaterial, engagement of the researcher. This may be also a way to respond to the required ‘sensitivity to *spatial and corporeal* practice to supplement work on the visual tradition in geography’, as Powell has called for (2002, p. 267, emphasis added). In this vein, I copy here a few lines from the field notes:

Moving between all these different places works as a spatially extending contact, an ‘expanded friction’ that gives me a growing feeling of familiarity [...] At the same time, and thanks to this expanded friction, the research aims become more and more embodied. As if they are now more felt... Yes! it is the research aims that now give the directions of this pushing and pulling between all these places, they define both the physical and conceptual movements [...] A spontaneous but at the same time focused pushing and pulling of my body, the research practiced through my bodily presence in numerous places.

This is another ‘poetic attunement’ then, as claimed by Lancione and Rosa: ‘to the immanent capability of *anything*’ (2017, p. 144, original emphasis). The following part proposes an understanding of reflexivity that is useful in order to address the critical issues of positionality and ethics.

## ECHOES IN THE 'PERVASIVE MIRROR': TOWARDS A REFLEXIVE POSITIONALITY

Thanks to the feminist critique, reflexivity has become a well-established conceptual tool, or technology (Rose, 1997), in contemporary social and geographical research. Macbeth (2001, p. 35) defines reflexivity as 'a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, text, and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself. It is an exercise that expands to two different yet inherently interconnected and unquestionably significant ingredients of social research: positionality and ethics. Through reflexivity, on the one hand, '[facets] of the self [...] are articulated as "positions" in a multidimensional geography of power relations' (Rose, 1997, p. 308); and, on the other, researchers can develop 'a means of addressing and responding to ethical concerns if and when they arise in the research' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 276) or take 'moral responsibility for [the] difference [between the studier and the studied]' (Kobayashi, 2003, p. 348). In this vein, this part critically reflects upon the notion of reflexivity in order to shape an appropriate ground where questions of positionality and ethics can be placed on. It argues that a constant, relational, intersubjective, as well as affective reflexivity that penetrates all research stages is necessary if we desire to reveal and negotiate issues of positionality and ethics, and power relations in knowledge production.

For this purpose, it is important to listen to some critical voices. In her seminal article, Gillian Rose (1997) condemns that, albeit its significance for challenging allegedly 'universal' and 'neutral' forms of knowledge, reflexivity may be also problematic, especially when it appears 'transparent': the researcher's self is 'transparently visible to analysis' and consequently 'transparently knowable' (p. 309). Transparency presupposes a researcher detached from power relations, thus a researcher outside of the context in which s/he practices research. To respond, Rose focuses on *difference* rather than *distance* from others, and suggests that more performative views allow us to see research 'as constitutive (if not completely so), both of the researcher and of the other involved in the research process' (p. 315; see also Gregson & Rose, 2000); the latter involves numerous (power) relations that shape numerous research selves.

The second critical voice comes from another feminist geographer, Audrey Kobayashi, who stresses the need to question reflexivity's limits (Kobayashi, 2003). She builds her argument around one principal danger carried by reflexivity: to become 'a selfish, self-centred act [that works] actively to construct a sense of the other, to deny a reflexivity of others, and to emphasise the condition of detached alterity' (p. 348). We see again the reflexive researcher taking distance from the context and the other subjects involved, cutting the links with broader social agendas that, according to Kobayashi, make reflexivity

meaningful. Both scholars invite us to consider a reflexive self that is equally made within the research process as much as other selves are made too.

In the echo of these voices, I now would like to depart in order to propose a specific view on reflexivity. Discussing the ethical complexities in their research with homeless people, Cloke et al. (2000) artfully marry reflexivity with Bakhtin's dialogics, presenting a *processual* research practice, or 'dramaturgic event' (p. 137), in which the self meets 'the other' so that both sides shape each other. To Madison (2005), a reflexive dialogue is 'both difference and unity, both agreement and disagreement, both a separation and a coming together' (p. 9). In my view, the importance of the idea of dialogue rests in the reminder that reflexivity should not be 'navel-gazing' (Sultana, 2007); we are not reflexive for the sake of being reflexive. As an exercise, reflexivity should constantly construct and deconstruct the dynamic, fluid map of positionality and ethics, on which knowledge is produced in situated, geographically specific manners.

Adhering to Rose's and Kobayashi's criticisms, and integrating the above dialogic views, I would like to mobilise the metaphor of the 'mirror'. So far no originality; in its inherent ocularcentrism, reflexivity assumes anyway the presence of a (fictional, at least) mirror in front of the researcher, so that s/he can observe her/himself. Yet I invite the readers to imagine a specific type of mirror, not placed in front of the researcher, as perhaps common assumptions would have it, but a mirror that is shaped by the extension of the researcher's own contour — making the researcher another Haraway's cyborg (1985). This is the 'pervasive mirror': researcher and mirror are inseparable through an elastic common contour; the researcher inside the mirror, the mirror embodied by the researcher. The contour's elasticity allows the researcher to incline the pervasive mirror accordingly so that different areas are mirrored in it. At the same time though, this elasticity renders the mirror's frame/boundary prone to changes, and out of the researcher's total control.

Now locate our cyborg-researcher in the field, ask her/him gently to start the fieldwork, and observe her/him moving around with this extension of her/his contour (a bit below the shoulders, like two supplementary, joint arms), in which her/himself as well as the field are continually reflected. What happens inside the pervasive mirror? The physical extension of the researcher's contour makes her/him inherent in the reflexive practice. But since being reflexive demands the Other (Pillow, 2003), other subjects (and objects) are included in the mirror too, subjects (and objects) that, in various ways and to different extents, take part in the research practice. The pervasive mirror's physicality and physical connection with the researcher will aid me to finally say what does this mirror *do*, or how reflexivity can be exercised in order to critically address positionality and ethics.

In its pervasiveness, the mirror is saturated with *echoes*, not gazes. In there, subjects (and objects) echo towards each other constantly, exchanging infinite reciprocal, dialogic echoes from their different positions during the research

process. Echoes, like waves, are material though and, being so, they have the ability to move the bodies of subjects (and objects); the various positionalities involved in the research are in constant ex-change, positions affect one another and ethics are every time mapped differently. Through dialogic echoes, subjects (and objects) are in constant inter-relation and in mutual making. The research self is no more transparent (Rose, 1997; see also Thrift, 2008, p. 14) but absolutely material and prone to unpredictable alterations. The mirror as extension of the researcher's own contour has two other significant implications. First, that reflexivity is an embodied process that has unescapable emotional and affective impacts on the researcher. And, second, that, by embodying it in such a way, the researcher carries the mirror before, during and after what is defined as 'research practice'. In the end, the overall saturation of echoes shapes the field itself as well as the knowledge and subjectivities produced within.

This specific metaphor of the 'pervasive mirror' —as extension of the researcher's own contour, being material, and saturated with echoes— indicates the directions that reflexivity takes in this work, seeking to critically engage with positionality, ethics and power relations as well as the 'subjectivities produced through specific performances of [geographic] knowledge production' (Gregson & Rose, 2000, p. 449). More precisely, it contributes to an understanding of the field 'as a region undergoing continual processes of construction by the fieldworker, inhabitants of the field, and those elsewhere' (Driver as cited in Powell, 2002, p. 262), and suggests that reflexivity be understood as a continual process before, during and after the fieldwork. It takes account of emotions and recognises that the researcher does not remain emotionally unaffected by research encounters (Liamputtong, 2006; Widdowfield, 2000). It reveals the researcher's multiple positionalities and considers them as always 'negotiated in practice' (Hopkins, 2007, p. 390).

Last but not least, the constant interrelations —or dialogics— of the echoing subjects point towards an ethical agency that is intersubjective and relational (Whatmore, 1997) and not one-way or static with the research self in a distant epicentre. It is within this saturation of echoes that both the researcher and researched constitute each other (Rose, 1997) through a continuous, complex interplay of positionalities and ethics. The following parts employ evidence and direct extracts from field notes to demonstrate what has been echoed in *my own mirror-extension-of-my-contour* during my research practice in central Athens — and is still being strongly echoed.

## SWIMMING IN THE VISCOUS FIELD: INSTITUTIONS AND FRAGILE POSITIONALITY

While in the field, I find myself struggling to move in a space where a very specific, powerful rhetoric [about a ‘psychopathology of the homeless’] seems to have become solidified, fixed, almost material, saturating most of the research areas I’m traversing. My research movements feel difficult, they demand much effort, they are restricted, largely defined by a thick discursive mass that needs to be passed through in order to finally reach the homeless. The thick discursive mass defines the flow of research practising; it slows it down. I cannot move easily, cannot move the way I want, hard to move my legs, my body hardly swims. This space feels so viscous sometimes that positions me in a pre-given way in front of the research participants. How do I swim in all this thickness then?

Field notes, May 22, 2017

This section is about the complexities, difficulties but also opportunities that arise in geographical research on homelessness when conducted through institutionalised spaces, run by public or non-governmental organisations. It also presents positionality as ‘fragile’, as a result of often competing positioning forces outside of the researcher’s hands. Field evidence is used in order to show how institutions shape the —discursive and material— context for research practice; or, put differently, how institutions are *spaced* (Doel as cited in Murdoch, 2005, p. 18) in these locations, how this spacing affects research practically, and how the researcher may respond to therein emerging ‘Janus-role positionings’.

I have chosen to begin this part with an excerpt that describes a personal feeling that dominated most of my field research: the feeling that it was difficult to move *as a researcher*. My extensive contact with many institutionalised spaces of the homeless geographies of Athens —inherent in multi-sitedness— made me soon realise that these geographies were saturated with a very specific discourse swirling around a widely alleged ‘psychopathology of the homeless’, quasi-omnipresent in the field’s lexicon, which made me experience the mosaic-field as ‘viscous’. Saturated with this specific discourse that, as if a thick liquid flowing all over the field and slowly filling it up, was decisively defining my research moves. Before our encounters, the homeless subjects were already pathologised and thus made undifferentiated, sharing one single, commonly agreed ‘psychopathology’. Consequently, my positioning in regard to a homogenised homeless population was often defined in advance. And, in the viscous field, my (practical and

discursive) moves towards different, more desired and morally just positions had to be struggled for. Constantly.

As mentioned already, this research's multi-sitedness assumed the inclusion (as well as exclusion) of various spaces. Linked to different institutions, these spaces represented different worldviews and ways of doing, opened different possibilities and imposed different research limitations. For, in a multi-sited research practice, context is also multi-sited —which makes this practice geographical. Consequently, a continuous and space-specific methodological adjustment was necessary. For instance, interviews at the municipal hostel could not be recorded; taking notes was not permitted during night outreach work with one of the NGOs I regularly followed; and, during some shifts at the day centre, the presence of more staff members than usually made my participant observation feel under (another) observation. Such facts affected the fieldwork's practicalities.

Another illustrative example of context is offered by the night shelter. A possible forthcoming closure, due to funding problems, made it ethically complicated and emotionally difficult for me to proceed with interviews with people that were living in this excessively precarious condition and were forced to find ways to negotiate it. Ethically complicated because proceeding would have meant giving priority to *my own* research instead of *their own* need to urgently find alternative accommodation (at least for as long as the interview would have lasted). And emotionally difficult because the uncertainty of those days had a strong emotional impact on shelter users, who expressed feelings of stress; conducting interviews seemed thus inappropriate as it could have amplified negative emotions (e.g. by discussing already emotionally loaded themes, such as everyday survival). Nevertheless, the most critical effect of multi-sitedness concerned my access to the homeless geographies, the encounters with research participants and the degree of institutional mediation in this.

## **INSTITUTION-FILTERED ENCOUNTERS**

Encounters with the homeless were defined by the type of involvement I, as researcher, was allowed to have in each space. By and large, involvement was realised in two ways: either by a focused access to institutional spaces limited solely to conducting interviews with homeless people (in the case of hostels); or directly participating in an institution's spaces and practices, through volunteering (in the cases of the day centre and night shelter, and outreach work). In the first case, encountering the homeless has been 'institution-filtered': with involvement being impossible because volunteering was not permitted, my encounters with homeless there have been strongly mediated by institutions. In the intermediate-fields, each respective institution would communicate my

research aims to the residents *of their own choice* and the residents would then decide upon participation. In many ways, the institution-filtered process was problematic. Specifically, having my research purposes communicated by other people made me feel insecure about possible misinterpretations and distortions since these people had only a vague idea of what the research was about. To negotiate the institutional mediation that could have negative impacts on the research practice, I organised group meetings with the homeless interested in participating, before proceeding to individual interviews. In this way I was able to introduce myself and the research appropriately, achieve a first sense of familiarity, correct any distortions caused previously, clarify issues of informed consent and anonymity, receive and respond to questions, and give the possibility to withdraw from the research process to anyone who had changed opinion. This was a way to achieve as much 'ethical validity' (Cloke et al., 2000) as possible in considerably controlled environments.

Moreover, the institution-filtered process raised issues of power, which posed moral and ethical questions. Having 'the right to choose' potential research participants, institutions had also the power to perform their own canonical projections, evaluations, discourses and categorisations on homeless subjects. 'I have tried to select them in a way so that *all categories* are represented in your research [...] And imagine that the ones you've already met are the most *normal* in here!' the social worker-head of the NGO-run hostel explained me in private after the interviews were over. And the psychologist responsible for the municipal hostel reassured me: 'We will find some *normal* ones [to participate]'. The viscous field was becoming even more viscous. The last phrase was uttered at a later stage of the fieldwork when I was aiming to include a few more hostel residents in the research. It was the moment I realised that my research was giving institutions the power to exercise their own discourse on homeless subjects, a discourse against my own ideology and ways of researching that was potentially harmful by reproducing certain stereotypes (Paradis, 2000). So, I decided to close that part of research and focus on other areas. Yet, albeit its drawbacks, this process provided access to and understandings of places that would not have been accessed otherwise; and it rendered possible for me to carry out interviews with homeless people that would not have been easily encountered otherwise and outside of these places.

## **RESEARCHER-FILTERED ENCOUNTERS**

Much differently, in spaces where direct involvement was allowed, encounters with the homeless have been characterised as 'researcher-filtered'. My active presence in these spaces allowed direct contact with homeless people and, therefore, I myself was able to approach and carefully invite potential participants based on the research's criteria, appropriate timing, their and my own emotions,

and, above all, based on familiarity with the homeless that was gradually attained through regular contact and mutual exchanges in the field. Put differently, an adequate theoretical sample could be achieved (Crang & Cook, 2007). Involvement in the core-fields was achieved through the practice of volunteering. In these spaces, I was not only a researcher; I was too a volunteer. And this made a difference in respect to my positionality and research practice.

The constant interplay between the role of ‘the researcher’ and the role of ‘the volunteer’, or what Conradson (2003, p. 515) calls ‘the dual elements of volunteer and researcher’, has been what could be imagined as a ‘Janus-role positioning’, which exemplifies how positionalities are changing, practiced and identity-dependent (Hopkins, 2007). Janus-role positioning is the result of two different, often contradictory but omnipresent and interrelated positionings of different directions: an *internal*, own decided positioning as human geographer and researcher, willing to conduct ethical, critical, theoretically informed and methodologically sound field research with homeless people; and an *external*, NGOs-imposed positioning as a volunteer, expected to align to and represent the organisation, respect their principles, follow their practices and adhere to their discourses.

#### *Janus-role: The volunteer’s side*

The volunteer’s role has been the ‘key’ for me to gain access to the practices of these spaces and establish relationships with the homeless; being a volunteer, I could finally become ‘my own gatekeeper’ and filter the process myself. However, being externally imposed on me and assuming specific characteristics and ways of being and doing, this role often seemed threatening to the role I myself was willing to have: that of the researcher. Being a volunteer meant many different things with inevitable ethical implications (Cloke et al., 2000). It involved practices that opposed my own values, such as not allowing the homeless to use the day centre’s facilities if they arrived more than half an hour after the appointed time, a practice aiming to discipline the homeless. It often meant compromising with patronising attitudes (e.g. expressing ‘pity’ for the homeless condition), philanthropic discourses (choosing whom to help and how) and/or inadequate, therapeutic actions for the homeless (as outreach work often seemed to me). And it imposed ‘necessary’ distances between myself and the homeless subjects I was trying to encounter: ‘Don’t talk with them *that* much’. Both at the day centre and night shelter, I was asked by staff members to sustain distances, avoid close personal contacts and not ‘create expectations’ to the homeless, although the nature of these ‘expectations’ was never defined. Simply put, being a volunteer meant a conscious dive into the viscous field —a dive I had to practically deal with.

Negotiating the negative aspects of the imposed volunteer’s role has not been effortless. For this role often involved practices that marked my body in specific ways and performed the ‘volunteer’ as strongly embodied. For example, my presence at the day centre presupposed an intensive, seven-hour training course,

along with other future volunteers. During the course, we were introduced to the NGO's principles through painting, writing, gesturing, and inter-acting whilst, at the same time, we were positioned in specific ways in it: as volunteers. Bodily movements and orchestrated actions of engagement (such as playfully drawing the NGO's 'vision') gradually made the volunteer's role embodied; the interaction with the rest of present bodies amplified the embodiment. Similarly, as a volunteer I had to sign both at the beginning and the end of my shift; 'for volunteers it is mandatory but for us (paid staff) not. This is the only way we have to check your presence here', a psychologist explained slightly grinning. And, if geographical practice 'is mediated by the way we sense ourselves in relation to institutions [besides others]' (Catungal, 2017, p. 12), doing research *and* volunteering entailed multiple emotional responses such as anger, frustration, sadness, but also joy and relief within the contextual affective atmospheres of institutionalised spaces. Hence, the role of the volunteer felt decisive; it marked my body, positionality and research practice.

*Janus-role: The researcher's side*

What was equally decisive though, was the other side of the Janus-role positioning: the researcher. The inevitable embodiment of the volunteer, with its above discussed challenging sides, called for a necessary emphasis on the side of the researcher as a way to negotiate the imposed positioning and balance it with a desired one. Choosing specific positions at the day centre and night shelter, which allowed direct and as much as possibly un surveilled contact with the homeless, was a first significant step. Nevertheless, it soon became evident that clearly marking my own contour as a researcher, hence different from the rest of volunteers or employees, had to be a continuous and situated practice if I wanted to proceed with my research in ethical and productive manners. This contour was becoming bolder and bolder by reminding mainly the homeless but also the employees sometimes that I was in that position principally for research purposes and, therefore, I was not representing any organisation. Or, in more practical terms, by giving someone a second soap or razor undercover for his/her shower, that is something against the rules, I was marking my position differently; I was not only a volunteer, I was *also* a committed researcher able to act. And as the research was evolving, it was the homeless themselves to gradually reinforce my researcher's contour through our mutual contacts, in which my desired positioning was becoming more and more clear and recognised.

Like a result of two different forces —an external, 'the volunteer', and an internal, 'the researcher'— my positionality was experienced as 'fragile'. When the side of the volunteer was becoming too dominant during research, urgent negotiations were necessary to balance it and re-define my positionality by reinforcing and emphasising the researcher's side. If, as Pile and Thrift (1995, p. 45) suggest, '[identity] is a fiction which must be continually established as a truth', then my identity as researcher had to be continuously established as such a truth. But the aim was never to eliminate the volunteer's side; both positionalities had to be

accepted 'as legitimate attempts to understand the nature of cultures' (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 415) of each place.

The Janus-role positioning and fragile positionality show how dynamic, unfixed and uncontrolled the position of the researcher can be *in situ*. But it does not claim a clear separation between 'the volunteer' and 'the researcher'; rather the two sides coexist without any clear boundary between them, they are often mapped one on top of one another. Contours are tangled. Manifoldly. There have been only *instants* that the boundary felt clear before becoming indistinct again. Instants that demanded a decision to explicitly perform my self-as-researcher. Malleable to geographical and institutional contexts, the researcher self is shaped during the research practice by uncontrolled forces, which s/he seeks to respond to in a continuous process of changing, combining and contrasting positionalities. The next section focuses on other aspects of the fragile positionality, arising in encounters with the homeless.

## ENCOUNTERING THE HOMELESS: ANOTHER FRAGILE POSITIONALITY

...and *you* look inert and uncomfortable...

Homeless man, Athinás street, November 18, 2016

White, Greek, male, able-bodied, at my thirties, fully funded PhD candidate,<sup>15</sup> based in Italy, with a strong interest to geographically study homelessness ‘back home’. This is my primal positioning; very important. But such ‘original placements’ need to be questioned (Lancione & Rosa, 2017, p. 138); for things are less fixed, more relational and definitely processual in research. The words quoted above come from my first night of outreach work, following a team of NGO volunteers in the streets of Athens around Monastiráki square. A homeless man we had approached pointed at me and uttered these words. Indeed, these were exactly my feelings that moment. A bit more mixed maybe but definitely these. But I had not realised them until the moment *he* positioned *me*: obviously different from him —perhaps even different from the rest of the group— a bit scared, physically slightly separated, ethically confused and emotionally vulnerable for ‘disturbing’ homeless in their private space (the street), unsure about what I was doing and why. That encounter made my research self ‘out of place’ (Cresswell, 1996). *I* first echoed upon him; then *he* echoed upon me. And again. Such exchanged dialectic echoes were constantly positioning and re-positioning subjects in the entire research practice in unpredictable ways. This section demonstrates how emotional, affective, and bodily-performative aspects of the encounters with homeless people, recognised through constant reflexivity, further perplex positionalities and make them fragile. Once again, geographical context matters as a considerable part of this work happened in institutionalised spaces. For this reason, I have decided to begin by locating these encounters right there.

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<sup>15</sup> My Italian PhD scholarship has been disproportionately generous in comparison to the funding (if any) I would have had, had I been affiliated to a Greek university. I would like to hereby express my respect to my Greek colleagues carrying out their PhD research in extremely difficult economic conditions. Furthermore, to stress the ironies of knowledge production, during the fieldwork period and thanks to some privileges provided by my university I was able to afford my room in L’Aquila, Italy, *and* rent another one in Athens, Greece, while doing research with people in extremely precarious and unjust housing conditions.

## INSIDE THE HOSTELS

As part of the two hostels' policy aiming to protect the residents' privacy, my encounters with their homeless residents happened inside the hostels. My visits in both places were thus strictly limited to meeting research participants and carrying out interviews with them, something that was giving a taste of strict 'professionalism' —but also of 'exploitation' of research participants, I dare to say— to the encounters. The process was positioning me in a hierarchical manner with regard to the homeless, a manner far away from the more inclusive and reciprocal research practice I was aiming at. What was contributing to this positioning was often the spaces' materiality. For example, in one of the hostels I was provided with a separate room to conduct the interviews. That was absolutely welcomed: an isolated environment would give the privacy necessary for interviewing; and there would be almost no ambient noise in the recordings.

However, meeting a research participant in an office with white walls, white furniture and white lights was making the encounter feel too formal, sanitised, excessively institutionalised, or even abnormal (see Widdowfield, 2000, for the impact of the environment's physicality on research). The environment also inscribed our physical positions and hence a specific positioning: I was sitting on the office chair behind the desk —as if the office was mine; and they were sitting on a common, smaller chair in front of the desk —as if they were visitors. This materiality created, in my own view and feelings, a 'professional atmosphere' that was positioning researcher and researched in a hierarchical distance, with the 'expert' waiting 'in his place' for the 'subject of study' to arrive, be studied, and leave. Next, please!

Positionality in this case was also expressed by the participants' sitting postures: They were often inward, reserved and self-protective —and so were many of those interviews. My efforts to challenge my positionality, by waiting, e.g., for the research participant *standing*, not sat, and letting them choose their place, were not that successful; they would always choose the same chair, putting me in the place of the 'professional', 'protected' behind the desk. Luckily, interviews were spaced in such ways only in the intermediate-fields. The biggest share of my encounters with homeless people happened, by choice, in places out of institutional reach (in cafés, public spaces or on the move), which significantly improved the encounters' quality and familiarity, involved mutual exchanges between the two sides overtime, and resulted in richer and less linear research results. Yet, even in those advantageous cases, positionality was still fragile. For it is always the body to be positioned.

## BODY AND EMOTIONS

Bodies, space and knowledge produce each other (Longhurst, Ho & Johnston, 2008). The role of the bodies (both of the researcher and the researched) in the production of knowledge with homeless people is evident through two major ways here: through the emotions they embody for the subjects; and through their material, performative aspects that link them with other subjects and other bodies. Regarding emotions, my encounters with the homeless have been filled with countless ‘emotional moments’ (Catungal, 2017). Often, interviews or discussions involved very uncomfortable narrations of difficult experiences, mainly related to personal pathways to homelessness but also to everyday survival. Such narrations brought tears sometimes. And pauses. Immersed in pauses, I remember —better, I still *feel* in my mirror— those moments as emotionally charged: empathy (to the extent this was possible), sadness, fear of possible further reactions, anger, but also hollowness for a seemingly unimportant research practice. These were necessary ‘labour pains’ (Melrose, 2002) that made reflexivity much less comfortable (Pillow, 2003) than a detached, transparent research self would have achieved. Being constantly reflexive and porous to labour pains affected positionalities and blurred the researcher-researched boundary. Interviews were hence emerging as remarkable, dense ‘affective atmospheres’ (Anderson, 2011) of fieldwork, which, being shared by dissimilar bodies, were bringing the researcher and the researched closer; at least momentarily.

Silences —the sound of pauses— were adding a great deal to these atmospheres. The silence that followed the description of one’s first days and nights in the street, a serious accident or a decisive human loss, left me emotionally suspended in an uncomfortable waiting: of a response, awaited by both sides, mine and the person’s in front. The difficulty to negotiate such emotional moments revealed also the entanglements of emotions with ethics and defined the immediate methodological moves. Was it ethical to proceed with research questions when the research participant was emotionally vulnerable? And what if, besides the visible distress, there were ‘hundreds of [other] invisible impacts amongst networked actors’ (Cloke et al., 2000, p. 151), which would make my research harmful? Every time I suggested that we quit the interview, the response was a clear will to go on. ‘Now that I am telling you these things... (pause) As if [these things] are being unlocked, things are opening up inside me’, a man told me after a long moment of silence and asked to continue our interview, lasting overall for two hours and forty minutes. Similarly, another one likened our discussion to ‘a massive decompression’ for himself and shared his relieving feelings. Other research participants said that the interview gave them ‘a sense of normality’ making evident that interviews were often perceived not as interrogative processes but rather as ‘common discussions’ apparently missing in the homeless’ everyday lives.

## PERFORMATIVITY OF BODIES

Besides the emotional and affective aspects, the body has also performative aspects that affect positionalities. We may recall here Rose's (1997) invitation for a reflexivity that takes into account performativity to highlight how positionings in the field are not pre-existing but constantly *made* during research (see also Gregson & Rose, 2000). Some bodily performances dissolve 'established', seemingly fixed positionalities. One day, due to lack of personnel, I was asked to go to the night shelter's entrance and perform (the obligatory) bodily control to Márkos, a shelter user who was also a research companion. Performing the control radically shook the positionalities that were shaped during months of mutual contact and a more than two-hour-long interview, casting the two sides away from one another. Although he did not seem to bother at all (for him it was anyway a routine), I felt this bodily practice as threatening the existing positionalities, rendering power relations exaggeratedly visible. One had the power on the body of the other; and hence bodies were performed as radically different and distant, although the control's paradoxical physical closeness.

Though, bodily performances position and re-position subjects in positive ways too. Sharing a portion of rice and chicken at the soup kitchen, for instance, has been significant for the produced positionalities. The food's shared materiality and the practice of eating from the same plastic plate challenged my personal limits as far as cleanliness and taste are concerned, limiting importantly the inevitable distance between the researcher and the researched (see Longhurst et al., 2008). Anyway, tasting the food at soup runs, the day centre, or night shelter, has always been a bodily, sensory practice of understanding the homeless and their (material) geographies, and an open act of proximity towards a 'relational baseline' (Jordan, 2002, p. 102) amongst research subjects. Moreover, other kinds of physical contact changed the in-field positionalities. Touching a used towel without gloves, for example, performed a crossing of my personal boundaries of hygiene and self-protection and challenged my position as a 'detached' researcher. Such deeds have often happened on purpose in an effort to achieve proximity to research participants and spaces as well as an embodied engagement with my research and the involved subjects.

Another example shows how, while doing research, social distance and positionality are performed through the body and its surrounding materialities. In September 2017, after the field research was 'officially' over, I had an appointment with a research companion in order to visit a public service (he speaks little Greek) and afterwards chat over a coffee. We had not seen each other for almost two months. Coming out of the metro station, I removed my headphones and sunglasses almost automatically. This was something I was used to do while doing fieldwork or, more generally, every time I found myself in the neighbourhoods and streets of fieldwork. The reason was simple: such visible material elements would perform an emphasised social distance in the case of

encountering a homeless research participant. Of course, there is something of ostrich mentality in this, as clothes have the same effect. But the fact that elements such as sunglasses and headphones were *additive* (while clothes ‘necessary’ or more taken-for-granted), made them feel more powerful objects to me. Unexpectedly though, my skin betrayed me in that encounter: ‘Hey, you are tanned! You were on holidays?!’ he said when he saw me, making me feel uncomfortable in front of a person who had spent his whole summer in the city, for obvious reasons.

## TIMINGS

Before closing this part, it is worthy describing two events that show that positionality is also time-related and that reflexivity is not limited to a strictly defined ‘fieldwork’. The first one regards the returning in the field after a period away. After the first three months of fieldwork, I had to return to Italy where I stayed for a month before getting back to Athens again. A month was enough to shake existing positionings and demand re-positionings. Albeit the warm welcome-back from all research companions, I felt distant, having lost some of the contact with them. The necessity to relocate myself by letting relationships revive was evident. The second event is related to listening to, and transcribing interviews. Days, weeks, or even months after the encounter, the recordings partially have been ‘forceful reminders of my situatedness’ (Catungal, 2017, p. 10). But they have largely been also *re-positionings*: distant from my *then* own self, listening to my own voice and observing acoustically the research practice after some time, a new positionality was being created, affected by the relations and events that took place between the time of the actual encounter and the acoustic encounter.

Concluding, the aforementioned reflective account of the body in knowledge production, not only points towards a processual view on reflexivity thanks to involved ‘emotional entanglements’ (Laliberté & Schurr, 2016) but also reveals performative aspects that render positionality complex and unstable. Emotions, bodily performances and timings result in a continuous coming-together and distancing of subjects, a movement that obscures boundaries and, above all, may lead to an instantaneous de-othering of the ‘Other’. For ‘there is a political imperative in recognising the Other within the self’ (Longhurst et al., 2008, p. 214) in utilising the body for —reflexive— research practice.

## **ETHICS AND POLITICS: IMPERATIVES FOR GEOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PRACTICE**

Either implicitly or explicitly, ethical issues have been present so far. This way I have attempted to remind the readers that reflexivity is meaningful when it keeps ‘moral imagination’ continuously active and engaged (Hay, 1998), and throughout the entire research practice. Ethics is a complex thing because it is entangled with politics. The performances of social distance discussed above complicate the ethical and political implications of practicing research. Efforts to minimize the perceived social distance and not to be provocative (e.g. by removing sunglasses or headphones) seemed definitely ‘ethical’ decisions. But what are the political implications of, in this case, ‘hiding’ social distances in a research seeking to critically *reveal* one extreme form of social inequality, namely homelessness, in its geographical making? Although most of the times unanswered, reflexive questions keep us attentive to issues of ‘asymmetry and exploitation’ in research (Cloke et al., 2000, p. 151). Here though, I would like to directly discuss the ethical and political imperatives stemming from my geographical research with homeless people in Athens, imperatives that may inspire future studies. And if they succeed to, then this work will have built at least one little ‘bridge’ of those needed in every ethical research project (Madison, 2005).

This study started with what Madison calls ‘ethical responsibility’: ‘a compelling sense of duty and commitment based on moral principles of human freedom and well-being’ (p. 5). Yet, moralities tend to suspend quite above the material ground of human practice. And it is on this ground (of social research) that ethical responsibility is exercised as a continuous ethical effort. Then, ethical responsibility is about practice (Hay, 2010) that exceeds abstract moralities. To begin, the ‘procedural ethics’ (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) or what Crang and Cook call ethics ‘with a capital E that comprise the broad and fixed principles’ (2007, p. 31) have not been a great deal for my research. To secure a formalized ethical position that would prepare me for negotiating access to the field’s institutions, I composed my own ethical contract, signed by my PhD programme’s coordinator. This included information mainly around informed consent, openness and transparency, confidentiality, risks and harms, protection of research participants, responsibility to the scholarly community (Liamputtong, 2006; Madison, 2005). As expected, the form was useful in order to negotiate access to the organisations responsible for the places of my interest.

But this contract remained almost exclusively at an institutional level, without touching my research companions, something that I often perceived as a form of institutional control over the homeless subjects—it seemed that a formal, written form was not of value for the homeless as individuals but only for the

organisations which their lives were largely dependent on. Only in the case of one hostel it was a last-minute decision of a social worker to individualise the contracts. Yet, and besides one research participant, contracts did not seem to matter. One signed without even reading; another left the room without taking it; and a third signed and, in a grotesque way, tore apart the sheet performing his trust in the social worker who introduced him to me: 'I trust you, Mr. Mários! I don't need this stuff!'. Regarding the core-fields, where research participants were approached and involved through building relationships in the field, information were given orally. For I was discouraged by the participants themselves to 'formalise' our rapports through any type of document. In fact, presenting a written form before the start of an interview, was perceived to destabilise the existing positionings, established after enduring contacts and mutual trust, and re-position researcher and researched in new distances, casting them away from one another. Written forms seemed to threaten, and not secure, trust. That did not seem much ethical. And ethics clearly proved processual (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001).

It soon became evident then that the real and challenging practice of ethics, this time written 'with a lower case e' (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 32), would happen in (but not exhausted to) face-to-face encounters with the homeless (see Gounis, 1996). It is the encounters of the previous part, their dynamic positionalities and continuous reflexivities, that we can draw the ethical imperatives of this work from, stressing, at the same time, the situatedness and context-dependency of practising ethics (Cloke et al., 2000) that every geographical research should consider. The first ethical imperative is fundamental one: to embody an active/activist role of researcher that does not simply recognise her/his role in the 'makeshift of the fieldwork' (Lancione & Rosa, 2017, p. 147) but makes active use of her/his, often privileged, positioning to affect this makeshift in ways beneficial for 'the vulnerable'. Of course, these actions should strongly relate to broader agendas for positive social change to make reflexivity meaningful (Kobayashi, 2003).

An example from the field is illustrative: 'Give him chickpeas' ordered whispering in my ear the employee working with me at the day centre's kitchen during a morning shift. On the other side of the counter, a homeless was waiting for me to give him that day's lunch. Knowing that there was a variety of food portions in the fridge, food that often went wasted, it was obvious that the employee wanted to simply get rid of the chickpeas. I found it 'ethical' from my side to ignore his order and give the homeless the right to choose: 'Would you like rice, chickpeas, or lentils?' Through *my* own (privileged) agency, the homeless gained *his* agency and could choose his lunch himself —'Rice!'. Whatmore's (1997) relational ethical agency had been for a moment achieved, and the institutional power over a homeless subjectivity had been subverted.

The second ethical imperative concerns this very subjectivity that many times seemed to be ignored or eliminated by institutions of the viscous field. As has

been said already, most of the homeless I encountered emphasised their individuality, showing a strong desire to position themselves outside a homogenising category of 'the homeless'. This tendency was sometimes so strong that demanded negotiation from my own side: 'I am not representative of the group, I have nothing to add to your study', or 'My case is very different, special, will not help you to generalise', or even 'I am *not* homeless' were reactions to my invitations for research involvement. To respond ethically to such positionings meant two things: to respect subjectivity and individuality; and to reinforce them throughout the whole research practice, from the ways of approaching people in the fields to the writing and communication of research results. The present imperative regarding the homeless' individuality is ethical in two ways. First, it is attentive to not reproduce common stereotypes of the homeless or marginalised populations in general (Paradis, 2000); and second, it exposes the institutions as powerful actors (Crang & Cook, 2007) by challenging their tendency to reproduce a homogenised homeless subjectivity. If the homeless subjects want to 'scratch the stigma' off of themselves, ethical research has to help scratching with them. Anonymity and the complex ways of dealing with it may be one reason to achieve such a goal, as this chapter's final section will briefly show.

This emphasis on subjectivity takes us to the third imperative. As the fieldwork experience showed above, positionality is not 'a thing' but a dynamic dialogical process between the researcher and the researched. Thus, in order to respect the subjectivity of the homeless, the researcher has to recognise her/his positionality as fragile, consider emotions and bodily performances, and be open to exchanging positionalities during research practice. For example, the homeless' practice of offering a coffee (or anything else) has been a widespread effort to switch positionalities and place themselves in what was often understood by them as 'normal' positions: 'Next time we will meet, *I* will offer you the coffee. To show you that *I* am able to offer too!' one said while chatting after the end of the interview. Normally, my morality would not permit such a thing. In teleological terms, accepting a coffee by a person whose life depends primarily on welfare would harm her/his already marginal economic situation. But in deontological terms, the deed seemed right in respect to the homeless' subjectivity and self-positioning (see Hay, 2010). What this imperative may teach us is that ethical to recognise the role of *personality* in positionality, following Moser (2008). For, by reflecting merely upon positionalities, such as that of 'the researcher' or 'the homeless', and by ignoring the individuals' multi-dimensional personalities — shaped by entanglements of class, gender, age, embodied experience, physical (dis)ability, ideology— may run serious risks of reproducing stereotypes by constructing canonical social categories in respectively canonical positionings.

The last ethical imperative relates to the creation of expectations and the responses to expectations during research practice. It does not take a great deal of imagination to understand the underlying risks of creating expectations while conducting research with vulnerable groups. '...So that you can also help me, if possible', a research participant said asking me for a favour regarding some

bureaucratic issues of hers after our interview. She made clear that her involvement in my research was followed by an expectation of ‘getting something back’. Additionally, the fact that many of the homeless used to see me in many different places of their daily lives somehow reinforced expectations; my multi-sited presence perhaps built a distorted image of someone with many connections in the city’s welfare system, if not of someone influential. Ethical research should be careful with the creation of expectations. But this should not imply that creating expectations *per se* is unethical; rather, what is unethical is the creation of *false* expectations, which are impossible to be met. For I consider expectations as integral part of a reciprocal and humane research practice, entangled with ‘trust, political and intellectual commitment to a group, a process or “a cause”’ (Lancione & Rosa, 2017, p. 137).

Many expectations can —and ought to— be met through a constant giving back of various, more or less silent, forms: by maintaining contact with research participants after the end of the fieldwork (either by visiting the field again or by telephone or postcards) avoiding ‘research tourism’ (Clope, 1997) and feelings of ‘exploitation’; by sharing information that have been gathered during the research process and can be critical for the homeless’ survival; by sharing and discussing research results; by opening up the therapeutic avenues of interviews, allowing the researched to indicate themselves the directions, regardless of research purposes; and by dedicating time when needed, again regardless of research purposes, either to share time and space or to advocate for them or provide types of assistance.

I would like to conclude by underlining that ethical geographical research, with its many-many more imperatives than the ones discussed here, ought to be traversed by a continuous *memory*: an effort by the active/activist researcher to not forget the social change s/he is committed to. The below fieldnotes’ excerpt describes such fears of forgetting:

After some time in the field, I have the feeling I tend to ‘get used to’ these people’s and spaces’ condition. But I should keep myself constantly and consciously awake. A continuous memory should permeate the research practice. Consciously and without diminishing the homeless subjects. This ‘getting used’ that inevitably supervenes with the everyday frictions of research, even if it ‘normalises’ the people involved —de-othering them— needs a solid critical and political basis: *to not forget the desired, and needed, social change.*

Field notes, April 13, 2017

## PRACTICALITIES

I will only tell you the *things that are relevant* to your research.

Lina, December 12, 2016

The lady on the other side of the desk was clear from the very beginning of our interview. The fallacy of what is called ‘in-depth interview’ was obvious. Although we, social scientists and human geographers, use this method and term widely (Valentine, 1999), it is always the research participants to define any ‘depth’ through their ways and techniques of responding. Many times, depth is nothing than a researcher’s desire. Recognising the fallacy of the term, as well as its masculine connotations,<sup>16</sup> the interviews conducted for this study are simply called ‘interviews’, although the term was often avoided in the field due to its strict technicality and ‘formal sound’. They did not include fixed questions but were structured as discussions around four initial thematic axes: one, personal story before and after becoming homeless; two, the spatialities and temporalities of homelessness (e.g. everyday experience, routines, access to services, personal routes); three, personal practices (e.g. socialisation, groups and individuals, negotiations); and four, materiality (e.g. use of goods, food). The aim of using axes instead of direct questions has been to allow research companions lead the interviews themselves (Ali, 2015), avoid touching issues that they were not willing to discuss and give a sense of discussing rather than interrogating. These four axes were guiding the research practice but, at the same time, were malleable; for example, the role of mobility has been inserted when its role in the homeless geographies became gradually evident. The same happened later on when the ‘body’ was added in the axes. Each interview was followed by a short discussion of the participant’s feelings and impressions regarding the process; their views have been crucial for dynamically adjusting and improving the research process.

In total twenty-seven interviews have been conducted with homeless. Twenty-two with men and five with women; twelve with night shelter users, eleven with hostel residents, two with street paper vendors, and two with day center users. Durations varied from forty-two minutes to two hours and forty minutes. Nineteen have been recorded whereas eight not. Twenty-three were conducted in Greek, two in English (with an Iranian and a Pakistani), and one in Arabic (with a Soudanese) with the presence of an interpreter, and one in Italian (with a Moroccan). All interviewed hostel residents have been encountered in the hostels, one of a night shelter user in her room in the shelter, one on the move, one at a soup kitchen and the rest in cafés and public places that were carefully

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<sup>16</sup> McCracken’s (1998) ‘long interview’ does not seem less masculine a term.

selected according to the participant's profile, tastes and preference.<sup>17</sup> The number of informal chats and discussions in all the places of the city's homeless geographies made in this work cannot be estimated. Yet their importance and contribution is massive. Additionally, nine interviews have been conducted with key actors of the field, such as heads of social services and NGO and public administration representatives, especially in the fieldwork's initial stages but also at later stages depending on the information needed.

## ON ANONYMITY

This last methodological section provides a note on anonymity that can be read as an extension of the above ethical-political imperatives. The anonymity of research participants is taken for granted in social research, being somehow both a 'default option' (Walford, 2006, p. 85) and an 'ethical norm' (Tilley & Woodthorpe, 2011, p. 199). This does not imply that anonymity ought to remain unquestioned though, as if it were an instrumental panacea for 'ethical' research practice that 'protects' the involved subjects, let alone the 'vulnerable' ones. Scholars have stressed the need to address anonymity critically. For example, Walford (2006) warns that anonymity may 'allow researchers to write [...] with less concern for absolute accuracy and to base their arguments on evidence which may not be as strong as desirable' (p. 89); in this sense, anonymity can function as a tool that legitimises or masks inadequate research evidence. Furthermore, for Kelly (2009) anonymity is neither monolithic nor equally applied in any case but instead 'must be realised to different degrees depending on circumstance and [...] must remain under constant review' (p. 443). And similarly, and very centrally to this dissertation, Wiles et al. (2008) call for careful attention as nowadays, that the need to express people's individuality is growing apace, anonymity may not be desirable nor applicable nor appropriate in *every* kind of social research.

In the light of these discussions, I suggest that anonymity be much more complex than a static, universal ethical obligation or a must-do academic exercise. For making subjects anonymous affects the making of their subjectivities through the overall research practice and the geographies it produces. 'If you don't mention my name, you can easily forge my words! How can you *not* write it was me to say all this?' a man loudly asked me during our first collective meeting at the municipal hostel. When I explained to him that changing the participants' names is common in research so as to protect the informants from harm, he did not look more convinced: 'Yeah I know, but it is *myself!* And you have to cite me *as your*

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<sup>17</sup> 'I like it here, it's nice and cosy!' (Hamza, January 6, 2017). The selection of the 'right place' to encounter a homeless has been important as the aesthetics, music, odours and patrons could contribute to a hopefully relaxing and familiar ambient for the participant as well as the researcher. This often meant a quick investigation of the cafés in the area before the appointment.

*source*'. For the Municipality though, the anonymity of participants had been clearly set as the number one rule for accessing the hostel (along with not recording nor taking pictures). And there rests the paradox: For organisations anonymity has been a prerequisite to give permission for research involvement, and which would be adequate to respect the privacy of the homeless; but for the homeless themselves, anonymity would obscure their identities as the subjects behind the words and practices that would have later on made this dissertation.

Practically, dealing with this paradox, all names of research participants have been replaced with pseudonyms since this has been a common agreement between the organisations and myself. Yes, anonymity is indeed an ethical-practical obligation to this extent. Nevertheless, I have opted for using no other obscuring techniques, such as mixing different characters or altering other information that would position situated research subjects far away from the(ir) subjectivities made in these pages. All elements, namely words and practices, that construct one's subjectivity ought to be respected, following the homeless' explicit need and continuous desire to appear as distinct, non-stigmatised individuals. Thus, elements that make a homeless subjectivity 'out there' make *this* homeless subjectivity *also* 'in here' —to the extent academic practice as representational practice allows this. Put simply, my own will is that each one of these people identify themselves as *themselves* behind false names.

Last but not least, this dissertation is not only about people; it is about places too. A first, almost automatic reaction has been to prevent as much as possible the identification of the research's actual places in order to prevent the identification of paid staff, managers and volunteers as well as of organisations themselves. But, eventually, I have decided to not do so, for two main reasons. First, because attempting to make these places unidentifiable would be practically impossible given the small size of Athens' homeless scene; for example, there is only one night shelter in the city centre (and two in the entire metropolitan area). And second, this deed would have serious political and ontological implications for geographic research. For Nespore (2000), the critical problem with place anonymisation in research rests in that places are reduced to generalizable, exemplifiable locations detached from their distinct political, social and cultural dynamics and connections —which make places as *places*.

Therefore, to oppose a 'spurious generalizability of time and space' (Walford, 2006, p. 90) and finally expose institutions as powerful actors (Crang & Cook, 2007), the places that make the geographies of this dissertation are not prevented from identification. Except for the public organisations, which are named because of the 'transparency' of public sector, the NGOs responsible for the spaces of the research are kept anonymous as it has never been totally clear to me (either verbally or in agreement documents) whether I am allowed to use explicitly their names or not. Yet no further identification is prevented (for example, they do appear on the map). For a geographical work that obscures local contexts has a very limited political capacity.



FIGURE SESSION 1 Metaxourghéio - Omónia, January 2017.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Scenography: The Machinic Archipelago of Athens City Centre**

#### ABSTRACT

'The scene' for the homeless geographies of Athens made in this dissertation is hereby set. It begins with a detailed elaboration on the central metaphor, the 'machinic archipelago', presenting it as a productive way to think of, re-present and textually make the dynamic and complex network of inter-related spaces of provision and care for the city's homeless. It then provides a specific space-time empirical account of the archipelago's machinic to illustrate that the archipelago has the ability to expand its spatialities by generating new places and then erasing them, responding to specific (weather) conditions. What follows is a description of the predominant discourses that circulate throughout the machinic archipelago, discourses that seem to play an important role in the sketching of the city's homeless subjectivities. The final part seeks to vivify the archipelago transforming it into this work's 'scenography' through a presentation of its most central, to this work, spatialities: the street, hostels, night shelter, and day centre.



FIGURE SESSION 2 Omónoia, March 2017.

## INTRODUCING A METAPHOR: THE ‘MACHINIC ARCHIPELAGO’ OF PROVISION AND CARE

According to Thrift, ‘understanding space-times requires new “geometric” metaphors that are able to describe them in their own – heterogeneous – terms’ (2008, p. 120). To understand the city’s homeless space-times then, a specific metaphor is used, that is the ‘archipelago’.<sup>18</sup> The use of this metaphor to refer to a city’s overall system of services for the homeless is not new. Gowan (2010), for example, describes how the gradual spread of emergency shelters has resulted in the ‘homeless archipelago’ of Los Angeles, shaping a whole new sector of the US semi-welfare state. Similarly, and in the case of Athens, Arapoglou (2004b) uses the term ‘welfare archipelago’ referring to the spatial setting wherein the city’s homeless may be concealed and contained through various discursive practices. Indeed, archipelago seems to be a powerful ‘geometric’ metaphor that meet’s Thrift’s above criterion: on the one hand, it gives a strong sense of the geographical dimensions of service provision, such as concentration and distribution in urban space; on the other, it stresses the critical role of specific *places* as constitutive ‘islands’ of the archipelago.

Islands are inherent to the archipelago; islands *are* the archipelago as they demarcate the spatial differences that compose the archipelago. To go back to the examples, the Los Angeles homeless archipelago is made out of ‘islands of deprivation, mundane and ubiquitous yet socially apart’ (Gowan, 2010, p. 187), whereas the Athenian one of ‘islands of state power and informal control’ (Arapoglou, 2004b, p. 636). Islands are the different spaces of care that altogether constitute the archipelago of homeless provision. Nevertheless, there is an inherent danger to imagine islands as isolated, as more or less cut off from other islands or dry land, if any around; and this imagination is contrary to the use of archipelago pursued here. Instead, utilising this metaphor draws strongly from ‘an alternative ontology of islandness, that is, destabilizing the myth of island isolation and engaging the worldliness of islands’ (Cattan & Vanolo, 2014, p. 1161). Spaces such as the night shelter, the day centre and the hostels, that make Athens’ homeless or welfare archipelago are distinct, different spatialities with distinct functions and (im)possibilities but are definitely neither *isolated* nor *static* spatialities.

If the archipelago is vital for the city’s homeless geographies made through this work, then what is proposed here is that this geographical making happens through perpetual movements, circulations, various temporalities and

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<sup>18</sup> An alternative metaphor often utilised is the ‘homeless industry’ (see Ravenhill, 2008). Although recognised as relevant, the term points at directions different than those pursued here, such as the political economy aspects of provision.

interconnections amongst its islands. Human bodies, discourses, objects, volunteer ethos, policies, food, and management and other practices shape, unshape and re-shape the island-spatialities through their temporal encountering and scattering. We may say that the idea of dynamism (mostly as circulation of the humans involved) regarding the homeless provision has been implied by some scholars who make use of the word 'circuit' (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017; Jackson, 2012; May, 2000; Wardhaugh, 1996). No explicit reference is made, though, to the essence and importance of this dynamism in the homeless lives and spaces, a reference that, in its fine-grained elaboration, can help us, both as public and as academic practitioners, to re-envision the homeless city (Cloke, May & Johnsen, 2010).



FIGURE 4 Things gathered and ready to be distributed.  
KYADA, November 2016.

To breathe a new, animated this time, life into Athens' homeless archipelago, I turn to Amin's and Thrift's (2002) well-known understanding of the city as a 'mechanosphere', which stresses the importance of systems and connections between subjects and objects and places, where movement is vital. Therefore, I hereby propose the metaphor '*machinic archipelago*' in order to animate it and emphasise the temporality, inter-connectedness and movement in the homeless geographies of Athens: geographies shaped through various, more or less institutional *places*, and through continuous and various *mobilities* influenced by these places and developed in their in-between space. In this *machinic archipelago*, places are not simply islands; rather, they are vivid nodes, 'island-knots' created and re-created through spatio-temporal encounters, *knottings* of all different elements mentioned above, from human bodies and materials to discourses and practices. Through the perpetual, inter-related knotting that they materialise, island-knots become what Cattani and Vanolo (2014) name 'repeated islands': 'temporary [assemblages] of materiality, emotions, [discourses, practices] and bodies, and limited to certain times in dispersed places in the city' (p. 1170).

As the following figure illustrates, the *machinic archipelago* mostly unfolds in the central area that expands roughly towards the eastward and southward areas of Omónoia square, namely areas highly stigmatised as ghettos, contributing critically to the so-called 'the crisis of the centre of Athens' (Koutrolikou, 2015a, p. 177). Omónoia is the archipelago's both navel and heart; everyone and everything refers to and passes through her. To exemplify the *machinic* of the archipelago and its island-knots, a flashback is needed: to the cold days of late December 2016. Then, due to extreme weather conditions, the City of Athens Homeless Shelter (KYADA), or the archipelago's central island-knot, orchestrated a massive circulation of blankets, mattresses, food portions, medicines, clothes, and outreach teams and 'experts' that later reached other island-knots of the *machinic archipelago* and the streets of Athens. Before proceeding to a more detailed, scenographic presentation of the archipelago's different spatialities important for this work, let us stay a bit more in those days of late December 2016, when the archipelago performed its *machinic* *par excellence* by generating new homeless spatialities that temporarily re-made the city's homeless geographies—and by erasing them afterwards. The *machinic archipelago* exhales and inhales its spatialities, expanding and shrinking them. And so does to the homeless stigma.

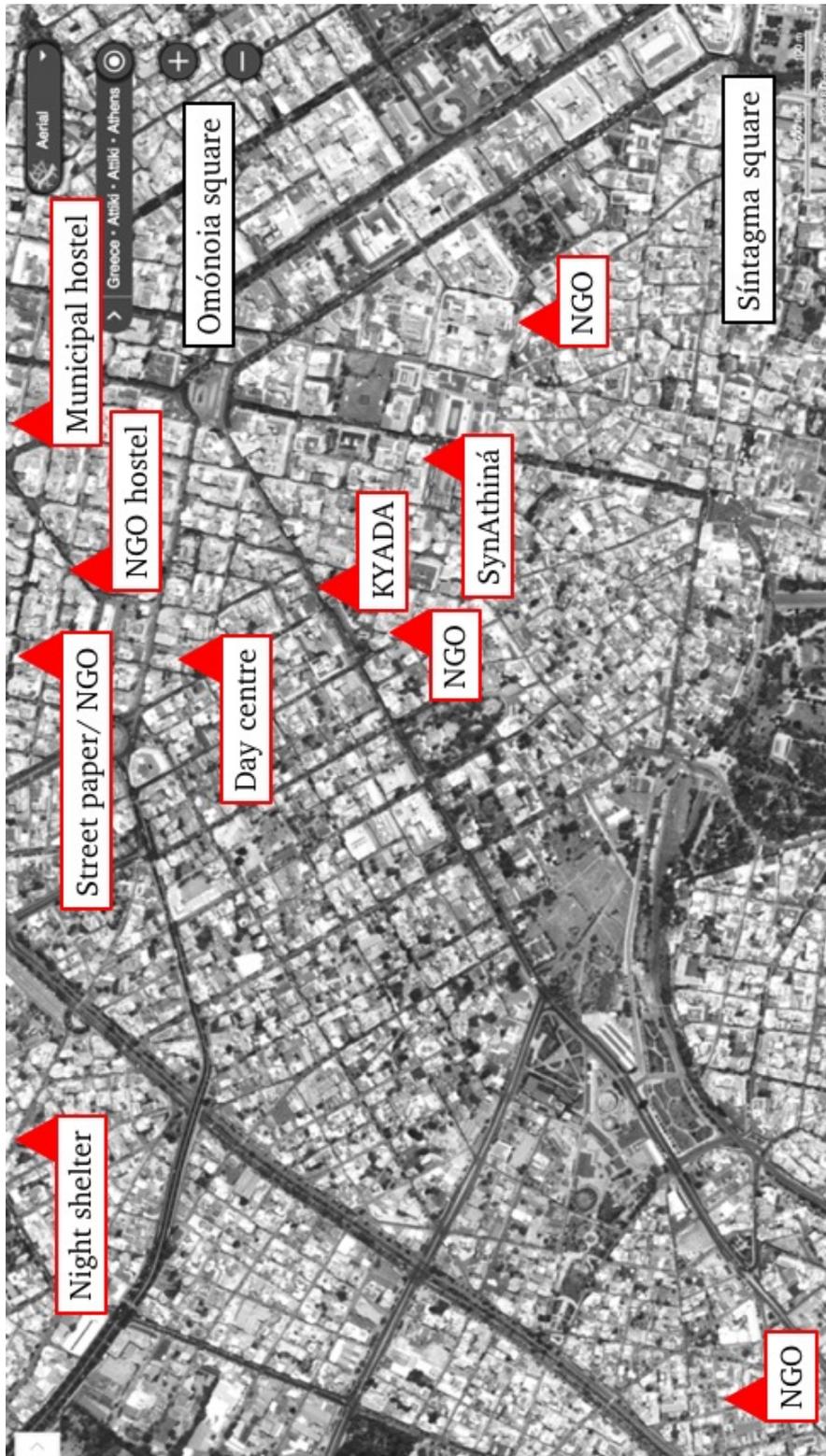


FIGURE 5 The machinic archipelago: research-related places.  
Own design based on Bing Maps © Microsoft 2018.

**DECEMBER 2016:  
THE EMERGENT SPATIALITIES OF THE MACHINIC ARCHIPELAGO**

The 27<sup>st</sup> of December 2016. Tonight, for the first time five metro stations will gradually remain open overnight so that homeless people can find shelter from the excessive cold. All stations are located in central areas that are considered to have a considerable concentration of homeless population: Omónoia, Monastiráki, Metaxourgheío, Eleónas, and Syggroú-Fix. In each of these stations, there is a space materially demarcated for an exceptional use, different than the rest of the station: a blue carpet on the floor, a tape, sheets of paper reading 'Temporary space for the homeless'. On another field visit on the night from January 1 to 2, 2017, most of the open stations are empty. Only at Omónoia station, the biggest and most central one, there were a few people sleeping on the ground, in the demarcated area, whilst some had left their belongings only. 'They (the homeless) have their posts, they don't come here... At maximum there are four people sleeping here', the security guy explains. 'I'll tell you where to go to find them. At Monastiráki, but *not in the station*, above it, outside Sávvas (a typical Greek souvlaki place)'. Indeed, the portico above the station, alongside Ermoú street is full of people sleeping. And the blue carpet at Monastiráki metro station, right below them, is empty.

As a new wave of extreme cold is expected from January 5, the stations of Omónoia, Monastiráki and Metaxourgheío will remain open for longer than initially planned. During another field visit, on January 12, about twenty homeless have found shelter at Omónoia station and stay here all day long. The gathering of human bodies is now remarkably visible. But not simply visible. The material and temporal setting of the metro station as an emergent space of Athens' machinic archipelago results in a specific visual economy practiced *in situ*. It is early afternoon, the station is crowded by a continuous flow of human bodies heading to different directions, inside and outside of the station, at different paces, slower and faster, stopping and starting over again. In all this, the homeless bodies perform a visual antithesis: they are 'in their place', clearly demarcated by the blue carpet that contrasts the station's floor; the tape above the carpet limits any transgressions of the boundary—a homeless man is begging standing, *behind this tape*; the security guy is watching, walking slowly parallel to the tape, staying close but not too close; other bodies, *many* other bodies pass by—and perhaps glance. The assembled tape, carpet and homeless bodies magnetise the gaze as if in an unusual quotidian spectacle. The materiality of the space and the resulting spatial division of the moving 'common' bodies from the still homeless bodies produces a visual economy important for the making of homeless subjectivities: a material continuum of gaze sets the homeless bodies under an unintended, momentary surveillance by the *other* bodies, passing by on the other side of the tape and stepping out of the blue carpet. But often glancing. The 'Other'. The stigmatised.



FIGURE 6 Chemical toilets on Omónoia square. January 1, 2017.



FIGURE 7 Omónoia station, the labels on the pillars read 'TEMPORARY SPACE FOR THE HOMELESS'. 1:00 am, January 2, 2017.

Along with the metro stations, the machinic archipelago expanded its emergent spatialities in different ways. When temperatures would drop below four degrees, certain so-called ‘friendship clubs’<sup>19</sup> would be transformed into temporary spaces for the homeless. Although inadequately equipped, these places sheltered the homeless by keeping them warm and protected from the harsh conditions right outside of them. Municipal or NGO’s vans distributed blankets and food portions to these spaces. Nevertheless, staff members expressed concerns for not being trained appropriately to respond to the needs of the homeless and acknowledged the urgency to staff these places with ‘the right people’.

Last but not least, these emergent spatialities of the archipelago are also digital. The General Secretariat for Civil Protection published an on-line interactive map in order to inform the citizens regarding the open public spaces, such as the aforementioned friendship clubs. Besides the ‘practical irony’ regarding which citizens have access to the on-line maps, the spatialities of the maps did not correspond to the actual expansion of the machinic archipelago, as many of the latter’s emergent spaces have not been included. Before mid-January, the ‘normal’ temperatures allowed the machinic archipelago to inhale and shrink itself back to its more standard island-knots. Stigma inhaled.

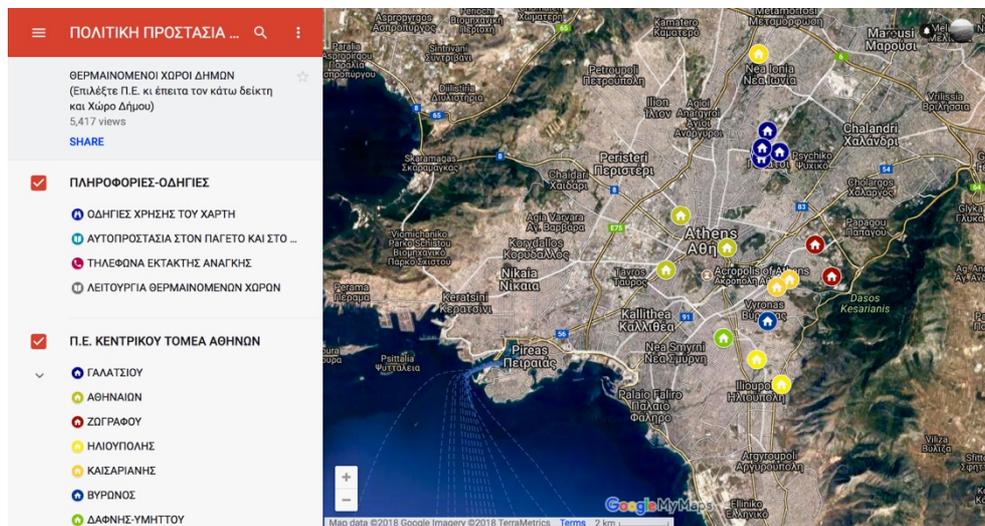


FIGURE 8 On-line map of emergent spaces, broader metropolitan area.  
Own screenshot from <http://www.patt.gov.gr> (accessed on December 29, 2016)

<sup>19</sup> Friendship clubs (in Greek ‘λέσχης φιλίας’ [lesches filias]) are municipal neighbourhood-based spaces dedicated to recreational activities for the elderly.

## HOMELESS SUBJECTIVITIES: A MACHINIC SKETCHING

In the machinic archipelago of Athens, homeless subjectivities are sketched discursively by the institutions managing the island-knots. This discursive sketching though is at the same time material as discourses generate specific practices of the new poverty management unfolding in the city recently; in other words, it reflects specific mentalities that shape policy and practices (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017). Above all, though, this discursive sketching affects the ways the homeless make their own subjectivities, either by adapting to or rejecting the sketching.

### *Empty new faces to be mirrored in*

In the machinic archipelago, ‘common’ society has started seeing themselves in the face of the homeless. The Editor of the city’s homeless street paper explains:

The next-door [homeless] person does not exist. The homeless have come out of our door, our *own* door. They are our sisters and brothers, parents, cousins, ourselves. And this is the Greek society now, a big part of it. It’s us. What next door and bullshit?

Homelessness is more threatening than ever; it affects sisters and brothers, parents, cousins. Potentially, anyone can become homeless. Even you, me, us; in here. Potentially, anyone can go out of their own doors as brand new: homeless, who stay out of those doors. And, as I have been warned, ‘it’s not the stereotypical image of the homeless’. Whatever this ‘stereotypical’ means, in the machinic archipelago the homeless subjects as ‘other subjects’ are further othered, *re*-othered. They are re-othered as terribly close ‘other subjects’ due to a deep socio-economic crisis that affects the middle classes. They are re-othered almost as ‘us’ and, at the same time, the homeless embody the fear to be ‘othered’. Doors, faces and bodies seem interchangeable —‘[they] are *our* poor’ (Kaika, 2012, p. 425, original emphasis). And this is why ‘common’ society has to care, to provide specific spaces in and through which the care for *this* ‘other’ can be performed.

Yet, in its heralded normality (Wasserman & Clair, 2010, p. 60), this other-as-us does not have the face of *any* homeless but, rather, the face of a *new* homeless. The idea of the ‘new homeless’ circulates markedly through the machinic archipelago. Not all NGOs embrace the term, at least explicitly —‘a person who lives in the street is a person who lives in the street’, the day centre manager said— but, in its circulation, the ‘new homeless’ (see Theodorikakou, Alamanou & Katsadoros, 2013) performs new homeless subjects that are sketched in a new way: former middle- or low middle-class; possibly educated; who are ‘victims of reality and not homeless by ideology’; and are still potentially economically productive. The ‘new homeless’ seem more sympathetic (Del Casino & Jocoy, 2008). Definitely, they are sketched as distant from other homeless, perhaps those ‘stereotypical’ we have been told before: ‘the marginalised [constructed] as objects of abjection, not only because of their sins or sicknesses, but also because

they [are] unable to recognise and appreciate the compassion offered' (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017, p. 97).

Hopper (1991) provides an illuminating historical account of how categorisations of homelessness function as a social construct that shapes boundaries: between worthy and unworthy homeless; and between the housed and unhoused citizenry. In the archipelago, the prevailing subjectivity of the 'new homeless' performs social distance in specific ways: being made as 'new', the homeless are extremely close to 'us'; but at the same time they are kept at a safe distance from the 'old' or 'traditional homeless' or, in the end, from 'homeless who *choose* to be homeless'. Within this selective identification on the side of 'common' society, though, as expressed through the spaces of the machinic archipelago, what is also performed is a precise sorting of the poor and the homeless in Athens (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017). The homeless are thus divided: some, the 'new', deserve (attention, compassion, resources, care, provision, spaces), whereas some others, the 'old', may *not* deserve (see also Kaika, 2012). As discourses of pity have done in the past, the 'new homeless' as a recent, emergent subjectivity in Athens' machinic archipelago may function as another device to 'justify exclusions selecting deserving from non-deserving clients' (Arapoglou, 2004b, p. 636). Thus, if indeed the face of the homeless happens to become the face of the 'common', as the latter fear, it will be, at least, a deserving face.



FIGURE 9 'Our sisters and brothers, parents, cousins, ourselves': picture at the day centre's main hall. April 2017.

### *Homeless for a bit?*

I would now like to focus on one specific element that is essential in the sketching of new homeless subjectivities, so essential that has been often embraced by the homeless themselves: temporality. Contrary to the 'old homeless' whose subjectivities have been indelibly marked as homeless, the 'new' are not projected as homeless in the future. Their homeless present is a present without extensions, a temporary condition of the now; a present struggled against in order to be restricted in time and space. As Kaika notes, 'they are convinced they do not deserve what they got [and] they have not—yet—entered the terrain where their existence is defined only by their position as beggars' (2012, p. 424). Hence, besides fear, the 'new homeless' embody also hope; for a quick re-integration back into 'common' society, quick enough so that the homeless stigma does not affect the new-homeless body. It takes some time for the stigma to settle down. 'He is *not* homeless', the night shelter's social worker whispered in my ear while a new user was being registered at the entrance: he was a Greek-Albanian at his forties, 'properly' dressed and well shaved, with basic education; he was the first one to leave the shelter every morning on his bike in order to distribute leaflets for living. The social worker later explained me that his 'profile' would soon lift him out of homelessness. 'He will find a way'. Indeed, ten days later the man left the shelter; he definitely found a way out of the shelter but did he also find his way out of homelessness?

The 'new homeless' subjectivities made as temporary homeless subjectivities are embraced by many homeless in an effort to get themselves rid of the homeless stigma: 'I don't consider myself as homeless because of my perspective to leave this place (the hostel)' or 'You know, in a broader sense, I am not considered homeless. You can call me homeless only as something that's happening *now*'. The role of temporality in the making of (new) homeless subjectivities is also evident in overt acts of differentiation from the 'permanent' homeless: 'There are others in here (the hostel) who live like this for 17 years now!' For some research participants whom I met in the beginning of their homeless lives, their involvement in the machinic archipelago has been considered —better, expected— to be temporary although social and economic restraints may lead to an unwanted perpetuation of the homeless condition: 'In the beginning I came [at the night shelter] just for a couple of weeks, to understand how I'm going to resolve this. Now months have passed and I'm still here, I don't get it, nothing really changes'. It is time that keeps homeless 'droppers' and homeless 'drifters' apart (Hodgetts, 2012) and that makes look so-called 'chronic' homeless subjects less 'successful' than 'short term' ones (Wasserman & Clair, 2010, p. 114).

### *Psychopathology of/and the homeless*

To understand the importance of temporality for the making of new homeless subjectivities, I suggest that we relate it with another discursive element diffused in the machinic archipelago, that is the so-called 'homeless psychopathology'. 'You cannot be Greek *and* mentally sound and end up in the street', the head of a homelessness-centered NGO told me during a meeting; it seems that, to her, a

Greek homeless has to be mentally ill too, whereas foreigners may have different reasons for being on the street. The word ‘psychopathology’ referring to the homeless subjects flows quite easily from one island-knot to another, pathologising the phenomenon itself (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017, p. 10). It expresses how a prolonged homeless condition may be gradually embodied, changing the homeless subject. ‘What matters is for how long a person has stayed on the street’, the day centre manager said, and continued: ‘this relates to how warm he (sic) is to switch back’ (see also Papadopoulou & Kourachanis, 2017, p. 140). But ‘psychopathology’ is not just about psychic, immaterial issues; rather, it solidifies psychic problems through embodiment, it fixes them *inside* the homeless body. Being temporary homeless, the ‘new homeless’ have not —yet— embodied homelessness, they do not have a distinct ‘psychopathology’, and may still resist the homeless stigma. In the archipelago, psychopathology is often two things: both an explanation for *and* a taken-for-granted trait of the subjectification of the homeless. Often, though, some call for attention: ‘Let’s be attentive. [Psychopathology] does exist, yes, but it’s as if asking which came first, the hen or the egg’.

What Hopper calls ‘the idiom of pathology’ (1991, p. 783) seems to be a dominant one in the grammar that sketches homeless subjectivities in central Athens. Claims such as ‘there is always something psychopathological behind, even very-very small, to end up here (at the night shelter)’, medicalise the homeless (Lyon-Callo, 2000; Mathieu, 1993) and eventually neutralise homelessness (Sparks, 2016). These claims strongly echo what Gowan (2010) defined as ‘sick-talk’, which defines also the ways provision and care are enacted as well as subjectivities are shaped. ‘Am I mad?! From EKKA (the National Centre for Social Solidarity) they sent me to a doctor, who said that I am mentally fine!’ a man asked me once at the night shelter. And Símos, a research participant, said that, after he tried unsuccessfully to enter permanently a hostel, he found out that he would have got a place there if he had pretended to be mentally ill. It only takes some words to situate ‘social pathology at the level of the individual’ (Dear & Wolch, 1987, p. 15).

#### *Benefits for cases?*

The last element of the discursive making of homeless subjectivities in central Athens relates more directly to the relation between the homeless (both ‘new’ and ‘old’) and the services provided at the archipelago’s island-knots. In a past research on the discursive enactments of homeless-related institutions in Athens, Arapoglou (2004b) has stressed that ‘the relationship between providers and recipients is not shaped by any conceptualization of rights or citizenship’ and, thus, the homeless hostel residents may be ‘treated as guests (*philoxenoumenoi*)’ (2004b, p. 622, original emphasis). It seems that thenceforth, things have changed notably. During my fieldwork, the word ‘guests’ has never been heard in any space of care for the homeless involved in the research. Instead, the homeless subjects using these spaces have been addressed either as ‘beneficiaries’<sup>20</sup> or as

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<sup>20</sup> ‘(Επ)ωφελοούμενοι/ες’ [epofelouúmenoi].

‘cases’<sup>21</sup>, the latter been observed also by Arapoglou (2004b). An exception has been the NGO-run hostel, where the head of the liaison office used repeatedly the term ‘serviced’.<sup>22</sup> The implications of the use of these specific words are obvious for the making of the homeless subjectivities. With the services addressing the issue of homelessness becoming ‘benefits’ now, the homeless ‘beneficiaries’, and not only them, are asked to recognise these received benefits. However, receiving a benefit implies a privileged position and hence asks for something in return; to compensate the privilege of benefits. Therefore, ‘beneficiary’ homeless subjectivities are made through a binary interplay: they are both receivers and desired as givers-back. And, in a workfarist local management of the poor, giving-back may be performed in various ways ‘aspiring to render the homeless “similar” to the rest of the population’ (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017, p. 99): for example, being disciplined to the rules and time-schedules of the archipelago; showing active interest in improving one’s conditions on one’s own; looking for jobs and accommodation; overall, performing responsible subjects.

Last but not least, addressing the homeless as ‘cases’ has contradictory effects on their subjectivities. First, it tends to counter homogeneous understandings of the phenomenon by stressing the differences and particularities of homeless individuals. Each homeless is a different ‘case’, a story. However, being excessively focused on the person, it may overemphasise the individual to such an extent that any systemic and context-based explanations of homelessness are occluded. And, most importantly, in being ‘cases’ the homeless are de-subjectified to manageable objects located in the machinic archipelago: as ‘cases’, homeless subjects may be assigned to social workers who are called to deal with these cases (Williams, 1996). But responsibility remains always of the homeless-cases: ‘I will find him (a homeless at the day centre) a job, will *he* manage to keep it?’ was the question between two social workers, in a tone of disappointment. Overall, all the aforementioned discursive elements that encounter each other in and, at the same time, get scattered from the island-knots of Athens’ machinic archipelago, point to specific makings of the homeless subjectivities that are located therein. The more practice-oriented spatial making of these subjectivities that is presented hereafter ought to be seen in constant relation to these discursive elements, with the homeless subjects either opposing or embodying them, as essential elements of the homeless stigma.

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Περιστατικά’ [peristatiká].

<sup>22</sup> ‘Εξυπηρετούμενοι/ες’ [exypiretoúmenoi/es].

## SCENOGRAPHY: VIVIFYING THE MACHINIC ARCHIPELAGO

It is now time to breathe (more) life into the machinic archipelago, *through* and *by* which the homeless geographies of this work are made. If Athens has its own ‘culturally significant and locally specific homeless “scenes”’ (Cloke et al., 2010, p. 21), this part is a partial ‘scenography’ of what follows, partial because it will keep unfolding also in the next chapters. It re-presents not all the spatialities of this research, as listed in the methodological chapter, but attempts to vivify the most central ones, central to the making of both homeless geographies and subjects to follow. The reason for using the word ‘scenography’ is not (only) aesthetic; rather it allows us to imagine these spaces not simply as ‘stages’ but as active, integral constituents of social life. Scenography (from the Greek ‘σκηνογραφία’ [skēnographía]) is where *scenes* (σκηνές [skēnés]) are *carved* (γράφειν [gráphein]) upon. Imagined as such, the street, hostel, night shelter, and day centre are not untouched or static backgrounds but rather ‘hardly inert’ (Anderson & Harrison, 2010, p. 9). They are material locations that shape (im)possibilities for things, bodies and mobilities-frictions to intersect and dynamically make the homeless geographies of Athens. If you prefer, they are active backgrounds, of multiple dimensions, *forth-and-back-grounds*, thick and malleable enough to let life-scenes sink in them—in an interplay not of absorption (of life by place) but of mutual making.

These places, as micro-scenographies, are material, discursive, felt, embodied, practiced, inter-connected. They are the primal geographic matter where life (as if scenes, or geographic moments) is engraved on—and *is being engraved* on. Altogether, these places are ‘formative spaces which act as a generalised form of writing on to and in to the world, working especially on the level of bare life’ (Thrift, 2008, p. 23). From now on, this primal matter will be omnipresent throughout this work. In many ways. After the spaces of the overall scenography become distinct (to the possible extent) as micro-scenographies in this chapter, they will firstly melt downwards and then blend into each other in a complex and vivid scenography where things, bodies and mobilities-frictions shape the city’s homeless geographies and subjectivities. The micro-scenographies to follow are: the street, the hostels, the night shelter, and the day centre. Regarding the three latter, each part will start with some basic characteristics of the function and organisation of these places before proceeding to a more vivid scenographic description. Together with these first micro-scenographies, the homeless research participants are introduced.

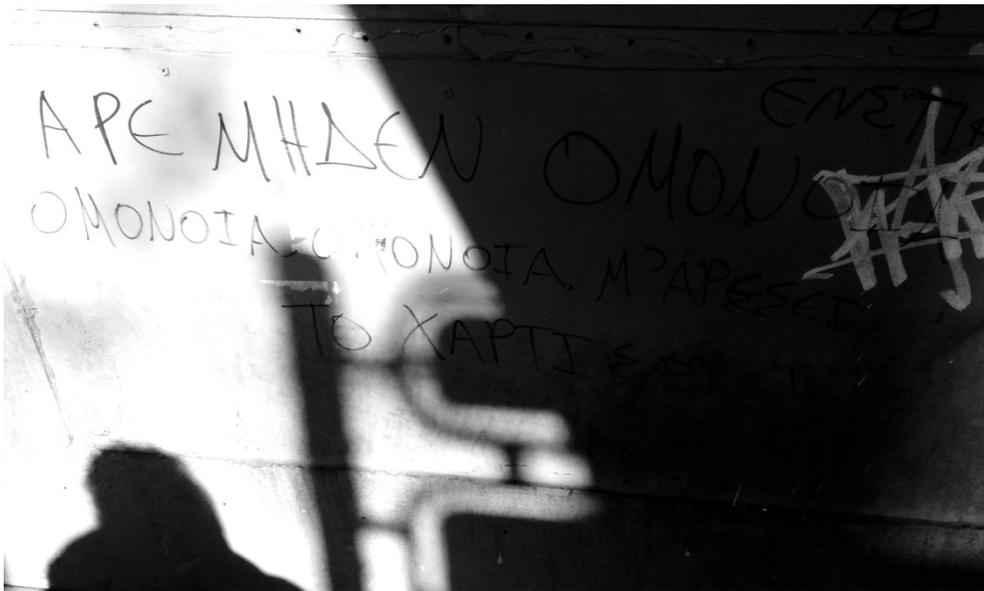


FIGURE 10 'Zero Omonoia... Omonoia, Omonoia, I like your cards'. Omonoia, January 2017.

## THE STREET

As already mentioned, 'the street' has not been the focus of this research, without being excluded though. At the time of the fieldwork, only one research companion, Símos, was sleeping rough, in his makeshift shack. Besides a small minority who have no street experience, either because they were hosted by friends and/or relatives, or got direct access to institutionalised spaces, most research participants have spent at least a 'short' period (or several periods) on the street before gaining access to the machinic archipelago. For these people the street has been pivotal in the making of their homeless subjectivities; it somehow inaugurated that making: 'there you cut yourself off from your previous life [...] you cut yourself off from other people'. Being part of one's subjectivity, the street is present by being *remembered*.<sup>23</sup> And remembering is part of the subjectivity's making.

Thus the street here is the street-as-memory that marks differently and variably the city's homeless geographies. Yet this memory is often paradoxical; a memory forced to be forgotten, denied, erased by the homeless people. 'Being on the street is a thing that any serious person doesn't want to remember', I have been told. Yánnis, a sixty-two years old Greek, used to be a sailor for many years. After 2000 he gradually found difficulties in finding jobs on boats and started working as unskilled worker 'on the dry land', as he likes saying, until his network became

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<sup>23</sup> The micro-scenography of the street will actively reappear in the mobility-friction chapter, this time not as remembered but as experienced day after day through both mobility and friction.

too weak and he could find no more job. Since 2005, he has experienced different periods on the street. But it is impossible for him to remember his first day as homeless; he tries to repel bad memories and, the few times he reminisces about the street, he does so as if being another person's memory or not memory at all: '...yeah, must be unpleasant having nowhere to sleep, I guess...'

Leftéris is sixty-one, Greek, and used to run a small carrier in Athens with his brother. Their business has been very successful until Leftéris' brother's sudden death and, especially, until Leftéris' truck got stolen a few years later. He is now a street paper vendour and resident of the municipal hostel. His answer to my question about when it was that he first had to sleep rough, after his savings were over and he could not afford a rent, has been:

I can't tell you because I have totally erased all this from my memory, can't remember. I only remember that it was cold, not like today, a bit warmer, but still cold. But I have erased my memories, because... I have erased some things from my memory in order to survive and sleep at night. If you don't do this (erase memories), you can't survive and sleep at night. It's very important that I manage to sleep at night, very important.

Requiring acts of negotiation, removing the memory of the street is a matter of survival then; either the person survives or the memory, along with its space — the street.

### *Street visions*

Memory and vision are inseparable. For sighted people, remembering mostly means revisiting (static or non) images from the past; remembering is, partly, re-seeing. The space of the street-as-memory is a space linked to a particular 'way of seeing'<sup>24</sup> then. Often vision is saturated with one's personal mistakes that led to homelessness; and seeing these mistakes — 'and *only* mistakes, you see nothing else but mistakes'— immerses the subject in a thoughtful self-reflective process: 'I was thinking, thinking that I did mistakes, and some mistakes ought to not be done'. Dínos was forced to close his shop after the burst of the crisis and, when his then wife asked for a divorce, he has been hosted at relatives' before he ended up on the street and until he finally got access to the municipal hostel. He recalls his street life firstly as if he was blind: 'You cannot see anything. When you live there (in the street), you don't see anything'. And when he managed to see, he could only see one thing: a mountain; for 'it all becomes a mountain'. However, Dínos' non-vision is not related to the street *per se*; it relates to his will to escape the street, something that made him different than other homeless people, as he implied: '[Blindness] happens, of course, if you want to step out of the street. If you don't mind and live in there (the street), then life is ok, then *you see*'.

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<sup>24</sup> The phrase derives from George Berger's (1972) 'Ways of Seeing', London: Penguin.

The street is remembered by Leftéris too as a place of limited vision: ‘[On the street], I could see nothing, for there was nothing, there was no life to see. Everything just black. Would not see shops, would not see windows, nothing. Neither people would I see. Only a black thing, I would see a black thing. And a fog, I was trying to do like this (gesturing to ‘open up’ or ‘clean’ with his two hands the space right in front of his face, as if trying to enter the air) in order to... (see?)’ The street is foggy; the fog may be black or made out of mistakes; and behind the fog, a mountain. For Dínos, Leftéris and other research participants the street changed their ways of seeing —and made some of them almost blind. But the fog is not everywhere *that* thick; around Omónoia square, the fog is rarefied. And so, vision recovers. ‘When I fled Kallithéa (a southern suburb) and came to Omónoia, I started seeing things better [...] Before I was just blind, exactly as *you* [Panos] were before we met and had a discussion’. Again though, this is a particular vision, different than before, newly-shaped. Seeing now means *knowing*; knowing the homeless city, its people and places —the homeless geographies shaped around the ‘navel’<sup>25</sup> of Athens’ machinic archipelago. ‘Only then I got acclimated’.<sup>26</sup> As truly was for me as a researcher, Leftéris got to know about homeless life when he found himself at Omónoia. With brand new eyes.

#### *Streets of knowledge*

And Leftéris continued: ‘There (at Omónoia) I slowly got to know people. Where to eat, where to sleep. We would go to Evangelismós (a central hospital), or other hospitals to stay overnight. And in the morning, again on the street. Step by step, by step, by step getting to know people: “here you can eat, here you can take a shower, here this, here that”’. When the fog is rarefied and the streets are finally seen again, the homeless start to know. The streets of knowledge meet one another at Omónoia. Various nodes of the machinic archipelago, expanding around its navel, restore the homeless vision. Specifically, the soup run of KYADA, the biggest in the city and just few meters down the square, is an important place of knowledge: ‘I would go [there] because a lot of people would go too. And also because it was on a daily basis’. This was how Yánnis acquired knowledge for the homeless city and survived sleeping rough; by establishing a daily routine at a place where many other homeless would be. Informal chats, questions and answers, while lining up for the food. Everyday at noon. Sharp. The City’s soup run was his ‘starting point’, as he said; his starting point for knowing homeless life; and surviving it. A movement to and around Omónoia square is necessary for the foggy streets to slowly become streets of knowledge.

#### *Street feelings*

The street is a place not only of specific ways of seeing, but of ways of *feeling* also; there is plenty of affect in the fog that surrounds and touches the body. The

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<sup>25</sup> Here I am inspired by the book of Filíppos Filíppou (2000) ‘Omónoia 2000. Travel in the navel of Athens’, Athens: Agra.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Μπήκα στο κλίμα’ [bíka sto klíma], literally meaning ‘I entered the climate’.

feelings felt on the street define the way homeless geographies are practiced and experienced by the homeless. Feelings tell you *where* to go. Sleeping out at night means being exposed to various possible dangers and this results in tactics of spatial extension and contraction for the homeless (Wardhaugh, 1999). When these dangers are perceived, insecurity and fear are the prevailing feelings (see Papadopoulou & Kourachanis, 2017, p. 108). Then the street turns into a place where temporary feelings of security are looked for; traffic, passersby, lighting, another homeless or a group of homeless create 'niches of security' in the street. 'Most of the times [I slept] at Syntagma [...] where I had the feeling that there was not much danger, because things become hard at night'. I asked Yánnis what made him feel there was not much danger:

There were lights and people passing by just in case something happens [while sleeping]. You must feel some sort of security, there is no point in choosing an isolated place. I wanted to feel secure even for those few hours of sleep.

Minás is another male resident of the NGO-hostel who came from Crete to Athens when he lost his job about two years ago; he has a family but is divorced and used to live alone for years. After accepting some invitations by friends to live at their houses, one day he decided to sleep out in order to feel more independent. Those days, and as Yánnis did, Minás would prefer to sleep rough at Omónia square because it is crowded; the aim was to stay '*inside* the traffic', as he said, in order to feel secure. He would be particularly afraid of the 'blacks, who rob and skin you alive for five euros!'.

When not in a crowded or illuminated spot, anxiety and fear are dealt by staying in familiar locations. Cháris is sixty-three, Greek. He used to deal with trade of church items and was also running a tavern. After one large export that was underway got cancelled because a Chinese trading company intervened, he had to close down his business, as he did months later with the tavern. And after a serious accident he was firstly hosted by his children, then lived in an abandoned shop provided by a friend, and finally ended up in the street. Before accessing the night shelter where he sleeps the last one and a half year, Cháris would stay only in his old neighbourhood, never go to the city centre. Being born in Peristéri, the streets would feel so secure that he could not go elsewhere even though provision was considerably better in the centre. In its affective fog, the street may have a strong impact on the homeless. 'What matters for me now is to find inner peace. After all this story [of living] on the streets, the bet is one: how to stay peaceful *inside*'. The fog is inhaled.

Símos used to be a successful artisan in his hometown, Chalkída. Financial problems in the late eighties forced him to close down his business and, after having worked in Libya for the construction industry, he returned to his family house in the 2000's with considerable savings. Serious issues with his brother, whom the shared house belonged to, led him to the decision to leave Chalkída and come to Athens with no money left as he had stayed unemployed for the last

years. The last two years he sleeps rough. But now, at the age of sixty-five, having constructed his own shack, he feels settled, established somewhere. Like this he can finally negotiate the anxiety and fear experienced during his first days in the streets of Athens, three years ago almost. Inside his shack, the street feels a more secure space. The fog is kept mostly outside.

*Other streets, street Others: first touch of stigma*

'Before I used to fool them (the homeless in the street). How is it possible to end up on the street?! It would always be inconceivable for me that I *myself* could ever end up like this! [...] Staring at [the homeless], looking at all this ugly image, I would have never expected what followed...' No surprise that the homeless themselves have seen the homeless as 'Others', before becoming homeless (see May, Cloke & Johnsen, 2007), as Ánna did before deciding to leave her house, where she could not afford emotionally the way her brother in law would treat her mother. Having neither a job nor any savings, Ánna, now a Municipality hostel resident, became roofless. Yet, on the street that Other is met—and touches the self.

Working at a nearby restaurant, Márkos, now fifty-four and sleeping at the shelter, used to go to the port of Piraeus to hang out in the afternoons. He loved the sea, he still does. At the port, he would observe for hours the 'Other': the homeless who were around. Then the homeless would often come close to him, he would give them some coins for cigarettes, coffee, whatever. Back then he had his job and would rent his own flat. But after some business in the real estate sector together with a friend of his failed, and having serious conflicts with his mother and siblings, he ended up in the street. So, the first night he had no place to sleep, he returned to the port; that time he would come a bit closer to the homeless though. 'Guys, I have nowhere to go tonight'. And then he was one of them.

The first days on the street are marked by encounters with the 'Other'. As mentioned in the beginning of this part, in most cases the street inaugurates the making of homeless subjectivities. It is there that an 'untouched' body gets closer to homeless bodies. And slowly stops being that untouched anymore. Living there, the street gave Minás the chance to understand how homeless people feel; for he was not that distant from them anymore:

I was stretching my ears in order to listen to those people (the other homeless), their discussions. Before that I had zero clue, really! And then I would suddenly listen in order to compare with my own situation. A sort of sensitivity...

Similarly, Antónis describes his coming closer to the homeless Other as something 'hedonic': 'I was getting such a pleasure feeling how other people feel like with no money in their pockets!'. He has been living in homeless hostels since 2014, after having been involved in a story of economic corruption that made his

daughter ask him to leave her house, where he used to live. He now lives at the NGO hostel of central Athens, following mental health medication.

As with Ánna above, Leftéris too would often wonder whether homelessness could even happen to him. The first time on the street, he wondered: ‘Me, an educated man, do I conform here?!’. But soon enough the street pulled him downwards. ‘[First] I was watching others eating and could not eat at all! [...] But one needs to lower levels, to fall down’. For him, the people he met on the street were not ‘normal’. ‘But I had to let myself fall down. Then I became one with those people. And this is how I survived, by becoming one with them’. Encountering, getting nearer to, and understanding the homeless ‘Other’, on the street the homeless stigma is finally embodied —no ‘Others’ on the street thus.

Before closing this section, it is important to stress that, whilst the street has been the punitive space *par excellence* in literature, especially in the so-called prime urban space, in Athens during the fieldwork very little evidence of punitive practices has been documented. The punitive is mainly expressed in fragmented, apparently amateur and isolated ways and small material traces that do not appear to be parts of a more general punitive policy of the City or other stakeholders. Punitive incidents have been mentioned by NGO members and homelessness activists, such as the police’s attempts to push away the rough sleepers from the portico of Ermóú street, Monastiráki square, as well as the removal of makeshift benches on Klafthmónos square, often used by homeless during the night, a removal that has been attributed to the Municipality. The streets of Athens seem then to be less dystopic as the punitive paradigm suggests.



FIGURE 11 Punitive traces on Metaxourgeío square. June 9, 2017.

## THE HOSTELS<sup>27</sup>

Both hostels are located in one of the city's most vibrant and messy areas. But entering the hostels means crossing a threshold; a gentle silence, slightly cracked by murmurs, quiet chats and footsteps, fills the place. The noisy, polluted, sighing, sweating streets do not enter here. There is a smell, touch and sound of shared privacy, which seems to be commonly accepted and respected. But, coming from the outside, we, you and me, are not part of the deal. In both hostels, a reception mediates any ingress that can make the silence's cracks break further; like you and me right now. In all this shared privacy, the reception mediates between the residents and the outside, it filters the contact between the two by becoming their point of contact.

The NGO-run hostel is a six-storey glass office building in Koumoundourou street. The building is organised vertically as such: ground floor, reception and a small garden; first floor, liaison office; second floor, social service and bedrooms; third floor, bedrooms; fourth floor, kitchen and offices; fifth floor; homeless day centre; sixth floor, laundries. Four people sleep in each room, on bunk beds; men and women separately. Twenty-five people in total. In a building designed to house offices, the hostel is made hostel through spatial alterations; there is a touch of impermanence—in the beginning, the programme was anyway financed just for eight months.<sup>28</sup> The social worker and head of the liaison office explains:

I had told [the heads of the project] that this building is inappropriate for a homeless hostel. You can't house people where there are no railings outside the glass, you make it too easy for someone to commit suicide! Proper walls with proper windows are needed.

From here it takes just a 250-meter walk to reach the only short-term municipal hostel in Athens. From Koumoundourou we take Mární street; here we almost cannot hear each other. Traffic. When we enter Chalkokondíli street, things are calmer; still vibrant but definitely calmer. Is this why pigeons prefer this street? The Municipality leases an old hotel here, where 160 homeless people are now housed. Residents are allowed to spend all day long in the building while food portions are available for lunch and dinner. A psychologist coordinates the running of the hostel, whilst the rest of the staff is composed by social workers, receptionists and cleaning staff. There is nothing marking the presence of a homeless hostel on the outside though; the hotel's materiality is untouched, the

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<sup>27</sup> The two hostels listed in the methodological part (one run by an NGO, the other by the municipality) as the research's intermediate-fields are conventionally put under one single label ('Hostels') due to their strong similarities in terms of functioning, regulations and research results. 'Compressed' like this (see Caulley, 2008), the 'hostel' becomes mostly a *type* of space of the city's homeless geographies.

<sup>28</sup> In October 2014 the programme started officially and the personnel signed contracts in February 2015, when the hostel started receiving residents. It closed on February 28, 2017, after five funding extensions.

signs, logo and flags still invite clients. In the end, nothing special, just another hotel. But, again, entering the building means crossing a threshold. The entrance hall is a bit dark; the glass door is almost non-transparent and lights are dim. This faded light, a mixture of filtered sunlight and weak electric lights, cloaks the space. And underneath it, that gentle silence with its slow rhythm. Here it is not a hotel anymore, absolutely not. The interior atmosphere —I always imagined entering a beehive like this— is in contrast with the building’s shell. On the walls, some A4 sheets announcing rules and news. Before reaching the reception, there are two living room spaces, each made of three couches placed around a table. White cloths cover the couches; they disturb the room’s darkness; but white colour respects the silence. A few elderly people sit there and others, perhaps a bit younger, hang out outside the building. We met them a minute ago, while entering here. Underneath the hotel’s sign, they looked like hotel clients, no? Eight floors here: mezzanine, the social service; first floor, restaurant; second to eighth floor, the rooms. As a living ghost, the hotel revives in its double-bed rooms, where nothing seems to have changed much, and where people who are not the owners of those beds sleep every night.



FIGURE 12 The hotel’s interior before its transformation into the municipal hostel. What changes mainly is the light, which is very low now, and the white sheets on the sofas.

Source: <http://www.ionishotel.gr> (last access: April 17, 2018)



FIGURE 13 One of the hotel's bedrooms.  
Source: <http://www.ionishotel.gr> (last access: April 17, 2018)

### *Space of laurels*

'We want these people (the homeless) to leave back the hostel's security'. These words were said during a public event<sup>29</sup> about the Municipality's actions to tackle homelessness. Security; how important a feeling for the homeless who have managed to access the provision of the machinic archipelago and have experienced living on the street or are afraid of experiencing it in the future. Most research participants and hostel residents recognise and appreciate the hostel as a secure place. Provision makes security: food, beds, heating, roof. 'In here the security of food, of sleep, makes me forget about rents and bills', Minás says. Then Yánnis: 'Here (the hostel) is my basis because it gives me security, sleep, food... no money-related problems, for example, having to pay for a hotel room, with the hotel's receptionist asking me "are you sleeping here tonight or not?"' Having lived such a situation, feeling secure in the hostel gains further value. There seems to be a paradox in this security though; as this paragraph's opening quotation shows, after these secure spaces are created, it is desired that the homeless leave them. Security is bad. Or security is bad for the vulnerable. Or security is bad for the vulnerable after some time. In fact, many research participants expressed concerns about this sense of security and its effect on themselves. 'In here (the hostel), I rest on my laurels'.

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<sup>29</sup> The event titled 'Housing, Reintegration, Social Entrepreneurialism. City of Athens Policies for Vulnerable Groups' took place on December 16, 2016, at the City's cultural centre, 50, Akadimías street, and was organised by the Social Solidarity and Health Care section of the Municipality.

*It's called "ho-stel"*

Somewhere in the middle of the same event, a mental health consultant who is involved in the municipal actions in question, firmly said that there is a 'sense of herd'<sup>30</sup> in the hostels; then she made it clearer: 'not a sense of group, but of *herd*'.<sup>31</sup> When referring to humans, the word 'herd' is disparaging. In this case, it is made disparaging through a contrast with the 'group'.<sup>32</sup> The herd is composed by undifferentiated elements (mainly animals) that act (for example, move) altogether based on instincts (for example, of hunger or security); the disparaging act of the 'herd' on its units is that, the latter being undifferentiated, one single, universalized and allegedly commonly shared characteristic 'fits' all —for example, just the species. Quite differently, 'group' opens up possibilities; a group may be composed by diverse units that share a common characteristic and its acts may be results of complex processes (for example, democratic discussions or interior conflicts). The shamelessly uttered, disparaging word gives a sense of passivity, inactivity, comfort. And the herd-group binary relates to another binary; that of animal-human. The contrast thus dehumanises the homeless and makes the hostel a herd's space —secure, but still of a herd.

Now imagine a herd (of anything), in a difficult condition, that is being offered a space that protects it (from anything perceived as threat) and gives it a sense of security; in other words, a secure space. The herd will identify itself with this space and will make it a secure spatial reference —will become *of* the place and feel *in* place. But, albeit secure, the hostel is a place difficult to identify oneself with. For, contrary to any herd, the homeless are neither of nor in place. Rather, they express forms of alienation from the hostel in very individual ways. Dínos said: 'I have been living for two years now in the hostel. Cannot live here, it is foreign to me [...] I don't want to die here, I want to die in *my own place*'. The bedroom is never personal; practices such as decoration make it feel *as if* it was personal, they create an illusion of personal place. After one year and a half at the night shelter, Stéfanos still expects to see his own bedroom every time he wakes up; not the hostel room.

Alienation has been taken as given or obvious by some hostel residents: 'It is called "ho-stel"'.<sup>33</sup> I was reminded many times. Yánnis likened himself to a hotel client. Bodily practices also may contribute to feelings of alienation, often related to existing rules and regulations. The act of signing performs a distance from the place and sustains a formalised relationship between subject and space: 'You need to sign when you enter, when you leave... Signatures for the food, signatures for this, signatures for that...' Minás finished his phrase with a fed-up sigh. He wants

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<sup>30</sup> 'Αίσθηση κοπαδιού' [ésthisi kopadiού].

<sup>31</sup> 'Όχι αίσθηση ομάδας, αλλά κοπαδιού' [óchi ésthisi omádas, álla kopadiού]. In Greek language the distance between the two words is significant; as with English, 'herd' is used for animals and becomes disparaging when it refers to humans, whilst 'group' is used only for humans and never for animals.

<sup>32</sup> 'Ομάδα' [omáda].

<sup>33</sup> 'Ξενώνας' [xenónas], from 'ξένος' [xénos] meaning 'foreigner, stranger'.

to find a room for himself —‘anything, even a basement’— just to know that he does not have to sign. Then, the act of packing one’s belongings, necessary during the hostel’s regular sanitations, and of unpacking them afterwards, give a sense of instability; Lína pointed at a pile of plastic bags and suitcases with clothes and other stuff: ‘It is as if we are in constant moving here!’.

Yánnis has worked for many years as a sailor. Living in the hostel brings back memories of the then life and revives its central space, what he likes calling ‘a mobile prison’: the boat. Specifically, he likens the hostel with the boat: ‘I see it like this: as if I were on the boat again, living with other people [...] because we go away, then we come back in our cabin in the evening’. For others, the hostel is the school or the barracks. The hostel then becomes another place, a place that is distant, lived in the past, bygone now. The hostel as hostel may become alien to the homeless. Place and subjects seem to be in a constant tension: on the one side, a perceived and appreciated security; on the other, an alienation that prevents the subject from feeling in place. If in the street the self is ‘othered’ and the Other is ‘selved’ (as homeless), in the hostel the place is ‘othered’ and the homeless subject suspended —secure but out-of-place. In the machinic archipelago, one may feel safe on a boat; but there is always something moving below it.

## **THE NIGHT SHELTER**

This is only shelter for homeless people in the central municipality. Located in the working-class neighbourhood of Kolonós, west of Omonoia square, it is run by a multinational NGO and has a capacity of fifty beds approximately. The five-storey building has been provided by the Municipality of Athens and the programme has been running since November 4, 2013. A social worker is the head of the shelter, supported by administrative staff as well as two volunteers (myself included). Due to the shelter’s ‘non-discriminating’ policy, its users form a very heterogeneous group of homeless people in terms of nationality, gender and age; families, drug users and heavy drinkers cannot be hosted. Besides sleeping, here one can take a shower, is offered soap and clean towels every day, can drink tea and have a meal (when available), can wash clothes and get new clothing. At the ground floor, another NGO operates a soup kitchen; squeezed on its right side, the shelter’s entrance.

There, at the entrance, the homeless are documented while entering; name, surname, time of arrival, and number of bed. 36, 12, 7A, 35, 0. ‘I am number 2, everybody knows me like this now. We ended up being numbers...’ Numbers replace names. The person learns to identify her/himself with the number of her/his bed, by repeating it in many occasions: when entering, when taking a clean towel, when handing in the bedlinen to be washed. Repeatedly, the number

becomes internalised. 'I tell it (his number) completely mechanically. If you ask me which is the number, I cannot really tell you'. And the personnel often refer to the homeless using these numbers:



-(checking the book at the entrance) Has Cháris entered?

-Hm, wait a second... Cháris...

-Number 12.

-Oh, it's him, right! No, not yet.

FIGURE 14 Beds. Night shelter, April 2017.

On the mezzanine there is the kitchen, where tea is prepared and food is stored. First floor; the shelter's social service, where mainly the homeless users are 'received' for the first time and their 'personal stories' are documented, and the cloakroom with clothes, shoes and bedlinen for the ones in need. Second floor; bathrooms, launderettes and a common space with chairs and tables, a television, few books. Hooks to hang each one's belongings. Hooks have numbers. Minás has spent a period at the shelter before finding a bed at the hostel. He recalls in a vivid manner:

A big room with nails around. Number 1, number 2, 3, *you were num-bered*. They would give you a number! There you would hang your bag, your change of clothes, or something to eat, a sandwich or some coffee, you would just hang them there.

Tea and food (when available from offers) are served here. Tea at seven, eight, and nine o' clock in the evening. When people enter the shelter, the second floor gets alive: talks, movements, smartphones on the floor getting charged, smoke,

TV volume up, food portions on the radiators, going into the showers, sound of water falling, going out of the showers, handing in the wet towels, combing hair in front of the mirror. Tables are neighbourhoods, everyone has her/his own chair and so do their neighbours. Third floor; beds for both men and women; the latter have separate rooms. Fourth and fifth floor; beds for men only. Beds have numbers.



FIGURE 15 'A big room with nails around. Number 1, number 2, 3...'.  
Night shelter, January 2018.

### *A place to sleep*

Night shelter. In Greek 'υπνωτήριο' [yptonítirio], literary 'dormitory', *a place to sleep*. The place is there for one reason; for the homeless to sleep inside. Clear. For this reason, its entrance opens from 18:00 till 22:00 every day; to sleep. And everyone must have left by 09:00 the following morning. By fixing a principal natural need and activity, sleeping, in a specific place and for specific time, the shelter disciplines the homeless subjects, who are expected to gradually build a certain routine around it. Homeless lives are hence scheduled. According to the shelter's social worker, this is necessary for reintegration. As necessary is to *not* allow the homeless to feel secure here. Only a place to sleep is provided, not even anytime; for all the rest, 'you' have to find yourself time and place, day after day. Specific rules contribute to this too. For example, no shower is allowed in the morning, before leaving the place. During hot days, Hamza, a single fifty-seven years old Pakistani man who has been living in Greece for many years and lost his house about a year ago, would sometimes take a quick shower in the morning

quickly, before leaving the shelter; ‘that nobody listens the water is falling’. He knew he was not allowed to do so. Until the social worker found out:

-Are you taking a shower?

-...You know I don’t lie, so... I will not answer (laughing).

-...

-Look, if I don’t take a shower in the morning, I feel dirty.

-*That’s* what I want you to feel!

-What?!

-This place (the night shelter) is made to make you feel like this! So that you can go out, find a job, find something good for you so you are able to shower any time you want.

Hamza admitted that he could not agree more and never took a shower again in the morning (at least, I was told so). ‘*That’s* what I want you to feel’. Time-space regulation and the discipline of the homeless depend on the production of specific feelings, desired by the ones who operate the place. Again, security should *not* be amongst these feelings. Nevertheless, the cost of discipline is another negative feeling: that of repetition. For Rahim, the feeling of an aimless repetition is very strong. Being a forty-three-year-old male Iranian asylum seeker who recently arrived in Greece, he cannot apply formally for any job, at least before his asylum status is approved. ‘Days, believe me, look like repetition. Repeat, repeat, repeat [...] And when you get inside (the shelter) you are happy because the day has passed by’. Entering the shelter after 18:00 marks the accomplishment of a routine task; the day is finally over. As was yesterday, as will possibly be tomorrow:

Look, you end up like this: after lunchtime, you wait till the time the Shelter opens because the hours you can stay inside are very specific, [you wait] when the Shelter will reopen so that you find yourself with the same people, to joke a bit, watch some TV. The next day, the same thing.

### *Sharing routine*

For those ‘same people’ whom Stéfanos would meet every day after having finally entered the shelter, personal daily routines are structured around the place and time to sleep. The shelter thus synchronises and *syntopises*<sup>34</sup> collectively the homeless bodies that sleep there. This everyday synchrony and syntopy is often understood as assimilation; ‘The first days, I would think where to pass all these hours (till the reopening). And then I took this thought out of my head because I was forced sometimes to feel like the others’. Manólis is a Greek man at his seventies, very successful for decades in trade between Greece and the USA; due to his own bad management, as he says, he lost all his property and thus his

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<sup>34</sup> Syn + tópos (place): belonging to or sharing the same place.

house. Due to his social network, he accessed the shelter from his very first day as homeless, after sleeping in a central hotel as long as he could afford it. It took him some days to realise that the shelter's shared spatio-temporal routine made him think and feel like the other homeless; then he decided to negotiate this assimilation. 'We are all the same. After one point, we are all the same', Márkos said; having a place just to sleep for certain hours makes no big difference to him: 'The day goes by the same way. Either you sleep rough or at the Shelter, the day goes by exactly the same way'.

According to the social worker's words above, in her discussion with Hamza about showering, to find a job is central in the shelter's disciplinary routine. Not having a place to live but a place to sleep, the homeless subject is expected to stay active during the day and find a job. However, not *any* job can be found, but one that is absolutely synchronised with the Shelter. Rifat, an Afghan man at his thirties who became unoccupied as unskilled worker the last years, would find random day labour sometimes, mainly through his Bangladeshi network in central and western Athens. When he finally found a more permanent job at a bakery not far away from the shelter, he soon found out that this work shift was incompatible with the shelter's tight schedule. Most of the days he would work overnight, preparing bread and pastry for the day after. Finishing his work early in the morning would mean waiting until the evening, even twelve hours, in order to enter the shelter and sleep. But in the evening, he should start his shift again. Having no place to sleep the right time, Rifat had to give up his work at the bakery; and unavoidably become 'inactive' again.

#### *Another boat?*

Notwithstanding its regulations, the shelter as a safe roof—at least only at night—has been repeatedly appreciated by most of its users. After almost half a year there, Mímis, a fifty-one-year-old Greek man, still remembers the relief he felt when he entered the shelter for the first time: 'I thought, "that's fine, I have a place to sleep now!" because before (he had to spend days on the street)... Anxiety was gone, I would not sleep out any more!'. He had previously been evicted after having quit his work due to diagnosed psychological issues. For Asad it was similar: 'The feeling is different. Yesterday I had to sleep on the street, today I am sleeping indoors'. Yet, relief and security seem to be one side only:

For many years I have worked on ships. Many terrible things I've seen, the sea breaking into the ship, people dying in the sea. [...] Three shipwrecks I've seen in my whole life, believe me. But *this one here* (the night shelter) is another thing.

I met that man only two or three times, at the very end of my fieldwork. He made me realise though that the water on this side of the archipelago, where the shelter is floating on, is billowier. The shelter runs the risk of sinking.



FIGURE 16 Empty bed. Night shelter, May 2017.

## THE DAY CENTRE

The biggest day centre for homeless in the city, run by a large Greek NGO, serving more than 130 people daily,<sup>35</sup> and opening from 09:30 till 17:00.<sup>36</sup> Upon appointment day centre users can take a shower, wash clothes, drink coffee or tea, spend up to two hours in a shared room (watching TV, chatting, reading etc.), meet a social worker or doctor, make use of the library and get food portions (according to availability of offers). The day centre occupies the building's fourth and fifth floors. A security guard at the entrance, ground floor, controls the inflow of people; day centre users have to show him their cards where the appointed day and time are written on. Then they have to take the elevator to reach the Centre's reception, on the fourth floor. There is no other way; a door with bars separates the fourth and fifth floor from the rest of the building so that the centre cannot be reached from the staircase; and the elevator does not arrive at the fifth floor unless someone calls it from there —where the staff's offices and library are. Like this, the day centre and the street are in almost direct contact. The day centre responsible explains:

While we were trying to open them (two day centres), in the beginning one in Távros and one in Peristéri (a southern and western suburb respectively), we had to close down both after the local community's opposition. For they didn't want their neighbourhoods to become the 'pool of Siloam'.<sup>37</sup> So, we moved to Deliyóryi street that is a neglected street. Even there, there was some reaction in the neighbourhood, at quite low levels though. We closed the windows, we prepared everything, we opened [the day centre] and *then* [the neighbours] realised'

For the two suburban local communities, the potential presence of a day centre for homeless people would transform their neighbourhoods into 'pools of Siloam'; where the poor and the marginalised would huddle in order to 'get healed'. The place would attract the stigmatised and thus community 'had to' oppose it (see Dear & Wolch, 1987, chapter 2; Johnsen, Cloke & May, 2005; Takahashi, 1997). But in the heart of the machinic archipelago, the day centre was less out-of-place. The pool's water fuses well into the archipelago's water.

### *The chaos' opposite*

But street and day centre are in opposition: 'The street is chaos. On the street [the homeless] are stranded, whereas those who come [at the day centre] have a schedule'. One or two appointments per week are expected to schedule homeless time (and space) and discipline the homeless subjects, the latter not being

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<sup>35</sup> On December 2017 the total number of people inscribed at the Centre was 8,290.

<sup>36</sup> Opening hours have been modified during fieldwork due to the day centre's functional changes.

<sup>37</sup> Originating from the Bible, in modern Greek the phrase 'pool of Siloam' ('κολυμβήθρα του Σιλωάμ' [kolymvithra tou Siloám]) is used metaphorically to connote a location where human illness, be it either mental or physical, can be miraculously healed.

'stranded' anymore. This is supposed to be the effect of scheduled activities: showering, washing clothes, getting clothes, getting food, drinking some coffee or tea, staying indoors for two hours (necessary in cold or rainy days), meeting a doctor or social worker (when requested), library meetings. Once or twice per week. However, the plan to affect homeless time like this seems perhaps too ambitious. Once I saw Símos waiting for the elevator to leave the centre. 'Enjoy your weekend', I said. He laughed. 'What weekend? I only know my lunch is at noon and my dinner at seven. I know nothing about Easter, Christmas and stuff like that. Like this I resist psychologically'. Homeless time is divided only on the basis of the day, distributed *within* the day. Time in the longer term feels undifferentiated —a repetition of the same unit, the day. By thinking time as limited to day and not beyond that, Símos negotiates the loss of 'common time', which involves divisions of time, and perhaps respective practices, that are typical for 'common society', such as Christmas or Easter.



FIGURE 17 Tea time. Day centre, May 2017.

#### *The fourth floor*

All services for the homeless are found here, besides the library, that is on the fifth floor. On the left side of the elevator, the reception, obligatory point of passage and where everything is orchestrated; the TV room, where coffee, tea and sandwiches are offered (the latter when available); and the doctor's office in the background. On the opposite side, and perfectly visible from the reception, the launderettes, the bathrooms, the kitchen, the hair salon, a bathroom for people with physical disabilities, and the social service.

During my first shift I am told that laundry machines are ‘the apple of discord’. ‘Keep the rules for yourself!’ an old man shouts at the receptionist when she reminds him that only two changes of clothes can be washed by each person and that neither jackets nor blankets are allowed. Acting very angrily, he throws his bundle of clothes on his little trolley and heads to the elevator, pulling the trolley behind him, in order to leave. His moves are edgy, rapid, antithetical to his old body. ‘Are you *not* gonna take a shower?’ says the receptionist. The man changes his mind and goes back to the laundrettes. He puts inside only what is allowed. Two people share each wash. According to another rule, the first one puts freely the clothes in the laundry; the second one has to put them first in a net and then in the laundry. Like this, the clothes are separated and confusions are avoided. Many people prefer not to use the net though. In some cases, the net may be too small for the clothes. And some decide to not wash eventually. ‘I am not that weird, but the clothes are not washed well when in the net’, a homeless man came to explain me after he repeatedly asked the receptionist to skip the net.

Next to the laundrettes, the bathrooms and showers. Four in total, two on one side, two on the other. Hot water is available for approximately twelve minutes after the person enters the shower. From the kitchen, hot water is turned on every time. When supply stops while someone is still showering, a shout is immediately heard: ‘Wateeeeeer!’ Shower time is split in pieces of twelve minutes. This is the pace of the day centre that rules the homeless bodies and regulates the availability of hot water. From the kitchen, food portions are distributed, depending on the offer. All these different functions permit meaningful material and bodily practices to happen, which will be discussed in succeeding chapters.

However, in order to vivify the place’s particular scenography, it is important to stress that everything happens in a material environment saturated by a particular, mixed aesthetics. Playful tags on the walls and the curtains convey messages of hope, dreaming, living, laughing, loving. The homeless stigma is treated with optimism in a would-be cozy environment (Johnsen et al., 2005). At the same time, traces of decay are visible almost everywhere; humidity, often broken toilets or blocked sinks, materials that fade.

Above all though, the city enters with the cold wind from the windows. Located here, the day centre relates to one of the city’s most deprived areas; through the view. Through the windows, the city’s decaying materiality aligns with the day centre so that the two of them compose a visual symphony of stigma. The interior is in dialogue with the exterior. Even when the playful aesthetics succeed to temporarily hide the stigma, the —multiple but harmonized amongst them— views that invade the place from the outside reveal the stigma and relocate it both on the homeless bodies and in the machinic archipelago.



FIGURE 18 The day centre's main hall. April 2017.



FIGURE 19 Lénorman street, Metaxourghío, April 2017.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Homeless Stuff: Materialising the Machinic Archipelago**

#### ABSTRACT

The chapter attempts an attunement to the matters of Athens' homeless geographies arguing that material things, either as absent or as present, and the complex relations and practices around them, matter for homeless subjects. Having experienced and negotiated forms of material divestment, that is a separation from personal possessions signaling the birth of the homeless self, the homeless are involved in practices of material investment in the machinic archipelago, where care is practiced through the provision of stuff, such as clothes and food. Yet, investment is a complex, nuanced, regulated process that critically contributes to homeless limited materialities. Specific objects, such as plastic bags, relate to ideas of stigma; others, like foodstuff, are involved in conduits that relate to an important political economy of provision for the poor; and others, like the homeless' own belongings, acquire emphasised importance for distinct, non-stigmatised subjects. Conduits of divestment may exist within the archipelago, transforming homeless stuff into rubbish. The chapter closes with some general conclusions regarding the homeless cultural material geographies and subjectivities.

Τα πράγματα περνούν από μέσα μας  
με μαύρες γραμμές  
κι ένα μόνιμο βόμβο  
περνούν με μαύρες γραμμές  
από μέσα μας.

*Things are passing through us  
leaving black lines behind  
and a constant buzz  
leaving black lines they are passing  
through us.*

Ήσυχα ήσυχα κλείνει ο τόπος  
με μαύρες γραμμές  
πίσω μας ήσυχα κλείνει  
με μαύρες γραμμές  
ο τόπος.

*The place is shrinking silently silently  
leaving black lines  
behind us is shrinking silently  
leaving black lines  
the place.*

Βασίλης Μαντζούκης (τραγουδά η Μάρθα Φριντζήλα), 'Κλείνει ο τόπος',  
δίσκος 'Baumstrasse', 2007, Αθήνα: Libra music

Vassílis Mantzoúkis (vocals by Mártha Frintzília), 'The place is shrinking',  
album 'Baumstrasse', 2007, Athens: Libra music

**D**uring a shift at the night shelter, I am having a chat with Philippe, a French forty-year-old man. Our chats are mostly Philippe's endless monologues. This time he is describing an Iranian soup kitchen he recently discovered in the city; he did not like the food at all; to be precise, 'it was shit!'. After a small pause, and while looking absent-minded at the people around us, he turns back to me and continues, with a sudden tone of surprise:

And you know what, man? Those people there (the homeless at the soup kitchen), they *don't look like homeless*, man! Not at all! They all have their smartphones, playing... they don't *look* like homeless! But the food was shit, man...

For common imagination, 'the homeless' has a very specific materiality, characterised by a severe lack of belongings—a non-materiality, which lays emphasis on the materiality of the homeless body itself. Although it is acknowledged that defining homeless subjects on the basis of what they *lack* rather than of what they have may reproduce canonical understandings of homelessness (Lancione, 2014a), it remains relevant to keep considering this lack, mainly in material terms. For, even though specific consumerist materialities, such as smartphones, may be nowadays so widely diffused that become available also to more marginal groups—blurring, perhaps, at a first glance the boundaries between the middle and the lower classes—homeless subjectivities are made (also) through material deprivation.

Homeless. Home-less. Lacking this—now *that*—place called 'home'. Lack is indeed integral to homelessness. But, besides its heavily symbolic social status, 'home' is always also material, connoted by the idea of 'home as shelter' (Somerville, 1992). Linking the materiality of home only to the roof (as the home's sheltering element) though, as Somerville does, is reductive; it ignores the multiple materialities that fill the home's space *below* that roof, materialities that take the form of 'home possessions' (Miller, 2001; also Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Therefore, home is the material paraphernalia that surrounds the subject—a subject-possessor. And, in what Kawash (1998) calls 'chain of loss', when a person becomes homeless, is deprived of all, or a big part of, this paraphernalia—a largely dispossessed subject. This chapter deals with homeless stuff. Stuff that have been forever lost. Stuff that are somewhere patiently awaiting. Stuff that have been preserved somewhere, somehow. And stuff that are being given to the homeless in the machinic archipelago, and at the same time taken.

To Anderson and Tolia-Kelly, 'an attunement to matter enables a political praxis of inclusion and recovery to be grounded in the *human* geographies of inequality and exclusion' (2004, p. 672, original emphasis). This chapter attempts such an attunement to the matters of Athens' homeless geographies arguing that material things, either as absent or as present, and the complex relations and practices around them, matter for the homeless subjects. Two interrelated processes are

central in materialising these geographies: ‘divestment’<sup>38</sup>, entailing ‘the separation of [homeless] from their things’ (Gregson, Metcalfe & Crewe, 2007, p. 187), and marking the ‘birth’ of homeless subjectivities; and its counterpart, ‘investment’, entailing the receiving and regulation of things for the homeless in the machinic archipelago, and shaping their subjectivities. The divestment/investment boundary is not clear as many practices that take place in the machinic archipelago paradoxically combine both. And, even when not overlapping, divestment and investment are always relative, nuanced and limited practices: divestment does not mean thus that homeless people are *totally* divested, which would result in immaterial subjectivities; neither investment signifies any *return* to a previous material condition, which would result in the erasure of homeless subjectivities. The chapter starts with divestment and the homeless’ experiences of ‘material schism’; it then presents various and contradictory practices of investment that take place in the machinic archipelago; and finally provides an exemplary conduit of disposal and divestment before closing with some reflections on cultural material geographies and the making of homeless subjects.

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<sup>38</sup> The word originates from the Old French *des-* that expresses removal and the Latin *vestire* from ‘*vestis*’ that means ‘garment’ (en.oxforddictionaries.com, last access April 12, 2018).

## DIVESTMENT

[I was carrying] myself! (laughing) Myself and anything else I could carry with me.

Yánnis, December 8, 2016

Homelessness is experienced materially. Not only through the materiality of the body that finds itself in new social and material conditions, but also through a separation —total or partial, gradual or abrupt— of the homeless from their possessions. To different extents and in various ways, the homeless subjects are divested. This divestment is critical to understand the homeless geographies of Athens; for these geographies somehow cope with *divestment* through an *investment* of the homeless subjects and thus a further making of their subjectivities. If a dialectical material culture theory tells us that, as subjects make objects, *objects* make subjects too (Miller, 2005; 2010), I argue that there is a necessity to engage with this theory in a careful and critical way in order *not* to deduce that any lack of objects *unmakes* subjects. Divestment does not mean *desubjectification*. Instead, through this process subjectivities are still made. In critically different ways though. For lost, absent, distant, scattered and stored stuff makes people too; people different than before.

### **'MATERIAL SCHISM': THE BIRTH OF THE HOMELESS SUBJECTS**

'Asking anyone for a cigarette?! Give me, please, a cigarette... This is so ugly. Especially for me, who had everything three years ago'. Kalliópi is fifty years old and has lived for three years in hostels for abused women, after she decided to leave her place with her little daughter; for one month and a half now, she has moved to one of the archipelago's hostels. She goes on: 'Till three years ago, I was living in a palace for twenty years... for me, not that my home was a [real] palace but *for me* it was... You can't imagine the pain inside me'. Back then, at home Kalliópi had everything she needed. The beginning of the homeless life and the birth of the homeless self are marked by what could be called 'material schism', that is the critical moment the person is separated from her/his personal belongings. It is the moment the subject finds her/himself with nothing or almost nothing or with few things. At the same time though, this separation being lived, the material schism extends far beyond the very moment it happens. It is present afterwards mainly through a contrast between a strongly material past condition and a present condition of considerable material loss. Whatever lost remains as 'absent presence' (Hetherington, 2004). For Antónis, resident of the same hostel, this material loss had a destabilizing effect on him: 'I was trying to balance totally

shattered. For I had nothing. One moment I had everything, the next I had nothing’.

If ‘everything’ may sound too generic, the importance of the material schism and the loss experienced within become concrete in the idea of ‘noikokyrió’.<sup>39</sup> The day Agathí got evicted, she left her place taking with her ‘nothing, nothing, nothing!’ —‘besides very few clothes’, she will correct later. At the same time, she was leaving something behind, something more concrete than just ‘everything’:

A lot of things [I left at home]. The [furniture of the] living room, the table, the bed. The cooker, the laundry, the dishwasher, the fridge. I had my *noikokyrió*. And many embroideries I had, so many, and I’ve left them there. Frames! I’ve left many frames there. Many that I made myself with thread and needle’

If the materiality of the house is often reduced to physical design and housing standards (see, for example, Clapham, 2005), what Agathí describes here goes far beyond that, reminding us that ‘the lack of possessions [...] is the fundamental point of alienation’ (Pascale, p. 260) for the homeless.

Noikokyrió is the Greek word for household; however, it does not stand only for the people who collectively make the house (‘hold it’) as a unit. In the Greek culture, noikokyrió is also strongly material, signifying the goods, the objects, the stuff that make the house what it is for the individual as possessor situated *in* the house (as the original word itself has it, see footnote 39; also Young, 2005). Stuff that is involved in everyday domestic practices; stuff that have been bought, found, offered and made; and, above all, stuff that have been selected and accumulated through time. For Greeks, a noikokyrió is *set up* (‘στήνεται’); ‘to the knife and fork’, as Leftéris noted for his own. It is essential part of the ‘building’ that, Heidegger reminds us (2001), lets humans dwell the earth. And it summarises the practices that make home materially (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). The processual, time-consuming assembling of stuff makes noikokyrió part of one’s own self: a personal material paraphernalia that surrounds the person and makes it materially. The separation from all this through a material schism, deprives the homeless of a life-long personal achievement: ‘I lost all my stuff, I lost all my noikokyrió. I now have to start from zero again’, Páris acknowledged with a conscious, reserved frustration.

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<sup>39</sup> In Greek ‘νοικοκυριό’ [noikokyrió] from ‘νοικοκύρης’ [noikokýris]: the one who has the power (κύριος) *inside* (εν) the house (οίκος).

## DEALING WITH STUFF

Divestment is a process, only part of which is the material schism. It is a process of abandoning, storing, losing, selling or even moving with (more or less) stuff and thus practiced through various conduits of divestment (Gregson et al., 2007). In some cases, belongings are just left behind. Márkos has experienced more than one evictions. Every time he would abandon the house leaving his stuff ‘exactly as they were placed’. Then from zero again. In most of the cases though, divestment is a more complex process that the person has to deal with. Mímis soon took the difficult decision to sell some of his belongings, mainly figurines, in order to survive. He put them in a bag and walked down to Monastiráki one morning, where he managed to sell them at the flea market. ‘Stuff that had costed me up to 200 euro, I sold them for five [euro]. Disgrace!’<sup>40</sup> Getting deprived of one’s belongings by selling them at a value lower than the ‘real’ one may feel demeaning for the person. A common practice is to store stuff at friends’ places or in storages friends provide, planning to get them back at some point. But even so, things end up physically disconnected from their possessors. After taking some clothes with him, Páris ‘started scattering things here and there’, whilst Yórgos gradually lost his stuff while moving from friend to friend, where he would be hosted before ending up roofless. Storing stuff does not necessarily mean securing them.

The first days as homeless, and after having sold ‘[his] fridge, car, TV, [his] noikokyrió’, Hamza collected some of his remaining things and started living with friends:

I tried to save some at one of my friends, I didn’t have the luxury to keep it for a long time since I had no space, so... I threw them away! There were clothes, there were many things, where would I have carried all that stuff?!

Throwing one’s belongings away may be a tough separation, not only a material but also an *emotional* schism. ‘And I threw [things] away, my friend, you can’t imagine what I did throw away. Leather clothes, shoes, what did I throw away!’, Leftéris remembers. And goes on:

*Then I got hurt, then I got hurt. Objects of a whole life. And unfortunately, I am a bit stupid, I bond to my stuff. No matter how small, how petty they are [...] I bond to my stuff. And then you are forced to throw everything away*

When divested, the homeless subject experiences a break in their bond with personal belongings. Once parts of the same subject, person and stuff are now separated. Schisms hurt.

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<sup>40</sup> ‘Ξεφτίλα!’ [xeftíla!].

## AWAITING MATERIALITY

Divestment is a nuanced process involving acts other than separation. Some other stuff survives either by being stored in safe locations or by following the homeless person becoming themselves homeless stuff. Agathi's former landlord has packed her noikokyrió, as she described above, in boxes and, as the court usher told her, she can go back anytime to take them. 'Of course I am thinking about [getting them]. But where is the money [to move them], my dear?' When stored, stuff is stored life. 'I put all my life in three boxes, four, and stored them in my cousin's basement [...] [Inside I've put] the photo albums. The pictures. The most important thing in my life are my wedding pictures, of children, of baptisms, friends, everything. Nothing else [...] Oh, and my papers. From school, documents and so on'. When Leftéris returned to that basement to check the condition of his boxes, he saw red; nobody had taken care of and humidity had affected them. For many research participants, valuable belongings, their own stuff, remain distant but somehow safe, in safe spaces. For the homeless, they comprise an 'awaiting materiality': objects waiting patiently to become again parts of their subjects. And subjects, like Yánnis, have plans for them: 'to get them back, sometime!'

## COMPRESSED MATERIALITY

Besides the materiality that, either scattered or sold or lost or stored, is separated and thus distant from the homeless subjects, there remains a part of it that follows the homeless in their new lives and spaces. In its initial making, homeless subjects resist any total divestment through a process of material selection: 'You must have as much as possibly only the necessary stuff, trying to start [your life] over again', Yánnis explained. The reason is practical: with more than the absolutely necessary on him, it would not have been possible to go around in search for a job. For Leftéris though, material selection has been less tactical and more spontaneous. In a moment of daze, he only thought about one thing to take with him; clothes:

Uh, what should I have taken, the toothbrush and such stuff? I didn't even think about that. I just thought of two trousers, two blouses, two jackets, one pair of shoes. Only one because they did not fit in the suitcase [...] I can only remember the clothes, I said "what am I doing with my clothes?!" I mean, what am I going to wear, how will I survive without clothes... I didn't even think of [other stuff].

Mainly, but not exclusively, in the form of clothing, any previous materiality has to get incredibly reduced, to shrink, get compressed. Otherwise it is impossible for it to follow the homeless. As a result of divestment, the remaining 'compressed

materiality' (see also Kawash, 1998) that is still part of the homeless subject, takes mostly the form of the suitcase. Recall Kalliópi, a few paragraphs above, talking about her house as if it were a personal 'palace', providing her with any material object she needed. That palace is now compressed: 'Now I have three suitcases and *these* are my possessions. *These* are my possessions'. A palace in three suitcases. Instead of three, and as most research participants, Stéfanos compressed his materiality in only one suitcase, when he decided to leave his sister's place months after the closing down of their aluminum family business. And as Leftéris did, he put just clothes inside, and 'just the necessary ones'.

In close contact with the person's body, the materiality of the suitcase is not disconnected from the making of the homeless subject; through the suitcase, the homeless subject is embodied and perceived for the first time:

I realised [I was homeless] when I first *took the suitcase* and left [my sister's place where I was being hosted]. I said myself 'What's happening now? The sky is nice, yes, but I used to look at it in a different way, being glad'

Luckily, as he noted himself, Stéfanos managed to enter the night shelter from the first night he had no place (away from the sky) to sleep. But the bodily practice of taking the suitcase marked anyway his sense of self and subjectivity—and it keeps marking them.

## **SWEATY STUFF**

'I tried to save as many things as possible. And went out on the street then. I hopped on my Nissan (car), put all the stuff in the trunk and the books on the front passenger seat'. Andréas has lived like this for twenty-seven months in total, surrounded by whatever belonging he could fit in his car and moving with them from one spot to another in a northern Athenian suburb. The car not only sheltered his body, by keeping it relatively warm and protected, and his mind, by listening to radio broadcasts, but sheltered also his stuff, in a way that he could have control on them. Like this, he had already secured his books and bedlinen when, after renting a bedsit for a short period, had to go back in the car again. For Andréas it has been very important to resist divestment as much as he could:

They are part of myself. Whatever I had made, my dear, I had made it with my departed wife [...] [and] everything was made with sweat.<sup>41</sup> For this reason, our heart was shaking not to lose anything, not to part ourselves from anything.

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<sup>41</sup> 'Ό,τι είχαμε πάρει λοιπόν, το είχαμε κάνει με ιδρώτα' [Ότι ίchame párei lipón, to ίchame káni me idróta].

There are two points in the above words that illustrate how the material deprivation performed and experienced through divestment matters for the homeless subject. First, that things are part of Andréas' self. Yet, things are not *per se* part of himself; they are *made* as *his* things and are hence *made* as part of *himself*. There is a preference for 'making' rather than, say, simply 'having', 'buying', 'getting', or 'collecting' things. Like in the case of noikokyrió, stuff, prior to divestment, are a product of a processual material making, wherein the subject is actively and bodily engaged. Sweat makes stuff —Heidegger's building is stuffed with effort. Second, materiality is a personal way for Andréas to relate with his wife, who got killed in the same accident that marked the beginning of his homelessness. Through their common engagement in the making of his stuff —the sweat was shared— and hence through the stuff themselves, Andréas and his wife are still part of each other. And together they both are part of their stuff. Divestment thus threatens these very connections that, through objects, constitute subjects. When homeless, these subjects are called to maintain as many as possible of these connections by resisting divestment; compressing, scattering, selling, storing —anyhow. Thanks to the car, Andréas' materiality was less compressed than it would have been in one, two, or three suitcases. And the material schism has been a bit less harsh for him.

## COUNTERING DIVESTMENT

Divestment is a matter of space —of limited space, more precisely. The dispossession of space means too (a partial) dispossession of materiality for the homeless subject. When Lámbros realised that he would end up without a place soon as he had stayed jobless for too long, he did not stay inactive:

One or two months in advance (before becoming homeless), without telling anything to anyone, I started moving my stuff in a small storage room, because stuff was valuable to me. They were the only things I could start a new life with, things I had paid for.

What activated Lámbros was the fear of ending up in the street 'with just one t-shirt'; the fear of being divested. Hoping to be able to set his life again with all this within two or three months —'unfortunately I have by now reached thirty [months as homeless]'— he had found a place for his stuff before even finding one for himself.

Lámbros repeatedly told me how his house had been 'set' according to his own standards, following his personal needs. His fridge, his stereo system, his computer, his discs and books were part of this personal setting. He found it logical then 'to protect [his] stuff'. Again, it is much more than the practical aspects:

I have chosen [this stuff] *myself*, I have bought them *myself* and each item reminds me something about the day I got it, that [for example] we were listening to it (a CD or vinyl) together, or that you gave it to me as a gift. These things have to stay with me. If they are not with me, I am not myself. I am *another man*.

It is then this mutual making between subjects and objects that renders divestment so powerful for the homeless: a material schism gestates the risk to transform the person into *another man or woman*, by removing parts of the person, parts embodied in personal stuff and so extending the self beyond her/his own body. To preserve his sense of self, the materiality of the self has to be preserved too, sometimes at any cost. Lámbros is proud to tell that, ‘although hungry now’, he refuses to sell his collection of CDs and vinyl records.

Today he lives in another storage room, provided by a friend. All stuff has been now moved there; he sleeps and wakes up every day surrounded by his materiality, almost like before. Even so, though, his subjectivity does not remain untouched. Having no electricity, he is unable to use most of his stuff and devices. ‘I am glad to still have them and know they (the things) are fine. They are with me because a place [for us] was found. But what makes me sad is that they must become functional again’. Although present and still part of himself, Lámbros’ materiality is idle. ‘This (not using his stuff) kills me. I have the whole world’s time available but because of this situation (living without electricity) I cannot use them. And so I lag behind’. Physically present but idle, stuff embody the homeless’ expectations to reuse them. Yánnis is a technology enthusiast who lives too with his idle materiality in the hostel: ‘[I have saved with me] some electronic stuff I was using in the past but now I cannot, but I am keeping them anyway. For the moment I’ll find again a computer, my own computer’. Preserving one’s belongings against divestment is not simply about possessing stuff but about using them and, through use, having the capacity to relate with them in everyday practice. Even in these cases hence, divestment has been achieved, to a certain extent, and the homeless subjects have been affected accordingly.

Experienced through a more or less continuous material schism that marks the beginning of many homeless lives, divestment is pivotal in the making of homeless subjectivities. While being divested, homeless subjects have to deal with their own material dispossession. Agathí and Márkos left everything at home while leaving to sleep rough whereas Hamza threw some away to go to friends. Kalliópi, Yánnis and Leftéris compressed mostly their clothes in suitcases; Leftéris stored others in friends’ places as Páris and Yórgos did, having their stuff scattered or lost eventually. Mímis sold what was of value. Andréas fit everything he could in his car and slept in there; with them. And Lámbros decided to live with all his stuff, watching them inert waiting to be used again. Nevertheless, regardless of the ways and degrees to which subjects resist it —*if* they want to resist, and in most cases they do— divestment performs something (a lot) more than plain material dispossession; it separates the subject from what has been

collected and made during a lifetime, from what has been soaked in sweat, from what relates to beloved persons who have been now lost or to memories, to what makes 'normal' life being practiced the —personal— way it is practiced. All in all, it separates the subject from her/his own parts, leaving her/him incomplete, making her/him another subject. This is why so many homeless tried in many different ways to keep their stuff close to them or somewhere protected, even when physically distant or scattered. Divestment separates the subject from whatever constitutes it tangibly, materially, resulting in new subjectivities, this time defined as homeless. Homeless and *stuffless*.



FIGURE 20 (Former) homeless stuff. Veikou street, March 2017.

## INVESTMENT

Now imagine Agathí, Márkos, Hamza, Kalliópi, Yánnis, Leftéris, Páris, Yórgos, Mímis, Andréas, Lámbros and many others, more or less divested, arriving in Athens' machinic archipelago. Only with a suitcase or leaving their stuff in the car for a bit, they find themselves in new (for them) material spaces that are ready to somehow recover their material loss, to somehow invest them. Therein, the presence of stuff and the practical and discursive engagements between them and the homeless matter for the latter's subjectivities.

I have started doing things that I wouldn't in the past. To steal, for example. Two days ago, at the Red Cross I was staring at a sleeping bag and [the staff] asked if I needed it. I nodded yes and got it whereas I had one already. I just wanted to have a *second* one. So I deprived someone else of it. For me this is a form of stealing.

As Símos and I are sitting on a bench right in front of his shanty, the sleeping bag is behind us, hidden behind the shanty's wall. Placed therein, now the sleeping bag is part of his own materiality as he sleeps in it every night. But before, when it appeared available to him in one of the archipelago's nodes, this object challenged Símos' sense of self, and shaped his subjectivity. It objectified notions of need, desire, possession, comfort and, in the end, a new morality performed by the practice of stealing —or whatever Símos perceives as such.

In spaces of care, care is performed not only through psycho-social relations but also materially (Conradson, 2003; also, for the case of Athens, Kourachanis, 2015, p. 121). Spaces of care are nodes of material provision in which the homeless subjects are actively involved and homeless subjectivities are constantly in the making. Through material provision the homeless are invested: they are surrounded by, relate with and become active parts of the materialities of these environments; are provided with various stuff; and are involved in material practices through which they relate both with stuff and other subjects, homeless or not. By focusing on material practices rather than solely materials, the aim is to avoid a two-fold risk: to succumb to an 'object fetishism' (Duncan, 1990, p. 11, in Jackson, 2000; see also Cook & Tolia-Kelly, 2010); and to present the homeless geographies as 'surface geographies' (Tolia-Kelly, 2013). Practices described here focus mainly on the materialities that move around clothes and food; they show that investment in the machinic archipelago is a complex and, above all, limited process, often in a paradoxical interplay with divestment; and highlight how homeless subjects relate with these materialities. Before all this though, there is another materiality that calls for attention: paper.

## PAPER SUBJECTS

Documents are in many ways the primal matter for the homeless subjects. During and after divestment, papers are to be saved and preserved. Then they are important remainders that relate the subject with his/her previous life. 'Papers are all my life', said Manólis, who has stored them in a friend's trunk in order to take them back when he will find a house. Sometimes these remainders of divestment mark the beginning of homeless life: 'I arrived in Athens [from Salonica] with two bags of papers', Élsa said for her first day as homeless, after getting divorced and being asked to leave the house by the notary. But besides the remainders of the past, papers play an active role in the making of homeless subjectivities throughout the machinic archipelago (for the role of ID cards, see Arapoglou, 2004a). Some research companions became homeless after a serious accident. For these, papers perform their disabilities, their mental and physical conditions. So they carry them anywhere they go. Even before starting our interview, Agathí had already spread sheets of papers all over her bed where she was sitting on; surrounded by documents, she could prove all her story she was sharing. And after Antónis had narrated a big part of his life, he stopped and told me:

Do you want me to bring you documents so that you see with your own eyes? [...] I want you to mention in your epilogue that you saw some evidence of what you have heard... [I am bringing you] only two sheets of paper so that I myself am ok psychologically also.

It was impossible to convince him; he immediately stood up and went to his bedroom, two floors below, to bring his papers. We continued the interview with them in between us, on the desk. From that moment, and reflected on them, Antónis was being made as 'homeless Antónis' through those papers in between us.

Both accessing and moving in the machinic archipelago depends on different types of papers. The Day Centre users, for example, have already their personal card in their hands when they arrive at the reception on the fourth floor; with this they are allowed to use the facilities on that specific day and that specific time. Papers perform the homeless subject. Leftéris arrived at the machinic archipelago in bad physical and psychological condition. To have a place in the archipelago's services, specifically the municipal hostel, he was provided with documents by an NGO. From that moment, moving through the archipelago was smooth:

Then she gave me three-four papers. [...] Every time I would show those papers—I have no clue what was written on them, I was so confused that couldn't even read— every time I would show them, people would make me automatically bypass the queue, I would be the first one in the line.

In many cases the homeless feel the need to demonstrate documents to prove they are homeless. But as papers make the homeless, they can also *unmake* them. Minás had collected all necessary documents to be accepted at another hostel, while he still had no place to sleep; hematological tests, chest x-ray and certification for psychiatric nurses among others. Carrying all this paper stuff, he was ‘homeless enough’ to access the spaces of care he was interested in. But when, right before signing, he was announced that his place had just been given to a contact of the hostel’s director, he asked for his papers back: ‘[...] and I rip everything apart! Fuck off,<sup>42</sup> I threw everything away!’ Without papers now, Minás went back to a friend’s place for a couple of days before ending up at Omónoia, to sleep on a bar’s chair. By ripping his papers apart though, he was absolutely still homeless; but he was not any more an *eligible* homeless, eligible to access some of the archipelago’s nodes (see Takahashi et al., 2002). In the end, without those papers, perhaps he had become even more homeless.

## CLOTHES

A December Friday night, something to eleven. Temperatures are low and still the really cold days are yet to come. The kiosk of SynAthiná, right in the middle of Athinás street, is a vivid, luminous spot that looks warm. People come and go—mostly come—some wait outside chatting with social workers and drinking some hot tea, others inside hanging out and getting food portions. But the stuff that receives most attention is clothes. Evanghelía, an NGO volunteer, is poking around in a sort of wardrobe behind a sliding door. The wardrobe is packed with clothes and two homeless are already waiting to see whether she will find what they asked for; in this pressure of expectations, Evanghelía’s movements are rapid and somehow nervous. The homeless man and woman are waiting patiently. The man has asked for a shirt; with long sleeves, for the winter. Immersed in the material mass of clothes and shoes, Evanghelía’s hands take selectively items out digging. A black sweater comes out. It’s not a shirt but the man is excited anyway. He puts it in a blue plastic bag he is given and leaves with a ‘goodnight’. The lady is luckier: of the messy wardrobe, Evanghelía pulls out a red sack with the promotional logo of a multinational company on it. And out of the sack, Evanghelía takes and demonstrates a pair of white Adidas shoes, and a pair of brown leather boots. With her eyes wide open behind her glasses, the lady cannot hide her enthusiasm; anyway, she is not supposed to do so in here. ‘These pants are *also* included!’ Evanghelía loudly says while lifting a pair up. More enthusiasm, laughs, satisfaction; from both the giver’s and taker’s sides. Before leaving, and having thanked all the crew, the lady takes a portion of rice in a blue plastic bag. She places it on top of the red sack on her little shopping trolley and leaves the kiosk.

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<sup>42</sup> ‘Αι σιχτίρ!’ [ái sichtír!].

### *Washing with rules*

During my first shift at the day centre I am told that laundry machines are ‘the apple of discord’. ‘Keep the rules for yourself!’ an old man shouts at the receptionist when she reminds him that only two changes of clothes can be washed by each person and that neither jackets nor blankets are allowed to be put in. Acting angrily, he throws his bundle of clothes on his little trolley and heads to the elevator, pulling the trolley behind him, in order to leave. His moves are edgy, rapid, antithetical to his short, old body. ‘Are you *not* gonna wash your clothes then?’ asks the receptionist. The man changes his mind, looks back and returns to the laundrettes. He puts inside only what is allowed to, under the gaze of another staff member. It is not easy to skip washing when a homeless has the chance to do so; for otherwise s/he will need to wait for next week’s appointment.

Two people share each wash. According to another rule, the first one puts freely the clothes in the laundry; the second one has to put them first in a net and then in the laundry. Like this, the clothes are separated and confusions are avoided. Many people prefer not to use the net though. In some cases, the net may be too small for the clothes, or may seem too dirty. Thus, some decide not to wash eventually. ‘I am not that weird, but the clothes are not washed well inside the net’, a homeless man came to explain me after he repeatedly asked the receptionist to skip the net. Washed clothes are put in a blue plastic bag and the homeless takes them elsewhere to dry them.

Rules for washing clothes are present at the night shelter too. Each ‘number’ is allowed to do the laundry once per week. When on a Friday Aahil enters the social worker’s office asking to wash his clothes, the social worker says he can do this on Tuesday, according to his bed number. Aahil insists but with no results. ‘They try to wash their clothes more often than it is permitted’, I am told when the man is out. For months now only one out of the three laundry machines works. Another day, Hamza comes to the laundry room where I am alone during my shift; smiling he whispers: ‘Today it’s not the day but can I wash two shirts anyway?’ Being my first period there, and being hesitant to take initiatives, I suggest: ‘Let’s see how much space will be left in the laundry and ask Helías (the employee I am sharing the shift with)’. ‘No no, leave it then, let’s go with the rules’. Hamza uses to perform ‘the good homeless’, going with the rules and often behaving the way expected in the shelter, especially when staff members are present. This is why he frequently uses a self-service laundry not away from the shelter. And when it happens to stay without his daily wage, he either has to ask for money or leave the clothes there and get them back when he will finally find the money.

One day, an Albanian man and woman arrived at the shelter; they are married and the only (official) couple to use the shelter during my fieldwork. The first day they can wash, the woman comes to the laundry room to complain: she is

not allowed wash her clothes with her husband, her beds, and bed numbers, are too far away from each other. 'We cannot wash our stuff together with the others here, *we* are *we* and *others* are others... There are diseases... But *we* are healthy... This is not right!' When Eiríni from the personnel explains that this is how it works here and that, if she wants to wash only with her husband, she can wash by hands, the woman reacts: 'I don't have the money to buy detergent for that! If I had any, I would not be here!' In response, she is reminded: 'Exactly because you have no money, you have to compromise with what we offer'. Similar incidents with the couple happened repeatedly, until the moment they were asked to leave the shelter for having argued with other users. The specific way washing the clothes takes place in the shelter affects the couple as a unit. A material practice that used to be common has to be first unlearned and then relearned as a separate practice, not shared by the wife and husband any more. Having their materials separated, the couple is less a unit now and its two parts have to mix their clothes with other people's clothes. Their commonly constituted subjectivities are affected.

Such regulations regulate the degree and quality of the homeless' investment in the archipelago. When Níkos, drug user and rough sleeper, arrives at the day centre for his appointment in order to wash his stuff, he takes a stinky grey blanket out of his sack and tries to put it in the laundry. When a staff member tells him that, according to the rules, blankets cannot be washed, Níkos does not seem to understand: '...But I am sleeping with it every night, how is it possible that it cannot be washed?'. Not being convinced, he is asking to see the day centre's director in order to complain. When the director comes, she explains the rule to him once again before deciding to offer him a new blanket so that the old one is thrown away. Like this Níkos finally calms down although he still does not seem to have understood why his own blanket has to stay dirty and be thrown away. Instead of being washed, such a personal item that Níkos used to sleep every night wrapped within, is replaced with a new one. His blanket thus becomes disposable, to be thrown away and be replaced notwithstanding any personal connections. Dirt and a rule that does not allow the blanket to be put in the launderettes are enough to justify material replacement —a practice of divestment within investment. I doubt whether Níkos in the end threw the old blanket in the bin after leaving. But, at least for a moment, his own materiality is at the same time threatened and refreshed, whilst he is materially unmade and remade.

Investment hence often happens through restrictive practices in the machinic archipelago. This is why many shelter users, for example, although they are given the possibility to do their laundry at the shelter, decide to subscribe too at the day centre, so that they have the possibility to wash clothes at least one more time per week. Mr. Droúvas stayed for a couple of months at the Shelter and was lucky enough to have a good friend with a house; he would wash his clothes there when needed without having to wait for 'his day' to come. Nevertheless, he kept visiting regularly the day centre too making a 'targeted' use of the launderettes.

His aim was to maintain a contact with the place in order to establish his presence there for the moment he would have his own house again and he will need a laundry machine. 'You don't know how it feels like to have taken a shower, feel yourself clean, have also clean underwear, whereas the clothes on you are not washed for four days or so...' Many times, during our quick encounters, he would whisper that it was his 'strategy' to go there for his laundry. 'I don't *really* need to come here'.



FIGURE 21 Food containers. Day centre, November 2016.

## FOODSTUFF

'Food is not a problem when one is homeless', I was repeatedly affirmed from the fieldwork's very beginning. From the big NGOs and their representatives to the municipal Department of Social Services and their social workers, food is never said to be a problem. Indeed, many homeless agree. 'You can find food everywhere!' and 'Anywhere you go you'll get a plate with food'. The machinic archipelago seems to be drown in food. Food is such a fundamental materiality for the maintenance of human life that its mere provision seems to be enough, especially in cases of people with limited or no access to it. Food is a materiality justified by itself: with life being materially sustained, the type, quality and ways of offering food often remain unquestioned. In fact, Andréas remembers of his first days on the streets: 'What I needed was not to gorge myself but just to maintain myself'. So he would eat any food he would find.

### *Food conduits*

The investment of homeless subjects through food does not only happen at soup runs and kitchens, where food is prepared and given at the same place. Other nodes of the machinic archipelago are important places where food is provided to the homeless. At the municipal hostel, for example, elder residents or residents with special dietary needs, such as diabetics, are provided with food portions that arrive from the municipal soup kitchen, while at the NGO hostel the small number of residents makes it financially possible to provide them with two meals per day. However, food provision is less secured in spaces such as the day centre and the night shelter. Although therein investment is performed to a considerable extent through food provision, availability is not guaranteed; for it depends on offers by actors independent from the day centre and the night shelter. Anyway, it must be highlighted that food is almost every day available in these spaces thanks both to the staff's efforts and the civil society and their donations. But, given this dependency on philanthropy and external care, the quality and quantity of food are rather unstable, a fact that renders investment unpredictable, variegated, nuanced and affective, relating with feelings of anxiety or surprise for homeless whose eating patterns largely depend on these places.

Therefore, no food is cooked at the day centre and night shelter but instead everything arrives there from more or less distant locations of Athens: taverns, restaurants, private companies and donators, other NGOs and soup kitchens that end up with an 'edible surplus' at the end of the day, offer their food. Like this, these two places are inter-linked with other spaces of care or broader networks of philanthropy and solidarity that make the materialities of food circulate through complex conduits and mobility patterns. For example, food at the day centre arrives after the driver has collected daily offers mainly from restaurants and cookhouses that give their leftovers away. Plastic containers of various types and plastic bags arrive at the kitchen; then, staff members or volunteers will make individual portions in smaller plastic containers. Sometimes the overall quantity is excessive and the staff tries to give away as much food as possible so that it is

not thrown away, especially when it is from previous days. Besides quantity, the fact that food comes from other places has two considerable effects: first, the quality and type of food cannot be controlled since it is prepared elsewhere; and second, the conduits that circulate the food may be too long, something that further affects quality.

Staff and volunteers sometimes have to guess the meal's ingredients in order to inform the homeless, especially regarding allergies and religion-based preferences, as in the case of Muslim users who avoid pork. Staff and volunteers have also to somehow assure that the food just arrived or waiting in the fridge already has not gone bad. 'They will call the police!' This was an employee's tasteless joke when he noticed blisters on the bean soup that was about to be distributed one day. That soup was thrown away, of course; but this would by no means guarantee the quality of the rest of the food that had no visible or olfactory signs for its condition. This further perplexed the ethics of my Janus-faced positionality as a researcher-volunteer: for I was not able to take responsibility of what I was providing the homeless with, and thus of the material effects this practice would have on their bodies. For Manólis 'the problem is when foods are collected from various places, they are gathered all together and become bad and stinky'.



FIGURE 22 Food just arrived, day centre, December 2016.

Notwithstanding the unpredictability of the food's quality and quantity, the types of food provided are more or less standardised. 'I've never seen so much bread in my life!' was heard in the day centre's kitchen. On the floor there are three big black rubbish bags full of bread loaves; others in plastic containers on the counter. Bread is almost always available, even when other stuff is not. Many times bread

replaces a 'proper' meal: 'No food has arrived yet! Is there any bread left? Give him some bread in a bag!' When different types of it are available, such as whole grain or cereal bread, the homeless are happy to choose. Rice, lentils, pasta, chickpeas, orzo dominate the homeless' diet in the archipelago. In the long term, the repetitive presence of these foods brings about feelings of boredom and amplify the desire for what is either absent or inadequate in one's eating routine. 'When will I find kiwis again?!' Mímis said with his mouth stuffed when he saw me watching him eating a kiwi greedily above the trash bin, where he would right after throw the peel in before getting another one. Criticising the limited range of foods available at the city's soup runs, Símos said laughing: 'Beans are the poor's meat', and 'The homeless has not seen fish on his (sic) plate, never!'

'We are the trash-pickers. Whatever they throw us we take, both words and things'. With these words, Símos reproduced perfectly a dominant idea in the archipelago about how to invest the homeless: by giving them 'whatever', be it words or things. But the homeless definitely do *not* take 'whatever'; even Símos will contradict himself by choosing *one* single place to get his meal from and not many different places, as others do. Of course, this choice and practice differentiates him from the rest of the homeless and is what makes his subjectivity 'untouched' by the stigma: 'I could go to more than one places [to eat]... because some [other homeless] go to ten soup runs. They tear through everything and whatever food they don't like... goes dumping!' Food is an important materiality for performing homeless subjectivities. To emphasise their subjectivities, some homeless prefer, when they can afford it, to buy food instead of getting it for free at a soup run or the day centre. Youssef gets very annoyed by questions such as 'did you eat at that place?' or 'did you eat there? how's the food?' Trying to stay away from all this, as he says, he has decided to buy his own food. And when someone offers him a portion, he responds: 'No, thank you. I have *my own* food'; food that has been *bought*. But, through food, homeless subjects are not only made different than other homeless subjects.

#### *Political economy of homeless food?*

The above practices suggest that there are complex material conduits in the homeless' investment through food, which relate to a broader political economy of food in the machinic archipelago and beyond. What is critical is that the food that arrives at the island-knots from several other places is *offered*: from places where food has become a surplus that nevertheless has to be consumed immediately —because it goes bad or expires— to places where food can indeed be consumed immediately —because someone there is in need of it. At a first level, the fact that food is offered and not bought or prepared with bought materials, may deprive it of exchange value. Food conduits therefore appear unidirectional; food is given to the homeless with nothing being given back.

Nevertheless, two points should be made here. First, along with other stuff offered in the machinic archipelago, food may in some cases and in complex ways regain an exchange value that is different than the conventional one. For

example, when offered food is re-offered from a homeless who has access to a specific place to another homeless who does not have this access, the action is perceived more an exchange than an offer: '[Arghíris] then told me: "Even if you were my girlfriend, I would not feed you *that* well!" They all do this. They give you [food] today so that you give *them* tomorrow'. Márkos perceives being offered food by Arghíris as an exchange, a giving that expects a giving back. Although similar concerns have been expressed widely by research participants, offer-as-offer has been a practice as common as offer-as-exchange, making the homeless' investment through food an ambiguous practice (see also Valentine & Longstaff, 1998).



FIGURE 23 Leak pies at the day centre. March 17, 2017.

The second and final point is that, although the food offered at the night shelter and day centre may seem deprived of economic value, the food conduits and often the materiality of the food itself reveal complex economic relations that produce these conduits. On March 17, 2017, for example, a box of pre-packaged leak pies arrived at the day centre (for the first and last time during the time of the fieldwork, see figure 23). As any food, they have been passed on to the homeless that day. Nevertheless, the packages allow us to track, to an extent, a certain political economy at play: the pies are initially distributed by another NGO to students of schools in Athens' low-income areas, as part of a 'food education' programme for kids; the NGO's programme is sponsored by the biggest cultural foundation in Greece, which is advertised on the packages; and, not having been consumed at the schools, the pies arrived at the day centre as they expire the day after, March 18, that is Saturday and thus schools are closed. Therefore, the two points above suggest that the food conduits that circulate and concentrate food in some of the archipelago's island-knots are more complex and politically and economically significant than the mere act of food-giving may suggest.

## LIFE IN PLASTIC, IT'S FANTASTIC?

On January 13, 2017, the national Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) visits the night shelter for a short TV coverage. Before leaving the building this morning, and prior to the video-cameras' arrival, the homeless are asked to remove some of their stuff from the second floor. Not everything. Precisely, they are asked to remove plastic bags hanging from the wall, below the numbered hooks. For some reason, the plastic bags have to become invisible to the viewers and are thus moved to the basement, which, in the words of the staff, was like this 'finally inaugurated'. Although from this day on Mímis will have to go three floors down in order to get some of his personal stuff, he sees all this movement as positive: 'It shows that there is some interest, no?!'

The homeless' investment is mostly wrapped in plastic. Plastic spoons, plastic forks, plastic knives. Toothbrushes and shaving sets become individualised in packages of plastic. Donations by big companies are organised in plastic bags. Freshly washed clothes are carried in plastic bags. Bread in plastic rubbish bags. Food arrives in big plastic containers; then it is transferred to other, smaller plastic containers. Plastic containers are put in plastic bags to be given away. Plastic bags are mostly blue plastic bags. In the machinic archipelago, the sooner the Greek word for (mainly plastic) bag, 'σακούλα' ['sakoúla'], is learnt, the easier the homeless survival. Even when staff and volunteers communicate with foreign homeless in English, 'plastic bag' is often 'sakoúla': 'Do you want a σακούλα to put your meal inside?' or 'My σακούλα got lost, I had left it right here! Fuck, they stole my σακούλα?!'. Sakoúla is, perhaps, the only materiality guaranteed in the machinic archipelago; one just needs to ask for it.



FIGURE 24 Hanging stuff at the night shelter, December 2016.

Due to its wide circulation, the plastic bag is also a widely recognisable object in the machinic archipelago: ‘I remember them arriving [at the night shelter] carrying always with them blue plastic bags! Do you [at the day centre] give them to them or do they find them elsewhere?’ The Shelter’s staff member was curious where all these plastic bags were coming from. The day centre is an important node for the circulation of plastic bags in the machinic archipelago. ‘Give him two [bags]’, an employee tells me *sotto voce* while an old man is ready to collect his washed clothes from the laundry; ‘he is obsessed with plastic bags’. Amidst the overall significant material shortage due to limited funding, an apparently low cost made the giving of plastic bags almost unconditional, unquestioned, automatic. Most homeless seem indifferent; they just get their bags and go away. Some others, though, may ask specifically for a *nontransparent* bag; or may put the blue plastic bag in another, *black* plastic bag: ‘It’s not necessary to be seen’. Such practices show how the intersection between visibility and materiality (Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2012) may be constitutive of homeless subjectivities through an item that is part of the homeless stigma and thus needs to be somehow hidden. As hidden plastic bags had been before ERT’s visit at the Shelter.

Parts of the homeless stigma, the bag and other plastic stuff invest the homeless in specific ways; homeless subjectivities are made *through* plastic —they are ‘becoming with plastic’ (Gabrys, Hawkins & Michael, 2013, p. 8). As a material, plastic does a lot to societies: it builds up dumps (Knowles, 2017); it relates to the ephemeral (Vincent, 2013); and may provoke feelings of disgust (Fisher, 2013). Plastic bags in particular are modern negative emblems of a ‘throwaway’ culture that activate policy responses (Ritch, Brennan & MacLeod, 2009; Clapp & Swanston, 2009); in the end, they are ‘single-use, cheap and flimsy. Rubbish’ (Klocker, Mbenna & Gibson, 2018, p. 2). Being invested through plastic, homeless subjects engage bodily with plastic as *material texture* of specific physical and cultural qualities; and, by taking, amongst others, the form of the bag, as an *object* wherein specific values are objectified and circulated.

The plastic that wraps a big part of the materialities of homeless investment performs a sense of disposability: cheap, almost valueless, non-enduring. Plastic may touch and smell —it feels— almost dirty, at least not pleasant. At the night shelter, every time Salim is given a new, unused plastic glass to drink his tea in, he washes it willfully with soap in order to get rid of the ‘dirt of the plastic’, as he says. By being offered massively, plastic bags are practiced as disposable. Like this, the possibilities for personal engagement are limited; for there is not much time for subjects to relate with these objects. After this *sakoúla*, another will come. The self has to relate and identify her/himself with something ephemeral, made of what Barthes has called ‘a disgraced material’ (1991, p. 98). In a period when the European Commission attempts to break plastic bag habits (EU, 2017), thus officially ‘stigmatising’ plastic bags and reshaping European citizenship, ‘other’ subjectivities, perhaps more ephemeral, are to a big extent materialised through this very stuff that, like part of the homeless bodies, circulates and

becomes visible throughout the machinic archipelago. Before it gets thrown away and gets replaced by the same materiality.

A few months after ERT's visit at the shelter, at the day centre another arrival is warmly welcomed by the personnel. Food from catering. In *paper* bags. Paper triggered a sort of celebration and performed a temporary positive shift of the quality of food provision. While carefully putting food portions in the paper bags, I am encouraged to exaggerate: 'Put more, put more! Once in a lifetime such a fortune!'.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, in a paranoia of excessive material provision, and notwithstanding the content that does not differ considerably from that of other days, giving food in those bags did feel different. It performed something more 'proper,' clean, of good quality, as if *bought* instead of offered, more consumerist; and, thanks to the paper's material opacity, the small plastic containers inside could not be seen from the outside. Paper bags felt both less stigmatised and, most importantly, less stigmatising.



FIGURE 25 Σακούλα. Day centre, March 2017.

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<sup>43</sup> 'Βάλε, βάλε! Μια φορά στη ζωή τέτοια τυχερά!' [Vále, vale! Mia forá sti zoí ta tiherá!].

## RESTRAINED MATERIALITY

Investment has its limits. Both the limited resources of the different nodes and the rules under which spaces function restrain the materiality of homeless subjects. At the day centre, shaving sets and toothbrushes are given only for use inside, within the two hours the homeless are allowed to stay. 'Here is not a supermarket, they cannot get anything they want', was the reaction of an employee of my shift when he saw me giving a second toothbrush, undercover. When no individual packages with shampoo are available, shampoo is poured from a family-size package into plastic glasses so that it is distributed to several squirts. Inevitably, some glasses end up with less shampoo than others.

-Can you give me a second [glass], please, so that I can shower better? a man asks.

-If you go to a five-star hotel, you'll get plenty of soap, the staff member responded.

-We don't ask for too much, just for some more shampoo to wash ourselves..., the man said and left to the bathroom.

Later the same man will justify his 'demand' to me with three simple words: 'We are *homeless*'. Although normally called 'clients', day centre users differ substantially from supermarket and five-star hotel clients. They receive materials but in a restrained manner; comfort should not be excessive and thus the homeless condition always remembered materially. 'Whichever sandwich you touch, you take', was told from the other side of the room to a man who was trying to find a sandwich of his taste on the breakfast counter. 'Mr. Karídis, your time is over and you are not allowed to eat here!' Few minutes earlier, in the kitchen, I had given to Símos some beans and Arabic bread; knowing very well the rules, he tried to eat secretly on one of the tables that were not very visible from the reception. Putting everything in his backpack, and leaving behind an ironic comment ('More papal than the Pope!')<sup>44</sup> that triggered reactions from the reception lady, Símos had once again experienced a paradox of investment: he did receive food; but he had to find another place to consume it. Luckily, that was a sunny day of late April and eating on a nearby bench was fine.

### *Lack of space*

'In here we are not allowed to have more', explained Dínos, who, besides his clothes, he only has brought at the hostel his guitar and some pictures of his daughter. As the loss of stuff during divestment is strongly related to the loss of space, investment is related, in various ways, to *limited* space, limited either in literally spatial terms or through regulations. Being homeless, Ánna is entitled to regular food provision at the social grocery store of the municipality. Not having a fridge and some storage space at the hostel though, she has to store the food at

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<sup>44</sup> 'Βασιλικότερη του Βασιλέως!' [Vassilikóteri tou vassiléos], literally meaning 'more royal than the king'.

her mother's place, whom she is not in good terms with. Anyway, at the hostel there is neither a kitchen where she could cook. A common practice is to keep some foodstuff in the bedroom and, when the sun goes down, move everything on the window ledge so that it is better preserved during the night.

We don't have the right to have any food we want. I don't know whether you noticed on the second floor, the announcements. There is a list there with all food that is allowed, we choose according to that list.

Besides the lack of space and infrastructure, the type of food that is consumed in hostels is subject to regulations. Below is the list Lína from the NGO hostel is talking about, a list titled 'Foods to be consumed outside eating schedule', and which defines her investment through food:

Fruits

Yogurt

Rusks

Bread

Cheese

Cured meat products

Milk

Tea

Coffee

Juices

Croissants etc. (sic) only pre-packaged and with expiration date

'There is no personal space. In here rules dominate'. Notwithstanding the rules, some of the residents may try to personalise their limited space by, say, putting some framed pictures on the wall. Even in these cases though, the bedroom is perceived not so much as 'their own' but '*as if* it were their own', as he said. For Kostís, taking care of his bedroom as if it were his own is a deliberate personal practice: 'I don't want to feel the space here mine. For, if I start doing so, this will mean that it's my own choice to live here'. This is just one of the ways for him to construct a very specific, less stigmatised subjectivity: one that does not choose to live at the hostel and is thus different from the rest of the homeless who are mostly homeless by choice.

#### *Leaving stuff at the shelter's entrance*

Zafeíris is a 37-year-old day centre user who sleeps rough on a small and quiet square close to the Acropolis. After we got to know each other a little better, he started asking questions about the night shelter, knowing my involvement there. Living for three years now in the machinic archipelago, he obviously knows the shelter's existence. His questions betray a reserved, timid interest. But in the end,

the discussion would end up with an overt discouragement: no, he was not ready to part with his belongings that were ‘too many to be allowed at the shelter’. This brings us to Minás’ mainly negative memories of the shelter, where he would sleep for a small period before moving to the hostel he lives now. Through a juxtaposition, he narrates:

Here (at the hostel) I have my bed, my wardrobe, inside the wardrobe all my clothes, my suitcases below the bed... Oh! *There* (at the Night Shelter) you were not allowed to take your suitcase upstairs with you! [...] Terrible!

Indeed, besides their wallets, documents and mobile phones, Shelter users are allowed to carry very limited stuff; the ones really necessary such as one change of clothes, slippers, nightclothes, and anything they want to eat. Zafeíris has heard about this and Minás has experienced it. Restraining possessions like this is part of the shelter’s general policy to not let its users feel comfortable *therein*. And not even *outside* as the homeless have to carry around some of their stuff all day long if they cannot find alternative spaces to store it.

For the homeless subjects, it is the shelter’s entrance that performs their restrained materiality, upon their arrival. Whether they like it or not, here the newcomers learn to get rid of their stuff; and to move upstairs with only the really necessary. Here homeless subjects become materially lighter. The rules permit only one small suitcase per person to be stored in the entrance’s small makeshift wardrobe. When the wardrobe’s sliding door opens, a messy material mosaic appears: plastic bags, suitcases, boxes, backpacks and many other objects in a vertical disorder. Today the social worker is present at the entrance in order to help the rest of the staff, especially right after the Shelter’s opening that the flow of people waiting outside is pressing. The social worker asks Hamza to reduce his stuff. Reducing stuff in these cases means two things: either compressing everything in one single suitcase or throwing stuff away. Hamza hesitantly opens the wardrobe behind him; with one plastic bag, a shoe box and a backpack, he obviously knows he might be in trouble. Stuff has to be disciplined. After trying calmly to put everything in the backpack, he regrets to give the shoes to the social worker: ‘In case someone else needs them...’. Moments of restraining one’s materiality at the entrance are affective; they make visible the homeless’ material loss and emotional reactions as well as puts the rest of people, mainly the staff and volunteers, in an uncomfortable position of having to impose the rule and, at the same time, observe its awkward effects on homeless subjects.

Aahil follows Hamza in the line; he too has ‘too much stuff’. In English, the social worker asks him ‘to fix them’. Although Aahil knows very well what this means, the social worker will need to repeat many times, changing the tone of her voice: ‘To fix them!’ Aahil says he will remove them tomorrow before leaving; he is aware that like this he will be able to take his stuff to some friends or another place. He even refuses to open the wardrobe. ‘To fix them!’ The tone is becoming more pressing and he decides to move. He wedges a plastic bag with shoes in

between his two bags. All stuff together shapes a vertical fragile mass, balancing in difficulty. Fragile is the atmosphere too. The social worker gets angry and asks Aahil to remove everything from the wardrobe. He gets angry too. Two plastic bags are bound on both sides of his backpack; he is asked to reduce the volume. Aahil puts everything on the floor and stands passively leaning against the wall. He refuses a further restrained materiality. 'You are not going upstairs before you fix them!'. That was the last phrase I heard as I had immediately to move upstairs to start giving towels to the people who had started taking a shower. But since I saw Aahil upstairs later that evening, I guess that, in a way or another, he was less material.

### **MATERIALS OF THE SELF**

The first days Manólis was sleeping at the night shelter, he would always carry with him a book; even when he would just come to the laundry room to get a clean towel for his shower. Years ago, he wrote this book himself along with his now deceased wife. Every time he would introduce himself to a staff member or a volunteer, the book would be in his hands, like an extension of himself. He would quickly go through the pages explaining the story. And, although it was never realised, he would promise a copy to many of us —only the shelter's director did take one. As many other homeless, Manólis apparently felt 'out of place' those very first days. But the book, *his* book, would make him different from the rest of the users. Less stigmatised. With it always in his hands he was still 'out of place' yet in his own, different way; he was still Manólis in the shelter instead of 'a(ny) homeless' at the Shelter.

What the book did to Manólis in the beginning will later on be done by his branded clothes or by an expensive face cream. In the homeless geographies of Athens, within a condition of divestment and restrained materiality, stuff acquires an emphasised importance in the making of homeless subjectivities. For where materials are fewer, they may matter more. All the complex, messy, dynamic, unpredictable, continuous, reciprocal, tactical, precognitive, and, to an extent, ungraspable ways in which homeless subjects both relate and *don't* relate with homeless objects in the machinic archipelago culminate to more explicit performances that emphasise the self, mark social difference amongst the homeless and help subjects deal with the homeless stigma. These performances of difference become possible through possessions; new or old possessions, the latter as remainders of a past materiality that homeless subjects strongly relate with.

In general, material possession itself is often emphasised. Having one's *own* bedlinen, pillows and towels at the hostel performs a homeless subjectivity that, in her/his personal ways, resists a total material dependence from the machinic

archipelago, as a total investment would have performed. At the shelter, I was repeatedly reminded that some homeless that they had *their own* shampoos and shower gels. Especially when this ‘own stuff’ would come in a bigger than usual package —let alone bigger than the single-use packages provided usually— its possession is further demonstrated. No need to get *everything* from here; the homeless subjects still have —and perform— a capacity to decide on the way and, above all, the stuff they get invested through.

Pantelís is having his shift at the night shelter’s entrance. Right after having controlled a middle-aged man and while the man is heading to the elevator to go to the second floor, Pantelís asks him: ‘But... Do you want me to get you a [new] jacket?’ Indeed, it is a chilly evening and the man is dressed just with a cotton blouse. ‘No, dear, thanks. I have *two* [jackets] upstairs’, looking around until his gaze is crossed with the next homeless man entering —who, *perhaps*, had only one. In his arrogant style, the man had already performed a sense of self through material possession: a homeless who has not one but *two* jackets; and a homeless who, in this way, seems to be different from the next one in the line, with whom he will probably sleep in the same a room tonight. In any case, around the man impressions were managed (Goffman, 1956).

‘They are the most valuable thing I’m left with’, Manólís said giving me a pair of DIESEL jeans to be washed at the shelter. Reminders of a past life but parts of the same self, homeless stuff that has survived de-materialisation performs a sense of ‘normality’ that negotiates the homeless stigma. With his big, blue Polaroid brand sunglasses, Mímis definitely does not look like what many people would expect a homeless to look like. From his confident way of walking along Athinás street, he seems to know it. When I told him that they suit him, he said that they come from his ‘normal life’. ‘I am homeless but do own a car!’ Yórgos surprised me in the middle of our interview. Besides the various costs that make car ownership extremely difficult to handle, and although sometimes he has no money to put gas in and move the car, he refuses to sell it: ‘It allows me to calm down, to take a ride. Just to take a ride, I feel normal’. Subjects and (remaining) objects hold each other tight together shaping homeless subjectivities that, through material fragments of the past, still relate to what is understood as a lost ‘normality’. A sudden loss of these remaining objects performs another material schism for the homeless subject. One day, Manólís did not find the two shirts he had put in the laundry. As the shelter takes no responsibility in these cases, he had to admit the loss in a deeply emotional moment: ‘Somebody will have a good Easter. He (sic) will sell these shirts for five euros each whereas they costed me 150...’. He then went to the first floor to find some new shirts in order ‘to calm down a bit’, as he said. Paradoxically, homeless subjects can be divested while being invested.

Possession is not *only* to be emphasised as stuff sometimes performs homeless subjectivities that may be perceived as ‘too different’ or ‘not so homeless’. ‘Hey! You got new shoes you bastard!’. His friend’s reaction made Mímis smirk, look

towards the ground and move his feet awkwardly while waiting for the shelter's opening, together with others. Newly possessed items, such as a new pair of shoes that has obviously been *bought* and *not donated*, can mark a social distance that, although desired, may feel inappropriate and thus needs to be regulated in certain contexts. Kostís has clothes that 'do not suit at the hostel'. After his failed efforts to mar them a bit, to make them look more used, he moved them in a storage room where he returns to regularly in order to exchange. He feels ashamed to have all these clothes, which can provoke other residents that have less stuff. Lámbros takes his headphones out of his backpack in order to show them to me; they are collectible, carefully protected in a brown purse. 'I never wear them here (at the day centre), *on purpose*'. In these instances, personal difference and more-than-homeless subjectivities are performed but remain personal. And although parts of the homeless subject, they have to be kept invisible. It seems that the homeless stigma should not be scratched off too much.

## WHERE THINGS BECOME RUBBISH: CONDUITS OF DIVESTMENT AND DISPOSAL

It was around six thirty in the morning when two municipality officers with a little van, followed by a patrol car, arrived outside of Símos' shack in a central neighbourhood; allegedly the Mayor had ordered the dismantling of the shack. Símos responded facetiously that, if *they* had an order from the Mayor, *he* had one from God: an order to keep living on that very spot. After explaining that his presence there is temporary and that he does not bother anyone around and being supported by few neighbours who started videoing the scene with their smartphones, he managed to convince them to leave. Nevertheless:

In the meantime, those fuckers had started ripping out [the shack], they grabbed two bags from therein! And then I went to the Municipality and told them 'guys, why my personal stuff?'. They said 'they have taken them to Ierá Odós, you can go and get them back'. I went there, nothing.

Where Símos was advised to go is the City of Athens Waste Department. And ironically enough, as happened with Símos' own stuff, homeless stuff may end up there; where he can go and retrieve it. But, moved to that place, will his stuff be still *his stuff*? For material belongings to end up at the city's Waste Department, there exists a whole practice that affects homeless materialities and hence homeless subjects. Conduits of divestment become conduits of disposal. This practice is carried out by the same Department. 'Anything left in public space is considered a pollutant<sup>45</sup> by law', the Department's head made clear starting our discussion. *Anything* left. *Anything left*. But homeless stuff in public space are not 'anything'; they are materials like the ones housed people use in their daily lives. And they are definitely not 'left' either; they are somehow ordered in somehow protected spots of the city. In Símos' case, for example, 'anything' is two personal bags and 'left' means kept inside his shanty.

The Department's aim is to restore the space [of the homeless] and clean it up. This is our duty, the fact that someone may be living there does not matter. In the end, we do all this for the homeless' own good.

With this intention, two municipal clerks with a small truck and a pressure-wash vehicle arrive at the spot. The homeless then has to stand up and pack her/his stuff up so that the spot is cleaned up, through what is known as 'hot washing' (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2010). Police are always present 'in case of need'.

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<sup>45</sup> 'Ρύπος' [rípōs].



FIGURE 26 'Hot washing' the pavement outside the day centre. Three rough sleepers have just moved their belongings elsewhere.

Everything happens according to the law and belongings are protected. Both the Waste Department's head and the chief of Athens' central sector (that covers mainly the historical centre area) assured me that all stuff is handled according to the possessor's will and nothing is thrown away if the person does not ask so. But what if the owner is not there? With the practice happening between morning and early afternoon, it is very possible that the homeless have left their spots and are moving through the machinic archipelago for their daily needs. 'We collect all stuff in case the homeless wants it back. But we are not obliged to do so'.

Both discursively and practically, the Waste Department makes homeless stuff 'out of place' (Cresswell, 1996) in a restored and ordered city centre—or, at least, desired as such. Thus made, homeless stuff transgresses Athens' spatial purity and order like '[signs] of symbolic pollution' (Arapoglou, 2004b, p. 628). This practice *in situ* is only one part of dealing with homeless stuff. For, when out of place, this matter has to be moved to its (new) place, to get fixed somewhere else so that it is finally made 'in place' again. Homeless materialities extend quite beyond the machinic archipelago without, of course, being independent from it. In a 'follow-the-thing' part of the methodology (Cook, 2004), and after getting the permission by the Waste Department, one morning I arrive at Ierá Odós, the 'sacred way', where Símos was told that his stuff was kept waiting for him. Or, according to the Social Services Department of the City of Athens Homeless Shelter, where homeless stuff 'is stored'. In this resisting industrial area, just three kilometers west of Omónoia, I enter the huge yard that is separated from the street with a tall metallic gate. The guard and his dogs welcome me warmly. He knows why I am here and he takes me straight to the spot. The dogs are following us. The yard is a parking lot for rubbish lorries, there is no sign that something can be stored or kept here. I am following though; the gods too. The lot is covered with cement.

Finally, we arrive at the storage room: a relatively big room on the ground floor, with broken windows and no door. Flies and an unpleasant smell, that of dust and time mixed together. Black rubbish bags are thrown on the floor. The Municipality's emblem on them adds an ironic, negligible sense of 'order'. Stuff, blankets, jackets, books, other clothes are coming out escaping the bags' dark interior; as if they wanted to make themselves visible again. A material mass wrapped in black plastic. A thrown bamboo chair somewhere in the middle. 'Here these things become rubbish', the guard says. Dogs enter to find shelter on a rainy day or simply urinate. Sometimes he saw rats. Some of the Department's clerks may dig into the mass looking for something useful or valuable: 'I've no clue what the hell they expect to find'.

After being separated from their owners, these processes transform homeless stuff: here possessions turn into rubbish, as 'conduits of disposal [are] implicated in changes of value' (Hetherington, 2004, p. 165). Formerly personal materials are put in plastic bags; then gathered all together in a disorderly whole; and, all together like this, they are gradually degraded by being left for long. 'The last four years that I work here, only one homeless has come to ask for his belongings'. Besides the initial physical separation, with the march of time and the material practices of animals and other people the belongings' materiality is slowly transformed, deteriorated, decomposed and finally recomposed as something else. Eventually, in its 'potent afterlife' (Thrift, 2008, p. 9), it becomes a rubbish materiality that is less and less connected to the subject that used to own and use the stuff. Sheets of paper stapled on the bags announce the exact spot the content was found. Kleitiou 5. Stadiou 22. These traces of a past ownership, rather than relating to the homeless subject, now relate homeless stuff —better: homeless *rubbish*— to a faceless address of 'a homeless'.

Therefore, there exist complex yet explicit processes of divestment in the homeless geographies of Athens that affect the making of homeless subjectivities. Although the homeless' possessions are often considered as trash and thus cleansed during evictions (Speer, 2016b; see also Walby, 2012), divestment may also be performed through the *transformation*, not simply consideration, of homeless stuff into valueless stuff. Reinforced by a cleanliness-and-order discourse, possessions in public space are separated from their owners (see also Wasserman & Clair, 2010). The material separation between subject and object is spatial: stuff is first moved to a specific place, away from the homeless possessor; and then, in that very place, the materiality of this stuff gradually yet radically changes as its 'temporal and physical limits' are reached (Gregson, Crang, Ahamed, Akhter & Ferdous, 2010, p. 853). Transformed into rubbish — put in black plastic bags, piled up on the floor, worn down by time, animals and humans, left *there*— homeless objects are not part of homeless subjects anymore. And even if tags on the bags somehow relate to faceless homeless possessors who are less material than before, the Waste Department have done their job: they have produced waste.





FIGURE SESSION 3 Things becoming rubbish.

## **CONCLUSIONS: CULTURAL MATERIAL GEOGRAPHIES OF 'OTHER' CONSUMERS**

The birth and further making of homeless subjectivities happens (also) through complex processes of material divestment. A 'material schism' performs, in different degrees and various manners, the homeless' separation from their belongings, leaving the subjects with a compressed materiality. The importance of stuff becomes evident in the different ways different homeless subjects attempt to negotiate the experienced material schism and limit divestment to the possible extent. Once found in the machinic archipelago of Athens, the divested homeless are actively involved in specific material geographies, where stuff now takes the form of things of care (Lancione, 2016b). Clothes and food, amongst others, are the stuff that perform a certain investment for homeless subjects, which compensates their divestment. Yet, investment is neither complete nor unregulated nor neutral; stuff is involved in specific practices that affect the making of homeless subjects. Rules and limited resources define to a considerable effect the homeless materialities, by limiting their possessions for example. The domination of plastic, especially in the widespread form of the blue plastic bag, may reproduce ideas of disposability, non-value, and stigma. And the food conduits which the different places are involved in may be relating to a larger political economy that complicates and politicises the material practice of offering stuff that appear to have zero value. In such a condition of restrained materiality, personal belongings, mainly as remainders of the previous, non-homeless lives, acquire an emphasised importance for many homeless subjects. At the same time, conduits of divestment that expand from the machinic archipelago outwards may separate some homeless from their stuff, transforming the latter into rubbish.

As Cook and Tolia-Kelly note (2010), the material cultural geographies of poorer people, such as the homeless, should not be further neglected and call for attention that opposes simplistic Eurocentric accounts of 'consumption' and 'production'. And, I argue, they should not be neglected for three main reasons. First, because practices and conduits of divestment, constitutive of these material geographies, are not always matters of one's choice (Gregson et al., 2007) but inevitable, forced and schismatic. Second, if we not only consume 'in order to become' but also consume 'according to who we are' (Mansvelt, 2005, p. 81-82), receiving and consuming material provision as a poor or homeless ought to be seen as another, particular practice of consumption, which may leave considerably limited space for choice, perhaps contrary to 'conventional' consumption. Yet, it nevertheless affects one's becoming and social position by relating, for instance, to apparently valueless materials or materials that are socially loaded in certain, minoritarian ways. Third, and extending from the previous point, the material geographies and conduits wherein the homeless find

themselves matter for the latter's subjectivities not as material geographies *per se* but rather because they are enacted in broader social, spatial and cultural dynamics.

As consumption has become increasingly pivotal in social and cultural life (Bauman, 2007), the homeless, with their visible dispossession and incapacity to consume, become the consumer's Other in spectacularised urban environments (Gerrard & Farrugia, 2014). But in the spaces of the machinic archipelago, the homeless reacquire their lost capacity to consume. However, it is a capacity to consume certain materials, in certain places, in certain ways. If subjectivities are 'constituted within [the] folding of spaces and things' (Hetherington, 1997, p. 187), homeless subjectivities are constituted through the folding of the archipelago's different spaces and the things consumed (or *not* consumed) therein. The washed clothes, plastic bags, packages of foodstuff, stuff that become rubbish, and the other materialities in this chapter, point that the homeless are definitely not non-consumers; instead, they are made as '*other* consumers'. Other consumers who have been previously divested; who may largely depend on material conduits that are perceived and practiced as economically valueless or disposable; and who, in their investment, get materialised through paternalistic practices of offering.



FIGURE 27 Shaving and brushing-teeth sets. Day centre, May 2017.



FIGURE 28 Karaiskáki square, November 2016.

## CHAPTER SIX

### No Cloaks on Homeless Bodies

#### ABSTRACT

This chapter attempts to ‘uncloak’ the homeless bodies arguing that, in their mutual making with space in the machinic archipelago, bodies are central to the making of homeless subjectivities in inherently multiple and material ways. The machinic archipelago becomes the place where ideas of cleanliness and dirt are negotiated by the homeless through bodily practices, in a struggle to ‘seal themselves off’ from the other homeless and perform some sense of ‘normality’ and ‘order’; countering the stigma. Homeless subjectivities are made through the materiality of their bodies in multiple ways: with the bodies being maps of the past; by adjusting to the difficult conditions of everyday survival; by engaging in bodily practices of receiving and ingesting food; through clothes as active elements of bodies in the making; and through affective atmospheres perceived bodily. The chapter closes with some general considerations putting the bodily making of homeless subjectivities in Athens in a broader context.

*Τα κορμιά είναι συσκευές που αναδίδουν νοήματα ακατάπαυστα, τόσο μιλώντας όσο και σωμαίνοντας. [...] Η σάρκα είναι ενσαρκωμένη ιστορία, υποστασιοποιημένος χρόνος, εξωτερικότητα που δεν της λείπει η εσωτερικότητα —δυναμισμός τέλος πάντων που αντιπροσωπεύει μοναδικό κεφάλαιο ζωής.*

Κωστής Παπαγιώργης, 2016, 'Ο Εαυτός', Αθήνα: Καστανιώτης

*Bodies are devices that give meanings off incessantly, both by speaking and by hushing. [...] The flesh is incarnated history, beingness of time, outsideness that does not lack insideness —anyway a dynamism that represents a unique life capital.*

Kostís Papayórghis, 2016, 'The Self', Athens: Kastaniótis

Those were her first days at the night shelter. When we entered the café, and walking towards an empty table, Élsa stopped for a second; and so did I —until that moment and spot, our bodies were synchronised. ‘My hands look ugly! I don’t have a nail clipper to cut my nails’, she said so looking at her hands, half frustrated half annoyed. She seemed to me like a big child thinking out loud. She confessed she did not feel comfortable there, she did not feel *suited* to the place. It was the cafeteria of the Greek National Theatre. And I had suggested so for simple reasons: it is located in the archipelago’s heart, less than 200 meters away from Omónia square; it is considerably affordable; almost never crowded or with loud music, positive elements for a well-recorded interview; and I was expecting that especially Élsa would appreciate it. She has worked for many years in theatres; in fact, later on she will tell me that the place’s atmosphere felt familiar. Nevertheless, the plan had, at least for a moment, failed. Élsa’s body felt inappropriate; surrounded by the cafeteria’s well-curated aesthetics, her long and slightly blackened nails, especially on their edges, performed her entire body as out of place. It took us only a joke and a few seconds to sit at the table but our bodies were now less synchronised.

The ‘homeless body’ is not absent from geographical, and not only, literature. Indeed, marked so differently than what we could, perhaps too generically, call the ‘academic body’ (see though Tolia-Kelly, 2017), it could not have been ignored in academic research. Although barely ever in their centre, studies have stressed the importance of the body for both the homeless condition and broader social dynamics. Yet, besides very few exceptions, the homeless body is dressed with a light, thin cloak in order to traverse literature: it is there but not *fully* there, helpful for the argument but barely ever *the* argument. Roughly, the ‘cloaked homeless body’ is present in the literature in three distinct but often overlapping ways as presented below.

Firstly, it is what carries ‘dirt’ within and for society (Hodgetts, 2012; Toft, 2014; Watson, 2000, Wright, 2000). Perceived as dirty, dangerous, filthy and trashy both discursively and materially, the homeless body needs to be regulated so that the public imagination is restored and stays unthreatened. Regulation in this sense often means cleaning up a homeless spot and pushing the homeless away. Through its ‘dirt’, the homeless body separates the homeless off the society (see also Smith, 2014) with the latter reacting against this separation aiming to restore a desired order. Above all though, this body does much more than simply dividing and isolating the deviant homeless from the rest of society; it relates to broader social dynamics wherein homelessness ought to be located. In a society of spectacle, aesthetics and high consumerism, visible homeless bodies are the ‘stains and blights on the city space’ (Gerrard and Farrugia, 2015, p. 3) —or are *another* spectacle? In this spectacularised space, and through encounters with ‘consuming bodies,’ the dirty presence of the homeless body is part of everyday visual discourses, wherein the Other is made and reproduced as carrier of ‘social pollution’ (Urry, 1995, p. 188). What Gerrard and Farrugia (2015) importantly stress then is how inter-related the homeless body is with the aesthetic politics of

consumer capitalism (for a discussion on the homeless body and contemporary urban ideologies, see also Hillis, 2008).

The second way in which the homeless body is present in research, and here its shape under the cloak starts changing, is in order to re-gender the homeless subject by giving visibility to female homelessness. Reshaped like this, the homeless body becomes mainly a critique against homelessness as a masculinist (academic) construction. Commenting on how 'the homeless' is either an androgynous or a male figure, and stressing the significant increase in visible female homelessness in the UK, May, Cloke and Johnsen (2007) talk about other homeless bodies: it is through the circulation in and population of the city's 'homeless spaces' by female bodies 'that prior codes of signification—"woman", "homeless"—come together and are (re-animated, constructing particular and situated identities shaped in part by questions of *visibility* (p. 127, original emphasis). This visibility of the feminine homeless body, Watson says (2000), challenges the predominant, highly domestic, feminine bodies of the mother or wife in a way that housed women are kept in their place; 'by her presence [the homeless woman] becomes a reminder to all women of what they may become if they step out of line' (p. 168).

Following, and as a third way, it is important to briefly discuss two specific studies that contribute significantly to theorising the homeless body, especially because they approach it straightforwardly. In the seminal article *The Homeless Body*, Kawash (1998) traces how the 'public' and the 'homeless' are made as two separate entities. It is this distinction that, however discursive or/and ideological, shape something completely concrete: the homeless body, as opposed to a 'phantom public'. Through and in the homeless body, exclusion is materialised as an event; the few remaining possessions carried around, along with specific activities carried out in public, continuously shape a 'particular mode of corporeality' (p. 324). Materialised like this, the homeless body develops a twofold relation with space: it is in a state of continuous movement across it, which results in placelessness; and is located in 'geographies of containment' that are strongly defined by and limited to the services that facilitate the homeless body's needs.

The second study worthy discussing here is Wardhaugh's on the 'unaccommodated woman' (1999). Although the homeless body is not as central an argument as in Kawash's work, Wardhaugh is however at pains to illustrate the importance of the (material) body in the everyday lives of both female and male homeless. Specifically, she notes: '[lacking] access to that second skin, the home, the homeless body becomes the first and often only line of defense against a dangerous world' (p. 102). Indeed, the loss of home—or a more general reduction of possessions as Kawash reminds us—increases the importance of the body as a material boundary under the homeless' control. The response to this precariousness, in order to achieve some physio-psychological security, takes mainly two forms in space: contraction, that is a reduction of the visibility and

spatiality of the body; and expansion, that is expanding the body's presence in many different places by claiming them (a male-dominated tactic).

All the aforementioned approaches point towards, pivotal to this work, possibilities for critical engagements with the homeless body. To further expand these directions and possibilities, I suggest that we uncloak as much as possible this body —better, these bodies— by centering it in an empirical, grounded and spatial way aiming to render it less silenced, less motionless and less immaterial, as some of the above cited studies may unintentionally do. For the body 'never remains silent for long' (Nast and Pile, 1998, p. 9). Uncloaked like this, homeless bodies become the active sites through which the homeless selves are physically enacted and performed towards the outside (Parsell, 2011; see also Cloke, May & Johnsen, 2008). This enactment, though, contributes to internalizing homelessness making it part of oneself. Habitually then, homeless subjectivities are made as the homeless condition is experienced through 'a fully embodied and affective experience which is mediated by spatial and intersubjective processes' (Farrugia, 2011, p. 74). Daya and Wilkins (2012) provide a cultural geographical account of the homeless body. Relating with other spatialities, the body is the homeless' affective space where senses of home and belonging are negotiated and achieved, in practical and less rational material ways, such as drinking. And, focusing on its physicality, Higate (2000b) stresses how crucial the body is for the material making of masculine homeless subjectivities: the body is physically tested in difficult conditions; it continues previous embodied experiences; and it actively interacts with the food it receives.

Engaging with this small research niche, this chapter is about homeless bodies in the machinic archipelago. To understand how bodies and archipelago interrelate and shape homeless subjectivities, some of 'the particular ways in which spatial relationships come together to make bodies and places, *through the body and through places*, [are] exemplified, demonstrated and clarified, *in places, through the body*' (Nast and Pile, 1998, p. 4, emphasis added). Such spatial relationships are, for example, the interplay between the clean and the dirty body, the marked body, the nourished body, the dressed body, and the mirrored body, all practiced in the machinic archipelago. Arguing against any reification of 'the body' (Turner, 2008), the chapter's aim is to empirically pluralise '*the homeless body*'. This pluralisation is sought by embracing the personal, the subjective and the contextual of embodied experience and meanings, and by embracing the body's inherent multiplicity — the empirical and theoretical bodies within 'the body'. By and large, the various bodies that are somehow becoming fleshy through the following words have three simultaneous qualities, as suggested by Longhurst (2001, p. 5): they are 'real' in their 'weighty materiality'; they are constructed socially; and find themselves in a constant 'state of becoming with places', the latter being the archipelago's spatialities. Before starting then, I invite the readers to imagine a continuous discursive-material merging of places into bodies and of bodies into spaces —and a synchronous emerging of homeless subjectivities.

## IS ANEWBODY HERE?

Through different degrees of dematerialisation, the homeless' dispossession of their belongings emphasises another materiality that remains; more personal than any other: their own bodies. After having secured all his stuff, Lámbros realised one thing: 'It was then difficult *for my own body* to cover its needs'. With few other possessions around them, 'the extension of the homeless [bodies] in the world is pressed closer and closer to the bodily boundary marked out by the skin' (Kawash, 1998, p. 331). Homeless bodies matter for homeless subjects. Once on the street, the bodies' materiality undergoes substantial changes. New odours and a new skin, which develops unprecedented marks and discharges, remake the subjects' bodies and calls for negotiations.

The time he was living in his car, Andréas experienced the paradox of not being recognised by people he knew; so much had his face changed, or so much people pretended to not recognise him, as he assumes. But it was below his clothes that the homeless body was in its more drastic making. He recalls:

At times I had blisters, pimples, pimples with pus. [...] I had a found a camping gas and would heat up water in a tinplate that I had cut, would go to the side and... [...] I would take two, three undershirts, a small towel and the heated water and, in the middle of the winter, I would go at a corner to clean my genitalia.

The skin, then, starts giving off undesired odours. Yánnis stresses how the inability to wash himself, while being on the street, and the odours inevitably given off by his body made him feel uncomfortable —not (only) for the others around but for his own self:

I don't know if you have ever approached people who... [stink] [...] Up to two days it is acceptable, ok, armpits start smelling, but on the third and fourth day you start getting soaked in sweat and it's... a bit... unpleasant. *For the person himself.*

Smell changes the relation between the self and the body. Smell marks the self through the body. After his bodily odour changed, although his makeshift ways to deal with it, Andréas *still* feels that odour is present on himself:

Even now that I take a shower two or three times a week, I *feel* that I'm smelly. Smell of sweat... Most of the times it is just in my mind. [...] Like when you go

to the pissoir and flick your thing (penis) and always leaves something... This smell, so, is as if I have it from then, *as if I am carrying it with me*.<sup>46</sup>

Feelings of a persistent smell were shared by many research participants who nevertheless could wash themselves regularly, given their access to the archipelago's facilities. Like drops of urine that may remain on one's body after a visit at the pissoir, odours such as that of sweat, which were first emitted on the street, may mark the homeless bodies in such a material way that the self is changed. The homeless is now made not as *anybody* but rather as *anewbody*: a new material self, located in the archipelago.

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<sup>46</sup> 'Σα να την κουβαλάω μαζί μου' [sa na tin kouvaláo mazí mou].

## RUBBISH PERSONS?

‘We are balancing above the shit’. This is how Símos understands his daily life and efforts to make it as dignified as possible. Along with smell, blisters and pimples, what surrounds the materiality of new homeless bodies is a certain and powerful idea of dirt, of pollution, diffused all over the city’s machinic archipelago. ‘Capitalism produces also waste’<sup>47</sup> and the homeless are one sort of it, Lámbros believes including himself in that ‘waste’. The lives and time of the homeless are seen and felt as thrown in the rubbish, an often-cited metaphor used by the homeless. ‘I feel sometimes down, that I am rubbish. I became a *rubbish person*’, Rahim confesses, whilst Arghíris gives an example:

They (at public services) see you like rubbish.<sup>48</sup> [...] One [civil servant] tells [another one] ‘help the sir, please’ and the other one keeps staying far away. I tell her ‘I don’t have cholera, I just want to explain you what I need’ [...] As if I would contaminate her...<sup>49</sup>

The smell of a body that had to stay on the street all day long, as in the case of night shelter users, often provokes facial expressions of disgust and aversion for the personnel. The face may turn itself away when the homeless body is proximate. And leaving the day centre after the end of the shift, staff members may express a desire ‘to take a loooong bath’, accompanied by a movement of the arms passing above their body downwards —as if ridding their skin of *something*.

Rahim’s sense of himself as a ‘rubbish person’ is not independent from practices taking place in the machinic archipelago, and specifically at the shelter, where he sleeps. The use of gloves by members of the personnel and volunteers in order to have physical contact with the materialities of the homeless users reinforces ideas of dirt and pollution on the homeless bodies. ‘I tell them (the staff) “Motherfucker, you go to the toilet, you clean your shit, am I worse than this shit?! *You use gloves?* Do you treat us like this?” You know what I mean?’ I knew what he meant. This is why I had decided from the very beginning of the research to not use gloves in my contacts with the homeless. Often, the materialities surrounding the homeless bodies are perceived as dirty even if they are supposed to be the opposite. For example, white plastic gloves may be used by staff and volunteers when *clean* clothes are taken out from the laundry or the dryer; or when a mug is given by the homeless in order to be exchanged with a new one by the staff. The gloves that mediate such physical contacts between the staff and

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<sup>47</sup> ‘Ο καπιταλισμός παράγει και απόβλητα’ [o kapitalismós paráyi ke arónlita].

<sup>48</sup> ‘Σε βλέπουν για σκουπίδι’ [se vlépoun gia skoupídi].

<sup>49</sup> ‘Λες και θα την κόλλαγα ψώρα’ [les ke tha tin kóllaga psóra].

volunteers, and the homeless and their stuff perform the homeless bodies as distant, potentially dangerous and polluted in moments of a slightly sterilised touching —wrapped in white latex.

## CLEAN HOMELESS DO NOT WORRY

'A *clean homeless* just came out of the shower, yeah!!!' Márkos celebrated bringing me his used towel. For him, putting the words 'clean' and 'homeless' so close to each other and uttering them aloud was a sort of sarcasm, something both strange and funny. The dirty homeless body often provokes feelings of shame whilst it may trigger suspicions that it is kept dirty on purpose: to attract attention and compassion and beg effectively, for example. On the contrary, the clean homeless body is heralded as a personal achievement, keeping the subject away from all this and the stigma it carries: 'No, no! I was not dirty! Wait, we have to make it clear: I was NOT dirty!' Besides all the difficulties of street life, Leftéris insisted there was something making him different. Dirt is 'a signifier of imperfection and inferiority' (Sibley, 1995, p. 14). With the homeless subjects made as new bodies and being surrounded by the idea of dirt and rubbish, the machinic archipelago is the place(s) where bodies can be taken care of and dirtiness can be negotiated. The therein spaces of care shape the possibilities for maintaining the homeless bodies in various and often contradictory ways. Therefore, general ideas and practices of cleanliness have to be considered in relation to the homeless bodies, as they actively shape homeless subjectivities and position the subjects as distinct, as much as possible away from 'the (rest of the) homeless'.

Staying clean, unpolluted, untouched by the homeless stigma, has been emphasised by all research participants. Agathí shows me how 'clean and tidy' her bedroom at the shelter is, taking care even of the second bed that is neither hers nor used by anyone else for the moment; it is because *she wants it* to be like this, I am told. Stéfanos has asked the cleaning ladies of the hostel to not clean his room; he does it himself along with his roommate, using their own detergents. Minás is proud to say that he receives congratulations for cleaning the hostel's kitchen, on his shift every Thursday:

I asked for vinegar, vinegar to clean. And then a psychologist came, Eléni, and said 'bravo, the original cleaning!' I was washing the tables upside down, the sinks, the sink was shining, everybody froze! [...] And then [the staff] were saying 'guys, you have to clean as Minás does' [...] They were telling me they were happy every Thursday. And I liked that thing!

In front of the 'experts', as he calls them—the social workers and psychologists present—he then explained how important it is to clean so well, better than others; in front of the hostel's 'experts', Minás had performed perfectly the clean homeless who, maybe, deserves his place therein.

Cleanliness is presented as a personal principle, a clear evidence that someone is not ‘useless’ and, above all, the way *par excellence* to perform normality. A normality that pulls the homeless subjects away and differentiates them from other homeless. Hamza has been assured by the Night Shelter’s personnel that he should not worry about his situation and that everything will be fine as he is ‘one of the nicest and *cleanest* persons’ living there —‘so don’t you worry!’. Hamza is ‘nice and clean’ also regarding his bed at the Shelter; he knows he ‘cannot personalise it because it’s not [his] property’ but keeping it clean is a way to make himself different: ‘The maximum you can do is to keep it clean *more than others*’.

Hamza knows well how to perform a ‘common sense’ normality. This is what happened one day, after trimming his beard with the scissors above the sink:

I went to my table, I took tissues and cleaned the sink. Here comes the behaviour and the attitude you have, ok? When I cleaned it all and there was not even one hair, Ríka (a volunteer) said: ‘I really like it so much! This is what makes you *different* from other people [at the Shelter]. You could just open the water and let it flush there. But you chose another thing, you cleaned it putting [the hairs] where they should be (in the trash bin). This is something special you do, this is *not normal*’ I told her ‘Ríka, *this* is normal, what I am doing, this has to be normal. If somebody is not doing this, that’s *abnormal*’.

If a homeless body is commonly perceived as dirty or residual, as the first part of this chapter has shown (see also Sibley, 1995; Desjarlais, 1997, p. 2), then, I suggest, there are two levels of interpretation of the above mixed contact between Ríka and Hamza. At a first level, Hamza’s well-orchestrated practice to remove the hairs, carriers of his own ‘dirt’ as residues of his body, not by simply making the water run down over them but by carefully cleaning the sink with tissues — under Ríka’s gaze— surprised Ríka in positive terms. For his cleanliness was not ‘normal’ to her. Márkos’ playful contradiction ‘clean homeless’ that opened this part, echoes here. At a second level, to understand the meanings of this bodily practice, it is useful to relate to broader ideas of pollution and purity, as reflected in the homeless’ general persistence and pursuit of a clean body and space. Mary Douglas (1966) has shown how social ideas —and practices, we may add— about what is dirty or polluting are not just about hygiene and pathogenicity; rather, they are about order. Dirt is dirt as long as it performs a ‘contravention of [what is perceived as] order’ (p. 36). The homeless efforts and practices to perform cleanliness, purity ought then to be seen in relation to ‘an order’ that becomes crystallised in specific ways throughout Athens’ machinic archipelago: to get subscribed at the day centre, the homeless have to declare their need for showers and not, for example, for the library or simply for a warm place for a coffee; and at the night shelter, taking a shower daily is an unwritten rule, an unofficial requirement for sleeping there —and the homeless know it.

In this order, homeless subjects are desired to be clean subjects, perhaps in an effort of ‘rehabilitation’ according to mainstream, middle-class standards (Veness, 1994). Through cleanliness thus, and specifically through the cleanliness of the bodies and the routinisation of this cleanliness, the homeless stay ‘in order’: they follow specific rules, are positioned a bit closer to the ‘mainstream’ and take distance from ‘the (dirty) homeless’, the latter perhaps understood as *disordered*. In his ‘mixed contact’ with Ríka, Hamza’s practice made him ‘in order’. Precisely it made him ‘in Ríka’s order’. Hamza was more than a clean body; as he said himself, he was ‘normal’. In the end, he did not threaten Ríka’s ‘cherished classifications’ (Douglas, 1966, p. 37), something Ríka was prepared for as her surprise showed. In that contact, the homeless stigma had been successfully scratched off. Hamza was a clean, deserving homeless. Unstigmatised. After all, (his) cleanliness seems to be a good sign for someone who wants to leave the archipelago in order to ‘reintegrate’ into society.



FIGURE 29 Night shelter showers. June 2017.

## CLEANDIRTY BODIESPACES

The centrality of cleanliness in the discourses and practices of homeless subjects is related to specific spatialities, which make and are made by these discourses and practices. These spatialities take two main, inter-relating and inter-dependent forms. The first is the *micro*-spatiality of the spaces of care. Therein, the homeless bodies meet (other) homeless bodies. The close physical contact with other homeless bodies, their odours, emissions, sounds (such as farting or snoring) provoke specific feelings and reactions and call for negotiations. ‘You see the others, who are very dirty, and you have to be only one meter away from them. Sometimes the beds are not even one meter away from one another! Difficult, very difficult’, Stéfanos says for the night shelter and feels lucky now at the municipal hostel where he shares his bedroom with ‘a very *good* person, very *clean*’. And Mímis, who often feels ashamed for the unwashed bodies of other homeless, vividly said: ‘Disgusting. They (other homeless) sit close to you like this, *dirty!*’ In these spaces, ‘dirty’ homeless bodies tend often to be discursively ‘pathologised’. For Leftéris and his friend, for example, not taking a shower at least once per week means that the homeless has psychiatric issues, a mental illness as some psychologists have explained to them. Indeed, at the night shelter, when a user does not take a shower albeit the unwritten rule, s/he may be ‘diagnosed’ by staff members as ‘having a problem’. In spaces of care, therefore, homeless subjects tend to shrink their own bodies to protect them from ‘other’ homeless bodies that surround them. For stigma is in dangerous vicinity and homeless bodies need to stay somehow untouched by it.

The second spatial form that matters for the centrality of cleanliness is the *macro*-spatialities of the city. ‘If I were a painter, I would paint for you this area as grey’. The machinic archipelago unwraps in a deprived, highly stigmatised in public discourse and media, part of central Athens, west of Omónoia square (see Koutrolikou 2015a, 2015b). Amongst the homeless, there is a shared, strong aversion towards the archipelago’s broader area, which is often described as dirty, grey, dark, a pothole where foreigners, ‘blacks’ and drug users live. Kostís prefers to not move around Omónoia square, where the hostel is, especially late in the evening, because he only sees misery there, whilst Azi, a seventy-two-year-old Kenyan man who stays in the same hostel, feels free when he enters the metro station of Omónoia in order to go away. In Minás’ words:

Here (the hostel’s location) I am scared. *A lot* of dirt. [...] I walked across Stadiou street, it’s disgusting, then Ermoú, Eólou streets. Disgusting. [...] Full of dirty people. [...] City centre stinks. It’s taken over by foreigners, I’m sorry...

For him, this image and sense of central Athens contrasts an ‘old central Athens’ that he would enjoy. But even the machinic archipelago itself may relate to notions of pollution and dirt, as Símos’ simile shows: ‘It is positive that social welfare is getting mobilised (through the archipelago). But for the moment, what is happening there is that *pus* is being mustered’.

Although similar opinions and feelings have been expressed by some night shelter users also, it is evidently the hostel residents that share such a strong, explicit detestation. This perhaps relates to the possibility the hostels give to their residents to stay therein all day long; like this, homeless residents may use the hostels as ‘protective spaces’ wherein they can fortify and protect themselves from a ‘dirty city’. On the contrary, night shelter homeless, having to stay out for most of the day, are ‘forced’ to engage with the city. With their bodies located therein, these homeless may develop a certain familiarity with the challenges and unpleasant aspects of urban life and may negotiate them.

These micro- and macro-spatialities are in a productive material-discursive interplay both with one another and with the homeless (and other) bodies therein. Spaces of care are surrounded by and merged into city space. City space embraces them and is made also through spaces of care. Homeless bodies find themselves simultaneously in the micro- and macro-spatialities in a ‘merging of body/space as [one] location’ (Low, 2017, p. 94). Yet, as these spatialities embody dirt in various ways as ingredient of the homeless stigma, homeless subjects feel the need to shrink their materialities, to seal their bodies off; for ‘other’ homeless bodies saturate both the spaces of care and the dirty city centre. Sealed off, these bodies are in a constant tension with these spatialities: while located *in* there, they struggle to stay untouched. It takes a big effort for each homeless body to get sealed off differently —as a homeless subject.

As a final step, I would like to draw once again from Mary Douglas in order to attempt a broader geographical interpretation of the interplay between dirt/cleanliness and the homeless bodies. There exist in Douglas’ thesis about purity and danger (1966) some spatial aspects that, I think, are considerably ignored in Human Geography. These spatial aspects concern the idea of boundaries and boundary crossing, in relation to pollution, purity and the dangerous interplay between them. According to Douglas, society is a system and purity serves for the preservation of the, essential for this system’s well-being, order. By threatening its purity then, dirt threatens also the system’s order, when it crosses the system’s boundaries. ‘Where there is dirt there is system’ (p. 36). Therefore, it is the crossing of boundaries that defines what is dirty: anything that disrupts the system’s order, after having crossed (some of) its boundaries, is rendered ‘matter out of place’.

In this conceptual vein, homeless bodies, as transmitters of ‘dirt’, can be considered as ‘matter(s) out of place’. But out of *which* place? And which *order* exactly could they threaten? To reflect on such questions, we may look at one of

the spatialities that, according to Douglas, comes to life through the drawing of boundaries: the society's margins. In marginal areas, there exists danger of social pollution; '[there] is energy in [society's] margins' (p. 115). At an urban level now, and considering the spatial context in focus, Athens' homeless geographies unfold in one of the city's socio-spatial margins, materialised through 'spatial and social boundary processes' (Sibley, 1995, p. xvi). Throughout the machinic archipelago, the constant interplay between bodies and the archipelago's micro- and macro-spatialities, and the involved tension between dirty and clean homeless bodies produce the 'energy' of these socio-spatial margins. Homeless subjects try to remain 'in order', thus not to be perceived as threatening for society, by keeping their bodies as clean as possible. At the same time though, and ironically enough, they are surrounded by a spatial and bodily dirt that threatens their clean bodies and the order they perform. This contradiction results in a sealing off the (clean) homeless bodies that try to stay untouched by the stigma of the margins—in Athens' machinic archipelago, homeless subjects *desire* and *strive* to become 'matter out of place'. In the sealed off homeless body, the dangerous for the social order energy is released within the city's socio-spatial margins. For the moment, the overall order of the social system seems safe.



FIGURE 30 Bathrooms. Day centre, April 2017.

## BATHROOMS AND TOILETS

‘Maintaining the purity of the self, defining the boundaries of the inner body, can be seen as a never-ending battle against residues’ (Sibley, 1995, p. 8). The bathrooms available in the machinic archipelago are the spaces where such battles are given by the homeless and where the aforementioned ideas of cleanliness find their practical articulations through the materiality of homeless bodies. Observations here refer mainly to male homeless because of a methodological limitation: my shifts at the day centre have been on days dedicated to the ‘general homeless’, that is mostly homeless single men since other days are dedicated to women or families. Bathrooms are the *par excellence* spaces of care *inside* spaces of care. They are the sites where the so much desired care for the homeless bodies is practiced.

At the day centre there are four showers and four toilets as well as a separate restroom with a shower and a toilet for the disabled. The latter is used mainly as a toilet for the general public since very few homeless users of the centre have been identified as ‘legitimate’ to use it. As has been mentioned already, hot water supply in the four general showers is regulated, a regulation that gives a particular polyrhythmicity. Staff and volunteers switch the hot water supply on every time a homeless enters the shower. Supply lasts for eleven or twelve minutes and this is the time showering oneself is expected to last. This imposed polyrhythmicity —marked by a loudly voiced ‘wateer!’ every time the hot supply goes off before a person has finished— has mainly two purposes: to regulate the use of the often limited overall hot water, and electricity, especially in winter time; and to facilitate the quick flow of users as often, mostly on peak days and hours, there might be a long waiting list for the showers. However, this regulation opposes the homeless’ use of bathrooms *not just* as ‘functional spaces’ (Longhurst, 2001); they have to simply take a shower and leave. Staying naked under a flow of hot water can be a relaxing moment a tired homeless body may await. Many homeless admitted they tend to procrastinate their exit from the showers in order to extend as much as possible this moment of warmth and comfort and postpone their going out in a cold environment, especially if the two hours of one’s appointment are over right after the shower and s/he has to go straight out on the street.

Given the extremely limited, if any, access of the homeless to hygiene facilities, bathrooms are spaces of magnified importance for body care and relief. Although many homeless try to ensure access to more than one places in the city in order to serve themselves as frequently as possible, a day centre user can have two or even one weekly appointment, due to the centre’s limited capacity and resources. Therefore, the homeless bodies have very limited moments to be taken care of in an environment of relative shared privacy and comfort. It is in these limited

moments then that, besides showering, homeless bodies can release their residues: cutting nails, combing hair, defecating, shaving face and/or body parts, cutting hair, urinating, sometimes perhaps masturbating,<sup>50</sup> are practices that saturate the bathrooms as spaces of body-care. They are practices that the homeless bodies have been patiently restrained from for days before accessing these bathrooms: the 'appropriate spaces' where such practices can finally happen.

As suggested above, though, all these bodily practices include various discharges and residues. Feces, hairs, nails, urine, sometimes blood. 'These fucking razors don't cut anything! Don't you see they all (the homeless) come out [from the bathrooms] bleeding?', a staff member noticed. The aversion against bodily residues, especially amongst men, has been stressed elsewhere (Longhurst, 2001). Nevertheless, these residues become more threatening as they come from bodies considered dirtier than others; they are residues not of *any* bodies but, instead, of bodies stigmatised as 'homeless'. In the bathrooms of the day centre and the night shelter, the homeless body is threatened by the homeless bodies. While I am busy with the laundry machines, Rahim enters the room and, taking advantage of our intimate relationship, just says 'hi' and takes his razor himself (although not allowed by rules). Razors are kept in plastic transparent bags with the owner's bed number written on it. Two minutes later, Rahim comes back in panic, with shaving foam still on his cheeks. His bed is 26. But, in his usual rush, he grabbed the razor number 29. And he realised it while he was shaving. It is impossible to calm him down. Having somebody else's razor on his skin is dangerous for him. He has to know who the owner is, who the owner is, 'who is the owner of fucking razor 29!' When I ask him to calm down a bit so that I find the list with the names and numbers, he explodes: 'Are you kidding?! This razor belongs to a *homeless*, it can be *contaminated!*'

Ideas of the homeless bodies and their residues as dirty are reinforced by the material economy these bodies are involved in within the machinic archipelago. For example, the use of shampoo and shower gel is individualised through single-use packages that are not supposed to be shared by two or more bodies. At the night shelter, underwear is not allowed to be washed in the laundry machines, according to the rules; they can be washed individually by hand, so that they do not mix with other underwear. Moreover, the provision of toilet paper and razors is limited: a razor is given every five days; and a roll of toilet paper every ten days. It happened many times that a homeless asked me for some toilet paper earlier so that s/he could finally defecate. Of course, such a restrictive material economy is result of the shelter's very limited resources. Yet, the homeless bodies are largely affected, being deterred to 'leave dirt'.

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<sup>50</sup> During one of my shifts at the day centre, I have heard a man masturbating in the showers. Given that he was the last one on that day's list, there was no pressure by other users. Shouting, he asked me more than once to switch on the hot water supply, something that I did more than once until a staff member realised that he had stayed in there for 'too long' and ordered to not switch it on again.

After continuous problems with the sewage system, the toilets at the day centre remained closed for days. As a result, the homeless would have to share the only toilet available: that in the bathroom for the disabled, of course when someone was not taking a shower or shaving in there. People would often have to line up for long in order to access the toilet while once I had to show the staff's toilet on the fifth floor to a Syrian man who was suffering and needed to urinate urgently. Giving to the homeless man access to the *staff's* toilet was not permitted and I was disapproved for this initiative. As days without toilets turned to weeks without toilets, a staff member told me openly that the toilets had remained unrepaired on purpose: so that they do not get obstructed again. Having four toilets for approximately 130 people using the Day Centre on a daily basis indeed increases the risk for obstruction. Besides any 'practical' reasons for the decision to keep the toilets closed though homeless bodies had to limit substantially their material discharges, such as urine and feces, discharges the staff had often expressed overt aversion of. And compared to the staff's toilet that is never obstructed, as I have been told, the homeless toilets are spaces where homeless bodies seem to expel 'too much dirt'.

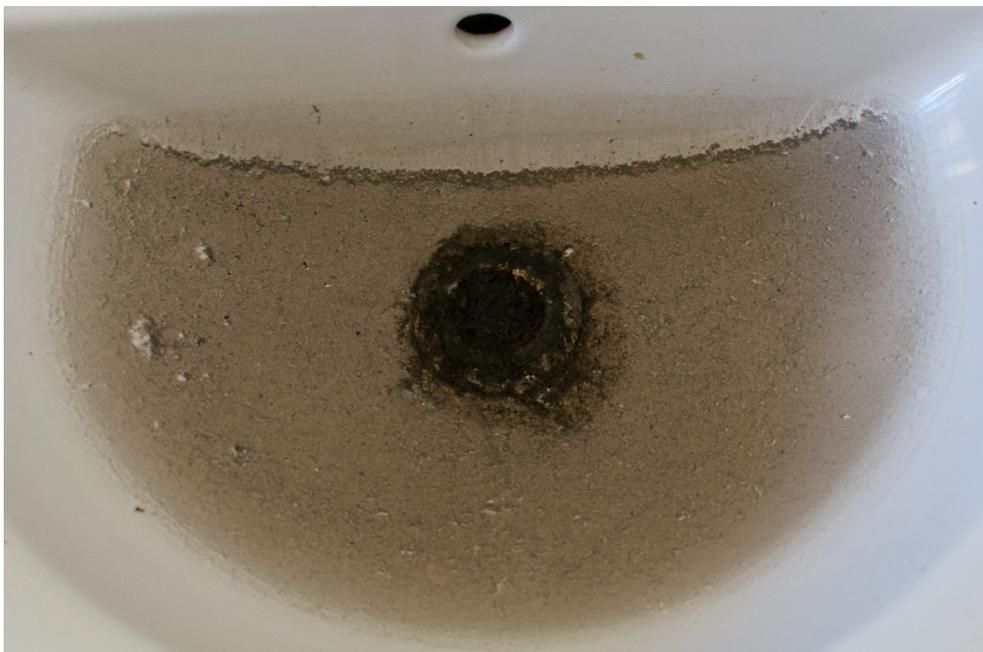


FIGURE 31 Sink after shaving. Day centre, March 2017.

## BODY-MAPS

The skin contributes massively in the shaping of the subjects; and with the help of the language, it makes personal pain audible (Makrynioti, 2004). For some homeless, a serious accident has been a life cornerstone that either marked the beginning of homeless life and subjectivity or relates with them indirectly, as an incident, for example, that had various consequences that eventually led to homelessness. In these cases, the visible traces of accidents, surgical operations or other physical disabilities on the homeless bodies become parts of one's self. They shape a body-map that the homeless always carry with them and identify themselves with. On the body-maps, the past of the homeless subject is engraved forever. And it can be uttered out loud. For '[the] body is told, and acted out, through the stories that are folded into it' (Nast and Pile, 1998, p. 9).

'You cannot see them from where you are sitting now but I still have scars from the stitches [on my head]. They still exist.' Andréas keeps some distance from me saying this, as if kindly protecting me from the view. In fact, I cannot see. Agathí can spend hours explaining how her body has changed, both inside and outside, after an accident that nearly killed her almost forty years ago: 'My leg is sewn together. If you notice, my arms too are sewn together'. Showing me:

From here to here. Till here, if you put them under warm water, you will see [the scars] clearly. Till here, see it? [...] On my head I had twenty-six stitches from here to here. the scar is visible, like a bump.

Taking my hand and driving it over her head: 'Here is the gap, right here! From here to here behind it's all a gap. You do like this, and it's right here!' Her insistence to make me touch her scars by navigating my hands over her old body makes me feel uncomfortable. Yet, she explains her body-map in a serene and decisive manner, taking her time, not hurrying. Like this, she performs her homeless self to me, the *non-homeless*; and the materiality of her body proves the stories she is narrating to me —and why she needs to sleep at the night shelter. From here to here. Tiny distances. Huge subject formations. 'My whole body is seamed', she finished.

The practice of showing one's body-map is often coupled with that of showing documents in order to prove one's state as (legitimate) homeless, as we have seen previously. When the papers seem wilfully silent, the body acts. A sixty-year-old homeless man with crutches would always show me his teeth and eyes while asking for food at the day centre. Like this, he would convince me that his vulnerable body needs special food, unfortunately not always available. Given his severe physical condition, he is one of those who have access to the bathroom for

the disabled. One day, a staff member was insistently knocking on the bathroom's door asking him to finish because, according to him, he had been in there 'for way too long'. When the man came out dressed up but still wet, he hurriedly went to the reception. Holding his documents *on* his body, while balancing on the crutches, he was angrily explaining how important it is for him to carefully clean his body. The body and papers convinced the reception lady. He only needed two more minutes to massage his chest.

Body-maps are not stable though. They are dynamically shaped as the homeless subjectivities are always in the making. Stéfanos has moved from the shelter to the municipal hostel. This desired spatial transition is hoped to cease worrisome changes on his skin: 'At least I flee from that stress [of Shelter life]. At least this is how I felt it myself, *on my skin*.<sup>51</sup> I developed psoriasis, which is psychological. [...] Now I am starting seeing things *on myself*. Got it?' Similarly, others see their hair getting grey faster than before or, as happened with Mímis, getting grey almost in one night: 'Have you heard this thing that some people turn white in one night? This is exactly what happened to me when this whole story (his homelessness) started, after the crisis started...'

## BODIES IN THE MIRROR

'Hm, what do you think? How do I look? I get weight because of sadness'. Saying these words, Mrs. Maltézou did not take her eyes off herself. Mirrors help the homeless subjects, positioned in front of them, read and speak out their body-maps in different ways. Mirrors provoke the enactment of body-maps. Contrary to the day centre, at the night shelter, the mirrors are placed not inside the bathrooms but right outside of them, in the open space in between the bathrooms and the laundry room. Like this, a particular space is created through the dynamic interconnections of three elements: the mirror, the subject reflecting her/himself, and the subject(s) that happen to be present or passing by at the moment of the reflection. The simultaneous, visible presence of the three elements in the same space renders reflection a practice that is acted out.

After having taken a shower, most homeless take some time in front of the mirrors. To comb one's hair, to shave, to pop a pimple, to examine their bodies; or to examine *other* bodies without staring at them directly. Many times, reflecting oneself is simply staring at oneself for a few seconds, even while passing by. Sometimes, it may take longer. Body-maps in nearly perfect view —the self facing the self. Yet this self barely ever remains silent. These moments in front of the mirror involve practices that relate the homeless to their bodies: they compare their *homeless* bodies with their *pre-homeless* bodies; remember and narrate stories; observe changes; and, by speaking out, they perform their homeless

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<sup>51</sup> 'Στο πετσί μου' [sto petsí mou].

subjectivities in front of staff, volunteers and other homeless. Before the mirror, the homeless bodies utter the self a little bit more, a little louder.

While grooming her straight, long, greyish hair, Agathí remembers and brags about how even longer her hair was before her serious accident. Others narrate similar facts, relating to other body parts, while taking care of those parts by touch and through the mirror. Mímis is observing his belly and asks me with surprise: 'Why the hell am I getting weight?' 'Because we never eat salads and fruits', someone next to him will respond. Others too see their bodies becoming overweight and admit that the stress and worries of homeless life make them eat more and more, as a reaction to it and in order to improve their mood. Others, though, realise they have lost weight and are also concerned about their bodies. Through the mirror, the body as flesh relates with the body as psyche. Looking at oneself after a new haircut or after a long shower, reminds one how 'feeling good outside goes together with feeling good inside'. In front of the mirror, the gaze points at the self, the voice (also) at the other.

## THICK SKINS

'Skin has to become thicker now. Not only for the cold but for everything'. These are Hamza's words in a moment of frustration with night shelter life. After four months of sleeping there, he realised that a new bodily materiality had to accompany his new subjectivity. His new, thick skin is not just about tolerating the weather conditions, as he said, having to spend his whole day out in the streets those cold days of winter 2016-2017; it involves other things that are less metaphorical and more embodied. Thick homeless skin is thick homeless body. The shaping of 'physical selves' is inherent in the making of homeless identity that may have to render their bodies multiply resilient (Higate, 2000b).

Not knowing where to eat, especially the first days one finds her/himself in the machinic archipelago, or disliking the food offered in its various nodes call for difficult adaptations of the homeless bodies. Minás remembers: 'Hunger. It has happened that I stayed five days with no food. I would then find a fountain and drink a lot of water. To bloat myself with water.<sup>52</sup> Hunger'. Therefore, bodies may have to learn how to satisfy their hunger not with rather anything solid but with something liquid. One evening at the night shelter, while I was bringing the tea to the common room, Mímis was the first one to see me coming and run to be the first one in the line: 'Huh, the first one for tea today?' I asked him. 'Yeah, with this now I feel full'.

Eating nothing can also be a choice, a personal physical exercise that trains the body accordingly. Páris did not approve the quality and taste of the food served at one of the archipelago's soup kitchens and decided to stay hungry for days, before accessing the municipal hostel. For him, tolerating hunger is a physical achievement that, he acknowledges, cannot be easily achieved by all people. For 'some tolerate hunger, some don't.' Símos' body is shocked after two years on the street, he says. To prevent further shocking, he has decided to stay unfed when he feels sick. As his body becomes even more vulnerable due to an illness, he protects his body by not ingesting anything, given that he believes food at the soup kitchen he goes is of bad quality. Like this, Símos' body has been materially adjusted to negotiate homeless life. These practices show how homeless '[bodies] are vulnerable to transformation through action by their owners [in order to develop] particular aspects of physical "capital"' (Higate, 2000b, p. 100). Below the thick body-maps then, may lay the deep and malleable landscapes of the homeless bodies, making altogether the 'messy surfaces/depths of bodies' (Longhurst, 2001, p. 23).

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<sup>52</sup> 'Να φουσκώσω με νερό' [na fouskóso me neró].

## EMBODYING FOOD

It is a hot day of late July and I am having my first research-related meeting at the City of Athens Homeless Shelter, the archipelago's beating heart. The person who works at the secretary of the Social Service Department suggests that, notwithstanding the sun burning, we leave the air-conditioned interior and go to the backyard to talk; so that *I can see*. The soup kitchen practiced right here not only performs the Municipality's care for the homeless that is materialised through a massive, big-scale food provision<sup>53</sup> —so often publicised— but performs also a very specific image of the city's homeless population: that of a quasi-undifferentiated urban crowd of bodies so materially dispossessed and so desperately hungry that food is all they need. And for *this* they gather and line up *there*. 'There you can see eve-ry-thing', I will be told later during an interview. In the 'yard of the damned', as it has been characterised by an administrator (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017, p. 96), the spot I am suggested to sit down at is strategic: from here we have a 'perfect view' of the line of people waiting for the soup run to open its barred gate. It is ten to four in the afternoon and human bodies shape a long line from the main building, where food will be served in ten minutes, to the pavement outside. We can see this human line behind the tall bars that divide the narrow rectilinear space, where the line is forced to be shaped, from the rest of the courtyard, where the two of us are sitting, slightly away. Minutes later, while we are talking, the human line gets suddenly animated through an almost homogeneous moving-forward. A human bodily wave under the sun. Human bodies share one single momentum by pushing, sneaking, rubbing against each other. 'See?!' I am asked behind those bars, and behind my sunglasses.

Later, during research practice, the municipal soup run, widely known amongst the city's homeless simply as 'Sofokléous', that is the name of the street, appeared again and again in discussions. What I had watched from my secure, vantage point and what for the Municipality is the cornerstone of their material provision, materialised for many homeless all they wanted to avoid: the 'other' homeless bodies, their visible making, and the associated stigma performed via the bodily practice of food provision and reception. Sofokléous is more than just food; Sofokléous is a material practice that involves homeless bodies in specific ways. Besides its centrality in the homeless geographies of Athens, as for many people like Yánnis and others it would be the first place to be at and establish helpful connections for their survival, the municipal soup kitchen is for most research participants a place to avoid. Besides the food itself, described by Lámbros, amongst others, as 'rubbish' for example, Sofokléous is a place of aversion. Anna

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<sup>53</sup> 1,200 meals are distributed every day (source: <https://www.cityofathens.gr/en/node/7511>, last access 13/3/2018).

recounts that she went there on the very first days she was homeless and soon decided to never return because of a 'bad image' that brings back the idea of dirt: 'Drug users and dirty people, I didn't want to be close to them. It was a mess of *dirty people*. Anyway, food was not particularly good although I heard afterwards that they changed the catering company'. Soup runs and soup kitchens are often spaces of unconditional material relief and thus attract homeless subgroups that may be excluded from other spaces of care (Johnsen, Cloke & May, 2005). Annoyed by the presence of drug users too, Arghiris has been there for just three or four times but then quit.

They had told me: 'Look at all these people, the Municipality gives free food!' and so I decided to go. If only I knew what would have happened! For a plate with washy orzo and some red sauce, three persons beat up a woman!

It was the first time Minás went to Sofokléous to get his food; and would never go back for that orzo plate anymore.

Besides specific bodies that the homeless did not show tolerance to, avoiding the stigma and making their subjectivities and bodies distinct, what is critical at Sofokléous is food provision as a located 'body practice' in which embodiment and enselfment are constituted mutually (Turner, 2008). Standing; waiting; moving slowly forward; stopping; having other bodies in front; having others behind; stopping again; often touching these other bodies; stepping ahead and stopping again, compose the body practice of lining up and affect homeless subjectivities. 'The first time I had to stay in the line waiting for the food [...] it really hurt my ego and self-respect. Oh God! [...] Waiting for some food in line. I stopped going there'. Whilst for Hamza lining up is a practice that threatens his dignity, for others lining up is mostly associated with pushing: 'Being pushed in the line [of Sofokléous] disgusted me'. Taking place in the courtyard, this queuing is visible from the street and can thus mark the homeless bodies and associate them with the homeless 'others'. Many said that they did not want to be seen at Sofokléous, confirming that the visibility of care in soup kitchens matters (Johnsen et al., 2005). Thus visible, queuing is part of the homeless stigma (Lancione, 2014) and is therefore avoided by many (see also Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017). Mímis has never eaten there because, he heard, 'you have to eat outside, on the street!' Visible and physically present in a line of human bodies, the homeless seem to be intolerant towards other homeless bodies, such as drug users and people of different skin colour.

'Easy food makes you physically easy!'. After some months in the machinic archipelago, Hamza now sees how getting food at soup kitchens has certain, accumulative effects on himself. Besides the very moment of lining-up and its association with embodying the homeless stigma, this body practice has longitudinal dynamics that matter. Body practices, or body techniques, are *learning* practices (Mauss, 1973; Turner, 2008); in the long term, and through their repetition, they are the practices people learn to use their bodies through.

In other words, the becoming of the homeless subjects is a specific learning of using their homeless bodies through practice (see Warnier, 2001). Talking about another shelter user, Márkos says:

Even if you want, at some point you can't to get away from all this (homelessness). That is, he cannot reintegrate now. This man is sixty years old, he has *learned all this thing*. He has learned to go to the café and get his coffee for free, to line up for food, to get a cigarette for free and come [at the shelter] in the evening and tell you: 'Márkos, fancy a cigarette?'

This is not to imply that the provision of food *per se* may have negative effects on homeless subjects. The importance of soup runs and soup kitchens for the survival of those urban dwellers in need is indisputable. However, the ways and spatial contexts of such provision matter significantly. Thus, lining up as a body practice can be different than what has been described above and the homeless show preference to different ways of practising queuing in order to get food. After their experience at Sofokléous, many have opted for other places of the archipelago where the ways of accessing food seem more 'appropriate'. Specifically, two hundred meters away, a church-organised soup kitchen where lining up is organised according to priority numbers that are distributed in advance has gained much popularity amongst the homeless. Practiced through numbers, lines become disciplined and a specific image and behaviour are performed; one assimilating the 'passive meek homeless persons' (Parsell, 2011). Márkos explains: 'In order to prevent people from gathering outside and have neighbours complaining, they give numbers on the nearby square, from 1 to 50'. 'Some numbers are given from half past noon to one, the rest from one to one thirty. This is how they made this system', Arghiris adds.

### CAN YOU WARM IT UP A BIT, PLEASE?

'No food on the radiators', I have been told during one of my first shifts at the night shelter. Distributed through other soup runs and kitchens, food is often cold. 'Can you warm it up a bit, please?' a man asked me giving me back the two portions I had already given him in a plastic blue bag a minute before. And he justified: 'Like this (cold) it's not edible'. As a volunteer, which means limited, if any, responsibility for the way things happen there, it was almost easy, albeit uncomfortable, for me to just explain that there is no such a possibility; neither microwave nor stove here. The investment of homeless subjects through food provision is contradictory: on the one hand, they are given food; but, on the other, they may be deprived of 'the warm'<sup>54</sup> as a sensation. Yánnis says: 'Because meals

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<sup>54</sup> 'Το ζεστό' [to zestó].

are sometimes cold, you don't sense *the warm* anymore, only in very rare occasions [...] You miss the warm so much, the *taste* of the warm, the *sense* of the warm...'. Leftéris too complains that all his meals are cold and he tastes something warm only when he goes out with friends. 'And this is really bad for my health'. To regain this sense, Mímis chooses to go to a specific soup run every day where food is quite warm and one can see the cook serving after he has prepared the meal. The provision of cold food in many of the archipelago's nodes reduces food to a materiality that simply sustains human life. 'You have nothing else to eat, sir, you will eat this one! [...] It is a maintenance. A bad one? Yes, a bad one. But it's a maintenance', Símos said.

'In ingesting objects into itself, Longhurst says, 'the subject can never be distinct from the objects' (2001, p. 29). Besides a central matter in meaningful bodily practices, the food received in the machinic archipelago is also a matter that, when eaten, changes the homeless bodies and the perceptions of homeless selves through these bodies, in a food/body interaction (Higate, 2000b). Through a mutual and porous embodiment, the qualities of the food, as matter external to the body, are ingested by the body's materiality and hence become qualities of the self. Being deprived of a warm sense, all that homeless subjects may satisfy is their hunger and bodily maintenance, as Símos above noted. Cold food makes cold bodies; the pleasure of tasting something warm is served elsewhere.

Yet, the inevitable embodiment of food can be sometimes used for a purposeful making of homeless subjectivities.

I have the possibility to eat out. [...] But I always eat here (at the hostel). I always eat *also* here, even if I have eaten out, because *I want to remember* what I have been through. When I am out of here, *I want to remember*. Food [at the hostel] is terrible.

It is not Kostís' skin that needs to be thick, as happens with others; it is his overall body forever marked as 'homeless'. 'Food is a basic raw material of the body' (Valentine & Longstaff, 1998, p. 317). By tasting and ingesting food he dislikes, Kostís shapes his memory as embodied. The materiality of the food engraves upon the materiality of his body what he does not want to forget. When metabolised, 'terrible' taste makes the body that makes memory that makes the body that makes the self. A terrible taste to be remembered.

### **IT'S NOT LIKE I WOULD HAVE COOKED IT!**

Yánnis is provided with two meals per day at the hostel, thus he does not miss food. But: '[I miss] the food I could *make myself*'. By being *provided* with food, homeless subjects are denied any involvement in preparing and choosing their

own meals. Investment through food is thus limited to being given and consuming food, omitting the material practice of preparation in which subject and object engage with each other. Talking about food kitchens, Ánna admits that, although ‘edible’, food there is not like what *she* would have cooked it *herself*. And not being involved in the cooking process results in a particular taste that feels incomplete, not satisfactory;<sup>55</sup> food has the power ‘to dramatize the distance from [lost] home’ (Valentine & Longstaff, 1998, p. 135). Having to sign in order to get one’s meal at the hostel performs further alienations between the subject and the food’s materiality. Homeless subjects do not find it easy to identify themselves with their food. For their food is not *theirs*.

According to Turner, ‘[gaining control] over our own feeding patterns involves a growth in personal autonomy’ (2008, p. 152). If this personal autonomy of the homeless is to a big extent lost due to their alienation from food (see also Valentine & Longstaff, 1998), homeless subjects often turn to places that allow them to get bodily involved in the preparation process, or that, at least, offer food that is cooked ‘as if it was homemade’. Practices of a solidarity kitchen run that involves both homeless and housed people in the cooking process, and places of small-scale food provision where staff and the homeless prepare food together, are preferred in order to add in the plates that missing ingredient called ‘the self’. There, chopping a cabbage and stirring the soup is not just chopping a cabbage and stirring the soup; they are practices through which homeless subjects actively engage with the materialities of, finally, their own food. And not only:

I get mixed up<sup>56</sup> there (the soup kitchen at the night shelter’s ground floor). [...] I help with the chairs, to set the tables, to place the chairs on the tables [in order to clean], to collect the glasses, to tidy the place up.

Using what Mauss has called people’s ‘first and most natural instrument’ (1973, p. 75), the homeless regain the lost control over the preparation of their food and reengage with it.

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<sup>55</sup> ‘Δε βγάξει νοστιμάδα’ [the *vgázei nostimáda*].

<sup>56</sup> ‘Μπλέκομαι!’ [blékome].

## DRESSED BODIES

'He says: "I see you with the same clothes again, did anything happen?" I say: "I lost my house"'. This is how Manólis' friend got to know that he became homeless. His clothes, his *same* clothes, worn for days, marked his body as different. Manólis had a different body; and different was he. Clothes not only as mere possessions but mainly *worn*, wrapping the homeless body, becoming active parts or extensions of it and changing its materiality and visibility, affect homeless subjectivities (Farrugia, 2011). Paschális has a particular, almost eccentric, style. One day, Natalía, a night shelter staff member, saw him from faraway walking in one of Athens' most prestigious streets, she pointed at him and told her mother, who was with her, that he sleeps at the shelter. The mother's surprise, as she could not believe that a man 'dressed *like that!*' was homeless, makes Paschális repeatedly narrate this story in any possible occasion, emphasising his different, quasi-non-homeless self.

In a similar moment, when Hamza entered a café dressed as usually, in a striped shirt, he was asked whether he was a doctor. 'I replied "yes". I have to respect myself, to take distance'. For him, accepting the fake, prestigious identity of the doctor was an act of self-respect: through the clothes that performed his body in a specific way, he was, in that place and time, distant from 'the homeless'. To Stallybrass (1998), through an interplay of stripping and re-clothing the body, clothes have the power to mark social class and position subjects therein accordingly, positions that are subject to change. Erasing the 'visual stigma of being homeless' then (DeVerteuil et al., 2009, p. 645; also Gerrard & Farrugia, 2015) is not impossible thanks to the clothes wrapping the homeless bodies, changing their materialities and thus the subjectivities embodied therein.

## AFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

'I feel stressed... One moment my body feels hot and the next moment cold'. This is how an old lady experienced her first evening at the night shelter. Besides all the material, practical and performative aspects outlined above, the body is the personal primal matter through which homelessness is experienced, felt. To vividly illustrate the affective aspects of the homeless bodies and the importance of these aspects in the making of homeless subjectivities and geographies (see Daya & Wilkins, 2012), I suggest a focus on one specific effect of the ways the new poverty management is nowadays practiced in Athens, that is, the closing down of some of the archipelago's nodes. Due to funding limitations, closing down has been both a serious continuous 'threat' and enacted 'reality' for some spaces of care. For example, the NGO-run hostel remained open for two years in total whereas its initial funding was for a much shorter period. Not knowing when the funding ends after each one of the five extensions has affected the place considerably. It has not been possible for its stressed personnel to work in a productive and well-structured way; and it has provoked significant uncertainty for the hostel's residents who did not know for how long they would be housed there. In such an uncertainty, spaces of care may turn to spaces of *fear* for the homeless (Johnsen, Cloke & May, 2005).

The financial insecurity and forthcoming closure of these spaces has resulted in specific discourses that circulated mainly amongst staff members but also the homeless themselves. By and large, the forthcoming closure has been seen as the moment in which, given the uncertainty produced, homeless subjects have to practically show their activeness and deservedness by finding individual solutions to their homelessness: another place to live in after the present place, be it the hostel or night shelter, has been closed down. The overall discourse was saturated with a pressing, vital need for urgently mobilised homeless subjects, something that left no discursive space for the practical difficulties met by the homeless in their efforts: mainly the disproportionately limited resources (such as available beds in hostels and shelters) and, most importantly, the overall material realities of a city and society in an unprecedented social and economic crisis that dramatically limits opportunities, especially for its more marginal populations.

In the shadow of this discourse, shelter and hostel staff repeatedly expressed their disappointment for the allegedly 'passive' attitude of the homeless before a pressing reality and a risk of going back on the streets. For example, the social worker who was responsible for the NGO hostel complained to me that the twenty-five hosted homeless 'do not move themselves enough in order to find a solution'. To wash his hands clean of any responsibility, he would prepare, as he informed me, individual documents signed by each resident, which would state clearly that he, as social worker, had done any possible search for alternatives for

the homeless, who, as a consequence, would then have been rendered the only responsible for their condition. But the homeless subjects and bodies may tell — rather, *feel*— a different story: ‘This *feels* like a constant Scottish shower! Is the hostel closing? Is it not closing? Nobody knows’. The discourse of ‘passive homeless in danger’ has been partially reproduced also by some homeless who have seen their ‘neighbours’ being ‘too relaxed’ and unworried in all this. In spite of this powerful discourse and general belief that the homeless ‘did not care’ about their precariousness and remained ‘passive’, evidence from the then forthcoming closure of the shelter propose a more nuanced understanding, through the following geographical moment.

It is December 29 and I am arriving at the night shelter walking with Mr. Thános, an 80-year-old homeless whom I randomly met while crossing the train tracks on my way here; he had lost his orientation and asked my help to reach the place. The social worker and head of the shelter is down at the entrance. She is there to announce at every homeless entering: ‘According to the last notice we have, Sunday will be the last day [the Shelter will be open]. On Monday morning, you will have to pack all your stuff and leave the place.’ Her words are heavy. ‘And where do I go? Do I need new documents?’ Mr. Thános asks. Traces of and suspicions for a closure has been always in the air but have never been taken that seriously. This time though, the social worker’s repetition of identical announcements results in an ‘affective atmosphere’ (Anderson, 2011) in which the homeless are actively involved.

The silence of the entrance is transmitted to the second floor. In the laundry room, Rika and I are waiting almost in vain for dirty clothes to arrive:

What is the point of washing clothes now? To be sleeping on the street [from Monday on] with nonetheless clean clothes? Where will I sleep? [...] Do I need to undergo all this (him sleeping rough in the past) again?

Mímis asked us. Knowing my involvement in other organisations, people are asking me questions about hostels, shelters and other possible alternatives. This affective atmosphere is experienced through feelings of stress, sadness and confusion by the homeless. It sometimes brings tears and strongly emotional reactions: ‘Luckily my parents are not alive to see me in this situation, living on the street!’ The affective atmosphere is affective both for the homeless and staff members who expressed their distress for all this.

Eventually the shelter remained open. It has been considered ‘inappropriate’ to force people sleep on the streets on the New Year’s Day. ‘See how simple things people are happy with? Just with a bed, because they are able to keep that bed’. For Stéfanos and other homeless, it has been a relief to be announced the going on of the programme. Nevertheless, the state of uncertainty regarding the shelter’s funding status was not improved albeit the intervention of the Vice Minister for Social Solidarity to prevent the closing down. The night shelter kept



## CONCLUSIONS: BOUNDED BODIES, HARD BODY PROJECTS

'Techniques of the body in a given materiality are thus in fact techniques of the *self*', according to Warnier (2001, p. 10, emphasis added). The homeless bodies in Athens' machinic archipelago are the primal—both individual and collective—locations for the making of homeless subjectivities. They are the locations where the homeless self is born, where 'battles' between 'the clean' and 'the polluted' take place, where the self is taken care of and enjoys comfort, where the past is actively present, where everyday survival is felt materially, where receiving alms in a line matters, where more-than-homeless identities can be performed. And they are locations within other locations, such as the machinic archipelago and Athens. If 'the city's form and structure provide the context in which social rules and expectations are internalised or habituated in order to ensure social conformity, or position social marginality at a safe or insulated and bounded distance' (Grosz, 1998, p. 35-36), then we ought to ask what does the bodily making of homeless subjects perform in terms of social conformity and bounded distance.

Boundaries are pivotal in the interrelation between space and subjectivities, and thus need to be questioned (Longhurst, 2003). The continuous interplay between cleanliness and dirt as materialised by the homeless' constant efforts to keep themselves clean and tidy in a perceived as dirty and disordered socio-material—in one word, stigmatised—environment, namely the machinic archipelago, performs the homeless subjectivities bounded in space. The same location that threatens their personal hygiene, as they are largely positioned therein for their survival, is the one that provides them with the infrastructure to preserve it, at least temporarily. Like this, homeless subjects may remain spatially bounded in and around the machinic archipelago for a considerable part of the day. If boundaries 'prevent the dispersal of subjectivity' (Pile, 2008, p. 207), then the continuous struggle to keep the homeless body clean in dirty spaces prevents the dispersal of homeless subjectivities outside of the archipelago's boundaries and may thus keep social marginality at a safe, bounded distance, as Grosz states above.

A final point here tries to link the homeless bodies with broader social and cultural dynamics. The increasing importance of the body in today's Western societies is evident in the emergence of 'body projects' (Shilling, 1993). Body projects signify people's systematic attention and efforts to materially sustain their bodies in specific ways. Taking care of one's body becomes a personal project that, when finally achieved, constructs the self; body projects are subject projects. In a context of a 'new public health', the materiality of the body, its health, its appearance, its consumption patterns, its self-discipline perform a

normality whose maintenance 'is hard work in that it takes time, effort and planning' (Petersen & Lupton, 1996, p. 25). In the machinic archipelago, maintaining the homeless bodies' normality is a much harder work. Body projects for the homeless subjects are hard to achieve as the autonomy over one's body may have been, to a considerable extent, lost although through the homeless' tactics autonomy may be regained. Homeless body projects risk to fail and homeless subjects thus risk to become 'failed subjects'. And with the 'healthy body' standing for a 'moral body' and a 'moral subject' (Petersen & Lupton, 1996), homeless subjects, as largely deprived of the means to stay healthy, may appear as '*immoral subjects*' in the machinic archipelago and the overall city.





FIGURE SESSION 4 Bathrooms. Day centre, May 2017.



FIGURE 33 Omónoia, April 2017.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **‘These People Should Not Rest’: Mobilities and Frictions in the Machinic Archipelago<sup>57</sup>**

#### ABSTRACT

This chapter suggest a link between homelessness and the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ highlighting mobility’s constitutive character in the machinic archipelago, and the politics involved in the therein making of mobile homeless subjectivities. In a manifestation of its machinic *par excellence*, the archipelago shapes specific possibilities for the homeless’ mobilities and friction. A particular ‘sense of mobility’ reflects broader mentalities of managing the poor. A focus on the night shelter illustrates how this sense materialises in the homeless’ everyday lives, whereas frictions, as significant moments of stillness, are equally important. Further, the practice of outreach work, as if the flowing water of the archipelago, illustrates the vivid interplay between mobility and friction in the city streets, and the parallel making of homeless and non-homeless subjectivities. Concluding, the chapter calls to consider relationally mobility’s role in the making of marginal subjectivities.

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<sup>57</sup> The chapter is an extended version of the article published as: Bourlessas, P. (2018). ‘These people should not rest’: mobilities and frictions of the homeless geographies in Athens city centre. *Mobilities*, 1-15. doi:10.1080/17450101.2018.1464544.

In case the English in this chapter seems to the reader considerably better than in the rest of the work, it is thanks to Joseph Patton and his careful revision prior to the article’s submission.

**G**eographical moment one: Saturday noon. We are a group of six, and Andréas, a vendor of the Athenian homeless street paper, is ready to move with us through central Athens; and to show us ‘his’ Athens. He is our guide in one of the ‘Invisible Tours’, a mobile practice that, besides being a considerable source of income, is said to give positive visibility to the homeless subjects. The, often imagined as purposeless, homeless mobility is challenged through a form of mobility that makes Andréas visible in a specific way: moving with us, the ‘common’ people, throughout ‘his own city’, a sense of belonging and normality is performed for the homeless. Indeed, he almost looks like us while we are walking all together. Nevertheless, our route with Andréas is neither random nor that ‘common’; instead, it is shaped around very specific spots of the city, connecting them with each other, stop after stop: homeless hostels, day centres, soup runs, the municipal homeless shelter —the city’s machinic archipelago.

*Geographical moment two:* Saturday afternoon. The tour is over and Andreas is now fixed at his post, not away from where he was moving with us earlier; standing here, he is selling the magazine for a few more hours. Not only is he fixed though. He is also wearing the street paper’s red jacket, highly recognisable amongst Athenians today; without it he is not allowed to sell his copies. The moment he decides to move from there, he will have to take it off again (as he had to do during our Invisible Tour). The materiality of the jacket hence performs certain spatial associations of mobility and fixity, which affect Andreas’ subjectivity. Wearing the jacket relates to fixity, selling the magazine and being visible as a stigmatised ‘homeless’ —in ‘his’ place. *Not* wearing it relates to mobility, moving with us through ‘his’ city and finally ridding himself of the stigma —almost like being ‘normal’ again. Experienced and signified, this mobility/fixity interplay has a dividing effect on Andreas; as if the ‘fixed Andreas’, with the red jacket, is different from the ‘mobile Andreas’, without the red jacket. And, being aware of the stigma performed by the association between fixity and his jacket, he tries to break this association; making the jacket mobile finally, he hopes that he de-stigmatise it:

I *move* to the café [to take a break from selling the magazine] leaving the red jacket *on* so that it (the jacket) tells [the people there] that it’s me again! That I am not different from the person standing out there (himself selling the magazine), it is always me. The man to whom you waved ‘good morning’ a few minutes ago is *me*. Wearing the jacket does not change my soul or my way of thinking.

The two opening geographical moments give a grounded example of how meaningful, complex and interrelated mobility and fixity are, both as notions and as practices, for homeless subjects and their geographies. In a manifestation of its machinic *par excellence*, the archipelago becomes the institutional and material context wherein specific forms of mobility and friction matter for the everyday

lives of the homeless. Within this context then, which expresses a distinct 'sense of mobility', homeless subjects embody, experience and make mobility and friction meaningful while shaping the city's homeless geographies as 'drifters'. The making of these drifters as mobile subjects is highly political for it relates to wider social dynamics, such as institutional discourses and new ways of managing the poor—even in its mobile making, homelessness is more than an isolated social construct (Farrugia and Gerrard, p. 2015).

## HOMELESS MOBILITIES

Mattresses, blankets, chairs, cartons, a comb: such visible traces of private fixity influence common imaginations of homeless mobility. We pass by and take a quick (sometimes slightly guilty) glance at these objects while walking in the city. Perhaps we may slow down a bit, even stop, and *look* at this stuff when the owner is not there; this materiality of sleeping rough is the marker of one's territory (Wardhaugh, 1996). But where is the possessor of this territory, the 'other' who made us curious enough to stop? This is one important moment, I think, that the homeless can be commonly understood as mobile: through her/his absence, which is given away by the fixity of things visible to the public eye. If not there, s/he has to be mobile. Above all though, it is the *homeless her/himself* who produces common understandings and imageries of homeless mobility: by pushing a shopping trolley in the street, for example, a homeless person deprives the trolley's consumerist dimensions and performs an emblematic mobile figure, quite antithetical to the consumers of urban space (Gerrard & Farrugia, 2015).

As matter moving around, the homeless body carries along a very specific signification making it visible to 'common' society. This visibility (as that of the possessor's absence) is crucial: according to Hills (2008, p. 286), not having an established access to private space, homeless 'are condemned to forms of mobility discursively positioned as without value'; and Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield (2003, p. 23) note that 'where the mobility of homelessness becomes visible to the public gaze [...] it is more likely to be "inappropriate" and thus serve as a signifier of the absence of responsibility and rootedness'. Mobility then is certainly a way the homeless are 'othered' (Wolch, Rahimian & Koegel, 1993; May, 2000). However, homeless mobility should not be reduced to a sole line of division; rather it should be considered a meaningful social production that is constitutive of these people's lives and subjectivities —the *drawing* of this line. For '[mobility] alone [...] does not automatically mark out an outsider' (Cloke, Milbourne & Widdowfield, 2003, p. 23) but is part of specific processes, practices and values.

Lancione suggests that 'homelessness should just become synonymous with "continuous displacement" or a form of it' (2016a, p. 172). Indeed, however implicit in many studies, homeless mobility can take a multiplicity of forms, with displacement being its most extreme one, yet not rare. Either explicit or implicit, there is a continuous interplay between voluntary and involuntary forces behind homeless mobility. The former may relate to negotiating the homeless condition (Jackson, 2012) and the latter to ways of managing the poor (DeVerteuil, 2003); the voluntary/involuntary binary should be constantly questioned as unstable and vague though. This interplay is critically enhanced with the homeless' tactics, either responding to involuntary mobility or rendering mobility itself a tactic, blurring the boundaries between the forces.

At the institutional level, DeVerteuil (2003) highlights the interaction between homeless mobility and the broader institutional settings that define it. His critique emphasises the ways new poverty management results in an institutionalised cycling of homeless people, particularly single women, who may move from one structure to the other. Similarly, within the limitations posed by institutional contexts, Jocoy and Del Casino (2010) suggest that sociocultural discourses matter too for homeless mobility; for instance, shelter regulations (such as time schedules) that increase movement reflect broader cultural norms. Yet, the homeless should be considered 'not as abstract objects but as active agents negotiating their social and spatial exclusion' (p. 1944): their travelling involves both places of inclusion and exclusion, depends on material aspects (e.g. car-ownership or public transportation), and challenges conventional, normative binaries that see the mobile as powerful and the immobile as powerless. The work of Wolch and Rowe (1992) reveals the role of social networks in the daily paths of the homeless. The lack of spatial fixity may result in a 'time-space discontinuity' for the homeless; consequently, their daily paths include alternative social networks so that a compensating sense of 'time-space continuity' is achieved. Moreover, mobility heavily depends on what the Authors name 'locale', namely the 'environmental features, social institutions, and individuals and activities that are present in time-space' (p. 116); service facilities and philosophies shape the locale and therefore homeless mobility.

Beyond the strictly institutional, there are important experience-related aspects of homeless mobility, as 'the experience of homelessness cannot be considered apart from the experience of movement' (May 2000, p. 737). May relates mobility with the sense of 'home as place' and, focusing on single homeless men, identifies four types of narratives: first, of (dis)placement, including a 'hollowed-out' sense of place, feelings of isolation and disorientation; second, of homesickness, in which the home as place is constantly searched for; third, of spectral geographies, consisting of spaces that have been meaningful in the past, where the homeless return; and fourth, of the new nomads, continuously searching to (re)establish a sense of home throughout various places. Jackson's (2012) research with young homeless people in London provides evidence of the multiple nuances of mobile lives. Entangled in power geometries, mobility becomes an everyday tactic or important survival resource. Mobility may mean loss (of home or any place that feels alike) or can function as a managing strategy. Taking into account the various (both formal and informal) kinds of surveillance, Jackson argues that the experience of young homeless Londoners highlights that 'fixity is not always mobility's opposite, [but] rather some people become *fixed in mobility*' (p. 16, original emphasis).

## TOWARDS A 'NEW HOMELESS MOBILITIES PARADIGM'

In their account, Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 209) note that the claim of the 'new mobilities paradigm' is 'not simply an assertion of the novelty of mobility in the world today [but] rather part of a broader theoretical project aimed at going beyond the imagery of "terrains" as spatially fixed geographical containers for social processes'. To paraphrase them, locating homelessness explicitly within this paradigm would not simply be an assertion of the 'novelty' of homeless mobility. The homeless have always been imagined as on the move; if rootedness is a major characteristic of 'home' (Somerville 1992), then anyone defined by the absence of home is understood as rootless and therefore inevitably mobile. Instead, this chapter extends beyond abstracted imageries of homeless mobilities to understand these mobilities as social processes constitutive of the homeless experience, processes which are also political.

Cresswell's (2006, 2010) interpretation becomes the starting point here: mobility is not about abstract movement. Instead, it is considered a 'necessary social production' (2006, p. 22) that crucially shapes the modern world. It is practiced, meaningful, political. Mobility then is about becoming; a becoming that entails power relations and generates social difference. In this vein, Söderström et al. (2013) propose the concept of 'critical mobilities' in order to highlight how mobility is contested, constitutive of society, part of social processes and always in interaction with the immobile. Indeed, within the 'new mobilities paradigm', immobility (or fixity, or stillness, or 'moorings') does matter (Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006); the ever increasing and complicated movement in today's societies would not be possible without the fixity of specific locations that produce the 'structural or infrastructural contexts for the practicing of mobility' (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011, p. 7).

Moreover, if mobility is not to be seen as movement abstracted from social meanings, then, as every social process, it becomes constitutive of subjectivities too. Through their movement, human bodies influence each other and eventually 'map subjects' on space (Pile & Thrift, 1995). The ways, causes, places and trajectories of moving shape performances that ascribe meaning to the subjectivities in unequal, hierarchical ways: for 'movements are the product and also the producer of our social position' (Cresswell, 2006, p. 109; see also Cresswell & Merriman, 2011). Different mobilities result in different mobile subjectivities, which find themselves in a 'differential movement' (Simpson 2017, p. 4). Spatial movement positions and re-positions us socially. For instance, Adey et al. (2012) use the figure of the 'passenger' in order to show how this subjectivity is made through the mobile body and the material assemblages surrounding it, a subjectivity that is 'politicized, socialized, technologized and encultured in a variety of different ways' (p. 178). Other examples of mobile

subjectivities are: the commuter (Edensor, 2011); the tourist (Crang, 2011); and the, most relevant for this article, vagrant/vagabond, moving continuously and aimlessly (Cresswell, 2011).

To proceed, within the 'critical mobilities' fashion and engaging with the 'new *homeless* mobilities paradigm', it is useful to consider Cresswell's (2010) elements of a 'politics of mobility' aiming at a critical empirical investigation of the mobilities involved in the homeless geographies of central Athens. For the purpose and economy of this paper, specific elements receive attention: the *reasons* for being mobile, the way it *feels* and the *frictions* involved.

## SENSE OF MOBILITY IN THE MACHINIC ARCHIPELAGO

As the discussion on the metaphor's use has already shown, in the machinic archipelago, places and mobility are in constant interrelation: the former shape the material context for the latter. Or, in the words of Doughty and Murray (2016, p. 312), the machinic archipelago '[constitutes] the "conditions of possibility" for the development of certain types of mobile practices'. Forming our understandings of mobility discursively, institutions are critical to the practice of mobility. For the case of Athens, specific mentalities are central to the emergent management of the poor and homeless, positioning subjectivities accordingly (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017). As an essential ingredient of these mentalities, throughout the machinic archipelago of central Athens prevails a specific institutional 'sense of mobility': that of individual mobilisation. According to the official discourse, homeless people ought to be constantly mobilised.

The sense reflects workfarist ideas of self-responsibilisation, expected to make individuals move out of homelessness (Hennigan, 2016; Whiteford, 2010). Physical mobility and personal mobilisation are interrelated. But this sense of mobility concerns a specific scale: that of the body —or even parts of it. 'These people should not rest, they should get mobilised [...] to stand on their own legs', the head of KYADA said during a conference on tackling homelessness at the municipal level on December 16, 2016. The bodily movement of the homeless needs regulation and is desired as specific: continuous and tiring. This institutional sense of mobility, however discursive, is strongly material too. The legs are the part of the body that best symbolises personal mobilisation: '[Hostel residents] should get their shoes melted in search for job, every morning', stated the manager of a central hostel. Often this bodily responsabilisation is 'successfully' incorporated by homeless subjects, who 'feel the need' to move themselves; for if they don't do so, they will never leave the hostel or night shelter. 'If I don't move my own fingers, nothing will happen', Yánnis admits. Through body parts, legs especially, physical homeless mobility relates to personal mobilisation and unease —a bodily movement that should by no means be pleasurable: standing on one's legs means melting one's shoes.

Yet this official sense of mobility should be seen relationally (see Manderscheid, 2014): a complementary 'sense of *fixity*' seems to corroborate it, this time from the homeless' side. Fixity is signified as negative, undesired for everyday survival. It can result in stigmatisation, attract attention and/or entail dangers: for Hamza, '[being on the street] your first interest is to move away from [the spot], not become fixed [...] because you trigger suspicions'. This sense of fixity is also related to the fear of giving permanence to the homeless condition: '[While sleeping rough] I had to leave Kallithea (a suburb). I had to because I started being fixed there', Leftéris said. Hence, being mobile is a way to avoid establishing

an undesired *fixed* street life: ‘When you stay in one place, people around get to know you [...] I didn’t want to become used to this lifestyle’, Hamza continued. Besides establishing undesired relationships, fixity may too threaten relationships with people whose tolerance is important for the survival of the homeless. Símos’ tactic is illuminating: he never hangs his clothes outside of his shanty trying to avoid the neighbors’ suspicions that he is fixed to the location, a low-middle class central neighbourhood.

If the making of mobility is about ‘producing and moulding the perceptions, imaginaries and experiences of mobile —or immobile— urban people, and thus involves mechanisms of power’ (Jensen, 2011, p. 267), we must consider how the institutional sense of mobility is practiced through the machinic archipelago, aiming to reveal the politics in the making of homelessness and generally social difference through mobility. Therefore, considering the crucial role ‘distinct social spaces’ play in the production of mobilities and the ‘new forms of social life’ that they coordinate (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 213), the night shelter exemplifies best how the institutional sense of mobility becomes practiced and makes homeless subjects mobile in specific ways.

#### **FORCED MOBILITY AT THE SHELTER**

The difficult thing is to move your feet out of the mud [...] Waking up, having to leave the place at eight o’ clock, looking for a place to eat or have coffee for free, choosing which bench to sit on ... in order to be at five to seven in front of the shelter’s door that opens at seven thirty

(Manolis, April 4, 2017).

According to the paid staff, besides offering a bed and necessary sanitary facilities, the aim of the night shelter is actually to mobilise the homeless and make them responsible for themselves and effectively deal with their condition. This philosophy complies with the institutional sense of mobility through the shelter’s principal rule and function: its users have to leave the building at 07:30 and return the earliest at 19:30. From a ‘critical geosophy’ point of view (Cresswell, 2006, p. 21), the institutional sense of mobility, which relates to personal mobilisation, is materialised as ‘forced mobility’; here the homeless are forced to move out, a fact that inevitably results in being (more or less) mobile for at least twelve hours per day. Élsa angrily said: ‘I can’t stand like a statue from seven thirty to seven thirty’. After all, statues have no needs to fulfill in their endless fixity.

What seems to be desired —and made— in the shelter, is the mobile homeless, who embodies a form of movement that is considered by the personnel positive

and necessary for shaping self-responsibility, keeping homeless subjects alarmed and hence resulting in their social reintegration. If we consider ‘mobility as part of a governing logic’ (Jensen 2011, 262), the night shelter’s forced mobility is a governing, disciplinary practice coupled with constant uneasiness. Mirroring ‘workfarist’ approaches to social provision that prevail in Greece, and Southern Europe more generally, during austerity times (Arapoglou & Gounis 2017), forced mobility is expected to result in alertness, as a constant reminder of the homeless situation, marked on one’s body. In fact, Níkos from the NGO hostel described the being-in-the-street as an activating condition: ‘In the street you get alerted because you constantly look for a hole to get away through. Because you don’t feel safe, you feel the cold, you feel the heat’.

Any form of forced mobility is political though, and the reasons *why* one moves should be considered to reveal this political (Cresswell, 2010). Being excluded from space in general, the homeless are forced to be on the move, something that renders them perhaps powerless (Jocoy & Del Casino, 2010). Materialising the institutional sense of mobility in such a way, the night shelter becomes a temporary and paradoxical ‘space of exclusion’: the very place that accommodates its users at night forces them to be mobile outside of it during the day. The quotation opening this part expresses this paradox. An outward movement is necessary, guided by one’s own legs. Again, the legs are the bodily parts *par excellence*. Individual movement depends on their movement and so they *have to* be mobile. However, the shelter’s regulations and forced mobility make this movement feel difficult for the homeless. The shelter itself is the mud too, stuck on the homeless’ feet.

Therefore, forced mobility and its surrounding governing logic may have different results than expected. The homeless who find themselves under this condition seem to perceive themselves mostly as drifters rather than mobilised citizens, let alone *self*-mobilised. What matters here is that mobility is practiced through the human body (Cresswell, 2010). The words of Manólis above show the —symbolic and material— importance of the individual’s experience, and the role of the body-scale for the homeless mobilities and their politics. It is the sketching of the subjectivity of ‘the drifter’ that makes forced mobility meaningful, as experienced by the homeless themselves.

## **THE DRIFTER**

The shelter’s forced mobility produces meaningful subjects through a certain symbolic figure, as perceived by the homeless. Many research participants used the word ‘drifter’<sup>2</sup> to describe their daily being-on-the-move. The word is anything but neutral. The homeless signify the embodiment of the drifter in a very specific way. In Manolis’ words, ‘becoming a drifter means the end, it is the bottom one

can reach. Then you lose any interest to save yourself. Rather than feeling mobilised, being in a state of forced mobility is often perceived as a passive condition. Time simply passes by for Mímis: ‘You simply drift from early morning, to forget, not to think, to make time pass by’, whereas Élsa feels that she is wasting her time just ‘walking around pointlessly’.

Drifting is practiced as a particular, embodied way of walking. Márkos described it as a bodily practice with a strong impact on himself: ‘[Walking around] you look downwards in order to find some cigarette leftovers, some coins... You don’t raise your head up [...] [At the night shelter] we have learnt to look towards the ground in order to find something’. Looking downwards is socially loaded: like a sort of ‘personal gravity’, the gaze inevitably pulls downwards the head too. A human figure with the head turned down may be thoughtful, embarrassed, disappointed or desperate —thus loaded negatively. Quite the reverse, to hold one’s head, and therefore gaze, *high* signifies personal strength, self-confidence or pride. Márkos perceives himself in a specific way due to his way of drifting, and his words above stress the need to raise one’s head up. Similarly, this way of pointless walking relates to perceptions of personal dignity for Hamza: ‘I don’t want to go around all these places [...] I need to preserve my dignity and self-respect’. If subjectivities are spaced (Simpson, 2017), then the drifter is spaced a critical product of the forced mobility: a symbolic as well as practiced figure that the homeless subjects embody, a figure that reminds us that the spacing of homeless subjectivities happens also on the move. And the way it feels to be a drifter reveals further aspects of the politics of homeless mobilities.

## THE DRIFTER AND AFFECT

Cloke, May, and Johnsen (2008) have stressed the affective aspects involved in the several places that make homeless geographies, while for Jensen (2011), affective experiences of mobility should be considered in order to reveal power relations. Beyond the cognitive, being in a state of forced mobility provokes several feelings that add further to the meaning of ‘the drifter’. Firstly, it may be felt as inhumane. Medi, a Moroccan refugee at his fifties who has disability issues due to diabetes, offers a comparison: ‘Even a dog has to find a place to rest, it can’t wander forever’. For him, the status of the drifter is lower than the one of a dog. Forced mobility may be stressful but can also provoke feelings of a disposable self, as described by Élsa: ‘In the morning you wake up and feel stressed because you HAVE TO be outside. And it is pointless because you *feel thrown away*, totally thrown away, because you don’t offer anything, neither to yourself nor to anyone else’.

Other users stated that forced mobility makes them lose their mood, ‘feel down’. Feelings of shame are involved in Manólís’ movements in the city, defining his

everyday paths: ‘The very first days I was trying to hide even from my own self. I avoided any place where someone could have recognised me’. Yánnis narrated how being mobile while not affording the ticket fair becomes shameful: ‘There was much ticket control those days [...] Perhaps not everyone *feels ashamed* but I myself in front of 50 people, not having paid the fair ...how embarrassing!’ Stressing the affective dimensions of forced mobility not only gives agency back to the homeless subjects but also reveals the ‘mundane yet vital sensory, feeling capacities that both precede and exceed [...] strategizing and resistance’ (Daya & Wilkins, 2013, p. 359). Affect can make homeless agency more complete then. And affect cannot be perceived aside from the materiality of the body.

### DRIFTING BODIES

We have seen how central the body is in the homeless condition. And besides being simply the marker between the ‘public’ and its potential usurpers (Kawash 1998), it is made through a material-immaterial interplay that produces certain realities for the homeless. Forced mobility has a considerable effect, especially when intersecting with lines of age and/or physical disabilities. Having to move constantly is tiring, a place for some rest and fixity feel necessary but difficult to find. María, in her early fifties, described how her bodily movement has now changed to the state of dragging: ‘Merry-go-round all day long, I am tired, I’ve grown old [...] I don’t walk any more, *I drag myself*’. It happened many times during fieldwork that people showed me their swollen or wounded feet as personal evidence of their daily forced mobility. Pointing at her red toe, Élsa once told me, ‘This is because of walking. I am limping’. And another time while putting antiseptic on her foot: ‘I never had callouses on my feet. These shoes have been split apart’. Others too have shown me how their shoes may have been torn apart only few days after they have been acquired: ‘Look at this! I got them new five days ago and they are already falling apart because of walking! Yeah, they only costed five euro but still... five days!’

Not only the body itself and its performances become part of one’s self but also, in a phenomenological account, forced mobility is perceived through the body: ‘I feel a constant exhaustion. All this (being mobile) is absolutely bodily’, Élsa said. The material conditions of the drifting body have immaterial consequences in the case of Manólis: ‘I get EX-HAUST-ED. Bodily tiredness now brings me psychological tiredness’. Preserving one’s own dignity is related to whether and how bodily needs are met. Mimis gives a powerful example: ‘While on the street you have needs to fulfill. The food you normally eat is not the best and it happens that you urgently need a toilet and don’t have access to any. You are obliged to get demeaned!’ (see Mitchell, 1997) Thus, forced mobility can largely affect the homeless body both materially and immaterially. If ‘to walk is to lack a place’ (De Certeau, 1984, p. 103), the drifter’s need to walk —or, more generally, to be

mobile— represents the absence of a *fixed* place. To be mobile is to create place on the move *through* the homeless body. As the physical and psychological conditions of their bodies deteriorate (in a perpetual state of drifting and the impossibility of resting), for instance under a ‘forced mobility’, the homeless in Athens may become dispossessed even from the ‘only place’ they have as ‘secure’—their own body: a body-place that is made of memories, meanings, bodily needs and affect, moments of uncomfortable stillness, and, finally, purposeful routes throughout the city.

### DRIFTING PURPOSEFULLY

Notwithstanding the forceful forms of homeless mobility, homeless people play an active role in it through various negotiations. Empowerment through mobility is often explicit: ‘I create *myself* my own mobility’, Símos has proudly said. Such disruptive discourses of mobility (Doughty & Murray, 2016) should be considered within the social and material context of the machinic archipelago. Hamza expressed his need to add a purpose in his moving around: ‘I just pass my time by doing *something*. I don’t want to spend my time just walking around and wait until six o’ clock to be there’. This ‘something’ can vary from job searching to socialising. Within the condition of forced mobility then, there exists a ‘purposeful mobility’ that aims to make one’s day meaningful in her/his own terms and provide the homeless with feelings of satisfaction, social inclusion, or ‘normality’—in other words, with forms of empowerment. For example, Arghíris goes to a refugee camp on a daily basis as a volunteer: ‘What should I do?’ he asked me ironically, ‘drift all day long and move from square to square and from bench to bench!?’

The ‘doing something’ discourse seems to interweave with more explicit forms of mobility as a strategy for the drifter; ‘being in a state of mobility requires the development of tactics’ anyway (Jackson, 2012, p. 9). Agathí volunteers daily at the National Garden where she takes care of animals. Directing her forced mobility in this way, she turns in into a meaningful tactic that helps her deal with the negative aspects of shelter life: ‘Why not, otherwise where do I go? [At the Garden] I lose myself, don’t think of what happens in [the shelter], have *something to do*’. Being forced to be mobile, Agathí not only finds something meaningful to do; establishing social relations at a specific place, she produces her own spatial fixity: the Garden becomes thus a fixed, *safe* place for her to pass the day and perhaps achieve a certain level of ‘time-space continuity’ (Wolch & Rowe, 1992). For some, memory is more important than fixity; Manólís uses forced mobility in order to pass by the places where he grew up or where his wife had lived. Moreover, going back to his old neighbourhood becomes a tactic that hides the homeless status and obliterates social difference by performing a sense of ‘normality’: ‘Ha-ha, nobody knows [in my old neighbourhood]... They think I

am still rich and expect me to offer drinks [...] I don't allow voices to pull me downwards, you know'.

Such purposeful mobilities seem to comply well with the institutional sense of mobility as homeless subjects seem indeed to activate themselves. Perhaps though they become active not in the way desired by the official discourse and emergency forms of managing the poor: for example, not being a source of income, volunteering does not open apparent pathways out of homelessness either for Arghiris or for Agathí. But purposeful mobilities are a decisive way for the homeless to regain agency, produced necessary fixities, feel empowered and take control of their own everyday lives, a control that seems to be partially taken by the machinic archipelago.

## HOMELESS FRICTIONS

If we turn back to the paper's opening moments, we see mobility practiced and experienced in a productive, meaningful and complex interplay with fixity. Expanding to a third element of the politics of mobility, this part relates the homeless geographies of Athens with mobility research that highlights the importance of the immobile, of fixity, of 'moorings' (Adey, 2006; Cresswell, 2012; Hannam, Sheller & Urry 2006). Mobility should always be seen as dependent on, and in relation to, forms, practices and places of immobility. For Söderström et al. (2013), considering the interaction between the mobile and the immobile is essential for a 'critical mobilities' approach, whilst Adey (p. 87) underlines how 'mobility/moorings constitute, and are constituted by, social relations'. Therefore, being mobile as homeless in the machinic archipelago of central Athens involves several practices of stasis that have a significant impact on the homeless subjectivities and further stress the politics of their making as mobile.

Before proceeding with the empirics, it is important to distinguish between two terms here: 'fixity' and 'friction'. Both can be seen as two different sides of what can be called 'stasis', that is immobility at a conceptual level: the neutral state of being still, outside of any social context—to the extent this is possible. Previously we have seen how important and meaningful the idea of fixity has been in relation to both the sense of mobility (from the institutional side) and the need to be actually mobile (from the homeless' side). Fixity, then, can be considered as a geographical notion that shapes social meaning and hence enables specific practices. Examples of such practices that originate from fixity's negative signification are the night shelter's forced mobility, as well as the frequent purposeful movement of rough sleepers aiming to avoid stigmatisation.

Friction is the second aspect of stasis, or the other side of fixity. Friction is fixity *lived*: embodied, experienced, contested, meaningful. During friction, fixity is performed, multiply manifested. Most importantly, friction matters because it can be a *visible* practice, relating the person in friction with her/his 'outside', which either imposes the friction or can simply observe it in a specific 'regime of the visual' (Pile & Thrift, 1995) that affects homeless subjects. If it is the 'relational' that matters for the politics of mobility (Adey, 2006; see also Manderscheid, 2014), then visibility becomes a key actor that renders friction relational: it performs the relationship with the outside and, consequently, performs social difference.

For Yánnis, his fixity emphasised his difference from the rest of the people: '[a reason for moving while sleeping rough] was also that I myself was different from passers-by and didn't want them to see me sitting on a bench, immobile, while they were coming from and going to their jobs'. In this case, friction is activated

because the contrast between (a negative) fixity and (a positive) movement is visible. This visible contrast may lead someone to perform other, more desired forms of mobility as a way to negotiate friction. And Leftéris stressed how important it was for him to achieve being seen by others as mobile in specific terms: 'People didn't see me as homeless! They would just see a traveler with his suitcase!' Here, the social difference that friction can perform is actively, albeit temporarily, obliterated; put differently, '[mobility] enables the homeless to hide their status for a while' (Jocoy & Del Casino, 2010, p. 1959).

However, there is no clear-cut distinction between the two sides of stasis. They are in constant interrelation and the in-between line is extremely thin and fragile. Fixity always gestates the danger of friction. For some people or groups, the potential friction is negative and hence fixity is avoided. The critical role of friction in the homeless geographies and mobilities is gradually explored in two empirical cases, as follow: living in a car, and the night shelter's entrance. The former illustrates the importance of friction through efforts by the homeless to avoid it; the latter describes a crucial form of friction that the shelter users have to undergo every day.

## **CAR IM/MOBILITIES**

...In the middle of the sea with a Nissan Sunny.

(Andréas, March 29, 2017)

Although comprising a big part of the homeless population, people who live in vehicles have not received adequate research attention (Gowan, 2010). For some research companions, living in a car has been the first stage of their homeless pathways. For other, owning a car offers an alternative to night shelter's forced mobility providing the homeless with a protective, extended private space (Hillis, 2008) to spend the day in. Being homeless and im/mobile in a car is an experience in which the relationship between fixity and mobility, and the danger of friction are exemplified. Antónis spent months in his car before moving to a hostel: 'I always had to find a place [to park the car] where I could then move from'. Security can be one reason for moving the car in order to avoid friction; being immobile can entail serious danger and potential harm. Andréas explained: 'I was changing positions for security reasons, almost every two or three days [...] for my own safety because drunken, thieves and the like frequent such places [where I used to park]. If they notice that you live inside, they knock on the window, pierce the bald tyres'. The most important aspect of car im/mobility though seems to be a certain stigma that can activate friction. As Antónis' experience shows, this stigma is often countered with actions that aim to distort the impression of visible fixity:

I didn't like people seeing me inside the car, really [...] I was pretending to speak on the phone sometimes, was buying a cheap coffee in order to place the coffee cup on the car [to make it visible], was having a cigarette although I wouldn't smoke normally, [...] doing such things... opening the window so that the smoke would come out [and be seen] ....

A similar practice can be walking around the area in order not to be seen inside the car all day long. If the homeless mobilities often involve 'tactics of invisibility' (Cloke, Milbourne & Widdowfield, 2003, p. 30), the above experiences of research participants demonstrate that friction, or the fear of it, may involve 'tactics of distorted visibility'. When visibility cannot be avoided, it needs to be performed in desired terms, at least temporarily.

## ENTERING THE SHELTER

In the homeless geographies of central Athens, the night shelter's entrance could be described as one of what Adey calls 'obligatory points of passage' (2006, p. 88) for homeless subjects. It is where an all day long mobility *stops* —and so does the mobile homeless body. 'Being stopped is not only stressful,' Simonsen says, 'it also makes the body itself the site of social stress' (2012, p. 4). We have seen how specific practices take place at the entrance: noting down names, surnames, day counts, bed numbers; searching bags for 'inappropriate items'; and, especially, controlling the homeless bodies. Pockets are emptied, stuff left on the table for a bit. The homeless slightly raises her/his arms, the staff member takes the metal detector and scans the body. The detector is the item that performs control from a secure distance; nobody touches anyone yet control is effective. The metal detector is the material boundary between the homeless and the non-homeless body —the controlled and the controlling body, distant enough. Body twists, arms higher. A routinised choreography as discipline. Leaving the homeless body untouched, the detector performs a micro-panopticism on the homeless body. One person enters each time and when the control is over, the next one enters. The rest just have to patiently wait outside the door —all together. This time-consuming 'rite of entrance' imposes a specific rhythm to the flow of people entering the shelter, and the entrance thus possesses particular dynamics: it performs a powerful friction for the homeless, who find themselves in a 'less comfortable form of stillness' (Cresswell, 2012).

This waiting performs a restrained centripetal momentum for the homeless, pulling their bodies inside but, at the same time, holding them 'fixed' right outside the door (see also Kerr, 2016). The rite of entrance is highly affective. The opposing forces of the desire and impatience to enter on the one hand (as a result of the forced mobility), and the fixity necessary for the control on the other, make

the bodies suspended in an uncomfortable stasis, resisting their momentum inwards: 'Even if the shelter opened at four, we would be there waiting from three. When it used to open at six, we were there at five. Now [that the opening has been postponed till 19:30] we have to wait till seven thirty', Mímis accepted. Friction regulates the homeless movement at the body level regardless of the urge to enter. Moreover, the entrance's friction is immersed in a peculiar, uncomfortable silence. Only a few jokes or words are heard, sometimes. On the contrary, some minutes later *inside* the shelter the same people become talkative and interactive both among themselves and with the personnel and volunteers. It seems that friction matters.

Visibility is again critical. In the context of the homeless night shelter, the fact that the people gathered in fixity outside are visible may have an impact upon the individual stigma a homeless person often gets: being fixed altogether while waiting performs an emphasised, collective stigma when seen from passers-by. To avoid friction some may arrive late on purpose, while others remain in the area but are hesitant to stand close to the entrance. For example, Márkos tends to postpone this friction: 'Before entering, I need to take three strolls around'. Manólis highlighted the friction's affective impact:

[I go] faraway. When I am close [to the shelter] I have a feeling of stress, that time is approaching! If I sit at the coffee place [around the corner] as others do, asking constantly what the time is.... Oh! It is something to seven.... This is sickness, mental sickness!

Another pivotal element of the visibility of friction is the control described above. Although taking place indoors, the glass door does not hinder the view from the outside. And even if most research companions believe it is necessary, and control is performed in a routinised and quick way, being controlled *and* visible has a certain impact. When related to the body, the gaze is never neutral but 'charged with feelings, moral judgments and condemnation' (Makrynioti, 2004, p. 33). The following discussion with Manolis is illuminating:

Manolis: At some point [the control] becomes demeaning. There should be a sort of neutrality, this humiliation should not be seen from outside. This humiliation not to be seen! It is criminal.

Myself: How does it make you feel?

Manolis: A criminal!

Myself: ...As if you did something bad?

Manolis: Yes. Although it is right, it is not wrong. But it is a bit ... sheriff-style. And you are being watched! Watched! From people next door and the others waiting.

Myself: Can someone get used to this?

Manolis: No. You get used to it only in a space where you are not visible [...] You don't want to be visible while being controlled.

Volunteering at the night shelter, I myself have several times experienced the friction —of course from a completely different position. Although I was allowed to enter the shelter anytime, it was emotionally difficult for me to enter every time I arrived around the opening time, when people were gathered outside: bypassing the rite of entrance would mean to perform, make visible and emphasise the difference between myself and the homeless, with the latter subjected to the friction whereas myself being able to avoid it. And although users would always open space politely for me to pass, I always felt the necessity to hold back my bodily movement in order not to visibly challenge the friction —I had to go (better: *stay*) with the friction, yet untouched by the stigma. Hence the entrance, along with its friction, has always been a powerful —often uncomfortable but certainly practiced— reminder of my positionality and subjectivity as a researcher.

## THE ARCHIPELAGO'S WATER: MAKING HOMELESS GEOGRAPHIES ON THE MOVE THROUGH OUTREACH PRACTICE

*Η Ομόνοια είναι μια λίμνη στην οποία εκβάλλουν διάφοροι ποταμοί. Είναι οι ποταμοί οι αλληγορικοί και είναι οι ποταμοί οι καθαρώς νοητοί.*

Γιάννης Ιωάννου, 1980, 'Ομόνοια 1980', Αθήνα: Κέδρος

*Ομόνοια is a lake where several rivers flow into. These are the allegoric rivers and the clearly imaginary ones.*

Yánnis Ioánnou, 1980, 'Ομόνοια 1980', Athens: Kédros

As we have seen so far, the machinic archipelago of central Athens has the tendency to temporarily internalise the homeless stigma. Its different island-knots 'absorb' the homeless and specific practices so that provision and care can be performed. The stigma and the practices surrounding it are thus made invisible to the public eye. Yet, once again emphasising the machinic nature of the archipelago, the latter contributes also to a mobile making of the homeless geographies and subjectivities. Generating practices of the so-called 'outreach work' (or 'street work', as many of its practitioners in Athens prefer to call it using the English term), the archipelago externalises itself turning inside-out; instead of the homeless reaching it, the archipelago reaches the homeless. 'Hard stuff, [during street work] you see many things, *other* things, even drug users...' an outreach volunteer excitedly said one night. Indeed, thanks to this mobile practice the archipelago reaches people that otherwise deny its nodes or are excluded from them.<sup>58</sup> For many, doing outreach work means 'looking for the client' (Arapoglou, 2004b, p. 632). For, as the old motto has it, when Mohamed does not go to the mountain, the mountain will go to Mohamed<sup>59</sup> —even when sometimes the mountain has to liquefy itself.

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<sup>58</sup> During the whole period of fieldwork, very few drug users appeared at the day centre whilst the night shelter excludes by default this homeless sub-group.

<sup>59</sup> 'Αν δεν πάει ο Μωάμεθ στο βουνό, πάει το βουνό στον Μωάμεθ' [an den pàei o Moàmeth sto vounò, pàei to vounò ston Moàmeth].

Outreach work is a practice of movement and stillness that involves complex pedestrian dynamics between outreach workers and homeless people, affecting the street level politics and the subjectivities involved (Hall & Smith, 2013). Outreach: out-reach. The word's spatial implications are remarkable: first, defining something or someone as being *out*, away from here, thus distant —aim set; then, moving in order to *reach* that 'out' —route set, from here to there. 'This is not about just a walk, outreach has its purposes', the leader of an outreach group explained: 'the aim is *the homeless person*'. The homeless is distant, out there, and needs to be reached, from in here. And s/he is reached because care might be necessary. The practice of delivering care through the pedestrian practices of outreach workers 'not only traverses but *produces* the contours of the landscape, territory and consequent urban politics in which outreach workers move and are entangled' (Smith & Hall, 2016, p. 504).

In Athens, these contours are similar to the ones of the machinic archipelago: outreach happens mostly through it and along its edges, but also expanding it — for example, towards Syntagma square. These mobile practices are the archipelago's 'water': provision, care, and contacts between 'common' society and the homeless, with their differently marked bodies, are first externalised and then practiced *in situ*, visibly, and through mobility and friction. Pireòs, Ermou, Sofoklèous, Athinàs, Evripìdou, Stadiou, Koumoundourou, Omònoia; the streets and squares where the water mostly flows. But this water does not flow for the sake of flowing. Outreach is a purposeful mobile practice that aims at frictions, wherein the homeless and the archipelago get in touch. For '[the archipelago's] sea might be an element of contact, rather than separation' (Cattan & Vanolo, 2014, p. 1161).

The group's leader continued: 'While at the day centre the homeless come to a place that *you have defined*, in outreach happens the opposite: you go to the place that *they have defined*'. Out there, homeless subjects may be perceived as potentially dangerous, something that seems to be secured in the controlled environment of the day centre. Such (widespread) ideas of the street as a space defined by the homeless are often enriched with statements stressing privacy issues, the respect and sensibility needed in these places. Nevertheless, privacy becomes fragile given that the privacy of rough sleepers is both exposed *and* located in public space. It seems that, when combined, these two attributes legitimise possible transgressions of privacy —or, at least, efforts of transgression— and of the spaces privacy is exercised. With the homeless her/himself being the aim, the frictions involved in mobile outreach work are about various transgressions.

To show how the homeless geographies of central Athens and the involved subjectivities are made through mobile outreach practices, three geographical moments are described: outreach in the day; outreach at night; and outreach at Pedìon tou Àreos. May the water flow now.

## OUTREACH IN THE DAY

KYADA is the main, if not the only, institution conducting outreach work in the city centre in the mornings, almost on a daily basis. Its group consists of three social workers, while sometimes a car with a driver is available for remote locations. KYADA's street actions are targeted: the group leaves the office with a list of specific spots at hand, spots that have been indicated by citizens who call and inform the office about homeless people who may need assistance. 'Cases', often called like this (especially when already known), are listed. This outreach work is explicitly informative, aiming to inform the homeless about available services and, if possible, encourage them to access these services (both orally and by handing out a booklet).

Attempting to approach rough sleepers in the morning makes it difficult to actually find the person in her/his place; in most of cases, the team (myself included) ends up *not* encountering the homeless. This time of the day a homeless may visit services s/he is in contact with (e.g. a day centre), go to a soup run, seek for a job or even work (see Hall & Smith, 2014). In most of the cases then, outreach work has a taste of frustration —a taste that is gradually fading away as not finding the 'case' becomes more and more common, almost the rule. However, frustration does not mean inertia. Frictions do happen even in those cases; and are full of material traces. Even if the homeless is absent, her/his belongings, traces of everyday life, are present. These traces signal both the place and the person and show the degree of permanence. When carefully investigated by the social workers, they may even vaguely sketch the profile of their possessor (e.g. sex, age, activity, drug using or not). Especially, these traces perform privacy —and our gaze on them transgressions of privacy. Possessions as traces mark absent presences or present absences and make the homeless possessors spectral. The line between permanence and abandonment is vague. In such absent presences, the team leaves their own trace: the booklet. Outreach is marked.

Not all attempts are unsuccessful. On a sunny Monday morning, we arrive by car underneath one of the central overground highways that locals like to call 'bridges'. The car leaves us at a nearby street and then we walk. Arriving under the bridge, familiar traces start appearing, exactly where the place starts feeling hidden, almost invisible, somewhat private. Two sleeping spots are traced, one with its owner. We head towards him, without knowing if he is the person we are looking for. The man is laying on two or three mattresses placed on top of each other, and he is covered with two or three blankets. It is not clear whether he woke up because of our presence or he was anyway not sleeping. One social worker decides to introduce the group, and when 'KYADA' is mentioned, the man smirks. 'Are we disturbing you?' she asked him belatedly. 'No, I am used to be disturbed, especially from November to February [...] They (other outreach groups) pass by to give me tea, chocolate, raisins... but these things are not enough'. Short silence. Him smirking again, now it is almost a smile.

He is Pétros, a Greek at his forties, six years in Athens, three years sleeping rough. When the social worker informs him about the services provided by the municipality, he shows perfect knowledge of the field: he is aware of the municipal hostel, the processes and bureaucracy, the name and surname of KYADA's head, whom he knows personally. While talking to us, his body is gradually raising, perhaps in order to reach us, who are standing in front, watching from above. The height in between marks social distance. All three social workers show explicit enthusiasm for his smartness and awareness, respond to every 'positive sign' he gives, and encourage him to apply for a place at the hostel —although the waiting list might be too long this period. He did not look convinced.

-Do you have any specific need?

-Yeah, a house and a job.

That was a clear smile. Albeit Pétros' perfect knowledge about the archipelago's services, the social workers left him a booklet with information. And the group said 'good day' and left the place in big excitement. For, regardless of the friction's outcome, Pétros had performed a 'good case', according to the social workers: talkative, smart, informed; ready to become responsible of himself. And the group had performed a 'successful' outreach practice.



FIGURE 34 Under the bridge, leaving Petros' post. November 2016.

## OUTREACH AT NIGHT

Contrary to outreach work conducted during the day, the same mobile practice in the evenings or at night is undertaken by NGOs, besides on days of extreme colds that the Municipality becomes active also at night. These groups, predominantly consisted of volunteers, move in semi-spontaneous ways: each group has a more or less standardised route that slightly varies every time. The exact route is decided every time after all team members get together. The resulting geographies are then made through repetitive routes, and this very repetition allows relationships to be established with homeless that remain on the same spot for some time, something that is normally not the case for the municipality's outreach work. 'Let's go to Mákis!', was the idea of a volunteer after successive unsuccessful frictions; the movement had to finish with an encounter and Mákis could guarantee this.

Purposes, and hence practices, also differ; besides giving information or documenting one's story, the outreach practices that shape the homeless geographies at night are dominated by material provision. 'It is a material process', the head of one of the two NGOs I followed made clear upon our first meeting. Raisins, hot tea, homemade cake, blankets; what Pétros above said is not enough; and what a member of another NGO called 'a pat on the [homeless] back'. The importance of these material practices should not be underestimated though. A plastic cup of hot tea can be absolutely important to anyone spending a(nother) cold night outside, creating a moment of comfort and bodily warmth, let alone the human contact; civil society expresses its solidarity through the gesture of actual giving ('It's nice to give something!' a volunteer mentions, regardless of this 'something'); and such a materiality may create the space for 'common' society and its 'other' to get physically closer —'outreach is *interesting*' another volunteer will say, commenting on the encounters with homeless. As this geographical moment shows, the practice of outreach work is material not only in terms of provision. Rather it is material through the different bodies involved in frictions.

Most of times, outreach starts from Panepistimio metro station, at the machinic archipelago's eastern threshold. A small trolley, IKEA and plastic bags are shared, jackets with the NGO's logo are put on. Ready to move to Omònoia square. At night, frictions are more frequent. In and around the archipelago, many homeless are found were expected: in their place, out there. But they may be also sleeping or taking a rest in their visible privacy. For this reason, approaching should be careful and takes time. Movement is slowed down when a rough sleeper is detected; a few glimpses tell us if this is the case for stopping, otherwise movement will be again accelerated till the next spot. And around here there are many. Slowing down, glimpsing, going on, traces, slowing down again, a sleeping body, going on, a man sitting, slowing down, slowing down even more, stopping. Friction. Two of us approach the man, like this privacy is considered to be respected. The rest stand behind, distant, observing privacy, keeping an eye on

what is happening around, holding the bags, ready to provide anything needed —if needed, if available. ‘Picture! Can you take a picture for Facebook?’ someone whispers. ‘Click!’ and care for the homeless is captured by the carers and then can get viralised (Lancione, 2014). The man shares his story briefly, notes are being kept. Tea and raisins. No salty food needed. No blanket available. Ten minutes and we leave him alone again, underneath the yellow lights of the post office — ‘he is an interesting case!’<sup>60</sup> with no name apparently. The two of us who talked with him and shook hands ask immediately for disinfectant.

Once again in motion. The porticos along Athinàs street, especially their darker parts and where shop owners have left the space free, shelter people in groups. It is almost eleven, most seem to be sleeping. A bunch of three men are found chatting next to a church. Half the group approaches them and joins the talk. The team’s leader (‘This is *my* shift!’ he will tell me later), on his knees, offers some cake. ‘On the knees, this is how [outreach] is correct, on the knees’. On our knees distance seems shorter. We are there to listen: ‘There is no State [...] In all this (the crisis), the homeless and drug users are the victims’. The men keep themselves warm by rubbing *tsipouro*<sup>61</sup> on their feet and hands. Another team member comes from the other side of the street, holding a package of belts with the tips of her thumb and index finger: ‘I couldn’t refuse!’. She just met Eva, a homeless drug user known by most team members; Eva offered the belts as a gift. While approaching, at least two of us remain behind watching. Every presence that could be considered ‘threatening’ activates the bodies: in their jackets, chests are thrown out towards any other, ‘suspicious’ body so that the NGO’s logo targets it. The jackets and the bodily postures wrapped in them signal our role there, render our presences legitimate or less out-of-place, and create a secure distance for as long as friction lasts.

Gazes direct outreach work at night; the homeless gaze invites or repels the outreach team. At night, gazes are lights. This night, as most nights, most gazes repel us and our intended frictions. We just keep moving then. While slowing down our movement, a squeezed gaze in between blankets and sleeping bags is enough to accelerate movement again; it signals a privacy that allows no frictions this moment. Searching around, this night’s route will finish at Theàtrou square, one of the most disreputable spots of central Athens, often imagined as ghetto or no-go zone. The place is absolutely empty, silent, the only thing moving is rubbish thanks to the strong cold wind. ‘I like calling this area “Pakistanoùpoli!”’,<sup>62</sup> a volunteer joyfully explains to a British photographer and journalist who is following the group. A walk around the square. Nobody. No bodies. Heading to the closest metro station, I remain with a feeling not of a purposeful practice, as I was told, but of just a walk, like a freezing winter joke moving in the city.

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<sup>60</sup> ‘Ενδιαφέρον περιστατικό!’ [Endiaféron peristatikó!] literally meaning ‘interesting incident’.

<sup>61</sup> A typical Greek pomace brandy.

<sup>62</sup> Literally meaning ‘Pakistani city’. The area, mostly of commercial use, has a high concentration of migrant groups.

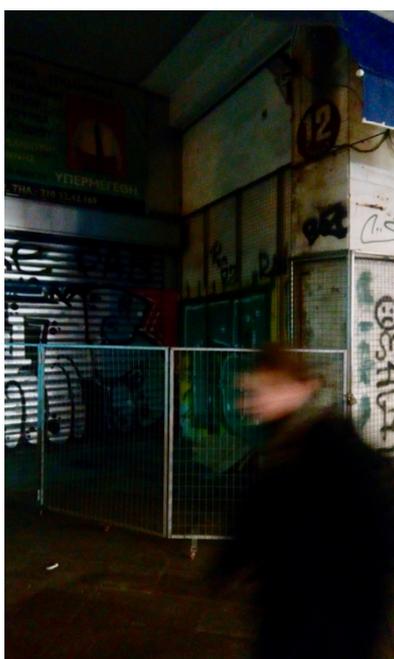


FIGURE 35 Shop-owners' attempt to prevent homeless from sleeping in front of the shops. Athinás street, December 2016.

## OUTREACH AT PEDÌON TOU ÀREOS

Pedìon tou Àreos is the city's biggest park. Its image is contested; the media and local civil unions claim for a reappropriation of the park, parts of which are used by drug users, dealers and many homeless. The dominant image is that of abandonment, dirt, social pollution. Similarly, Pedìon tou Àreos has been described as 'difficult' and no-go area by outreach practitioners and NGO members. 'We don't go there anymore, only on Christmas days... And we don't *really* enter, we go to the parts closer to the street', the head of an NGO explained. The machinic archipelago's water does not easily reach Pedìon. It sometimes leaks here though. The day centre's outreach team visits the park almost on a weekly basis; this is a focused outreach mobile practice that aims to approach (mainly) homeless drug users in one of the city's most disreputable spots.

June first, one in the afternoon. The sun is burning gently. Thirty-three degrees. Today we are four, which means roles will be clear and balanced: two approaching (a psychologist and a social worker), and two behind, on the lookout (the volunteers, myself included). We have been asked to have with us only very necessary things; our keys, our cellphones and perhaps a little money or just a bus ticket to return home. Other materials, such as a watch or a fancy backpack, may be out-of-place. 'Nothing will happen but you never know'. Free of our own possessions, our bodies are ready to slip into a more 'appropriate' paraphernalia:

reporter vests with the NGO's logo, heavy backpacks, thermos bottles. A material transformation before entering the park. Time to enter. The dense foliage creates an air of privacy, shapes an almost closed space. Our presence feels already transgressive; some first glances are magnetised, then some first bodies. Walking a bit further we find ourselves in a sort of anteroom, saturated with movements of drug using and dealing. From this anteroom, we can see—and control—what is happening further on: heavy drug using. Here is a spatial preamble and our mobility stops. 'We proceed till the point we feel safe', instructions have it. Friction begins.

However materially so different, our presence does not seem to really matter after a little while. Other bodies keep doing their 'other' stuff, namely drug dealing and 'light' drug using (such as *sisá*<sup>63</sup>), sitting, standing and moving. We in the middle. The soil we are stepping on feels less natural. In all this, a 'case' shows up; to be more precise, he is 'the *social worker's* case'. A homeless guy the social worker has been dealing with lately and seems to 'possess'. In this case, 'dealing with' means mostly a talk of five or ten minutes—till the next 'case' appears. He has a backpack identical to ours, given to him some time ago by the team. While talking, we offer him some juice from the thermos. None of us knows what kind of juice, none of us has tried. 'Strawberry', the man utters; 'Oh, really, it happened to be strawberry today?!', the psychologist responds adding notes of excessive enthusiasm to her tone. The appearance of the thermos and the practice of offering juice perform an immediate call: people are activated in a movement centered on us. Everybody would like some fresh juice on this hot day. For some minutes, the practice of taking a plastic glass, pouring some juice in it, and passing it on, orchestrates a choreography of specific bodies around us: they surround us, get a glass in a moment of material give-and-take, and leave. 'One of you (the two volunteers) has to keep an eye on her (the social worker) constantly!'

They are bodies that carry marks and wounds, bodies that move slowly and closer to the ground, sometimes faster, bodies of a different smell, touch and sight. Bodies immersed in practices that, as 'we' have learnt, are deviant, dangerous, dirty. And 'we' have learnt that our own bodies are not like this—a crucial knowledge for outreach practice. 'Relax, we are safe, we have these vests on, *they protect us!*', said the other volunteer when I expressed my anxiety for being there. Indeed the vests could by no means offer any physical protection; yet they make our bodies different. Inside the (professional) vest, under the (highly reputed) NGO's logo our bodies are marked as distant from the surrounding bodies. The vests, with their surrounding paraphernalia, perform the presence of our bodies as legitimate right here; legitimate but different, distant, untouched in all this spatial proximity. They do protect us. Juice is over. We progress for a few meters, always in the anteroom: 'Does anybody need condoms?' Second act of choreography, more bodies, other bodies. Condoms are over. Time to move. Relief. Friction ending. Heart beating slower.

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<sup>63</sup> A cheap psychoactive drug whose basic ingredient is methamphetamine.

The second friction of this outreach is also targeted; Georgia and Christos are two middle-aged homeless, apparently not drug users (Georgia has some alcohol addiction, I have been said), who live in the park for some years now. They are ‘cases’ of both the social worker and psychologist, who have been trying for long time to ‘activate’ them. We visit them at the kiosk they normally hang out, the team is familiar to them. We sit with them—but not that close to them. Georgia and Christos sit at a rectangular table’s head, one on each side; we sit right on the opposite side, the table’s other head, but distant from it. After a short chat, we leave for them on the table—not in their hands—a pack of plastic glasses, two soaps, a couple of shampoo samples, shower gel, and a deodorant that Georgia had asked for last week. All this time the long table has been in between the homeless bodies and our bodies; bodies that are not only marked differently, as described above, but also physically placed opposite to each other. If the friction’s aim is to ‘activate’ Georgia and Christos, this ‘activation’ is attempted from some distance—the ‘out’ is ‘reached’ from a secured position.

## **BODIES THROUGH THE WATER**

The mobile practice of outreach work, as if the archipelago’s water that flows around its islands-knots and connects them, aims at frictions in which ‘common’ people and the homeless meet, so that the former directs provision and care to the latter. Such frictions may happen during the day, at night, in the city streets, in parks; such frictions may also *not* happen. They involve moving, carrying, seeing, deciding, approaching, transgressing, shaking hands, accelerating, knowing, talking, reading traces and getting signals, material provision and sometimes material reception.

Above all yet, the practice of outreach work makes the archipelago’s geographies visible to the public eye. Provision and care are reaching out. But what is also out there are bodies marked differently: the bodies of the outreach workers, and the bodies of the homeless; or, the ‘giving bodies’ and the ‘receiving bodies’. Albeit the contact, the former’s material paraphernalia and bodily practices perform distance from the latter. In these frictions, the encounters between the two, however important, make the homeless body different, ‘out’, distant, ‘other’. Outreach work entails ‘pedestrian circulations [...] that produce winners and losers’ (Smith & Hall, 2016, p. 505). ‘Many times I saw them (people doing outreach) but I was trying to avoid all this [contact]. For becoming *visible as a homeless* in a society where most people know each other... is not good.’ For Hamza, the homeless stigma is performed visibly *in situ*. For water is transparent and bodies are seen through it.

## CONCLUSIONS: RELATIONS, SUBJECTIVITIES, MOBILE POLITICS

Manderscheid (2014, p. 192) calls to consider ‘mobility practices as relational practices’. The homeless mobilities and the geographies they shape in central Athens are indeed practiced *and* relational. The current making of the contested landscapes of homelessness in Athens (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017) is anything but static and involves the making of mobile subjectivities, both homeless and non-homeless. Mobilities relate the discursive level to the human body or parts of it, the institutional framework to its material manifestations, the mobile to the immobile, and abstract senses to the subjects that are forced to embody them. The machinic archipelago of Athens channels the motion and circulation of homeless bodies, as well as involves important moments of, more or less uncomfortable, fixity. And it also lets its water flow through the practice of outreach work.

An institutional sense of mobility demands that the homeless be self-mobilised as a means to give an (individual) end to homelessness; ‘movement is affirmed, is where the action is; stasis is condemned, pathologised’ (Hall & Smith, 2013, p. 276). In an emerging workfarist context of managing the poor, self-mobilisation means self-responsibilisation and the scale of the body, and parts of it, are central. Shaping the ‘conditions of possibility’ for mobility (Doughty & Murray, 2016), the night shelter affects the making of mobile homeless subjectivities, and materialises the institutional sense of mobility, the latter being practiced as ‘forced mobility’ imposed over the homeless. They must remain mobile for at least twelve hours every day.

If the passenger is only one exemplary character in order to understand how mobility contributes to the making of modern subjectivities (Adey et al., 2012), we ought to think about other, not *othered*, subjectivities that are made through different forms of mobility which are, for instance, forced and depending primarily on one’s body. And if with ‘a sturdy pair of shoes [we can] see the politics of urban life enacted and experienced’ (Smith & Hall, 2016, p. 505), the ‘drifters’ show us how sturdy their shoes are *not*, after walking the streets of Athens for hours and hours and hours. The pedestrian practices of the ‘drifters’ show how the institutional sense of mobility may produce homeless subjectivities that remind us more of the vagrant/vagabond rather than that of modern active, workfarist and self-responsibilised individuals. Nevertheless, while the vagrant/vagabond necessitated forms of regulations in modern societies (Cresswell, 2011), the drifter may be a *product* of specific regulations within the overall poverty management in Athens.

Can then the forced mobile homeless offer alternatives to the politics of mobility and subjectivity? Yes, I argue. But then, as in the case of the passenger, we are ethically obliged to respect and reveal the drifter's 'radical ambiguity' (Adey et al., 2012, p. 173), as well as the drifter's radical *multiplicity* produced along lines of ethnicity, gender, age and/or physical disabilities. Bringing homelessness directly into the 'new mobilities paradigm' does not simply aim at giving agency back to the homeless people by focusing on their mobile patterns and experiences. It also reveals mobility's pivotal role in the production of homeless marginality in broader, contextual social dynamics; homeless drifters in Athens are subjectivities that embody self-responsibilisation but also forms of personal negotiation. In the end, it shows how this mobile agency is highly spatial, relational and political.

## AFTERWORD: SUBJECTIVITIES CALLING GEOGRAPHY

Being a city *in and of* crisis, the Greek capital, Athens, undergoes dramatic and rapid changes in its spatialities; now highly stigmatised, the city centre becomes a political stake that calls for its governance. And within these changing spatialities, subjectivities change too; ‘new Others’, such as the (new) homeless, now seem to be closer to ‘the mainstream’. In this socio-spatial context, and amidst severe economic austerity, a new poverty management is being established in the city shaping contested landscapes of poverty and homelessness (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2017). This dissertation is about these very landscapes. The double-sided question that gave birth and shape to it is: *how are the homeless geographies of Athens made and how are homeless subjects made along with these geographies?*

Seeking answers, this work draws from (post-)phenomenological geographic accounts in order to make the *human* geographies of homelessness (Clope, May & Johnsen, 2010) of central Athens in practice-oriented, power-ridden and evidence-based manners. In this direction, a multi-sited, ethnographic research practice has been conducted throughout what has been called ‘machinic archipelago’ of provision and care: homeless hostels, a day centre, a night shelter as well as other organisational spaces that aim to address homelessness, such as soup kitchens, shape the city’s machinic archipelago and have been thus crafted as the fields of this research. But these spaces are much more than where the new poverty management is being enacted. They are the loci where the homeless stigma is being emplaced and embodied; from person to place and from place to person (Takahashi, 1997). If, in a Goffmanian fashion, stigma is made through mixed contacts between the ‘normal’ and the ‘stigmatised’, then the homeless stigma is made, unmade, remade and negotiated in these spaces that ‘normal’ society has prepared for (one of) its ‘Others’: the homeless subjects.

The dissertation’s empirics revolve around a conceptual triptych that proves critical for the practical making of Athens’ homeless geographies: materialities, bodies, and mobilities. These three are the ingredients that produce social difference and ground it in space: they show how homelessness is not a fixed and static category but is lived, embodied, material, discursive, spaced. When spaced through the interrelations of these three elements, homelessness is marked as one —another— of society’s ‘Others’. Yet, what matters is that materialities, bodies and mobilities do not simply co-exist in these geographies; they are *practiced* therein, practiced in certain possible ways. And they do not statically mark social difference once and forever; they constantly *perform* social difference and thus position it in broader social and cultural dynamics.

Specifically, *materialities* refers to the homeless' possessions as 'absent presences' as well as the 'objects of care' that are provided in the machinic archipelago. In a constant interplay between material divestment and investment, specific objects relate to ideas of stigma; others are involved in specific political economies of provision; others undergo processes of becoming rubbish; and others, like the homeless' own belongings, acquire emphasised importance for distinct, non-stigmatised subjects that find themselves in spaces of limited materiality. *Bodies* concerns homelessness as a bodily condition situated in space. In a cleanliness-dirt interplay, the machinic archipelago enables certain bodily practices for the homeless: bodies become personal maps of the past; they are the primal instrument for adjusting to everyday survival; they receive and ingest provided food; they are made through clothes as their extensions; and they perceive critical affective atmospheres produced by the new poverty management. Lastly, *mobilities* concern the homeless patterns of mobility and friction that take place in the archipelago. Mentalities of managing the poor materialise in a specific 'sense of mobility' that is practiced as forced mobility; the homeless experience this mobility as 'drifters', through affect and the materiality of their bodies but also negotiate it; frictions perform ideas of stigma; and through outreach work, the machinic archipelago externalises its practices and may contribute to the making of homeless stigma.

This triple attunement to materialities, bodies and mobilities as practices situated in certain contexts is critical because it may unveil the paternalistic ways society may deal with its 'Other' through, say, policies of managing the poor that ignore, or at least fail to recognise, their effects on the homeless as subjects to be managed. For investing the homeless materially is much more than simply offering (*anything*) to those in need (*of something*); allowing a basic maintenance for the homeless bodies is much more than just keeping someone clean or fed; and forcing the homeless to be mobile is much more than making them 'active' so that they are 'reintegrated' into the 'mainstream', as desired by this mainstream. The intention here is not to present these practices and spaces as valueless or unimportant; the comfort and support, both material and psychic, that they perform are absolutely and undoubtedly important for and always appreciated by the homeless. But the intention is to stress that equally important, if not more, are the *ways* and *spaces* these practiced materials, bodies and mobilities are enacted; their 'hows' and the 'wheres'.

This dissertation is not about Athens' homeless geographies *per se* though. No space for spatial fetishism in these pages. For what is made with and within these geographies are subjects as homeless. They are in a mutual making with the materialities, bodies and mobilities of their geographies. This is how homeless subjects are grounded in specific social and spatial positions. And from these very positions they experience, signify, embody, negotiate and counter the homeless condition —always in relation with what surrounds and defines these positions as *of the homeless*. Therefore, the material, bodily and mobile spatial practising

of homelessness practises also subjectivities and engraves social difference on and in them —engraving social stigma.

Overall, a theoretical and an empirical contribution to existing knowledge is attempted here. The theoretical brings to the fore the role of space and Human Geography in the practice-oriented and relational making of homelessness and homeless subjectivities by bringing together three geographical concepts, namely materialities, bodies and mobilities. The empirical contribution rests in the multi-sited qualitative research methodology conducted throughout some of Athens' homeless spatialities that have escaped academic attention, and in the centrality of human experience thus allowing homeless subjectivities to emerge along with space. Above all, by focusing in such institutionalised spaces, homelessness is presented not as an isolated social construct but located in wider socio-cultural dynamics. What has been primarily sought then is to approach homelessness not as an *a priori* social category that exists distinctively in a linear social continuum. Instead, it has been sought to approach homelessness in its spatial making. The research-hand of this dissertation has been immersed into spaces wherein society deals with the stigmatised as 'homeless', wherein the homeless stigma is practiced both *for the homeless and the non-homeless*. The machinic archipelago, its spatialities, subjectivities and politics are not *of* the machinic archipelago; they are of the overall society and culture —of Athens, of Greece, of Europe, of the World— made possible and practiced *through* the machinic archipelago.

However, the dissertation 'suffers' too some inescapable limitations that need to be stated. Whilst it illuminates and brings to front-stage neglected spatialities of the homeless city, other neglected spatialities remain neglected. This has been an outcome of the research's methodological crafting that has left outside Church-related spaces for the homeless, solidarity soup runs, neighbourhood-based civil actions, NGO- and municipality-run day centres beyond the machinic archipelago and throughout the whole Athens metropolitan area. Moreover, the dissertation 'fails' to trace differences in homeless experiences along lines of gender, ethnicity, religion and economic background, a fact that, when not acknowledged, may homogenise homeless subjectivities. Theories of intersectionality may prove fruitful in overcoming this, responding to calls to embrace intersectionality in geographical research (see Valentine, 2007). Other aspects, pivotal to the city's homeless geographies, necessitate attention in future studies, such as: the political economies of provision and care; labour conditions in spaces of care, especially given the increasingly limited budget dedicated to the management of the poor; and the other subjectivities that are made along with the homeless ones, such as those of staff members and volunteers.

After has been clear the role of Space in constructing, marking, reproducing, contesting and naturalising marginal social categories, such as 'the homeless', and the distances from a seemingly opposite and unquestioned 'social mainstream' — the 'Other's' *other*— then there remains another role to be stressed: that of Geography as academic practice. Human Geography's role is to reveal such

processes taking place and taking time. But not only this. It owes to society critical accounts that make, un-make and re-make social worlds, especially when these accounts concern the society's constitutive margins. And this making ought to be radically subversive: by respecting and allowing the subjects to emerge in anti-paternalistic ways; by being synchronised to the fluidity, nuances and contradictions of human life and its spaces; by being attuned to a political sensitivity for societal and spatial change; and, above all, by positioning 'the human' in the centre of the overall making. Rather not just '*the Human*'; but the human as an individual within social, material and political broader contexts. To practise Human Geography like this means to *not* produce accounts that serve in policy making and subjectify human subjects, such as the homeless, to manageable subjects (Farrugia & Gerrard, 2016). It means to produce geographical accounts that engage directly with the politics of life-out-there as well as of knowledge production and re-presentation-in-here.

To Lancione (2016a), 'researching homelessness —like any other body of knowledge (Foucault, 1990)— is a performance crafted between the *will to act* and specific *institutional schemata*, where the latter arguably have the power to affect the former' (p.163, emphasis added). In the case of Athens, I contend, the institutional schemata that shape the city's homeless geographies may have a vital yet often ignored effect on homeless subjects: that what matters in their lives is (only) *their past*. 'You want me to tell you how I ended up here [at the shelter], right?', Agathí asked me while sitting on her bed, ready for our interview and expecting me to just respond 'Right'. Uttering these words while mechanically putting her documents in order, she did not even look at me. The homeless of the machinic archipelago have learnt that all that matters is how they became homeless; their pasts until that precise moment. Lives today are not worthy, so may they be simply sustained. Hence, the homeless of the machinic archipelago do not lack a general 'narrative structure' (Desjarlais, 1997, p. 23). They lack a 'narrative structure of *the now*'. But what about that 'will to act' then? Human Geography as academic and social practice ought to enable and embody our will to act against established institutional schemata in order to restore the homeless' narrative structures of the now —and of *the here*.

Concluding, as much as this dissertation is about the making of Athens' homeless geographies, it is equally involved, at least it aspires so, in this very making — and de-making and re-making and back again. If materialities, bodies and mobilities make them, then what we have read so far is another practical making of these geographies; geographies made by notebooks, words, the photo-camera, pens, typing, the voice recorder, the keyboard, the screen, papers, highlighters, the smartphone, pencils. Above all, geographies where homeless subjectivities emerge from through their own narratives of the now and the here. Lastly, I wish to close all this with a phrase by Vassílis Papavassileíou, a Greek theatrical writer, director and actor. Hoping that this dissertation be in the end a mask —leaving though 'reality' neither undisturbed nor unnoticed.

*[...] η πραγματικότητα, επειδή είναι πολύ σκληρή, ντρέπεται. Ναι, ντρέπεται, κι αυτό από καταβολής κόσμου. Έτσι λοιπόν ανακάλυψε τις μάσκες, για να μπορεί να τις φορά και να κυκλοφορεί ανενόχλητη κι απαρατήρητη ανάμεσά μας και μέσα μας.*

Βασίλης Παπαβασιλείου, 2006,  
*Το Δύσκολο Ανάμεσα*, Αθήνα: Καστανιώτης

*[...] reality, being that hard, is ashamed. Yes, reality is ashamed, and this happens from the world's beginning. Thus reality discovered the masks, in order to wear them and get about undisturbed and unnoticed amongst us and inside us.*

Vassilis Papavassileiou, 2006,  
*The Difficult In-Between*, Athens: Kastaniotis



## EPILOGUE: ARCHIPELAGO NOTTURNO









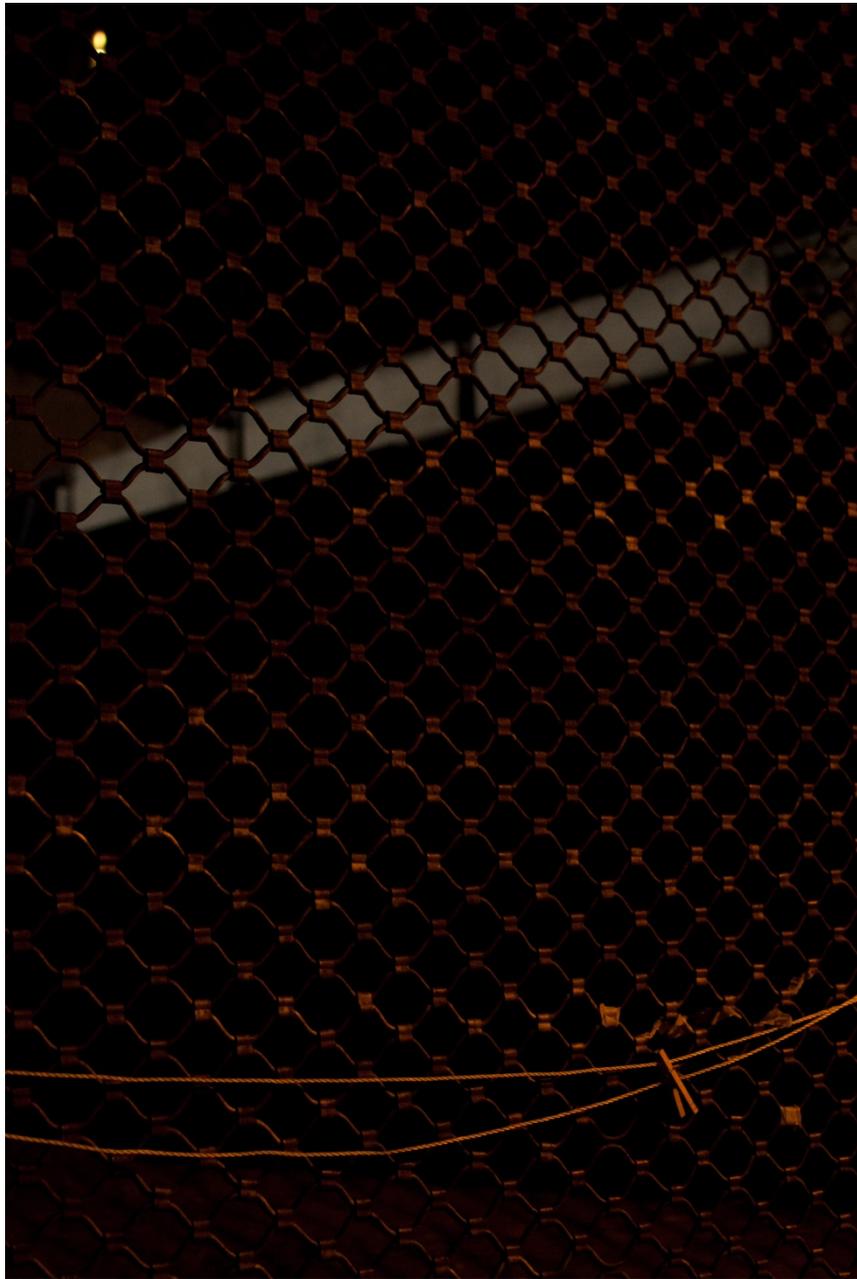


FIGURE SESSION 5 Archipelago notturno. May 2017.



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