The Greek Review of Social Research

Vol 153 (2020)

153 Special Issue: Work in the aftermath of the global economic crisis: new spaces and types of work emerging in cities of recession. Editors: Maria Tsampra and Alex Afouxenidis

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doi: [10.12681/grsr.22343](https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.22343)

The Greek Review of Social Research, 2020
Print ISSN: 0013-9696 Online ISSN: 2241-8512

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The symbolic economy of cities – new shapes of work and networking: The role of traditional and emerging clusters of creativity in the Athenian public space

ABSTRACT

In this article we investigate the changes in the Athenian urban space that have taken place in the light of the crisis, changes in labour relations and the symbolic economy. In the first part a theoretical overview of international changes, the role of culture in development strategies and the symbolic economy is made. Urban policies and new shapes of work are also being analyzed. The case of the historic centre of Athens, as a host of creative activities and as a growing tourist destination, also comes to the forefront. The last part is devoted to the ongoing field research conducted to look into the traditional and emerging creativity clusters in the center of Athens, how they are built and located and their interaction with the Athenian Urban Factory.

Keywords: *symbolic economy, culture & urban space, creative & cultural industries, co-working, networking*

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Received:, June 18, 2019 Accepted: September 17, 2019 Published: February 7, 2020

Μαρία Κούτσαρη και Αγγελική Δεμερτζή

Η συμβολική οικονομία των πόλεων – νέες μορφές εργασίας και δικτύωσης: Ο ρόλος των παραδοσιακών και των αναδυόμενων clusters δημιουργικότητας στον αθηναϊκό αστικό χώρο

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Σε αυτό το άρθρο εξετάζουμε τις αλλαγές στον αθηναϊκό αστικό χώρο που έγιναν υπό το φως της κρίσης καθώς και τις αλλαγές στις εργασιακές σχέσεις και τη συμβολική οικονομία της Αθήνας. Στα πρώτα κεφάλαια γίνεται θεωρητική επισκόπηση των διεθνών αλλαγών, του ρόλου του πολιτισμού στις αναπτυξιακές στρατηγικές και της συμβολικής οικονομίας. Επίσης, αναλύονται οι σύγχρονες αστικές πολιτικές και οι νέες μορφές εργασίας. Η περίπτωση του ιστορικού κέντρου της Αθήνας ως χώρου συγκέντρωσης δημιουργικών δραστηριοτήτων και ως αναπτυσσόμενου τουριστικού προορισμού έρχεται επίσης στο προσκήνιο. Το τελευταίο κεφάλαιο αφιερώνεται στην εν εξελίξει επιτόπια έρευνα που διεξάγεται προκειμένου να εξεταστούν τα παραδοσιακά και τα αναδυόμενα συμπλέγματα (επίκεντρα) δημιουργικότητας στο κέντρο της Αθήνας, τον τρόπο δομής, λειτουργίας και εγκατάστασης τους και την αλληλεπίδρασή τους με το «Αθηναϊκό Αστικό Εργοστάσιο».

Λέξεις κλειδιά: *συμβολική οικονομία, πολιτισμός & αστικός χώρος, δημιουργικές και πολιτιστικές βιομηχανίες, συν-εργατικότητα, δικτύωση*

1. THE SYMBOLIC ECONOMY OF THE CITIES

1.1 A New Condition

The profound changes which took place since the 1970s have been crucial for the western world's cities and societies. The energy crisis has rapidly developed into an economic crisis for the developed capitalist societies. On the other hand, the technological revolution of information technology has created the preconditions for overthrowing many facts as they have been in the ''golden decades'' - as Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm, 2011) calls them - after the Second World War. The solution that has prevailed in overcoming the crisis caused by the over-accumulation of capital - that is, the inability of capital to be reinvested in a profitable way - was the renegotiation of relations among the factors of production (capital, labor, land and the technology). By means of new technologies, which developed in the 1970s and 1980s – their applications spread rapidly all over the world, both in all phases of production and in everyday life - funds of historical magnitudes were invested in the financial sector as the value of money – e.g. the exchange rate values - was decoupled from the real economy[1] and turned into an independent commodity. Moreover, export values skyrocketed, as did foreign direct investments. The emerging multinational corporates were undoubtedly the winning players and reached at the end of the 20th century to produce one third of the world product (Berend, 2016).

Excessive changes in working conditions also occurred, as employees in Europe and the USA would have to adapt to a new situation whereby large production units - mainly massive, of Fordism organization - were "migrating" to Third World countries (Harvey, 2000, 1982; Massey, 1995). The production stages were separated at both organizational and spatial levels and at the same time, a new international and flexible division of labor was formed.

The changes were rapid and universal: contextual concepts such as the ''post-industrial society'' (Bell, 1973), ''flexible accumulation'' (Harvey, 1990), ''post-Fordism''(Albertsen, 1988) emerged and occupied decisively the international debate during the "fluid times and the emerging era of uncertainty" as Zygmunt Bauman described illustratively (Bauman, 2000).

[1] Bretton Woods Agreement: Fixed exchange rate system that currencies of 44 countries were linked to the US dollar and this in turn was linked to the gold price. The Bretton Woods Agreement was signed after the Second World War and lasted until the early 1970s when US President Nixon disconnected the dollar's price from gold. This has led to the liberalization of the money market and allowed states to adopt national monetary policies.

On the other hand, in sociopolitical terms, other spoke about a new phase, stage or trajectory of capitalism: neo-liberalism, meta-capitalism, new imperialism, late capitalism and so on (Harvey, 2013; Jameson, 1984; Mandel, 1978)

Beyond the convergences and deviations among those contextualizations we could say that from 1970 onwards it is observed that a "new economy" is formed (Scott, 2006) globally in which the prevailing productive activities are the finance sector, hi-tech, new arts and crafts, economic and business consulting, cultural products and cultural industries (including the media).

1.2 Culture as a new developmental pillar

Culture in the context of the aforementioned changes was a key factor. Although, since 1935 Walter Benjamin (2008) has raised his considerations regarding the technical reproduction of artworks, that brought about a qualitative change in their nature and later in 1947 Horkheimer & Adorno (2002) analyzed the process of cultural industrialization and commercialization, culture for many decades has been largely synonymous with high, sophisticated cultural activities. However, especially since 1990, new concepts have added to the notion of culture - which is nowadays multifarious, multi-level and characterized by liquidity (Smith, 2004).

The increase in consumer demand for cultural products recorded in recent decades is partly due to the fact that city dwellers' disposable income has increased considerably and they have gained access to durable consumer goods, various forms of entertainment and new life patterns (Hobsbawm, 2011) as well as the fact that the middle and lower strata had more - in relation to earlier - free time that has to be settled commercially (Souliotis, 2013). Easier access to education, the strengthening of the services sector along with its flexible restructuring, resulted in the rise of activities such as recreation, culture and tourism. Moreover, the intergenerational upward social mobility of sections of the lower strata (ibid., 2013) inevitably led to the explosive increase of interest in culture and its products. We could call this condition a cultural transformation, precisely because, what was once considered luxury to the middle and lower social class, today is not (Bell, 2001). This led to the search and creation of new identities and ways of living (Bauman, 1992) and on the other hand led to the construction of new consumer patterns based on the ''ideology of mass consumption'' (Sennett, 2007). Economic and social life in this new situation revolves around the consumption of symbols and lifestyles rather than the production of industrial goods (Smith, 2004). Narration and history, as key elements of modernity, are being replaced by the image and space that constitute the organizational principles of cultural production. As a result, urban landscape focuses primarily on consumption, entertainment, recreation and lifestyle services (department stores, leisure parks, residential areas) (ibid.).

1.3 The symbolic economy of cities and new geographies

Hall points out schematically that *"Culture is now seen as the magic substitute for all the lost factories and warehouses, and as a device that will create a new urban image, making the city more attractive to mobile capital and mobile professional workers"* (Hall, 2000). But what are the conditions that make a city or a place more attractive? The role of culture in this process is indeed important. Culture as a commodity, as a resource, as an axis of developmental and spatial policies, takes the form of ''*monopoly revenue''*, giving distinctive features to the cities in order to attract investment and become competitive in the global economic environment. The collective symbolic capital attempts to be seen as the competitive advantage of cities in international competition (Harvey, 2012). Moreover, culture is transformed into the city's financial base as an abstraction of any economic activity that does not produce material products anymore but is a symbol-producing system. Culture is intertwined with capital and identities in urban production systems which is becoming more and more the business of cities (Zukin, 1995). The growth of cultural consumption (art, food, fashion, etc.) and related businesses triggers the symbolic economy and its distinct ability to simultaneously produce symbols and space (ibid., 1995). Thus, ''*the symbolic economy features two parallel production systems that are crucial to a city's material life: the production of space, with its synergy of capital investment and cultural meanings, and the production of symbols, which constructs both a currency of commercial exchange and a language of social identity."* (ibid., p. 23-24).

The production of symbols and space involves many groups of activities: media (television, cinema, publishing, music) fashion-intensive consumer goods sectors (clothing, furnishings, goldsmithery, etc.) variant services (advertising, tourist facilities, recreation areas), a wide range of creative professions (architecture, graphic arts, web design) and finally activities of collective cultural consumption (such as museums, galleries, libraries etc) (Scott, 2000). In the framework of the symbolic economy, a new, distinct, economic sector including the above activities, has got specifically acknowledgment, the so-called "Cultural and Creative Industries - (CCI)".

But, in the symbolic economy, not only pure economic activities are involved. Symbolic economy is even what Zukin calls the *'urban imaginary'* (Zukin, 2011), the way and the place where everyday life is happening, where ordinary people walk in the streets, discuss, wear clothes or cook food, what creates a feeling of excitement.

Concentrations of cultural and creative activities in city centers are a predominant trend. Above all, their benefits multiply, as the supply networks that are being agglomerated build the so called *localization economies* (Marshall, 2013). Many of the activities are immobile, i.e. they are consumed in space and in the time they are produced. In addition, the markets in which they are active are extremely competitive and at high risk, so they remain often small and flexible, preferring to integrate into wider production networks, making them more productive and more sustainable. Finally, the symbolic forms depend heavily on large inputs of human, intellectual work despite the crucial role of digital technologies. As networks, therefore have a large production base that attracts specialized human capital and investment funds and presents a dense flow of information, goods and services (Scott, 2000).

These agglomeration economies often go beyond the form of a collaborative network and act as clusters that, through coexistence and division of labor, enable enterprises to create a competitive advantage by increasing performance in terms of returns (Porter, 1998, 1995; Scott, 2000).

Indeed, the development of specific activities such as those of applied design and creative professions in modern metropoles find spatial expression through the reconstruction of the urban landscapes themselves (Hutton, 2000).

The evolution of todays, post-industrial cities marks a distinct aspect compared to the long era of modernity: "*Culture, in the large sense, becomes the product of the symbolic economy and reverses the historical meaning of culture and the historical position of culture, in the great cities of the world. Culture used to be a by-product of wealth. Now, culture is seen as a generator of wealth"* (Zukin, 2001). The symbolic economy of the cities produces symbols for development and at the same time places for development (Zukin, 1995), while the systematic expansion of the creative, cultural, neo-artistic, technological and entrepreneurial synergies (Hutton, 2010) enabled also by the technical - taking the form of ‘neo-artisanal’ labour (Norcliffe and Eberts, 1999) and the spatial (Massey, 1984) division of labor.

2 URBAN POLICIES AND NEW SHAPES OF WORK IN THE ‘‘NEW ECONOMY’’

2.1 The cultural urban policies & the development dimension

Since 1990, cultural policies have been implemented around the world to make cities become centers of creativity and innovation. Many governments adopted these policies owing to the gradual decline of industrial economies and establishment of conditions for post-industrial development (Zukin and Braslow, 2011).

The work of F. Bianchini and M. Parkinson “Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience” in 1993 (Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993) was the first attempt to define the relation between cities and culture and recognize the importance of cultural policy as a revitalization strategy of cities. They describe the process in which, in the 1970s and 1980s, the local authorities of several European cities focused on new economic sectors, such as leisure, tourism and other 'cultural industries', to compensate for job losses by traditional industrial sectors. In addition, a cosmopolitan cultural life would be the key ingredient for the 'marketing' of cities in the ever-increasing 'globalization' to attract international capital and skilled personnel (ibid.). The great cultural programs during the 1980s in European cities have been used as symbols of renaissance for degraded cities (such as Glasgow, Sheffield), of elegance when it comes to the richest (Frankfurt), of modernization and innovation (Montpellier, Hamburg), as well as symbols of reconciliation - with Berlin being the most representative example (ibid., 1993).

At EU level, “competitiveness” has been in the core of European policy defining decisively the shaping of the spatial policy agenda (Maastricht Treaty, Treaty of Lisbon). However, there have been additional efforts and initiatives to promote culture as a development factor and its interaction with cities within the EU: The resolution of European Parliament in 2003 for the ‘‘cultural industry’’[2], the study that KEA carried out on behalf of the European Commission in 2006 about the economy

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[2] European Parliament resolution on Cultural Industries (2002/2127(INI)).

of culture,[3] the "Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities" in 2007[4] and the "Green Paper: Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries" in 2010[5] to name a few.

On the side of funding, EU launched in 2000 the 'Culture 2000' programme which ran until 2006, with a budget of €236.4 million dedicated to promoting a common cultural area, characterized by its cultural diversity and shared cultural heritage. This has been followed by the 'Culture 2007-2013' programme with a budget of €400 million and the on-going 'Creative Europe' program with a budget of €1.46 billion for supporting Europe's cultural and creative sectors.

In the debate on developmental strategies many decisions of variant international and European organizations were of key importance (Avgerinou - Kolonia, 2018). UNESCO's "World Decade for Cultural Development" (1988-1997) highlighted the role of culture, as a social regulator and as a developmental factor that could be capitalized[6]. Later, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg (2002), which recognized cultural diversity as the fourth pillar of sustainable development,[7] as well as the UN's General Assembly 2011 that considers culture ''*a driver and an enabler of sustainable development*''.[8]

What should not be omitted is the recent tools of regional development policies include, also the cultural dimension. The "Smart Specialization" – RIS3, which is included in the EU2020 Strategy, directs the national & regional authorities to design smart specialization strategies in an entrepreneurial discovery process. The goal is that the European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) can be used more efficiently and synergies between different EU, national and regional policies, as well as public and private investments can be increased. Among different objectives Culture, Creative Industries and Creative Economy belong to the main priorities regarding RIS3 in the European Agenda for Culture[9]. Regarding our case, one of the

[3] KEA - Kern European Affairs, "Economy of Culture in Europe". A study prepared for the European Commission with the support of Turku School of Economics and MKW Wirtschaftsforschung", Brussels, 2006.

[4] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/themes/urban/leipzig_charter.pdf
[5] European Commission, "Green Paper: Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries", Brussels, 2010
[6] https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/41/187
[7] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/milesstones/wssd
[8] UN System System Task Team on the post-2015 UN Development Agenda.
[9] European Agenda For Culture - Work Plan For Culture 2011-2014
http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/20182/84453/120420_CCI_Policy_Handbook_%28FINAL%29.pdf/3a645b54-4d8e-4cf9-95f9-bf60658cf5b2

five priorities of the Smart Specialization of Attica Region is the "Creative side of the economy".[10]

2.2 *Co-working in the Cultural & Creative Sector at the epicentre of change*

Within the aforementioned general changes in political, economic and social level, the realm of work is severely influenced. The background of these changes lies in the so-called post-fordist condition (in the 'New Economy' as we call it here) that has evolved through various stages through the digital realm, the network society and the immaterial and biopolitical production. Hardt and (Hardt and Negri, 1994) Negri (Hardt and Negri, 2003) have recognized two poles of tension: a new self-constitution of subjectivity and a new type of sociality, that relate to processes of self- and social-valorization of work. Cognitive workers, and within them culture and creative workers, have been experiencing in this context conditions of precariousness, constant sense of insecurity and competitiveness. Additionally, their work is characterized by the need for adaptability, flexibility, connectivity, on-off and project-based relation to circuits and networks (Antonopoulou et al., 2015). Moreover, a general observation is that cognitive workers participate less and less in unions and work organizations, as immaterial labor most of the times does not assign them a specific categorization and at the same time bio political labor is dispersed throughout the whole life, time and being of the working and producing subject, blurring the limits between work and life. Co-working spaces may help freelancers to lower professional risk and intensify their work, but they offer more than that, they function as ''*third places*'' (Oldenburg, 1989) in terms of offering socialization. Moreover, professional relationships that develop within these spaces lead to "serendipity production" (Moriset, 2014) although sometimes co-workers may not even realize it. So, it's not only the sharing of space, costs and infrastructure but more importantly the sharing of knowledge and ideas and the development of a "co-working spirit" within these spaces (Avdikos and Iliopoulou, 2019). Moreover, it is often the case that through these spaces they gain access to more projects; they enlarge their professional networks and become more recognizable.

[10] http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/regions/EL30/tags/EL30

It is no wonder that during the first half of 2018, co-working spaces in Europe represented 7,5% of total stock, showcasing an increase in comparison to 2017 (7,2%) and 2016 (3,6%)[11]. Last but not least what has to be mentioned is the relation of these spaces to the urban space. From a network-based perspective co-working spaces are to be seen as micro-clusters (Capdevila, 2013) that enable knowledge transfer among their members. Capdevilla stresses that the traditional industrial clusters are being replaced by '*innovation networks*' constituted by networked microbusinesses. Coworkers in co-working spaces create relational milieus providing workers with an intermediate territory where professional social interaction is at the same time physical and digital. The potential of acquiring a common reputation keeps these different social actors together in the same space and projects them into the broader socio-economic *'creative scene*' of the city (Gandini, 2015). The blurring of boundaries between work and fun, waged labor and leisure activities, is also reflected in the new built environment of the City where, as the developers of the Broadgate Centre emphasized in their publicity material, the new buildings and the spaces around them are a *"total landscape of work and leisure."* This redefinition of the boundaries is leading to a greater emphasis on the cultural capital of workers, on attributes such as style and bodily form, on how they look as well as how they perform in the workplace.

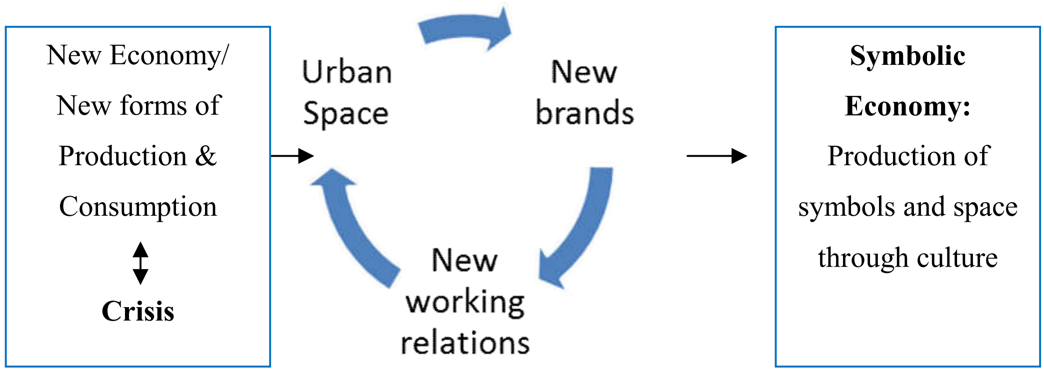
3 THE WORKING ASSUMPTION

What we explore in this article, is the reflection of these international mutations in the urban space of the historical centre of Athens.

We make the following assumption: New conditions of economic relations, production methods and consumption patterns have emerged in recent decades. The cultural dimension seems to play a predominant and multilevel role in these processes and often determines the state of reality. Also, we take the view, that the new working conditions/ relations, the urban environment itself and the new, different and often shifting identities/ brands that are often attributed to it, comprise three nodal axes that

[11] Arbitrage Real Estate Advisors, "Office Market Overview", 2018, Athens (in Greek)

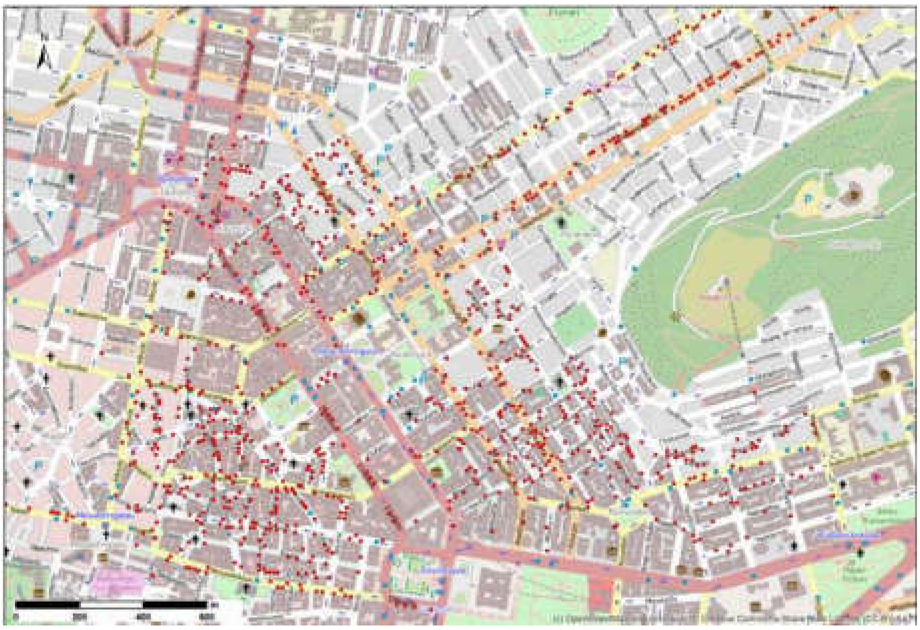
http://arbitrage-re.com/images/ArbitrageREAthensOfficeMarketReport2018GR.pdf interweave and fuel each other. In the same context, economic crises speed the progress of the fast-track reshaping of the urban settings.



The centre of Athens is the place where residence, productive activities, trade and symbolic capital are concentrated. It has been transformed gradually during the recent years also because of the principal impact of the economic crisis. Traditional and historical activities are mutating or declining, new creative activities and relevant cooperative models are being developed, culture plays an upgraded role in everyday life, tourist arrivals in the city center are boosted, and property prices are rising significantly. All of this opens new fields of research about the multiple identities living and developing in Athens.

When the international financial crisis erupted in 2008, Greece and Athens have been hit particularly hard by the crisis. Even today, the signs of crisis are evident in the centre of Athens.

Figure 1: *Closed stores in the center of Athens*



Source: NCHC, 2014.

Many shops padlocked and unemployment in Attica Region increased over 28%. At the same time, the historic centre of Athens was the main venue for demonstrations, protests, popular assemblies but also police repression and upheaval.

Table 1: *Unemployment rate in the Region of Attica (2007-2018)*

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
7.8	6.7	9.1	12.6	18.0	25.8	28.7	27.3	25.2	23.0	21.6

Source: Eurostat.

In those fluid conditions two counterbalancing grassroots poles - associated with the present work - appeared with the outburst of the economic crisis: On the one hand, community-led initiatives that appeared and concerned social solidarity movements as a response to the phenomena of poverty and exclusion from basic goods (education, health). On the other hand, due to the crisis, the unemployment, the greater flexibility in employment relations and the international changes of labor, there has been a turn into self-entrepreneurship and cooperative schemes such as start-ups or co-working spaces.[12] This has contributed to the creation of a collaborative environment evolving in parallel with international developments.

In 2015 the first signs of recovery of the economy are being observed, but these are carved on the layer that has been left behind by the crisis. Former shopping centers are transformed into coffee-bars & restaurants or cultural multipurpose facilities, large investments are made by benefit purpose foundations (Onassis Stegi,[13] Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center[14]) in culture spaces and cultural events, while the increase in Airbnb and the institutionalization of the 'golden visa' give an unprecedented boost to urban tourism in Athens and consequently to real-estate.

Following the above, the ''city-brand'' of Athens has taken various forms over the last decades. Undoubtedly, Athens' main mark of distinction is the antiquity and the ancient monuments that a ''Classical Athens brand'' imparts to it. Within this traditional brand, creative activities of the past –such as goldsmithery, tanneries, ceramic art – are included. However, what is of particular interest in recent years is the picture compiled for Athens of the crisis, the hip-style Athens, the Athens of resistance & social movements or Athens of alternative entertainment, culture and artistic creation.

We assume, that all the aforementioned changing conditions make up a new Athens portrayal: shifting spaces & activities, new schemes of cultural production, modern and traditional creative networks (bottom-up and top-down), flagship cultural projects and increase in urban touristic flows are leading to a new turning point of Athens' symbolic economy.

4 THE ATHENIAN URBAN CENTER

4.1 Creative Activities in the Athens' center

The Cultural and Creative Sector (CCS) in Greece employed 110,688 workers in 46,370 businesses in 2014, selling symbolic goods and services of €5.3 billion, adding value to the Greek economy of approximately €2.1 billion and contributing 1.4 % of

[12] Both practices could be explained using the 'sharing economy' point of view.

[13] https://www.onassis.org/initiatives/onassis-stegi

[14] https://www.snfcc.org/en

GDP. Similarly, in the EU-28, the CCS contributes 2.8% (€353 billion) to European GDP, through 1,7 million enterprises employing 6,1 million workers in 2014 (Avdikos et al., 2015). CC industries with the most employees for 2014 are architecture (21,200 employees), publications (16,200), advertising (11,300) and arts and entertainment (11,200) (ibid., 2015).

The historic centre of Athens is characterized by a long tradition in the traditional industries of creativity (leather, ceramics, carpentry and goldsmithery), as well as clothing and footwear products that can be directly linked to other creative industries such as design and advertising. Historically, these enterprises played a key role in shaping the urban space of Athens' center becoming also part of its cultural heritage (Demertzi et al., 2015). However, planning for the centre of Athens over the last 20 years, and specifically land use planning, has not applied a strategic policy for the support of small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises (SMEs). The implementation of the city-centre regulation laws for SMEs (see P.D. 84/1984 και GUP 1988) in combination with the strategy of cultural promotion and tourist development had a particularly negative effect on local craft units and led to a sharp decrease in the number of small-scale manufacturing enterprises.

Almost 57% of the country's workers in CCS in 2014 were graduates of higher education (University Degree). In the period 2008-2014, the graduate workers increased by 23.7% (EU-28: 40%), while primary education graduates declined by 73% (EU-28: -24%). This probably indicates the increasing professionalism in the creative professions and also the potential attractiveness of a highly trained workforce (Avdikos et al., 2015).

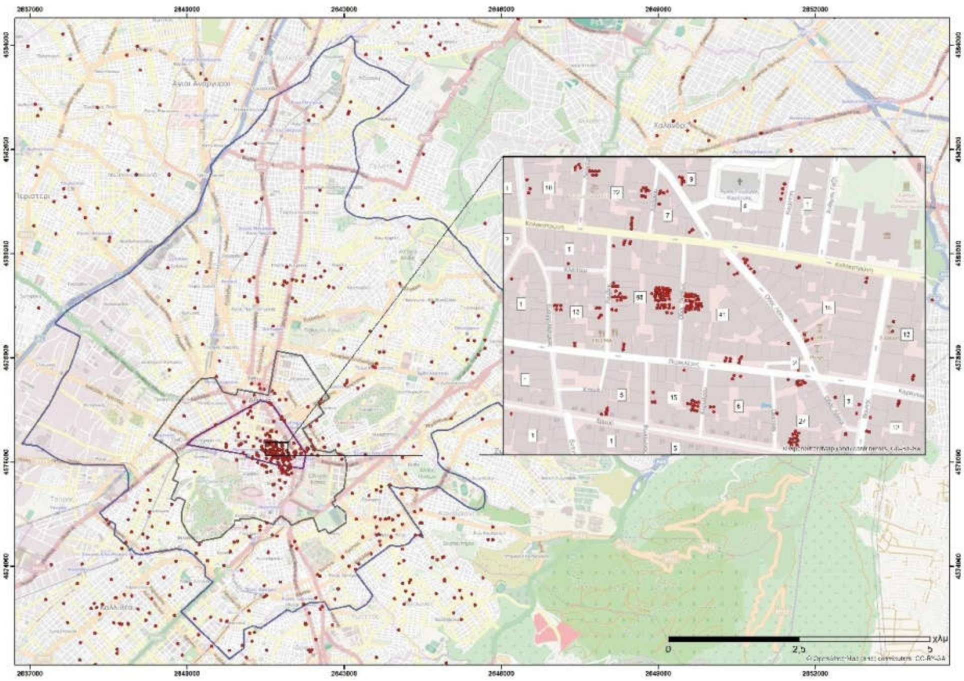
The cultural and creative production allocation, labor division and the number of enterprises in the 13 Greek regions seems to be particularly unequal as the Attica Region produces 75.5% of the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the CCS in Greece, representing the 57.3% creative enterprises, which employ 60.8% of total employees (ibid., 2015). Nevertheless, Athens holds a hegemonic position in terms of bringing together a large number of creative industries and their economic growth. Compared to other regions of Greece, 57.8% of all creative & cultural enterprises accounted for 84.9% of the total national turnover of these enterprises (Avdikos, 2014).

According to research carried out by the Spatial Planning and Urban Development Lab of the School of Architecture (National Technical University of

Athens – NTUA) in the framework of the project "MEDNETA - Mediterranean cultural network to promote creativity in the arts, crafts and design for communities' regeneration in historical cities (2013-2015)", creative industries today in the historical center of Athens face a variety of challenges: the general economic hardship and increased taxation, the deficiency of building a strong identity and reduced export activity, the difficulty of transferring know-how from one generation to the next, but also the constantly shifting of the urban space and the increasing trend of commercialization which led to the expansion of the consuming against the productive activities.

Within MEDNETA[15] the goldsmithery sector has been studied in the center of Athens. The goldsmithery enterprises amounted of 404 in 2004 while in 2014 they were 188 depicting a 53.5% decrease.

Figure 2: *Goldsmithery Enterprises in 2004 [404 Enterprises, ~37% of Attica Region]*

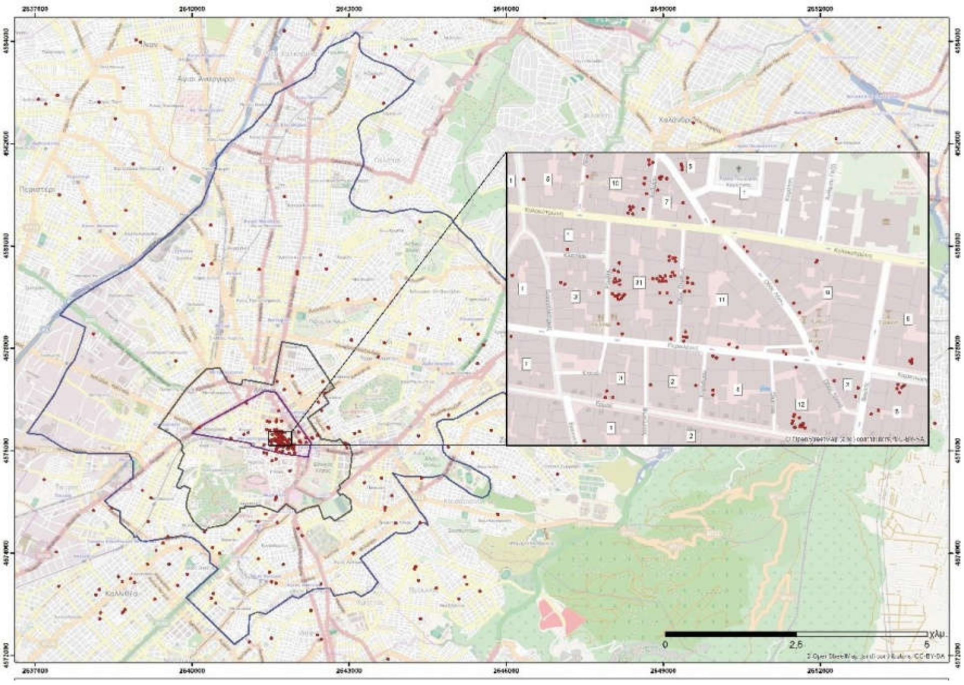


Source: MEDNETA Project.

[15] MEDNETA PROJECT "Mediterranean cultural network to promote creativity in the arts, crafts and design for communities' regeneration in historical cities" 2013-2015 funded under the ENPI CBC MED 2007-2013

However, this reduction is much smaller than the rest of the craft enterprises that existed on the floors of the blocks in the center (70-80% reduction).

Figure 3: *Goldsmithery Enterprises in 2014*
[188 Enterprises, ~39.5% of Attica Region]



Source: MEDNETA Project.

Therefore, we conclude that goldsmithery as a creative profession of art showed remarkable resilience in the centre of Athens despite the unfavorable conditions. This is reinforced by the fact that in a very small area, that of the historical triangle, the concentration of these enterprises reaches 40%. The transformation of the internal organization of these enterprises in order to cope with the economic crisis, from a vertical production model to the organization of a horizontal complementary network of collaborating companies in the center of Athens, is also observed.

At the same time, the historical center of Athens has been more and more attractive to modern creative activities in recent years (Koutsari and Avgerinou - Kolonia, 2015). These activities include new fashion designers, jewelry designers and object designers, as well as graphic designers, architects and artists who often expand their work in other branches of design. New creative businesses seem to take advantage of the existing operating networks of traditional creative businesses (supply of raw materials, outsourcing of manufacturing services) and are targeting different consumer networks (distribution through specialized retail stores and new exhibition venues). So, apart from the available building stock in low prices, what attract them are the existing networks where they build their new networks on.

4.2 The Athenian Brands

Creative workers, live, work and produce in a more immaterial context. Many of them work from home, but still there is an intensive need for them to belong to networks, from which they acquire work commissions and distribute their work products. Moreover, as self-branding becomes essential -as it allows them to valorize their work accordingly- social life becomes equally important. A self-brand is composed not only by the individual's work, but also and more importantly by the content a person is promoting through social media and Internet and finally through the social circles it belongs to. Entertainment (bars, cafeterias etc) and cultural consumption (theatre, music, art galleries etc) play an important role in the formation of these circuits, as they are the physical space of manifesting the self-brand.

Consequently, creative workers choose the environments they live and work in, according to the possibilities of participating in these circuits as well as the authenticity, uniqueness and "image" that these environments have. The collective cultural and symbolic capital accumulated in these areas is a catalyst in the formation of the so called creative milieu, which – as a next step – is embedded into the place brand.

For this reason, it is important to observe how the Athenian brand has changed over the years. The concept of place branding has emerged as an umbrella term for nation branding, region branding and city branding and is organically connected with the notion of places competing in a globalized setting, in order to attract investments and highly skilled workers. The main idea of place branding strategies is to communicate a brand that will turn a city into a destination, that people not only want to visit, but they want to live and work at. Creativity and culture are considered as important commercial marketing tools, towards the formation of a strong place brand, as they are able to shape special marks of distinction (Harvey, 2002). Real estate and tourism are economic domains which have evolved mechanisms to appropriate and extract surplus value through the monopoly rent that yields these marks of distinction, both in the scale of cities as well as in the scale of city areas. What is worth mentioning is that these mechanisms are able to extract surplus value without investing in fixed capital.

As far as Athens is concerned, the city brand is still fueled mostly by the history and cultural heritage of classical Athens. After the Olympic Games, organized in Athens in 2004, a new brand emerged, that encompassed a feeling of success and prosperity. Very soon, during the post-2010 crisis, the “Olympic Games Brand” was superseded by a new athenian “crisis-brand”, which was connected with the image of rebellious acts, degradation and insecurity. This image has its counterpart, a “crisis as an opportunity” brand, which is being consumed mostly by young entrepreneurs and creatives[16]. It is no coincidence that this brand has been communicated through magazines and blogs that relate to the tourist industry[17] and has been trying to communicate a positive creative image of Greece, in general[18]. As the “classical Athens brand” is fading out under the negative “crisis-brand”, the Athenian brand needs to be reinvented. The Athenian city centre is the main space field of manifestation of this brand and as such it is looked into in more detail in the following chapters.

4.3 The upcoming urban tourism

Tourism has seen a notable increase in Athens since 2013, as the city’s profile transformed from one-day stopover to a year-round city break destination. The decrease in tourism by 22% between 2007 and 2013 was followed by 56% increase between 2013 and 2016 which led to a record with five million tourist arrivals in 2017. Traditional accommodation capacity in Athens remained stable between 2013 and 2018, but at the same time arrivals in Athens International Airport are constantly rising. For example, whereas arrivals in AIA increased in July 2018 by 21.8%, hotel stays increased by only 3.6%. It is evident that short stay rentals attract a high percentage of visitors[19].

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16 “People want to be in the city center, especially the entrepreneurial set. It’s keeping the city buzzy. Ingenuity is paramount here - it feel like the land of opportunity.” Easyjet Traveller On-Board Magazine, 38-45.

17 For further info pl. see: < http://www.bordersofadventure.com/creative-transformation-crisis-athens/ > [last accessed: 31/05/2015]

18 For further info pl. see: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greeces-economic-crisis-fueling-the-creative-world.aspx?pageID=238&nID=27276&NewsCatID=385 > [last accessed: 31/05/2015]

19 Athens – Attica & Argosaronic Hotel Association & GBR Consulting (2018), Customer Satisfaction Survey & Hotel Sector Performance in Athens 2016-17 (in Greek)

Tourism had always a strong presence in the area of the historical center of Athens, but has seen a considerable rise after 2016. Psyri area as well as the area near Syntagma have a high concentration of hotels, whereas less hotels are present in Gerani area, as it is still considered a degraded area. At the same time the new actor in the tourism industry of Athens, short stay rentals, is emerging as a major transformative force. The historical center is affected particularly as it had until recently a high amount of empty building stock). According to data from airdna.co there are more than 1000 active rentals in the area and their number is rising rapidly after 2015. The phenomenon developed spontaneously and informally, as a new form of rent, giving to the owners of land in the center a solution to tackle with crisis and the increase in property tax. Gradually, investors engaged in short term rental activity in the center transforming whole buildings in short term rental facilities (Balampanidis et al., 2019).

In the context of these processes a lot of small and medium businesses try to thrive in the city center of Athens. These businesses benefit on one hand by the presence of tourism but on the other hand they are threatened – especially in the upper floors – because of the fact that short stay rental practices act competitively as they offer multiple revenues for work spaces converted to apartments. This phenomenon is having a huge impact in urban space as constant renovations in the area are resulting to the regeneration of space but at the same time is posing a threat of "hotelisation" for the historical center which needs to be addressed carefully.

5 THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL & EMERGING CLUSTERS OF CREATIVITY IN THE ATHENIAN PUBLIC SPACE

As mentioned already, the Athenian city center is characterized by the concentration of mixed productive activities, offices as well as touristic and recreational activities such as restaurants, bars and shops etc. Until recently the clusters of traditional crafts such as goldsmithery, tannery and garment industry held a predominant role in the city center. These clusters develop in whole buildings or streets or blocks and present a closed circuit of production -a specific value-chain- where knowledge, know-how and infrastructure are being shared in order to produce the final product. Although most of the times they are accommodated in buildings not often complying with the specifications applicable to their operation, they contribute to the production base of the historic center.

We call those types "Traditional Clusters" as they have a long history in crafting and networking in the cities' centers. The roots of this kind of creativity, which is now is being investigated more than ever before, the activities around it and their clusters are being found in the depths of the historical and cultural tradition of the European, the Mediterranean and Greek space.

What has been observed though is that the center has in the last years become attractive to other types of workers such as cognitive and creative workers who choose the center not only as their working area but also as a space for social activities and entertainment. Their spatial concentrations operate horizontally and vertically and allow them for better conditions to produce, promote, network and trade their products and facilitate the flow of knowledge and know-how, as well as the physical interaction between the creators.

Thus, a new creative ecosystem seems to emerge in the very centre of the Athenian urban landscape. Its gradual establishment in this particular area is not a random or coincidental incident. This new ecosystem refers and relates directly to the pre-existing ones; the vibrant cultural and leisure activities ecosystem, on the one hand, creates a familiar and fruitful environment, allowing for the "mandatory" flexibility between work and leisure. On the other hand, the traditional activities' cluster is part of this new ecosystem in a way that traditional and modern activities interact, collaborate and refer to each other.

For the purposes of this paper we have identified several types of creative micro-clusters that vary in scale, spatial allocation and organization. We distinguish them in: a) top-down organized collaborative spaces and incubators (eg Romantso, Impact Hub), b) self-organized collaborative spaces and (c) traditional clusters (eg Pandrosou Market, Jewelry Cluster, etc.).

In order to understand better the nature of these micro-clusters we have chosen three representative examples – one for each category- and we have conducted three anonymous interviews between April and June 2019. Each interview was carried out with guidance of a semi-structured questionnaire and lasted approximately one hour. The three questionnaires were slightly different but they were organized around the same central axes: a) identity of the interviewee and the space/ cluster b) structure, organization and space c) reasons for clustering / co-working d) collaborations and networking e) interaction with urban space and f) tourism. Interviewee A is one of the managers of a top-down organized co-working space, interviewee B and C are collaborators in a bottom-up organized co-working space and interviewee D is an established silversmith whose workshop is located in this area for many years.

5.1 Top-down organized co-working spaces

In Athens there exist at the moment at least 17 top-down organized co-working spaces and 5 of them are located in the area of our interest, the historic centre of Athens. In the framework of our field study we interviewed one of the managers of a co-working space – Interviewee A - that defines itself as creative hub. The space was established in 2013 and today hosts more than 40 creative individual entrepreneurs or companies that are directly or indirectly related with the CCI. The space according to the interviewee has a three-fold role: that of co-working space, that of a cultural space and that of a social center. More specifically, in the framework of the co-working operation the space offers all the necessary facilities for a professional in the form of "one-stop-shop", and additionally they offer training and support on business issues as well as facilitation of networking though "soft energies". What is more important though is that it is an extroverted space that organizes cultural and other events which act as meeting points for the creatives that work both in these spaces and in the area in general. As for its social role the interviewee stressed the need for social support for the communities that leave and work in the area. The space tries to bring closer these segregated communities with "other Athenians" through hipster events that have to do or example with their exotic food. Regarding the interaction with urban space, interviewee A believes that they have influenced strongly the area, through several interventions such as: cleaning of streets and public spaces, painting of buildings with their own expenses, replacement of lightbulbs in public lighting. For this reason, he says: "the neighbors really love us because they acknowledge how much they have benefited from our presence. Some of them reacted in the beginning when we were painting their stores, but now that they see the reformation of space they are most of them grateful. The area was the first ghetto in Greece and this means there were several problems here, many of them we helped to solve". Although the area had many problems according to his opinion it is one "of the most vibrant areas of the city with many positive and many negative elements". As regards the importance of branding interviewee A stresses the twofold role of their organization: first since their establishment they promote systematically the name of the area -which was essentially forgotten- as a creative neighborhood. At the same time, he things that also the branding of the space is very important for the people who work there. It is no coincidence that the building they chose is a former printing plant of a magazine. They relaunched the name as their brand in an attempt to create links with the former use of the space because "for creative entrepreneurs it is very important to link their work with a brand that adds a surplus value".

5.2 Bottom-up organized co-working spaces

Apart from centrally organized co-working spaces, there are numerus bottom-up organized co-working spaces evolving spontaneously in the Athenian city center after a mouth to mouth procedure. An interview was conducted with two architects –of three in total- sharing a common workspace in the historic center of Athens, Interviewees B and C. Both of them agree that the reason why they choose in 2013 to share a common working space was to lower expenses in an uncertain environment where they didn't even have a clear professional occupation. Both of them were working part time at home at the time. Today, co-working is a choice for them because they share not only expenses and infrastructure but more than this now they share a "common mentality and understanding of things" as well as projects and know-how. As far as the organization of space is concerned they try to share responsibilities as well but they admit that they are not so well organized. What attracted them among other things is the typology of the building. It is a 4-storey building with internal atrium and 10 small working spaces per floor 20-25sqm each which share a common bathroom. As Interviewee B says: "we like the typology of the building because it is open and closed at the same time. The small interconnected spaces allow you to expand and at the same time retain some privacy. The building itself promotes the sense of micro-community". On the other hand, Interviewee C pinpoints that although they renovated their space the bad condition of the building is the reason why sometimes they don't feel comfortable to invite a client etc but as she says: "we are optimistic for the future of this building because we believe in its architectural qualities and we hope that the situation will get better". When they rented the space in 2013 they were the first architects in the building. Most of the spaces were occupied by tailors or jewelry workshops. Today most of the traditional creative activities have gone either because they got older and stopped working, or because of the crisis. Some of them even tried to move to ground floor spaces in order to gain more visibility. At the same time more architects and designers have moved in the building and in the area in general. Interviewee B, believes that the centre is attractive for architects because of its cosmopolitan character. As for their relation with the urban space both agree that the centrality and the low rents are the main reason they like to work in the area. "The centre is very vibrant both day and night and there is a sense of neighborhood" says Interviewee C. "One of the negatives is the evolving tourism and general gentrification which makes you wonder how long we will be able to stay".

5.3 Traditional clusters

One of the best known clusters within the Athenian centre is the traditional cluster of goldsmithery which is located in the 'inner city' of the historic centre. It extends to a region of approximately ten city blocks and although there is a certain amount of shrinkage in terms of number of enterprises due to the crisis, it has shown remarkable resilience.

From our interview with interviewee D we learnt about the grassroots tradition in jewelry creation which its on-set dates from the end of the 19th century, when the majority of all kinds of workshops were located around the Parthenon. However, the real goldsmithery boost was during the 1960s, when the Greek Jewel gained an international reputation due to a few inspired jewel artisans (Lalaounis, Zolotas). Besides, the Greek jewel traces its history from the ancient years and is definitely part of the Greek cultural heritage.

Part of this tradition and this heritage is also the co-existence of the workshops, in the same spatial limits, which enables the craftsmen to collaborate, to exchange ideas or find common solutions to same problems of their occupation. In the inner city of Athens whole buildings or streets and also many spaces on the upper floors of buildings many workshops are located. Activities have become divided: the "whole workshop" of the past is now segregated in different parts of production, such as nailing, polishing or enameling. Also, different craftsmen specialize in different precious metals or stones such as gold, platinum, diamond and so on. This cooperation and coexistence has generated an informal cluster which has kept some aspects related to its traditional grassroots. This neighborhood is well known by Athens' residents as the best known "piazza" of qualified jewelry and this reputation is also spread to the tourists visiting Athens.

The floors of those buildings were full of workshops for hand-crafted jewelry during the 1960s and in combination with other hand-crafted activities (tanneries, ceramics, garment) located also in small spaces, the Athenian inner city was like a 'bee colony' of hand-crafted, creative activities. Today, this picture is fading as more often these workshops stop their activity due to many reasons. Interviewee D expressed her concerns about the continuity of this tradition. The main reasons are the difficulty in the succession of old craftsmen and the lack of educational or apprenticeship programs. Also, she points out the fact of the extreme competitiveness by the imported, cheaper and of lower quality jewels from Asia. She highlights the fact that many colleagues of her instead of working on the strategic advantage of traditional Greek jewels they forced by the circumstances to adapt to the cheap production to respond to the increased demand created by tourism and to tackle the competitiveness of the imported products. She insists though that this is a certain traditional cluster very similar to others that she had encountered in other European cities (Florence). Finally, she seemed really worried for her activity and other craftsmen's due to the land-use competition that has emerged in recent years because of the tourism increase and the increase in short-term rentals: "we are used to see all day the plasterboards transfer (for the renovations of apartments) and to listen to the castor wheels (from the tourist's luggage)". She is really concerned about the viability of this cluster if one after the other the craftsmen are forced to abandon their workshops in order for them to be transformed into short term touristic rentals.

6 CONCLUSIONS

With regards to the cultural and creative workers, the economic crisis has driven them to leave traditional models of work (Avdikos, 2014) and led them to become self-entrepreneurs to a great extent. Creative entrepreneurs have to tackle with a difficult reality: most of the time they cannot establish their personal working space and this is why co-working has become a trend both internationally, as well as in Greece. Co-working is covering two needs of young creative entrepreneurs: the lack of money in order to rent and organize their own working space and their need not to work alone from home but to participate in networks and socialize. For this reason, young creative workers seek either top down organized co-working spaces or they form bottom up collaborative spaces where freelancers and new enterprises coexist in an entrepreneurial community (Capdevila, 2013).

On the other hand, local know-how, built up over the years, as an accumulation of the experience of human knowledge, is determined by the specific features of each place, the particular natural, anthropogenic and social environment (Avgerinou and Klabatsea, 2006). The spatial co-existence still remains the critical factor for those activities to operate and network, as it facilitates cooperation, knowledge exchange, sharing of infrastructure and raw materials, as well as trade association, exploiting the economies of scales that ‘‘localization economies’’ offer.

Summing up, networking relations within the spatial confines of clusters play a crucial role not only in business terms because of the obtained synergistic benefits (knowledge, experience, collaboration), but also at the level of motivation, as collaborative networks, can create the perception of a stabilized entrepreneurial community despite the difficult circumstances. Last but not least, public space is also affected by creative clustering, leading to further establishment of businesses, as the space is regenerated through peer attraction and promotion. The impact of high touristification of the historic centre of Athens is becoming visible and these creative micro-clusters, both traditional and modern, can contribute to the city's resilience in order to tackle current social and economic instabilities.

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