



From Plato to the Plane Tree

Commoning and Contesting Space in Akademia Platonos

Master's thesis in Social Anthropology

Supervisor: Lorenzo Cañas Bottos

Co-supervisor: Carla Dahl Jørgensen

June 2026

Helene Hammer

From Plato to the Plane Tree

Commoning and Contesting Space in Akademia
Platonos



Master's thesis in Social Anthropology
Supervisor: Lorenzo Cañas Bottos
Co-supervisor: Carla Dahl Jørgensen
June 2026

Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences
Department of Geography and Social Anthropology



NTNU
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven utforsker Akademia Platonos, et arkeologisk område og nabolagspark i Athen, som en sosialt produsert og omstridt allmenning (commons). Ved bruk av Henri Lefebvres romlige rammeverk, undersøker forskningen hvordan parken kontinuerlig skapes gjennom hverdagspraksisene til dens mangfoldige brukere, spesielt de lokale beboerne. En sentral konflikt gjelder statens og kommunens plan om å bygge det nye arkeologiske museet i Athen, et byutviklingsprosjekt som truer med å fjerne viktig grøntareal og offentlig tilgang under skinn av en "oppgradering". Som en reaksjon forsvarer et lokalt initiativ parken ved å generere og spre motkunnskap og organisere motstand for å beskytte dette levde rommet.

Oppgaven avslører imidlertid at denne allmenningen er svært ujevn. Mens hverdagslige utvidelser av hjemmet (domestic extensions) ut i parken er en vanlig praksis blant den bredere lokalbefolkningen, blir disse nøyaktig samme handlingene uforholdsmessig stigmatisert som uorden, eller "materie på feil sted" (matter out of place), når de utføres av romfamilier. Denne ujevne sosiale anerkjennelsen forsterkes intenst av gresk mediediskurs, som selektivt kriminaliserer deres tilstedeværelse. Ved å spore friksjonen mellom marginaliserte romlige taktikker, organisert forsvar og statlig kulturminneforvaltning, demonstrerer studien at *commoning* ikke er en harmonisk tilstand av likhet, men en pågående, ulik praksis. Til syvende og sist belyser den hvordan felles livsinfrastrukturer oppnår enorm sosial verdi gjennom hverdagsbruk før de fanges opp av administrative eller kommersielle utviklingslogikker.

Abstract

This master's thesis explores Akademia Platonos, an archaeological site and neighborhood park in Athens, as a socially produced and contested commons. Employing Henri Lefebvre's spatial framework, the research examines how the park is continuously made through the everyday practices of its diverse users, especially the local residents. A central conflict involves the state and municipal plan to construct the New Archaeological Museum of Athens, a redevelopment project that threatens to erase vital green space and public access under the guise of an "upgrade". In response, a local Initiative defends the park by generating counter-knowledge and organizing resistance to protect this lived space.

However, the thesis reveals that this commons is highly uneven. While everyday domestic extensions into the park are a common practice among the broader local population, these exact same acts are disproportionately stigmatized as disorder, or "matter out of place," specifically when performed by Roma families. This uneven social recognition is amplified by Greek media discourse, which selectively criminalizes their presence. By tracing the friction between marginalized spatial tactics, organized defense, and state heritage management, the study demonstrates that commoning is not a harmonious condition of equality, but an ongoing, unequal practice. Ultimately, it highlights how common infrastructures of life acquire substantial social value through everyday use before being captured by administrative or development logics.

Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude goes to Carla Dahl Jørgensen and Lorenzo Cañas Bottos. This thesis carries their guidance generosity and faith in the work at every stage. Without their insight and unwavering support, it would not have been possible.

Table of contents

Prologue: Laundry on the Fence	1
Chapter 1: The Right to Produce Space	3
1.1 <i>From the Image to the Problem</i>	3
1.2 <i>The Site</i>	4
1.3 <i>Analytical Approach</i>	5
1.4 <i>Chapter Map</i>	6
Chapter 2: Methodology and Positionality.....	7
2.1 <i>Entering the Field</i>	7
2.2 <i>Positionality and the Condition of Proximity</i>	8
2.3 <i>Temporal Architecture and Accumulated Familiarity</i>	9
2.4 <i>Asymmetrical Access and the Roma Question</i>	10
2.5 <i>Ethics in Practice</i>	11
2.6 <i>Language, Translation, and Register</i>	12
2.7 <i>On Photography and Perception</i>	13
2.8 <i>How These Conditions Shaped the Research</i>	15
Chapter 3: Producing Space	17
3.1 <i>The Space That Is Planned</i>	17
3.2 <i>The Space That Is Practiced</i>	19
3.3 <i>The Space That Is Lived</i>	20
3.4 <i>Where the Dimensions Meet</i>	21
Chapter 4: Living the Park	22
4.1 <i>A Birthday Party on Old Ground</i>	22
4.2 <i>Rhythmic Belonging</i>	24
4.3 <i>Care and Belonging Through Recognition</i>	26
4.4 <i>Intergenerational Continuity and the Necessary Park</i>	28
4.5 <i>The Limits of the "We"</i>	30
Chapter 5: The Park Under Threat	32
5.1 <i>The Long Setup</i>	33
5.2 <i>Learning the Threat</i>	35
5.3 <i>The Plan Announced</i>	37
5.4 <i>What the Plan Looked Like from Inside the Park</i>	38
5.5 <i>The Assembly as Counter-Knowledge</i>	41

5.6 Counter-Knowledge in Action	43
Chapter 6: The Limits of the Commons	47
6.1 The Pressure Point	47
6.2 The Slide Toward Blame	49
6.3 Legitimate Use and Improper Inhabitation	52
6.4 Thresholds of the Commons	53
6.5 The Initiative's Position	57
6.6 Toward Chapter 7.....	58
Chapter 7: Plato's Laundry and the Image of the Problem	59
7.1 The Broadcast Segment	59
7.2 The Words That Made the Scene	61
7.3 What Was Shown, What Was Assigned	64
7.4 A Counter-Calendar of Use.....	65
7.5 Festivity and the Park as Public Room	70
7.6 Roma People and the Uneven Commons	72
7.7 The Object Was Never Only the Object.....	74
Chapter 8: What Remains in Common	77
8.1 The Park as an Uneven Commons.....	77
8.2 The Analytical Shift.....	79
8.3 Common Infrastructures of Life	80
8.4 What Remains	80
Bibliography.....	82

Prologue: Laundry on the Fence

At the edge of Akademia Platonos, where the park meets the archaeological site, clothes and sheets hung from the iron fence posts, drying in the bright June morning light. I noticed them on 26 June, as I was entering the park for fieldwork. Nothing in the scene explained itself. It did not say who had placed the laundry there, under what conditions, for how long, or what alternatives were available. It caught my attention, but it did not stop the day. I crossed one of the entrances and went into the park. Around the laundry, life in the park continued.

Yet when I later encountered the same scene in the television segment, the image had been given a different force. The presenter held it up with astonishment: how could this happen here, in Plato's Academy? That astonishment mattered more than the question itself. It invited the viewer to share the sense that the laundry did not belong there. In that moment, the image became evidence: laundry appeared as matter out of place (Douglas, 1966, pp. 36-37).

For six minutes, presenters and reporters elaborated a scene much wider than the image in the background. Through their narration, a broader constellation of elements was gradually attached to the image and made to appear as naturally belonging together: Roma bodies, feasts, revelries, and makeshift bedding. Elements that were only loosely visible in the background were progressively amplified; the narration escalated to encompass vandalism, drugs, police absence, and a general failure of urban management. What began as sheets on a fence became a visual shorthand for a public space supposedly abandoned to improper use and disorder, one that appeared to demand journalistic intervention as a matter of course. The segment did not need to have arranged the scene in order to produce it as a problem. By isolating the laundry, attaching other associations to it, and presenting astonishment as the proper response, it turned an ordinary scene into public evidence of disorder. Once the image had been framed in this way, intelligibility itself became morally ordered.

This thesis begins from that very operation through which an ordinary practical act was moralized into evidence of civic decline, impropriety and disorder, and through which that disorder became attributable to a particular population. Following Douglas (1966, p. 37), what mattered was not the laundry itself but the classificatory work through which certain practices, and the people associated with them, were made to appear out of place.

Akademia Platonos is not only an archaeological site. It is also a neighborhood park, a green space in western Athens, a route, a playground, a meeting point, a shelter, a political object, and a place where people live their lives alongside one another without necessarily sharing the same claims to recognition. Its publicness is not given in advance. It is produced through practice, defended through struggle, and limited through the social distinctions that decide who belongs and whose presence requires explanation.

I will return to the image of the park later. For now, let us take it as an entry point...

Chapter 1: The Right to Produce Space

1.1 From the Image to the Problem

This inquiry begins from a conflict over meaning: the moment an ordinary image is transformed into evidence through media discourse. The laundry hung on a fence inside Akademia Platonos functions here as an entry point. It was not neutral, but neither did it explain itself. Its conversion into a document of disorder made a specific practice, associated with a specific population in a particular space, legible as something requiring public concern and response. The analytical task is therefore to examine the interpretive and classificatory operation through which this transformation was performed.

This operation works through two simultaneous dimensions. First, the problem of the image involves the visual and discursive regimes that subject public space to surveillance and judgment, making certain practices and bodies visible as problems. This resonates with what Wacquant (Wacquant, 2007) describes as territorial stigmatization, but the stigma here does not attach to territory alone. It moves through the relation between place, practice, and population, as particular uses of the park become signs through which the space itself is imagined as degraded, deviant, or poorly governed. Second, the image of the problem describes how representation participates in constituting the disorder it appears merely to record.

Representation participates in the production of meaning, however it poses as reflecting reality (Hall, 1997, p. 6). What the segment encoded as disorder was not simply found in the park. It was constructed through a chain of representational and classificatory choices: which practices to select, which bodies to foreground, which associations to activate (Hall, 1997, pp. 226-227). Following Douglas (1966, p. 37), the issue is not only that laundry appeared out of place, but that this apparent displacement made other associations seem natural.

Roma users of Akademia Platonos did not become a problem because their practices were self-evidently problematic. They became readable as a problem because the segment drew on available cultural repertoires through which Roma bodies, domestic practices, and archaeological public space were made not to belong together (Douglas, 1966, p. 37) (Hall, 1997, pp. 232-237)

This double operation establishes the conceptual threshold for an inquiry into the production of a contested space. However, in order to study how a space becomes contested, it is necessary to examine the mechanisms through which particular signs, practices, and bodies are selected, assembled, and granted evidentiary force in the production of knowledge about that space.

1.2 The Site

Akademia Platonos is a park of approximately 38 hectares in Kolonos, western Athens. It occupies ground that ancient sources identify as the site of Plato's philosophical school. The name has never been abandoned, and its weight is felt very differently by different people. For heritage administrators, the Academy is a site of classical significance requiring managed access. For Kolonos residents, many of whom have lived within walking distance for decades, it is something more immediate: a place to walk, to sit with neighbours, to bring children, to breathe. For Roma families living around its edges, the park is part of a spatial fabric of everyday survival held in a practical proximity that is neither formally sanctioned nor refused.

Recent research on Roma settlements in Greece shows that spatial proximity does not necessarily entail social incorporation, a distinction that becomes important later in this thesis for understanding Roma use of the park and the uneven recognition of Roma park users in and around Akademia Platonos (Maloutas, et al., 2024). The park is one of the few large open spaces available to a dense and economically pressured population.

What gives the park its analytical density is the combination: classical heritage, working-class neighborhood, heterogeneous population, inadequate public investment, and recurring external threat. Anthropological work on public space and urban parks has shown that such spaces are not neutral containers of activity, but socially produced sites where governance, belonging, exclusion, and everyday practice become visible (Low S. M., 1996; Low, Taplin, & Scheld, 2005). Recent work on urban greenspace as infrastructure similarly suggests that parks can communicate wider political projects of modernization, public value, and urban order (Thompson, 2016). These elements produce a space historically elevated but socially underserved, symbolically significant but practically peripheral to planning priorities. The park matters not because it is representative of a broader category, but because its specific

contradictions make the conflicts it stages unusually visible and difficult to resolve by invoking any single principle.

1.3 Analytical Approach

This thesis approaches Akademia Platonos as a contested public space rather than as a site with a single, stable meaning. The park is produced through everyday use, heritage administration, municipal planning, activist defense, media representation, and the unequal recognition of those who live with or around it. These actors do not enter the space with equal authority or equal capacity to define what belongs there. Some uses become recognizable as ordinary neighborhood life, while others are made visible as disorder, misuse, or evidence of failed governance. The central analytical concern is therefore how legitimacy is produced and distributed in the park: who can appear as a proper user, whose claims are taken seriously, and whose presence requires explanation.

This is also why the thesis treats the park as a commons only in a contested sense. Shared space here is not approached as harmonious coexistence, but as an unstable arrangement made through repeated use, care, conflict, and defense. The friction between residents, families, activists, Roma park users, heritage authorities, and municipal plans is not outside the commons. It is part of how the commons is produced and limited. Roma use of the park is crucial in this argument because it tests the boundary of the park's publicness. It reveals what happens when a form of life is physically present in or around a shared space but not fully incorporated into the "we" that can publicly defend and define it.

The theoretical framework is introduced as a way of following these tensions rather than as a separate structure imposed on the material. Lefebvre provides the main vocabulary for analyzing how the park is planned, practiced, and lived (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38-39). Gramsci helps explain how some readings of the park acquire the force of common sense.

Anthropological work on urban parks and public space, especially Low's work on parks, access, and social difference, and Stavrides's work on common space, helps situate Akademia Platonos as an arena where use, belonging, exclusion, and conflict are continuously negotiated. Scott, Herzfeld, Harvey, and Ahmann are used more locally where the ethnography requires them, for questions of practical knowledge, cultural intimacy, heritage-

led redevelopment, and the politics of delay. The aim is not to rehearse theory in advance, but to give the reader enough orientation to follow the analytical movement of the thesis.

This movement also explains the chapter structure. The thesis first accounts for the conditions under which the research was conducted, then develops the spatial framework, then moves into the everyday life of the park, its defense, the limits of its commons, and finally the representational politics through which it becomes publicly intelligible as a problem. In this way, the chapters follow one problem across different registers: how *Akademia Platonos* is produced as a shared, contested, and unequal public space, and what this reveals about the right to produce space.

1.4 Chapter Map

The chapters follow the movement of the argument from fieldwork conditions to spatial production, everyday use, organised defence, unequal recognition, and representation. Chapter 2 begins from the conditions under which I produced ethnographic knowledge: repeated returns, proximity, motherhood, asymmetrical access, and the unstable position between activist sympathy and anthropological distance. Chapter 3 then develops the Lefebvrian framework through the park itself, reading *Akademia Platonos* through its planned, practiced, and lived dimensions. From there, Chapter 4 turns to the ordinary life of the park, following the ways residents, families, children, animals, and regular users produce it through repetition, care, sociability, and attachment. Chapter 5 moves to the park under threat and follows how residents and activists translated the language of upgrade into lived consequences and organised defence. Chapter 6 stays with Roma park users and the limits of the commons, asking how use can help produce a space without becoming equally recognised as legitimate public voice. Chapter 7 returns to the televised image and examines how media discourse, heritage governance, and ordinary classificatory habits make some forms of life visible as disorder. Chapter 8 draws these movements together by returning to *Akademia Platonos* as an uneven commons and by naming the broader mechanism the case makes visible: common infrastructures of life acquire value through use before they are captured by administrative, heritage, market, or development logics.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Positionality

2.1 Entering the Field

Fieldwork in Akademia Platonos began with an apparent openness that quickly became more complicated. The park is a public space, accessible in principle to anyone walking in. But accessibility and entry are not the same thing. Walking into the park for the first time as a researcher is one condition; belonging to it is another, and the distance between those conditions is precisely what fieldwork, over time, works to close, partially and never completely.

During the first period, I learned the park in practical and social terms. I began to understand its geography: where different people tended to sit, which paths were used at different hours of the day, how parents, elderly residents, dog walkers, Roma families, activists, children, and passers-by shared the same ground without necessarily entering the same social world. I also began to notice the informal norms that organised the space. Some areas felt open and visible; others carried more specific social meanings. Some encounters were easy; others required waiting, recognition, and repeated presence.

When I returned for the second period, my access changed. I was no longer encountering the park only as a new fieldsite. I had already begun to recognise people, rhythms, and tensions, and some people also recognised me. This made it possible to follow the organised defence of the park more closely and to understand the Initiative through formal statements, conversations, pauses, explanations, jokes, frustrations, and the practical work of staying with a struggle over time. The interview with Antigoni and Marilena belonged to this phase, but it also exceeded the form of a single interview. It became part of a wider conversational relation through which I began to understand how the park was defended, narrated, and cared for from within.

The third period brought another kind of knowledge. Returning after time away gave me both familiarity and distance. Some things felt immediately recognisable, while others appeared differently because I had been absent. I noticed details that continuous presence might have made ordinary: changes in use, small shifts in atmosphere, the return of certain practices, and the persistence of others. Working through repeated returns therefore shaped the knowledge I produced. I came to know the park in layers, through first impressions, accumulated familiarity, interruption, return, and renewed attention.

This rhythm shaped the analysis. It allowed me to see the park as a place that was continuously produced, rather than as a stable scene waiting to be described. Each return showed me something about change, repetition, and endurance. It also reminded me that ethnographic knowledge is built through partial access and situated attention. I did not see everything. I followed particular relations, routes, conversations, and events, and the thesis grows out of that positioned movement through the field.

During parts of the fieldwork, I was accompanied by my 10-year-old daughter. This shaped my access, my perception, and my bodily presence in the park (Cupples & Kindon, 2003). I entered the space as a researcher with a notebook and as a mother responsible for another person's comfort, safety, boredom, hunger, and need for rest. This changed what I noticed. I paid attention to shade, benches, playgrounds, water, traffic, dogs, and the ways adults responded to children. I also entered social relations differently and noticed that exchanges with other parents occurred more regularly. Some older residents who came to recognise us, were quick to advise and to share practical local knowledge: Where to find the best fruits, what time the street market offers the lowest prices, which places are 'more quite' for my study. The park opened through forms of everyday care that I might have missed if I had arrived alone.

This double position sometimes constrained the fieldwork. I could not always stay as long as I wanted, follow every conversation, or move through the park with detached concentration. It also gave me me a more embodied understanding of why the park mattered. I experienced the space as a researcher, but also as someone using it, waiting in it, negotiating it, and depending on its ordinary affordances. This is where some of my claims about the park's social value are grounded. I therefore try to hold that value without romanticising it: to take seriously what the park made possible, while also remaining attentive to its exclusions, tensions, and unequal forms of belonging.

2.2 Positionality and the Condition of Proximity

Any account of this research requires naming the conditions under which it was conducted: what shaped what became visible, and what remained obscure.

I entered the field with a left-wing and anti-capitalist political orientation, a sustained prior engagement with Athenian urban politics, and an affective and historical proximity to Greece

that goes well beyond academic interest. The Athens in which this fieldwork was conducted is an Athens I know from the inside, or close enough to the inside to matter: its political vocabulary, its habits of collective life, its particular forms of urban sociability, and its post-2010 political atmosphere of austerity, mobilization, and exhaustion were not foreign material requiring translation. They were already part of my own world.

This proximity characterizes what the literature describes as anthropology at home: fieldwork conducted within a social and political landscape that is not institutionally or culturally distant from the researcher, and where the advantages and risks of that proximity are both specific (Jackson, 1987; Strathern, 1987). The advantage is familiarity: access to conversations, political registers, and social textures that would require considerably longer to reach from a position of distance. The risk is not bias in the conventional sense. It is the risk of not noticing things that only distance would make visible: the silences, the exclusions, the self-protective moves a community makes, which a researcher already inside its political world may be inclined to process as familiar rather than examining analytically.

This proximity was a condition of access. It allowed me to participate in conversations and situations that would have been closed to a more distant observer. I could attend meetings without requiring interpretation, recognize moral and political registers that might otherwise have appeared merely sociable, and become trusted, relatively quickly, with the kinds of frank internal commentary that Herzfeld's concept of cultural intimacy names: what the community says about itself when the external gaze is absent (Herzfeld, 2016, pp. 3, 8).

The tension between activist disposition and anthropological discipline was not resolved at any point during this research. It was managed, unevenly and with ongoing effort. My own political commitments aligned so closely with those of the community that I had to keep a critical distance, not always successfully. The boundary between activist and anthropologist was itself unstable, and that instability was the condition under which the knowledge described here was produced.

2.3 Temporal Architecture and Accumulated Familiarity

Each return taught me something different. During the first period, I learned the park's social topography: where people sat, how the space changed across the day, where children played, where older residents gathered, and how different users shared the park while remaining

socially separate. This first knowledge gave me the ground I needed for the more political material that came later.

During the second period, I moved closer to the organised defence of the park. I could follow conversations with more confidence, understand references that would earlier have escaped me, and ask better questions about the museum plan, the Initiative, and the wider conflict over the area. Much of the material that shaped Chapters 5 and 6 comes from this period, when the struggle became concrete to me as work, worry, memory, strategy, and everyday commitment.

The third period changed my attention again. Returning after an interval made the familiar slightly strange. I noticed what I had begun to take for granted: how people occupied the park without announcing it, how some users became easily legible as “proper” park users while others remained harder to name, and how the park reproduced itself through small daily acts of sitting, passing, waiting, caring, playing, cleaning, arguing, and returning. Some of the sharper observations in this thesis came from that third return, when I could recognise the park and still be surprised by it.

2.4 Asymmetrical Access and the Roma Question

The forms of access that became available through sustained fieldwork were not equally distributed across the park’s different user communities. The most significant asymmetry concerned Roma families and individuals.

My proximity to the park’s activist and resident community, which was the primary social world of the fieldwork, meant entering the field already positioned within a set of social relations in which Roma presence was a contested topic. The community most accessible to me was also, as this thesis argues, a community whose self-understanding was partly constituted through boundaries that Roma presence complicated or crossed. Reaching Roma interlocutors directly and substantively from within that relational position would have required me to navigate social relations in ways that risked reinforcing the very dynamics of surveillance and problematization that the thesis is analysing critically.

There were also ethical reasons, beyond the practical, for not approaching Roma individuals in a straightforwardly extractive manner. The research context was one in which Roma

communities in and around the park were already subject to intensified visibility: watched, photographed, filmed, reported on, and made into evidence of various problems by journalists, municipal officials, and occasionally by members of the park's resident community itself. Adding a researcher with a notebook and questions about their presence would have reproduced, in its practical form, exactly the problematizing gaze this thesis is concerned to analyse. I did not conduct formal interviews with Roma individuals. This was an ethical and methodological judgment about what responsible research in this specific context required. In this context, responsibility to me meant studying the gaze around Roma users rather than asking them to submit themselves to it once more.

What the thesis can claim, as a result, is circumscribed. I do not claim to represent Roma experience from the inside. I therefore stay with the way Roma users become significant in the park's social life: how they are noticed, spoken about, avoided, defended, blamed, or made difficult to name. The responses to Roma families by other park users, by media, and by governance structures show how public life is produced in Akademia Platonos, and where its limits appear. For that reason, I could not treat this question as secondary. A thesis about the commons of Akademia Platonos that left Roma users at the edge of the analysis would give a cleaner picture of the commons than the one I encountered.

2.5 Ethics in Practice

I entered the field with an approved ethical protocol, but I came to understand that this could only provide a baseline. The ethical questions of the research emerged through specific situations, and I had to respond to them through situated judgement as the fieldwork unfolded.

All individuals cited or discussed in this thesis are anonymized unless their involvement in the park's public political life is already a matter of public record. I changed names, modified identifying details where necessary, and presented some individuals in composite form to prevent identification. These measures were calibrated to the specific vulnerability of different interlocutors: the activist community's public-facing members required less protection than individuals who spoke to me in conditions of informal trust and would not have expected their words to circulate beyond that context.

The risk of reproducing stigma was a constant ethical pressure throughout the writing process. The park's political context is one in which Roma people's lives, as this analysis will show,

are already heavily stigmatized in public discourse. I analyse the mechanisms through which stigma is produced and circulated, without using analysis as a way to claim moral innocence, while maintaining enough analytical discipline to avoid reproducing its effects in a different register.

There were also limits to what I included in this research. I stayed at the edge of certain internal discussions and avoided currying theme between different groups in the field. The same principle guided my encounters with Roma park users. I observed, listened, and paid attention to how people used the space, while resisting the impulse to treat individuals as research subjects simply because they were visible to me. I did not photograph Roma people or following personal stories that depended on trust I had not built. These were methodological choices shaped by respect for existing relationships, by unawareness of the limits of my position, and by a refusal to add further visibility to people already exposed to racialised forms of looking (Simpson, 2007; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

2.6 Language, Translation, and Register

My interlocutors spoke Greek, and the thesis is written in English. This creates a challenge of translation, register and conceptual travel.

The Greek of the park's everyday life, its activist debates, its neighbourhood speech and its ordinary sociability, carries meanings that do not move smoothly into an English-language academic text. It carries specific connotations, specific moral vocabularies, and specific political histories that engage differently with the conceptual language of anglophone social anthropology. When residents speak of the park as part of their neighbourhood in a way that implies something like ownership without legal title, the Greek idiom they use carries a weight that the English rendering only partially captures. I return to one such term, *Plataniotissa*, in Chapter 4. When activists frame the park's defense in terms that draw simultaneously on left political tradition, on neighborhood solidarity, and a register that resonates with Herzfeld's account of cultural intimacy, those frames do not separate neatly in translation (Herzfeld, 2016, p. 17).

Cultural translation, making local realities understandable across conceptual and linguistic borders, is the core task of the anthropologist (Asad, 1986). I do not claim to have resolved the challenges of that task. I have tried, however, to take them seriously. Throughout the

thesis, I have kept as close as I could to the Greek, and close to the ethnographic meaning where I had to.

2.7 On Photography and Perception

The original research design included extensive visual documentation. In practice, I took far fewer photographs than I had imagined.

The first reason was perceptual. In the early weeks I moved through the park with a camera and noticed that the camera was changing how I was seeing. I was scanning for images that would later stand as evidence. I was attentive to what was visually arresting rather than to what was happening. This produced two forms of discomfort. I was uneasy with the feeling that I was looking for the park with through the camera while failing to see the park itself. I also worried that stepping back from photography would leave me with a weaker record and a less secured method.

In a practical sense, my daughter returned me to the conditions of the field. I was there as a mother and a researcher and that double position set the terms of my attention before I had turned them into method. Having to know where she is and respond to her needs, made the camera feel heavier than it had to be as an instrument of documentation. This practical limit, however, gradually changed the field. The park began to organise itself, in my own attention, through use, rhythms and encounter, rather than around moments of potential capture.

I realised this retrospectively as I was writing this chapter, since this thesis is centrally concerned with the difference between what is visible and what is legible, between the image of a space and the spatial practice that exceeds any image.

I realised the methodological significance of this retrospectively while writing this chapter and recalled a methodological remark from a guest lecture by Michael Herzfeld that stayed with me¹. As I understood it, fieldworkers often worry that they do not have enough empirical material, however a remembered scene carries such density that writing from the attention

¹ I refer here to a methodological point made by Michael Herzfeldin in a guest lecture for our MA cohort at NTNU, organized by our professor Jan Ketil Simonsen on 11 November 2025. The formulation is my own paraphrase of memory.

that it still carries, as closely as possible to the time between the seconds would prove this anxiety wrong.

The second reason was specific to Roma people in the park, and a choice I consciously and methodologically had to make, knowing I emic terms that visual documentation in this context could be dangerous and lead to consequences I did not want to contribute to. Roma community in and around Akademia Platonos is already heavily visualised: by journalists, by municipal communications, by phones held up from balconies, by the television segment that opens this thesis. The problem was not that there were too few images. The problem was that there were already too many, circulating in a racialised visual economy that the thesis is concerned to analyse, without adding to it, 2017).

For the same reason, I did not photograph the laundry on the fence, or other material traces. Had I done otherwise I might have produced visual signs through which Roma identity is racialised. As later Chapters of this thesis show, this link carries a danger than the term racialisation alone not fully capture. Such images could have added another layer of exposure and would have travelled, as images do, beyond any context in which I could control their reading.

This choice remains uneasy because it relied on my judgement. But the vulnerability I sought to avoid though was not an attribute of Roma people themselves. It rather lay in the political conditions through which these people are made public signs of disorder.

I therefore treat non-photography as a methodological limit: a way of working with the social field around Roma producers of space without producing further material for the circulation of racialised visibility.

The decision sat within a broader context that should not be left implicit. Recent fatal police shootings of Roma youths and young men in Greece have made it brutally clear how quickly visibility, suspicion, and vulnerability can converge on a Roma body, and the question of who adds images of Roma life to the public archive, under what conditions, is not a neutral one.

There is a body of scholarship that has helped me think about this stance, even where its empirical context is different from mine. Simpson (2007) and Tuck and Yang (2014) argue that refusal in research is not a gap in fieldwork but a methodological position that takes

seriously what the research encounter does to the people who become its material. Trinh T. Minh-ha's formulation of "speaking nearby" rather than speaking about, discussed by Chen (1992), names a related orientation in visual work: proximity without capture, attention without appropriation. These authors write from positions and politics that are not interchangeable with mine, and the Roma situation in Greece is not the Indigenous situation in North America or the Vietnamese situation Trinh works from. Yet their work helped me clarify how to work with proximity without producing and returning exposure

The primary documentary mode of this thesis is observational and textual. The few photographs that appear are used where they serve a specific analytical purpose or illustration.

2.8 How These Conditions Shaped the Research

This chapter has described the conditions under which the research took shape. Three of them matter especially. The first was positional. I did not enter the field as someone encountering an entirely unfamiliar social world. The fieldwork was carried out from a position of closeness: to Greece, to Athens, and to the left-inflected political world around the organized defense of the park. This closeness gave me forms of access and recognition, but it also brought risks. What is partly known can be too quickly assumed, and proximity can sometimes make certain relations harder, rather than easier, to see.

The second condition was temporality of the fieldwork which unfolded across three distinct periods and lasted approximately eight months. The first run from 15 December to 31 January 2025; the second from 15 February to 31 March; the third and longest 18 May to 4 August. I had originally planned a more sustained relocation to Athens with a longer uninterrupted period of residence, but due to practical and situated reasons, that plan was proved impossible. Knowledge was produced through this rhythm: arriving, leaving, thinking from a distance, and coming back to a field that was both familiar and changed. The intervals between fieldwork periods became therefore a part of the method because distance allowed some things to become visible that continuous presence might have absorbed too quickly into habit.

The third condition was ethical. Decisions about whom to approach, what to photograph, what to write down, and what to leave out were not secondary to the research. They shaped the

research itself. Methodology, in this project, was not the application of a fixed set of procedures to a field that already existed independently of me. It was a continuous exercise of judgment within a field that was also being shaped, in small ways, by my own presence.

The chapters that follow come out of that encounter. The conditions described here are part of why the material appears as it does, and why some things are foregrounded while others are approached more cautiously, indirectly, or not at all.

Chapter 3: Producing Space

Akademia Platonos is a park in western Athens, and the simplest way to begin describing it is to walk through it. I take that walk here with Henri Lefebvre, because his work gives me a way to hold together what otherwise appears in fragments: laws, plans, paths, benches, memories, children's games, activist documents, and ordinary routines. For Lefebvre, space is socially produced through the interaction of three dimensions: space as it is conceived by those with the authority to plan and classify it; space as it is practiced through everyday bodily routine; and space as it is lived through memory, image, and attachment (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38-39). These are not three separate spaces. They are three dimensions of the same ground.

In Akademia Platonos, this matters because the park never appeared to me as one thing. It was planned as heritage, used as neighbourhood space, defended as common ground, and lived through memories that tied ancient stones to children's play and ordinary daily relief. I move through these dimensions in turn. First, I look at the planned park, the version that exists in laws, designations, and projections. I then turn to the practiced park, the ordinary rhythms through which people use and remake it. Finally, I follow the lived park through the words and memories of residents for whom the park is neither abstract heritage nor empty green space, but part of a life already lived there.

3.1 The Space That Is Planned

There is a version of Akademia Platonos that exists on paper before it exists in any other form. It appears in municipal records, in archaeological designations, and in a single line of national legislation: Greek Law 3057/2002, Article 80, paragraph 2a, which formally allocated the site of the park for the construction of a new archaeological museum. That allocation predates the current plans by more than two decades, and gives them their legal scaffolding.

The plan that now occupies that legal opening was presented publicly in March 2023, in a joint announcement by the Ministry of Culture and Sport and the Municipality of Athens, following an open architectural competition. The winning entry, by the architect Georgios Tsolakis, is described in the press release as the design for "the first 'green' Museum of the country," the New Archaeological Museum of Athens (Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2023).

The building is given at 14,362 sq m, a figure the press release frames as a substantial reduction from the 30,000 sq m that the relevant Government Gazette (ΦΕΚ) had permitted, and the height of 10.5 metres is framed in the same terms. The plan includes underground parking, a 500-seat open-air amphitheatre, and a description of the structure as bioclimatic and of zero environmental footprint. The Minister, Lina Mendoni, described the project as the realisation of "a decades-long vision of the Ministry of Culture" for the showcasing (ανάδειξη) of the site of Plato's Academy, "a grove, a sacred place, that transforms into a public space of education and recreation." Akademia Platonos was deemed appropriate, the press release adds, as "a place of spiritual radiance," where extensive state expropriations had been carried out from the 1930s onwards by the architect Panagiotis Aristofron and the Greek state.

The account that circulates within the neighbourhood's organising network describes the same plan in different terms. In an interview conducted on 10 March 2025, Antigoni and Marilena, both closely involved in the Initiative defending the park, described the projected structure as a concrete building of roughly seventeen thousand square metres, and the plan as requiring the removal of four hundred and eighty trees from the park's densest green section in order to accomplish the levelling of the archaeological excavations and what they called their "visual unification." They situated the plan within an explicit tourism logic: the goal, as they had documented it, was to extend the average visitor stay in the area from two hours to four (Antigoni and Marilena, interview, 10 March 2025). The figures they cited, the documents on which their account rests, and the evidence through which the Initiative has challenged the official framing are examined in Chapter 5.

I do not treat these two accounts as a simple disagreement over numbers. What they show is that the planned park is already a contested object. In Lefebvre's terms, this is a representation of space: a conception of the park organised through the authority, measurements, vocabulary, and priorities of planning (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38-39). But the Initiative also reads the plan. It reads it from below, through documents, local knowledge, environmental concern, and lived attachment. The same project therefore appears differently depending on who is reading it and what kind of loss they are able to see.

This is already a spatial fact. A law from 2002 shapes what can be built two decades later. A phrase like "first green museum" sets the terms on which the project is presented and

defended. The plan offers one way of seeing the park: from above, in measurements, and in the language of the bioclimatic, the showcased, and the visitable. The Initiative's counter-reading asks what that language will do to the ground. For now, the important point is that the conceived space of Akademia Platonos is neither singular nor stable. It is produced, and it is disputed. Produced space is historical and bears the imprint of forces and relations of production (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 46, 129-130).

3.2 The Space That Is Practiced

Walk through Akademia Platonos on an ordinary weekday, and another spatial order appears. It is not the order of the legal designation or the architectural rendering. It is the order made by people returning to particular places, at particular hours, with particular habits. Lefebvre calls this spatial practice: the perceived dimension of space, generated by the body's patterned engagement with its environment (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38-39). I came to understand this dimension slowly, by being there often enough for repetition to become visible.

On an ordinary afternoon, several uses of the park run alongside one another without colliding. Outside the playground, a group of Albanian mothers sits cracking pumpkin seeds, *pasatempo*, and watching the children. On one of the open stretches, a group of Pakistani men play cricket, the bat and ball moving through a geometry that the park's paths were not designed for but accommodate easily. Under the trees, on the days when they come, a small group practices polyphonic singing, the voices carrying further in the open air than they would indoors. Teenagers take kung fu lessons in another corner. Dog walkers cross all of this, following their own routes. None of these groups uses the park in exactly the same way, and none of them fully defines it. Several rhythms share the same ground.

The morning has its own rhythm. The central paths carry older residents moving at a pace that signals habit rather than exercise. They know one another by face if not by name, and they exchange the abbreviated sociability of people who have occupied the same space at the same time for years. The benches along the main axis fill according to an informal but operative geography. Certain benches belong, practically speaking, to certain groups, through repeated presence rather than formal allocation. A bench occupied by the same three men every morning at nine is not their bench in any legal sense. It is their bench in a social sense, and the regulars recognise it.

Children arrive with parents or grandparents after the school, in the afternoon, to attend their activities, football being one of the most popular of them, and their presence rearranges the park in ways that are both predictable and improvised. Shaded areas become important in summer. The central open space becomes, in the afternoon, something close to a playground. Dogs follow routes organised by a geography of smell, invisible to human users but operative in its own right.

None of this can be read from the planning documents. It is carried in bodies, habits, and informal understandings built through repetition. I recognised it by returning, sitting, waiting, walking the same paths at different hours, and learning that the park's order was not hidden. It was simply ordinary enough to be missed.

3.3 The Space That Is Lived

Alongside spatial practice, and in tension with it, is what Lefebvre calls representational space: the lived dimension of space, carried in images, memories, and meanings that attach to a place through experience (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39).). In *Akademia Platonos*, I encountered this dimension through conversations with long-term women users of the park, and especially through the way they spoke about the ground itself.

Antigoni, a neighbourhood resident involved in the organised defence of the park, was born in the area and now raises her own children there. Through her account, I began to understand the archaeological ground as something already folded into everyday life. The ancient stones were not only remains to be protected, displayed, or visually unified. They were also surfaces generations of neighbourhood children had climbed, named, and played on. I return to this continuity in Chapter 4, where it becomes central to the question of why the park is experienced as necessary rather than merely pleasant. Here, the point is more specific: the archaeological ground is already lived before it is reorganised as heritage.

Antigoni also described the park as alive in two connected senses: as an archaeological place and, more urgently, as ordinary green public space. What she emphasised was not only historical significance, but bodily relief. The park's small hills, hollows, shade, and open ground mattered, she said, for the human psyche in an otherwise hard urban environment.

I heard related attachments in other conversations with long-term women users of the park: memories of planting, sitting, reading, imagining the ancient landscape, and caring for small parts of the ground through repeated use. I do not develop those cases fully here. They return in later chapters, where they become part of the analysis of everyday belonging, blame, and unequal recognition. At this point, they help clarify what Lefebvre's lived space means in this field: the park is not only planned, crossed, or used. It is remembered, imagined, cared for, and inhabited through the same ground.

3.4 Where the Dimensions Meet

For Lefebvre, the analytical work of the triad lies in the tension between its three terms. Conceived, practiced, and lived space are dimensions of one process, and it is in their interaction that space is continuously made and remade (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 39-40). In *Akademia Platonos* these dimensions sit in the same ground: a law from 2002 and a plan measured in tourist hours, an afternoon of cricket, *pasatempo*, polyphonic singing, and kung fu, and three generations of children playing on the same antique stones. This chapter has set the dimensions out. The chapters that follow take up the moments where they meet.

Chapter 4: Living the Park

4.1 A Birthday Party on Old Ground

It was a June afternoon, already hot, when I found myself standing near one of the park's entrances holding a cake I could not refrigerate soon enough. The friend I had come to meet had declined it on dietary grounds, the heat was making it unstable, and I was trying to decide what to do with it when I noticed the party.

A folding table had been set up in the shade with sweets, drinks, and food arranged across it. Two large portable speakers were playing cheerful music. Children were playing with that open-faced abandon that belongs to children who are genuinely having a good time, and the adults around them were in the same spirit, unceremonious, laughing, completely at ease. There was nothing about the scene that felt closed or guarded. It felt, as I stood there with my cake, as if it could simply absorb you.

My child had reached this conclusion before I had. I became aware, at some point, that they had not spoken to me for several seconds, which with them is unusual enough to register. I looked up and they were already inside the party, dancing with the other children.

I walked over. A woman around my age came toward me immediately, smiled, and said: "Is the kid yours?" Then, without pausing: "Come, come, we're celebrating Christina, it's her birthday." Before I had finished deciding whether to explain about the cake, she said to me smiling "you didn't have to" while her hands reached mine to receive the box. It almost felt as if she knew that by doing so, she would lift a burden from my shoulder. A cold orange soda appeared from a portable cooler. My explanatory speech, already half-formed, became unnecessary. Something in me relaxed. A whole layer of social management I had been carrying, the Northern European instinct to justify every approach, to make every crossing into someone else's social world legible and defensible in advance, simply left my body for a while.

We danced and sang. Ate some of the cake. Kids were moving around the scene the same way bees fly among flowers. I can't recall whether it was half an hour or nearly three quarters, probably because that very timespan I had felt that time didn't matter until I checked the clock, and it suddenly did. It was getting a bit late, and we had to go eventually. I gave my kid

a notice that it would be five more minutes, signaling our departure this way. The woman insisted that it was too early, however she accepted a brief explanation that sounded somewhat “I wish we could stay more, but it’s been a long day” and as I was going to add that we’d come back the day after, she had already let me know that they would probably celebrate here again next week, and the week after that.

And there, as we were leaving, an older man passed by and with a mixture of scorn and authority that some older Greek men feel entitled to deploy as a form of civic performance, threw a comment. “Yes, yes, don’t miss out!” and continued bubbling in a short rant that *they* had turned the place into a circus. “Here of all places” he added, “in Plato's Academy, with *your* revelries and *your* clapping and *your* little belly dances”.

The woman turned to him without missing a beat.

"Oh, *barba*²," she said, with a smile so calm it was almost tender, "we've got no issues. Plato, Pericles, we like it."

What had just happened was not simply a comeback, though it was a devastatingly good one. He had come armed with the full grandeur of the heritage register: Plato's Academy, classical antiquity, the civilizational weight of the place. He had used it to shame them, to remind them that their music and their joy and their bodies were somehow too low for this ground. And she had taken that same grandeur, turned it inside out in a single sentence, and handed it back to him as a joke at his own expense. Plato, Pericles, any ancient gentleman will do, we are not picky. She had not received the comment on the level at which it was thrown. She had lifted it, twisted it, and made its pompousness available for public laughter without sounding pressed, wounded, or remotely diminished.

There was something in her timing and her tone that stayed with me long after the afternoon was over. She had not apologized, had not explained, had not accepted the shame he was trying to hand over. She had not even bothered to argue on his terms. She had simply made his register ridiculous and moved on. In Herzfeld's terms, what she performed was a precise,

² *barba* (μπάρμπα): a term of address for an older man, without implying kinship. I keep it in transliteration because “uncle” would make the relation sound more familial than it is.

confident manipulation of a dominant symbolic vocabulary, deflecting a claim to cultural authority by turning its own language against itself (Herzfeld, 2016, pp. 165-166, 176-178).

But it was also something more immediate than that. It was the response of someone who was completely at home, whose right to be there was not in question, and who therefore could afford to treat the challenge simply with the punchline rather than as a threat requiring defence.

The park had made room for a birthday party in the same terms that Lefebvre (1991, p. 39) would describe as the active production of lived space, reinvented through its inhabitants' practices. The birthday party in turn had made room for a stranger and her child allowing us to be received as guests. In Herzfeld's terms a performance of 'cultural intimacy' where the neighbourhood's domestic logic was extended into the park (Herzfeld, 2016, pp. 7-8, 56-57), a practice through which the park became hospitable and shared. And when someone briefly attempted to spoil it all, on the grounds that this was not what the space was for, his objection was not merely absorbed but almost monumentally deflected, exposing the very question at stake: whether the park should be perceived through abstract ideas of archaeological propriety, or through ordinary social practices by which people make it liveable. The exchange lasted perhaps fifteen seconds. But it contained the park's social world in miniature: its generosity, its ease, its capacity to incorporate the unexpected, and the quiet but firm moral boundary that its regular community maintains around what the park is and what it will not be told to become.

4.2 Rhythmic Belonging

Moving from the 'event' of the party to the 'rhythm' of *the bench* near the park's northeastern entrance, an uneven distribution of legitimacy is starkly revealed. Unlike the Roma, whose visibility was treated as a rupture to be policed, the visibility of the woman I call "Thetis" and her friends occupied a different moral register: It was noticed, yet never problematized in the same way.

These women gathered every evening at the same bench. They arrived between six and seven, depending on the heat, bringing sliced watermelon into plastic containers, bottles of water left to thaw slowly, folding fans and mosquito repellent. They sat in a configuration that never

varied: Thetis at the center; the others arranged according to an unspoken choreography of friendship refined over years. The women did not simply sit on the bench; they adjusted to it collectively. Their bodies pressed against one another overlapping, fitting side by side almost like pieces of a puzzle. Should later on other neighbours join, additional chairs were brought, extending the seating arrangement beyond. Such was their proximity that they seemed to merge into a single entity; And that entity, in turn, felt as essential to the park's landscape as the hat-wearing woman in Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*. It wouldn't look the same without.

What makes a public space into something more than a civic amenity is exactly this kind of rhythmic, embodied belonging. The bench had not been assigned to these women. No plan designated this hour, this arrangement, or this form of sociability. Yet through repetition it had become one of the park's naturalized rhythms. Their bodies had learned the place, and the place, in turn, had absorbed their presence. Lefebvre's account of the spatial body and rhythm helps clarify this point: space is not only seen or planned, but produced through bodily orientation, repeated gestures, needs, movements, and rhythms that become attached to place (Lefebvre, 2004, pp. 67-68). The bench was not merely occupied. It was rhythmically inhabited.

What matters here is not a shared cultural code, but a sedimented relationship between bodies, objects, and place. The watermelon containers, thawing bottles, fans, chairs, knees, elbows, bags, and mosquito repellent were not incidental details. They were part of the practical apparatus through which the women made the park usable and familiar. Their presence had acquired legitimacy not through formal right, but through repetition, care, and bodily attunement. Over time, their practice had become part of the park's material and social rhythm. It no longer appeared as an intervention into public space. It appeared as one of the ways the park existed.

For a significant part of the park's regular community, this is what Akademia Platonos offers: an open-air living room, an extension of home into the public sphere, and a setting in which the sociability historically organized through neighbourhood proximity in working-class Athens can continue to be practiced, even as the surrounding neighbourhoods become denser, more socially heterogeneous, and shaped by the pressures of increasingly complex urban coexistence.

This is where the contrast with the birthday party matters. Whether in the form of older women gathering around a bench or a Roma family celebrating a child's birthday, these practices enact inhabitation in the fullest sense: an ongoing, practical relationship with the park organized around the needs of everyday life rather than the formal expectations of civic designation. Yet they are not recognized equally. Some practices are allowed to settle into the ordinary rhythm of the place, while others are made to appear excessive, improper, or out of place. The question, then, is not simply who uses the park, but whose repeated use is allowed to sediment into belonging, and whose presence is kept visible as interruption.

4.3 Care and Belonging Through Recognition

One afternoon, a woman I had come to recognize as a regular presence in the park paused on her walk to look at two of the older trees along the central path. They were dry in a way that signaled neglect rather than season. She shook her head, made a comment about the municipality that required no elaboration, and then moved toward a shaded area nearby.

She had brought dry cat food from home, portioned out on pieces of baking paper, and a plastic bottle from which she poured water into bowls she had carried with her. She called the cats by name. Lele came first, then Tigri, then Baklava, who was bolder than the others and approached with the unhurried confidence of an animal accustomed to this arrangement. While the woman worked, Baklava came to investigate me, rubbed once firmly against my leg, and returned to the bowl as if the matter was settled. The woman watched this with amusement. "You see?" she said. "He has chosen you! Now you are one of us. You are a *Πλατανιώτισσα*."³ The word caught me immediately. She was recognising me, lightly but clearly, as someone who had crossed from visitor into local company. Yet the recognition came through a linguistic joke that changed the ground of belonging. She had named me through *platani*, the plane tree. That small substitution moved belonging from the philosopher to the tree: from the monumental name of the site to shade, return, care, and the lived ecology of the park. The joke made me laugh, but it also gave me the thesis in miniature. In that word, the park belonged less to Plato than to those who had learned to live with the plane tree. And matter of fact was that, a cat had chosen me and the plane trees had chosen the *Plataniotes*.

³ *Πλατανιώτισσα* / *Plataniotissa* is a playful feminine demonym formed from *platani* — plane tree — and the common Greek feminine demonymic suffix *-otissa*. Given the official place-name *Akadimia Platonos* / Plato's Academy, an expected formation would draw on *Platon-*. The joke shifts the ground of belonging from Plato to the plane tree, and from the official monumental name of the area to the lived ecology of the park.



Figure 1 Baklavas and his buddy, source: Own Fieldwork

To be accepted by the park's cats, in the social economy of this woman and the small informal network of people who feed and monitor the park's feral cat population, is to have been recognized by the space itself in some diffuse but operative sense. The cats belong to no one and to the park in the way that long habitation creates a form of belonging that precedes and exceeds any formal arrangement. The woman who feeds them exercises a form of stewardship entirely unrecognized by any authority: no one has asked her to do this, no one pays her, and no one would notice if she stopped except the cats and the others who, she mentions without ceremony, also come at different times with their own supplies.

This is vernacular care in the precise sense: maintenance and attention organized through personal commitment and accumulated practical knowledge rather than through any institutional channel. It is exactly the kind of practice that official spatial governance cannot see and does not plan for, but that is indispensable to what the park actually is as a living environment.

Plataniotissa, person of this place, is a category that carries this quality. It is not a civic title. It is not conferred by residence, legal status, or heritage designation. It is conferred by the park itself, through accumulated presence and mutual recognition, and it extends, at least in this woman's joking formulation, to those accepted by its non-human inhabitants. The cats but they are part of it, and the network of care organized around them is one of the threads through which the park is reproduced daily as a living rather than merely administered space.

Marilena, in conversation, made the point without prompting: "And it's not only the people, it's also the animals." Antigoni followed immediately: the park has wild birds, species approaching extinction, enough for the ornithological service to have conducted an assessment. The park's biodiversity is part of what makes it worth defending, and it is also part of what makes it difficult to imagine being defended by any authority other than those who are already in daily relationship with it. Governance can designate a space as ecologically significant. It cannot replicate the network of attention that makes ecological significance actually present in daily life.

4.4 Intergenerational Continuity and the Necessary Park

In conversation with Antigoni and Marilena in March 2025, Antigoni described a moment of intergenerational recognition that she returned to more than once. She was born in the neighborhood in 1985. As a child she played on the ruins inside the park, climbing the ancient stones in the area near the archaeological excavations, using a particular configuration of rocks as a slide. Years later, talking with Maria, a woman in her sixties who had also grown up in the neighborhood, she discovered that Maria had played on the same rocks in the same way. Antigoni's own children play there now.

"There's a continuity," Marilena said. "Which is really beautiful," Antigoni replied. "This popular use of the space has never stopped." She drew a comparison without being asked: on the hill of Philopappos, there is a rock that has been used as a slide by so many generations of children that its surface has been worn smooth. At Akademia Platonos, the stones that children call "the ruins" occupy two points in the park, slightly propped, and what the children say is simply: "Let's go play on the ancient things." The park absorbs this without commentary. The ancient ground is also a playground. These two facts coexist, and their

coexistence is part of what gives the park its particular social character: the weight of the heritage register is real here, but it does not organize everyday practice. It sits alongside it.

The park is necessary rather than merely pleasant for the families who use it most consistently, and this distinction matters analytically. Every afternoon, year-round, mothers of primary school children gather at the park while the children play football, ride bicycles, or simply run. "Characteristic image of the last ten years," Antigoni said. Children have grown up here, whole school cohorts of them, spending their afternoons in the park in ways that required no formal provision because the park's open space provided what no designed facility could replicate. This use is not organized or announced. It simply happens, and it happens because the park is there, large and green and safe enough, in a neighborhood where no alternative exists.

Speaking about the playground equipment that had been removed without replacement, Antigoni produced an ironic mimicry of the unspoken reasoning she attributed to the Ministry of Culture: "It can't be that a Greek, a migrant, or a Roma person does pull-ups in the forecourt of the New Museum of Athens." She raised her eyebrows as she said it, briefly inhabiting the official voice she was mocking before returning to her own.

The humor was bitter because the logic was real. The playground equipment that was removed as part of the redevelopment preparation tells a precise story about what "upgrading" means in practice: a parallel bars structure removed, a smaller playground demolished, a newer but smaller one installed in its place, without reflecting what the community actually needed. In mocking the Ministry's imagined reasoning, Antigoni was articulating an ethical counter-claim: that the park should remain open to the heterogeneous everyday life it had accumulated rather than being reorganized for a different and more selective public. The redevelopment scheme does not merely propose a different aesthetic for the park. It proposes a different public, and the incremental removal of facilities used by working-class families with children is part of how that different public is being quietly prepared for.

4.5 The Limits of the "We"

None of this should suggest that the park's social world is without its frictions or its moral limits. The older man at the birthday party was not an anomaly. He expressed, in an unusually direct form, something that runs more quietly through the park's social fabric: a set of assumptions about what kind of space this is, what it is for, and who belongs in it without qualification. The park's regular community is warm. It is generous to strangers with cakes and willing to dance with unknown children. It is organized, politically serious, and genuinely committed to the park as shared space. It has built, through years of collective effort, a social world with real density, real moral texture, and real practical solidarity. These are not small things.

But the "we" that this community constitutes and defends is not a transparent or innocent category. It is produced, and its production involves boundary-making that does not always announce itself as such. A woman named Thetis, encountered in conversation during the fieldwork, spoke warmly and at length about the park's sociability, about the dog-walking community and its ethos of mutual recognition, about her discomfort with the fast-food culture she associated with newer commercial presences near the park's edges. There is a distinction she draws, not always explicitly, between forms of public sociability that linger, that invest in the park as a place, that treat it as somewhere to be rather than somewhere to pass through, and forms that seem to her more transactional, more indifferent to the social world the park sustains. This is a genuinely interesting distinction, and it is not without analytical substance. But at a certain point in the conversation, in a move that had the quality of an unguarded slide, she connected her unease about changes in the park's character to Roma presence. The slide was not marked. It did not announce itself as a change of register. The discomfort about commercial encroachment and the discomfort about Roma were folded into a single continuous concern.

This is not unique to Thetis. It circulates in the park's social world in forms that range from the explicit to the barely articulate, and it sits in complex relationship with the community's otherwise consistent emphasis on openness and inclusion. The contradiction is not lost on the community's more politically reflective members. Antigoni, describing the neighborhood's composition, listed Roma families alongside Albanian migrants, long-term Greek residents, and recent migrants from elsewhere, and spoke of all of them as part of a living and diverse

social world. But she also noted, in passing and without fully developing it, that this diversity is experienced differently by different people, and that the park's organized defense does not resolve these differences simply by invoking the shared interest in protecting the space.

Elsewhere in the same political milieu, a phrase surfaces that points toward another dimension of this tension. Speaking about neighbors who had informed on activists during one of the mobilizations, someone said: "They were not neighbors, they were fascists." The phrase is interesting less as a political judgment than as an indication of how the category of neighbor is morally loaded in this community. Neighbor (γείτονας) here is not simply a spatial relation. It carries a normative content: a neighbor is someone who recognizes and participates in the shared life of the place, who orients toward common interests, who can be trusted with the intimacy of collective knowledge. Someone who informs on that community forfeits the category. They reveal themselves as something other than a neighbor regardless of their proximity.

This moral grammar is, as Herzfeld would recognize, entirely characteristic of how cultural intimacy works (Herzfeld, 2016, pp. 7-8, 14). The shared social world that makes the park function as a commons is also the world that defines, through its internal norms and its quiet exclusions, who belongs to it fully and who does not. The definition is not made by any formal authority. It is produced continuously through the social practice of the park's regular community, in the small recognitions and non-recognitions that accumulate over years of shared presence.

Where Roma presence fits within this grammar is the question this chapter has been approaching and will not yet resolve. What is already clear is that it sits at the edge of what the community's self-understanding can comfortably accommodate: present in the neighborhood, visible in the park, acknowledged in activist accounts of the area's diversity, but not fully incorporated into the "we" that mobilizes, feasts together, names its cats, and dances at birthday parties. Whether this partial incorporation is a transitional condition or a structural feature of how this particular commons operates is the question that subsequent chapters will need to hold open, without flinching from what it implies.

Chapter 5: The Park Under Threat

In Chapter 4, I described Akademia Platonos as a park already made through use: children's play, repeated routes, benches, shade, informal gatherings, animal care, and the small routines through which public space becomes livable. In this chapter, I turn to the moment when that lived value had to become organised defence. The proposed museum redevelopment did not enter empty land. It entered a park that people already used, remembered, argued over, and treated as part of ordinary neighbourhood life.

I follow how the threat was learned. At first, the language of renovation and upgrading sounded plausible. The park did need care: maintenance, more trees, protection from motorcycles, and practical improvements residents had demanded for years. The Initiative for the Struggle for Plato's Academy Park gradually reconstructed a different picture. Behind the language of greening, heritage, and openness, members identified tree removal, levelling, loss of paths and play areas, increased tourist circulation, and the reorganisation of a neighbourhood park into an object of archaeological display and future urban value.

I read this conflict through Lefebvre's distinction between conceived and lived space, and through Harvey's account of how common urban resources are drawn into circuits of value. I also follow the Initiative's work as situated knowledge: reading documents, explaining the plan to neighbours, pursuing legal action, delaying works, and keeping watch over the park. Scott's *metis* and de Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics help clarify the asymmetry between institutional planning and residents' practical defence.

The chapter begins with the longer legal and political setup through which the threat was prepared, then turns to how residents learned to recognise it. It then follows the official presentation of the plan and how that same plan appeared from inside the park, before examining the Initiative's counter-knowledge in action. It closes with the limit this defence opens: the park was defended as a commons for a heterogeneous public, while access to recognised public voice remained uneven.

5.1 The Long Setup

On 10 March 2025, during my second period of fieldwork in Athens, I interviewed two active members of the Initiative for the Struggle for Plato's Academy Park, whom I call here Antigoni and Marilena. Both had been involved in the struggle against the museum redevelopment and spoke from a position that combined neighbourhood memory, activist work, and close engagement with the planning documents. I had asked them how the threat to the park had taken shape. Their answer began further back than the 2021 announcement, when the redevelopment plans became publicly visible to many residents. It moved to a summer parliamentary session in 2002, and then forward again through earlier struggles over the park's edges.

What struck me in this part of the interview was how easily the conversation moved between law, memory, and practical knowledge. They used the chronology to make sense of the present threat. In Antigoni's account, the legal beginning lay in Greek Law 3057/2002, passed during the pre-Olympic period, when Athens was being prepared for 2004 and decisions about public space were moving quickly. She remembered the timing sharply: it passed in the summer, when "everything was closed." Marilena added that the law placed the museum "somewhere in the park," without defining exactly where. The vagueness allowed the museum to exist institutionally without yet confronting the neighbourhood with a precise loss of trees, paths, play areas, or open ground. The project could remain legally present and socially vague at the same time.

The years that followed carried their own struggles. Marilena described the park's recent history through earlier attempts to reorganise its edges. A residents' committee, she said, had fought "inside and outside Parliament" against plans for offices connected to the Bobolas/REDS–AKTOR development network on land that belonged to the social space of the park.⁴ Two years later, another struggle formed against a proposed shopping centre "higher up," at the edge between Kifissos and Akademia Platonos. In Marilena's account, these struggles made the park visible again as something residents could claim.

⁴ Giorgos Bobolas is associated with the ELLAKTOR/REDS–AKTOR construction and real-estate group; public reporting links REDS-owned property near the park to earlier plans for a high-standard office complex

Her voice sharpened when she moved through this sequence. The chronology was not neutral for her. It marked a change in how the neighbourhood related to the park. Before those mobilisations, she said, the space had been relatively closed and unknown. Some people knew it and came with their dogs, but it was also associated with drugs, stolen motorcycles, and neglect. The municipality's care appeared mainly through minor gestures that left the everyday condition of the park largely untouched. Marilena mentioned a floral clock installed by a previous mayor, a symbolic intervention that was soon destroyed. What changed through the earlier struggles was the residents' relation to the space. "The residents embraced the space again," she said. The park became more consciously held because it had already had to be defended.

After the residents defeated the offices and the shopping centre, "for a while, there was quiet," Marilena said. The phrase gives the later 2021 announcement its proper weight. The museum plan arrived in a neighbourhood with a memory of threat. Residents had already learned that development proposals around the park could appear as improvement while carrying the loss of common space. They had also learned that organised defence could work.

When Kostas Bakogiannis became mayor, the older legal designation became active again in a more concrete form. Marilena recalled that the Municipality of Athens and Lina Mendoni's Ministry of Culture suddenly produced a joint plan and a press release. A municipal decision then divided the archaeological area into two projects. At this point, the long legal vagueness of 2002 began to take material form. The museum was becoming a set of works, surfaces, trees, paths, archaeological justifications, and administrative decisions.

The current struggle began from this temporal asymmetry. For the municipality and the Ministry, the 2021 plan could be presented as a new upgrade. For Antigoni and Marilena, it belonged to a longer history in which the park's future had repeatedly been decided around the neighbourhood before residents had to make those decisions visible, contestable, and politically costly. The threat was sudden only from the position of those who had been excluded from its earlier preparation.

5.2 Learning the Threat

The 2021 announcement first reached residents through the language of improvement.

Antigoni described the state, the municipality, and the Ministry as offering only “penurious information” about the works, while speaking of the “upgrade” of the park and the surrounding area. The word did some work. It met an already existing desire for care. “Our first reaction was to be happy,” she told me. “We thought: yes, the park needs upgrading. It needs more trees planted, barriers to stop motor vehicles from crossing through the park, things need to be done.” She added immediately that this first positive response came “always with some reservation.” The need for care was shared terrain.

The problem emerged when the Initiative began to ask what kind of work the word “upgrade” was carrying. Antigoni described the shift in practical terms. They began to search for files that could “shed light on the case,” asking archaeologists, going to planning offices, and gathering documents from wherever they could find them. Her phrasing stayed close to the work itself: “we started searching,” “we started looking,” “we managed to see what was hidden behind the words.” The threat became visible through the labour of reading. Marilena gave this labour a longer political frame. The issue, for her, was what kind of redevelopment the area deserved, and for whom.



Figure 2 Photograph of the architectural model for the proposed New Archaeological Museum of Athens in Akademia Platonos, presenting the project as a green, low-rise intervention integrated into the surface of the park. Image credit: Tsolakis Architects.

“For fifteen years we have been struggling in this area for a real upgrading and redevelopment. They want a simple tourist, commercialised destination of three hours for tourists, not for the residents. We want and struggle for the park to grow, to reach the Kifissos river, to be unified with the archaeological site of Kolonos Hill, and to be a green, accessible,

free, open space for everyone, for all the people. This liveliness that you see around you, the people appropriating the space, does not fit their plans.”

The quotation compresses the Initiative’s counter-plan. Marilena defines real upgrading as extension, connection, accessibility, greenery, and popular use. The park should grow towards Kifissos, connect with Kolonos Hill, and remain open to the people who already use it. Her final sentence gives the conflict its ethnographic ground. The “liveliness” of the park was part of the value being defended, and also part of what the redevelopment plan could not easily absorb.

The Initiative’s work in this period became a form of local political education, though I use that term cautiously here. It began with files, maps, municipal decisions, archaeological claims, and conversations in the park. The task was to make the plan readable to people who had first encountered it as a promise of improvement. The word “upgrade” had to be brought back to the ground: to trees, paths, rents, children’s sport, traffic, concrete, and the loss of freely usable space. Work on Athenian urban movements has already treated public spaces as sites where freedom, democracy, and domination are actively contested (Kavoulakos, 2013, pp. 237-256). I use that literature here as a modest scaffold for what the interview material shows more concretely: the Initiative’s learning was also a practice of making public space arguable. This is where the defence of the park started to take shape. The Initiative had to contest the project before all of its consequences were material. It taught itself to read a language designed to sound benevolent, and then translated that language into consequences the neighbourhood could recognise. The threat was learned through that translation.

Because this thesis was written while the struggle was still unfolding, I also followed later public material produced by the Initiative. One later event sharpened what the March interview had already made visible. On 30 November 2025, while the residents’ appeal was still pending before the Council of State, the Initiative organised a public discussion in the park with Stavros Stavrides, architect and emeritus professor at the School of Architecture of the National Technical University of Athens. In the excerpt later circulated online, Stavrides described the park as a space of “huge supra-local significance,” a green lung and a “lung of sociability.” He also framed the Initiative’s work as part of a broader struggle over the meaning of the public: while those with economic and political power redefine public space from above, residents and movements also redefine it from below by trying to keep the fate of

such spaces in their own hands (Πρωτοβουλία Αγώνα Ακ. Πλάτωνος, 2026). I read the event as a later stage in the same process of collective learning. The Initiative was still gathering people in the park, still bringing in forms of expertise able to illuminate the plans, and still turning the proposed “upgrade” into a public question about common space, self-organisation, and the right to define what the park is for.

The next section turns to the official version of the project, because that was the language the Initiative had to read against.

5.3 The Plan Announced

The official version of the project became concrete in March 2023, when the Minister of Culture Lina Mendoni and the Mayor of Athens Kostas Bakogiannis presented the winning architectural design for the New Archaeological Museum of Athens at the Melina Cultural Centre. The joint press release described the project as “the first ‘green’ Museum of the country,” placed within “a park of the future” based on a new bioclimatic design. It promised “a pole of culture, greenery, and recreation” that would express the “enduring metropolitan role of Athens” (Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2023).

The design, led by architect Georgios Tsolakis, gave this language a visual and material form. The proposed building would cover 14,362 square metres and organise its interior around a sunken plaza. Its mass would be softened by green roofs, presented as a continuation of “the visual line of the Academy grove.” The project also included an open-air amphitheatre of 500 seats. In the same official language, the museum would carry “zero environmental footprint” and would sit within a redesigned park that joined culture, recreation, and environmental improvement.

Mendonis framed the site through a vocabulary of sacredness and public benefit. She described Akademia Platonos as “a grove, a sacred place,” now being transformed into a public space of education and recreation, with great environmental significance for Athens. Bakogiannis used a more municipal register. He called the park a “lung of the neighbourhood” and presented the redevelopment as a way to protect it through integration with the museum. “We do not want museums-fortresses,” he said. “We do not want closed-off museums. We want museums and interventions that are participatory, open.”

I treat this official presentation as part of the project itself. It organised the terms through which the intervention could be publicly understood: green, open, participatory, metropolitan, educational, environmentally responsible. The plan appeared as care for the park rather than as a claim on it. Its force lay partly in this ordinariness. “Upgrade” carried the promise of care; “green museum” carried environmental legitimacy; “participation” carried the appearance of consent. The language made the project available as common sense before its material consequences had been made legible (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 323-324). This is where Lefebvre’s distinction between conceived and lived space also becomes useful. The press release produced the park as a design object: a surface to be reorganised through architectural continuity, circulation, visibility, and future cultural value (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38-39).

The official presentation held together several promises that later became unstable in residents’ accounts. A museum could be “green”; a large building could preserve a grove by integrating with it; a redesigned archaeological field could be presented as an open public park; a project planned without meaningful neighbourhood consultation could still speak the language of participation. The Initiative’s work began on this terrain. It had to read against a vocabulary that sounded benevolent and translate that vocabulary into material consequences.

The following section returns to the park itself: the trees, paths, play areas, hollows, informal routes, and everyday uses that appeared with less force in the official presentation.

5.4 What the Plan Looked Like from Inside the Park

I encountered the park’s public life through fieldnotes, authorised event programmes, and the continuing political use of the park. On 1 May 2025, while I was not in Athens, Athens Urban Picnic took place in Plato’s Academy Park as part of This is Athens City Festival. The official listing presented it as a free May Day event with children’s activities, creative workshops, theatre, live music, and picnic use of the park (This Is Athens City Festival, 2025).

Photographs shared with me from the park gave that public description a more ordinary texture: children with painted faces, people sitting in the shade, food, play, and the park temporarily becoming an outdoor room. I return below to another form of gathering, the solidarity feast organised during the legal struggle. Here, the point is simpler: the park could hold ordinary public use and organised civic life without requiring people to become visitors to an institution.

When I returned to the park later in May and stood near Drakontos Street with a member of the Initiative, the plan became visible against this ordinary and political use. She showed me a diagram of the planned intervention. The area marked in brown did not look like an abstract project boundary once I was standing there. It cut into the part of the park where people moved between shade, play, paths, and open ground. What the official plan described through design language appeared, from that position, as a reduction of usable surface.

The same contrast had appeared in the March interview. Antigoni described the park through a series of uses that, in her view, any rough observation would reveal: children playing football, people cycling, kites, picnics, birthday parties, dancing, May Day gatherings, Pakistani men playing cricket, Albanian mothers eating sunflower seeds near the playground, teenagers, couples, dog walkers, and runners. She then made the point more directly: “with even a very rough observation,” one could imagine an upgrading plan that included the people who already used the park. Her criticism was phrased with disarming simplicity. The plan had failed to look.

The park’s uses also had depth in time. Antigoni, who had grown up next to the park and now raised her own children in the neighbourhood, described children playing on and around the ancient stones as a repeated scene across generations. Maria, an older resident, had told her that she had played there as a child; Antigoni had done the same; now her own children and their friends repeated it. Marilena condensed the point quietly: “There is a continuity.” The archaeological remains were part of how children learned the park before they became objects in a redesigned visual field.

The ground itself also mattered. Antigoni spoke about the small hills, hollows, uneven surfaces, and informal routes of the park. In an inhospitable urban landscape, she said, this relief mattered for the “human psyche.” It made the park feel different from public spaces where movement is planned from beginning to end. The value of Akademia Platonos lay partly in this incompleteness. It allowed different people to use it differently: families, older residents, migrants, children, runners, dog walkers, and groups who arrived with their own rhythms.

Marilena widened the account beyond human use. “It is not only people,” she said, “it is also the animals.” Antigoni mentioned wild birds, including threatened species, and referred to the

intervention of the ornithological association. Against this living landscape of trees, hollows, birds, vegetation, flora, and fauna, she placed the material vocabulary of the plan: marble and concrete. For these to be installed, she said, “all the green must leave and everything must be levelled. Complete clearing.”

Here the official term “unification” changes meaning. In the project’s language, the archaeological remains would be unified into a more coherent field. In Marilena’s account, unification meant the removal of paths, greenery, and ordinary access. She described the archaeological section as densely green and explained that the planned works would clear the area, erase existing paths, and reorganise the trenches so that “the tourist can easily consume the archaeological product as information.” The visitor would be able to take in the remains at a glance, together with a passage through the museum. The ground would become easier to read as heritage and harder to use as park.

The museum section carried its own loss. It would occupy the area associated with football, children’s groups, and everyday gathering. Marilena described the intervention practically as “17,000 square metres of concrete.” Antogni added, with irony, that the museum would be partly underground and covered by a green roof, as if these details were expected to absorb the objection. From inside the park, the objection remained simple. One section would be cleared for archaeological display. Another section of ordinary use would be absorbed by the museum.

By this point, I could see the difference between the official plan and the accounts I heard in the park. The press release treated Akademia Platonos as a surface to be made more legible through design: clearer circulation, unified archaeological visibility, architectural continuity, and future cultural value. Antogni and Marilena described a ground already legible to its users through routes, shade, children’s games, informal gatherings, birds, dogs, uneven surfaces, and memory. I use Lefebvre’s language of conceived and lived space here to name a difference that the material had already made visible (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38-39). The plan would make one form of legibility stronger and another weaker. It would make archaeology easier to display, the museum easier to circulate through, and the park easier to present as upgraded. It would also make ordinary use harder to sustain.

5.5 The Assembly as Counter-Knowledge

The Initiative took shape through ordinary means. Marilena remembered internet posts and posters. Antigoni added a more tactile detail: "with some papers," she said, "we were sitting in the park and talking." I heard this as more than a practical note. The papers were calls, leaflets, simple messages that could move from hand to hand and say, in direct language, that the park was at risk. Her addition pulled the account back to the ground: people sitting in the park, speaking to others, and trying to make the threat spread beyond those who already knew how to read it.

The Initiative grew out of assemblies held inside the park, older residents' networks, the earlier committee that had defended the area, and the Popular Assembly of Kolonos, Sepolia, and Akademia Platonos, which Marilena described as the more explicitly political collective rooted in Sepolia. Marilena described the group as including urban planners, archaeologists, journalists, and residents who had undertaken "quite a lot of self-education" in order to collect and study the material. I keep her phrasing because it prevents the account from becoming too polished. The knowledge came from expertise gathered, learned, and tested in relation to this plan.

The language of political education works here only when it stays close to the scene. Education here was not a formal programme. It was the repeated work of sitting in the park, reading documents, explaining what they meant, and learning how to turn technical language into a public argument. The Initiative's self-education was therefore also outward-facing. It aimed to make the plan understandable to neighbours who first encountered it as "upgrade."

Marilena's account of the Ministry of Culture shows how this counter-reading worked. She marked her reconstruction carefully: "I will tell you how I understood it through the research I have done with archaeologists who were pushed out." In that account, the archaeological site made Akademia Platonos different from other threatened public spaces because it brought the Ministry of Culture directly into the project. The minister, Marilena said, "exchanged her own plan, her own vision" for a museum in the area by certifying that archaeological excavations would take place there. That certification could justify the removal of trees. "For archaeological excavations to happen," she said, "the trees must be cut, the green must be destroyed." Her account kept archaeology in view while showing how archaeological necessity could become the administrative language for a broader redevelopment project.

Another example came from an absence in the plan. Marilena pointed to the lack of a transport study. This point stayed with me because it touched a form of knowledge I already carried in my body. This was the road I had crossed with my child. I knew the small tightening that comes with crossing streets in Athens: the quick calculation, the extra attention, the assumption that danger is part of movement and that one simply learns to manage it. Hearing Marilena speak about the absence of a pedestrian crossing made that ordinary anxiety analytical. The missing transport study pointed to the road that cut through the grove, the buses and cars passing through it, the memory of a student being hit, and the question of how a museum could be planned without beginning from the movements already taking place there.

The same crossing also shows why the Initiative's knowledge cannot be separated from the place that produced it. A planner could identify a missing study in a file. A resident could encounter the same absence while crossing the road, remembering the accident, watching children move between the two sides of the park, and asking where tourist buses would go. The assembly's counter-knowledge worked because it moved between these registers. It read the documents and tested them against walking, waiting, crossing, playing, and living near the park.

The Initiative's knowledge also had a history of access behind it. Antigoni recalled the Covid period, when the government closed parks. For a week, she said, people walked around the outside of Akademia Platonos. Then "we broke the doors and went in." She described the episode as a recovery of use: "we conquered the park again." After a complaint was filed, the park was reopened; if the gates were closed again, residents said, they would break them again. I read this as part of the practical grammar of attachment that preceded the museum struggle. The park had already been treated as a common space whose closure required an answer.

These practices prepared what I later describe as *methexis*: a participatory attachment to the park that exceeded formal membership while still becoming politically consequential. Someone could take a leaflet, join a discussion, remember an earlier struggle, cross the road with a child, attend an assembly, help with legal costs, or explain the plan to a neighbour. The Initiative gathered such acts into a more organised form without fully absorbing them into organisation.

The assembly's counter-knowledge was therefore a practice of re-attachment. It took the official vocabulary — upgrade, greening, bioclimatic design, archaeological continuity, future cultural value — and attached it back to what that vocabulary left uncoun­ted: the tree that gives shade in August, the route a child takes between the two sides of the park, the road a body crosses under pressure, the transport study that was never commissioned, the alternative site that was never seriously considered. People read contracts and missing documents, but they read them as people who knew where children crossed, where shade held longest, where the road interrupted the grove, and where earlier attempts at development had been stopped. The Initiative made the plan legible by joining these forms of knowledge. Its work turned a language of "upgrade" into a set of questions: who benefits, what is removed, what remains accessible, who was asked, and what kind of park the project assumes.

Once the plan became legible in this way, it could be contested legally, publicly, and materially. The following section turns to those forms of defence.

5.6 Counter-Knowledge in Action

The Initiative's counter-knowledge entered the legal field in February 2024, when residents and the local environmental association contested the redevelopment before the Council of State, the Greek Symvoulío tis Epikrateias (ΣτΕ). Public reporting later described the appeals as filed by twenty-two residents and supported by local organisations, including the committee defending the park, as well as environmental, planning, and architectural bodies (Lialios, 2024). The case addressed the tree-cutting, the wider redevelopment works, and the legality of turning part of the archaeological grove into the site of the new museum. The Council of State issued a temporary order that suspended works in the grove until the case could be examined. The Initiative announced this as a first victory and linked it directly to continued support for the legal struggle (Akademia Platonos, 2024).

The injunction altered the rhythm of the struggle. Works paused, while the project remained institutionally alive. Vigilance became part of the defence. Members watched for the first signs through which the plan might begin to touch the ground: surveyors, markings, fencing, machinery, workers arriving to prepare the site. A mark on the ground could become a fence. A fence could become exclusion. A machine could turn delay into urgency.

Marilena and Antigoni described such moments without drama. When surveyors came to mark positions for the works, the markers disappeared. When fencing was installed, it did not remain in place. When machinery arrived, residents gathered. The brevity of these accounts keeps the action close to practice. People who knew the park also knew when something unfamiliar was beginning to happen to it. They could notice, arrive, interrupt, and delay before the intervention settled into place.

These interruptions drew on the knowledge described in the previous section. It depended on documents, but also on the ground: where works would start, where markings appeared, who usually moved through the park, and when something looked out of rhythm. Scott's term *metis* names this situated intelligence (Scott, 1998, pp. 317, 323-324). Here, practical knowledge joined legal action, document reading, collective vigilance, and small material interruptions. The aim was to keep the project from moving smoothly from plan to fact.

The asymmetry of the struggle was built into the kinds of action available to each side. The municipality and the Ministry had contracts, legal categories, architectural plans, administrative timing, and the authority to describe the project as redevelopment. Residents had presence, memory, local knowledge, and the ability to use moments before they closed. De Certeau's distinction between strategy and tactic keeps that asymmetry visible: strategy belongs to actors who command an authorised place from which space and time can be organised; tactics operate inside terrain organised by others, using openings, delays, and practical improvisation (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 35-37). In *Akademia Platonos*, tactics were the practical edge of counter-knowledge.

Explanation also became action. Antigoni described informational rounds in the neighbourhood, where members spoke to parents, children, and residents who had first accepted the language of upgrading. She would tell them, "You know, we will lose the park." Some answered that the area needed improvement, that upgrading sounded good. She then brought the conversation back to rent: "But you live in rented accommodation, do you not?" If they answered yes, she pointed to what upgrading could mean for them: higher rents, rising property values, and the possible loss of the very neighbourhood improvement they imagined themselves receiving. The conversation brought redevelopment down to the cost of staying.

The solidarity feast belonged to the practical infrastructure of defence. A court case requires money, lawyers, time, communication, and people willing to make the cost of defence collective. In April 2024, before the Council of State hearing, EfSyn reported on an all-day solidarity feast in the park for financial support, information, and public awareness around the struggle to save the archaeological grove (EfSyn, 2024). In the organisers' framing, the hearing would decide whether the redevelopment of a grove in central Athens could include the cutting of hundreds of trees and the construction of a museum inside it. Food, music, and gathering sustained the legal struggle.

The cost of defence linked Akademia Platonos to other Athenian public-space struggles. In May 2025, the Akademia Platonos site republished the case of "Epimenoume Pediton tou Areos," where residents defending another park faced a damages claim of 115,500 euros after asking the administration to implement a Council of State decision. The post described such lawsuits as SLAPPs: strategic lawsuits against public participation, aimed at weakening and discouraging those who struggle (Akademia Platonos, 2025). Akademia Platonos was not the target of that lawsuit. The relevance lay in the shared terrain. Legal pressure, financial burden, delay, and exhaustion had become recognisable parts of defending public space in Athens.

The Initiative also pressed the question of alternatives. The refusal to seriously consider the nearby abandoned Rets factory as an alternative site for the museum clarified the priorities of the plan. The park itself was being treated as the valuable object: a green, historic, centrally placed landscape capable of heritage-led appreciation. The Initiative's counterproposal showed what the official plan had not asked: why should a functioning public park lose trees and open ground when an abandoned industrial building nearby could host the museum without erasing the existing landscape of use? Here the struggle concerned the authority to define what the park already was and who that definition served (Harvey, 2004, pp. 64-65, 73-75).

Delay became filled time. It held the park open while residents raised money, informed neighbours, built alliances, watched the ground, and kept the plan from becoming irreversible. Ahmann's work on political time sharpens the point because the case shows delay being actively worked: uncertainty was held open and converted into pressure for response and accountability (Ahmann, 2024, pp. 34, 225-227). In Akademia Platonos, delay was organised, filled, and made politically costly.

The defence of the park worked through this friction. The court case slowed the works. The injunction suspended tree-cutting. Markers and fences failed to settle quietly into the ground. Neighbours were asked to connect "upgrade" with rent, traffic, trees, and access. Fundraising made the cost of the case collective. Solidarity placed the park inside a wider map of Athenian struggles.

From above, the project spoke through upgrade, greening, rationalisation, heritage, sustainability, culture, and future value. From below, the test was material: heat, distance, access, shade, traffic, routes, bodies, care, and risk. These were not competing opinions about the same plan. They were different forms of knowledge about what the park already was and who it already served. Maintenance, access, proximity, care, and shade are not technical details of urban planning. They are the substance of public life, and the struggle over Akademia Platonos was, in the end, a struggle over who has the authority to say what that substance is worth.

This chapter stops at the ground that produced the struggle. The Initiative made visible the distance between an abstract promise and its lived consequences. A plan could be called an upgrade; it still had to be tested against shade, routes, trees, children's play, animal care, traffic, rent, memory, and the possibility of remaining in the neighbourhood. Counter-knowledge was the work of bringing the words back to the ground.

That is also where the next problem begins. The Initiative defended the park as a space for everyone who uses it. Yet the right to appear inside that defence, to speak and be heard as someone who belongs to the park, was not equally available. Chapter 6 stays with that limit through Roma park users.

Chapter 6: The Limits of the Commons

6.1 The Pressure Point

As Chapter 4 showed, a commons is produced through practice: through the daily acts of use, maintenance, and social presence that make a space feel collectively held. As Chapter 5 showed, it is also produced through defence: through the assemblies, the legal challenges, the disappeared survey markers, and the solidarity events that have kept Akademia Platonos open against the institutional weight of the redevelopment plan. But the commons produced through these practices is not coextensive with the social world of the park itself. It has a boundary, and that boundary does not coincide with the park's fence.

The boundary becomes clearest in the relation between Roma park users as everyday producers of the park and the organised community that defends it. Roma families are not occasional or marginal participants in the life of Akademia Platonos. During fieldwork across all three periods between December 2024 and August 2025, Roma adults and children were there with regularity and purpose: gathering for celebrations, bringing children to the play area, sitting in groups under the trees, and using the park in ways that were durably patterned. Their spatial practice was, in Lefebvre's terms, part of the park's lived space (*l'espace vécu*): the space of embodied, repetitive inhabitation through which social meaning accumulates independently of what any plan or designation says the space should be (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38-39). Roma families who use the park know it with the particular authority that daily practice confers. They know where the ground floods in winter, which shade holds longest in August, which corners carry which social meanings. This is spatial knowledge produced through use, and it is exactly what Lefebvre means by the production of space.

The Initiative's defence does not single out Roma park users as a separate category or divide the park's population into more and less legitimate publics. Its political claim is broader: the park belongs to the people who use it, care for it, pass through it, rest in it, gather in it, and depend on it as part of everyday life. In this sense, Roma users are included within the defence's claim, as part of the wider social world the park constitutes, producers of the same lived space the defence claims to protect. And yet this inclusion remains, in practice, uneven. Roma park users help produce the park in everyday spatial practice, but I did not encounter them in the assemblies where the defence of that park was organised and articulated. This gap is what I want to examine here.

I interviewed Antigoni and Marilena, both active members of the Initiative, during the second period of my fieldwork. By then I had observed Roma families and individuals using both the park and the wider area around it, and I had begun to notice a recurring pattern in conversations with other users and residents: a specific attribution of disorder to Roma families who use the park. This pattern struck me for two reasons. The first was that I had not introduced it myself. In informal conversations, I had not asked about Roma park users, nor had I said anything that would obviously direct the conversation there. Yet it often went there. Looking back, I do not think this was a fully conscious methodological choice at first. It was more likely an intuitive hesitation, perhaps an ethical one, about directing conversation toward a population already subject to scrutiny. As the pattern became clearer, however, that hesitation became deliberate. I decided not to raise the topic of Roma park users unless my interlocutors did so themselves.

The second reason was that the claims I was hearing did not correspond to anything I could verify from my own observation. I had not seen systematic damage or accumulation of waste that would have allowed me to attribute it to any particular group of park users. What interested me, therefore, was not whether these attributions were factually accurate. It was how readily they circulated, and how reliably structural neglect became attached to a racialised population. For this reason, when I later interviewed Antigoni and Marilena, I had decided not to use the term Roma unless they brought it into the conversation themselves. I was not trying to catch the Initiative in contradiction. I wanted to understand how Roma park users appeared, if at all, within the Initiative's own language of the park's social world.

Roma park users were mentioned twice. The first reference came in passing, as Antigoni listed different people who use the park: migrants, long-established residents of Kolonos and Sepolia, second-generation migrants, refugees, and Roma. There was no special emphasis and no visible distancing. The second reference was more analytically revealing. It came when Antigoni spoke about the removal of the pull-up bar. Raising her eyebrows, she shifted into an ironic register and voiced what she understood as the Ministry's unspoken reasoning: as if one could not have 'the Greek worker, the migrant, or the Roma' doing pull-ups in front of the future Archaeological Museum of Athens. She was not endorsing that logic. She was exposing it. In her ironic performance, what Mary Douglas calls the classificatory system of improper placement became visible: certain bodies, movements, and spatial arrangements were rendered incompatible with the conceived space of the future museum before any

explicit argument had to be made (Douglas, 1966, p. 37). Some uses of the park could be translated into culture, improvement, and public value. Others could appear only as misuse or disorder, as matter out of place.

Herzfeld sharpens why this classificatory move is so readily available in the Greek case. In his discussion of *ethnos*, he shows how Greek public discourse can conflate ethnicity and nation, and how groups that cannot be securely placed within that symbolic order may come to signify symbolic pollution, “matter out of place,” in Douglas’s sense. He names “Gypsies” in this context as one of the figures that defy stable definition within the national classificatory order (Herzfeld, 2016, pp. 80-81, 110-112). This does not explain Roma park users’ position by nationalism alone. It identifies a prior classificatory pressure that the park materialises: Roma use can be read as disorder before any specific act has been examined. Bauman’s formulation gives this structure its most severe form: “Man is before he acts; nothing he does may change what he is. This is, roughly, the philosophical essence of racism” (Bauman, 1989, p. 60). In the park, this mechanism appears in a smaller, every day, and less programmatic form: action is read through a prior classification of being.

6.2 The Slide Toward Blame

The conversation with Thetis and her bench group, introduced in Chapter 4, produced one of the fieldwork’s sharpest illustrations of how structural abandonment gets redistributed as population blame. Thetis described herself as born and raised in the neighbourhood. She had played on the ancient ruins as a child and watched the park change across five decades. Her daily presence on the bench, with her friends, their folding chairs and watermelon and mosquito repellent, was one of the park’s most stable social facts. Continuity ran through the ground and, to Thetis, that continuity also meant legitimacy.

She spoke about the park’s condition with visible frustration: broken infrastructure, missing bins, absent signage, no guards. ‘If only this city took care of it a little,’ she said, ‘a bit of watering, one guard.’ The conditional carried political weight. The park could be what it should be, if the institutions responsible for it acted. The slide came without a grammatical bridge and it came from inside a list of institutional failures, not as a separate accusation:

'First of all, there are no signs here. What are we even talking about? They put them in, and they broke them, they wrecked them. The Roma came here, pulled out the pipes, everything's been wrecked. Bins? There are two or three in the whole park. No bins, nothing.'

Roma people entered the account as «the other» between missing signage and missing bins: one more element in a sequence of things the state had failed to maintain. The infrastructure problem and the racialised attribution arrived in the same breath, indistinguishable in register and the shift of the blame slid unremarkable.

And Thetis continued *'Here the Roma come day after day and throw parties here, have birthdays. They respect nothing, neither the space nor the people'* until her daughter Evi cut through: *'Well, it's not bad for me that people celebrate their joys.'*

Surprised for this unexpected turn, the mother swiftly replied: 'It indeed is and I'll tell you why: Because they leave without picking up their rubbish. Because the cleaning woman was here in the morning and caught my glimpse exhaling: «I've been in this corner for an hour and a half cleaning up from last night's party.» Do you get it now?

'I'll accept that.' Evi conceded. The objection had narrowed from disrespect, to rubbish, to one worker's hour and a half. But the framing survived the narrowing. Evi does not dispute that Roma park users constitute a category distinct from the bench women. She disputes whether celebration is itself an offence. The grammar of attribution survives the challenge because the challenge is internal to it.

The municipal cleaner is cited as evidence and acknowledged as a worker. She appears with a voice, a body, and an account. Roma families who held the birthday celebration appear as an unnamed collective defined by the trace they are said to leave. Herzfeld's concept of cultural intimacy names what is happening here: the shared social knowledge a community holds about itself and circulates when the external gaze is absent, including the conventions through which blame is distributed without requiring verification (Herzfeld, 2016, pp. 3, 8). What I want to observe is the grammar of that distribution. The bins are absent; the Roma removed them. The space is neglected; Roma park users disrespect it. The infrastructure problem, which is a failure of institutional care, arrives already attached to racialised bodies. The grammar produces the attribution; the attribution is then taken as evidence of what required

no demonstration. However, when the conversation turned toward the museum plan, Thetis said: 'Neither green nor blue museum. The only green I want is the park for its people.'

In Ahmann's work on the Curtis Bay community in Baltimore, residents facing a proposed waste incinerator renamed 'the Fairfield Renewable Energy Project' developed what she calls moral punctuation: the capacity to cut through euphemistic institutional language and re-name things for what they are, compressing protracted bureaucratic processes into an immediate ethical demand (Ahmann, 2024, pp. 34, 225-227). Thetis performs this same operation, vernacularly and without organisational scaffolding, in a single sentence. The Ministry's 'first green museum of the country' and Bakogiannis's 'lung of the neighbourhood' dissolve on contact with the plain claim: the only green she wants is the park itself, for the people who use it. She does not need the theoretical vocabulary of abstract space to identify what is being done. She identifies it through the word the institutions have claimed and refuses to cede it, yet she does so at the same time she's subjecting a significant portion of the people she stands for to scapegoating and scrutiny, revealing to me the analytical complexity of this moment.

Thetis thus moves, within the same conversation, between two registers. She performs the slide from structural neglect to Roma blame, distributing the municipality's failure onto racialised bodies. Simultaneously, she exercises a sharp vernacular intelligence, cutting through the euphemisms of the state to defend the lived commons. Thetis does not experience these two registers as contradictory. She holds them simultaneously, without noticing the seam: the green museum is a lie, and Roma park users are the problem with the park. Through a Gramscian lens, this is the exact operation of spatial common sense: a contradictory, lived ideology where acute political insight into institutional power coexists seamlessly with the absorption of hegemonic stigma (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 323-324). The defence of the commons and the scapegoating of a marginalised population are held together in a single breath, or rather the sigh with which she exhaled closing the argument: 'Alas! ... Sometimes I sit here alone and I read about what happened in 435 or 400 with Plato, with the rivers here, with the olive groves, and I imagine all of it and I say: look what a paradise this really was, look what a historical place this is, and today all these things are happening.'

Here Herzfeld's structural nostalgia operates alongside cultural intimacy. Thetis mobilises the idealised, monumental past of the Academy, which is also the conceived space of the state's heritage management, to frame the present as degraded (Herzfeld, 2016, pp. 142-143). In

Lefebvre's terms, she draws on representations of space, the official, historical, planned-for image of the park, to evaluate its lived space (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38-39). The sense of loss is real and felt. But it relies on a narrative in which the historical Academy stands as a pure origin, and the present park appears as its degraded remainder. That framing has consequences for which forms of contemporary park life appear as continuity and which appear as corruption.

6.3 Legitimate Use and Improper Inhabitation

The birthday party for Christina, described in Chapter 4, returns here because it makes visible a mechanism the Thetis conversation names but does not display. The older Greek man's objection to the celebration was not to noise, or to the use of public space for a private occasion. It was precisely located. 'Here, in Plato's Academy,' he said, 'you'll have your birthdays, you'll clap your hands, you'll dance your little belly dances.' The heritage names were the argument. They designated the ground as carrying a moral weight that certain bodies and certain forms of celebration violated simply by being there.

The Roma host turned the heritage vocabulary on itself with a single line, appropriating the name of the place as a reason to stay rather than a reason to leave. Scott's *metis* names the move (Scott, 1998, pp. 317, 323-324), and so does de Certeau's account of the tactic: the art of the weak operates precisely by working within the territory of the powerful, using their words, their references, their symbolic ground, but to ends of one's own (de Certeau, 1984, p. 37).

Heritage, in this scene, is not available to both parties equally. The older man invokes it as a strategy: a claim made from a position of authorised standing, using a vocabulary that already belongs to the state's management of the site. The Roma host can only work within that vocabulary tactically, folding it back on itself. Heritage here functions as what de Certeau would call a strategy of the proper: it belongs to those who command a place from which to speak, and it works by setting the terms within which others must negotiate (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 35-36). The Initiative, too, generates counter-knowledge and everyday practice, but it does not generate heritage. Heritage is what the state produces by selecting and fossilising certain past practices into an authorised image of the site. That image then becomes the

ground from which particular uses can be disciplined, not through explicit argument, but through the weight of what the place is said to already be.

The contrast this scene produces is the same contrast that runs through Thetis's conversation and through the everyday social life of the park more broadly. The bench women and the Roma family both engage in everyday spatial tactics, temporarily extending domestic and social life into a public space whose official meaning is shaped by heritage. Both groups bring the material requirements of social reproduction into a space officially marked as monumental

The physical practices are structurally comparable. The social readings of them, however, are not. The bench women's domestic extension is absorbed into the park's lived space as familiar sociability. No one photographs it. No one names it as a problem. The Roma family's celebration, by contrast, is interrupted by the older man's invocation of Plato's Academy and classified as a spatial violation. This asymmetry reveals the core conflict over the production of space. The disorder does not reside in the birthday cake, the folding chair, the watermelon, or the laundry on the fence. It resides in the classificatory system that decides whose domestic extension counts as legitimate inhabitation and whose becomes improper dirt (Douglas, 1966, p. 37).

6.4 Thresholds of the Commons

Stavrides describes the threshold as a zone of regulated passage: a spatial mechanism that allows differentiated access to shared space without requiring absolute closure (Stavrides, 2016, pp. 18-19). The park's physical threshold is open. There is no gate, no ticket, no admission condition. Roma families cross it daily. What they have not crossed, in the grammar traced above, is the social threshold of the defending community: the point at which use is recognised as belonging, and belonging as giving a stake in the space's future.

To be on the recognised side of that social threshold is to be someone whose presence in the park is absorbed into the background of ordinary use: noticed in the way familiar things are noticed, greeted, returned to, incorporated into the park's social grammar without requiring special attention or explanation. To be on the other side is to be present in the park without being part of its social world in this fuller sense: tolerated in the sense that no one formally prevents the presence, but not recognised in the way that makes presence into belonging.

Roma park users occupy this threshold position. The distinction that matters is not spatial access, which is open, but social recognition, which is not equally distributed.

I want to be precise about what I mean by social recognition here, because recognition is not only a matter of being seen. In the park, recognition is built through repeated familiarity: knowing where people sit, which paths they take, which cats have names, which corners flood in winter, who returns at the same hour, and who is known in return. Roma users also know the park in these meaningful ways. They know where shade holds, where a celebration can take place, how to receive an outsider who arrives awkwardly with a cake, and how to answer an insult without surrendering dignity.

What I saw at Christina's birthday was not only use of public space. It was hospitality, spatial knowledge, and resistance carried out with confidence on the ground of the park itself. I arrived as an obvious outsider, awkwardly holding a cake and trying to manage my own uncertainty about whether I could enter the situation at all. I was received without hesitation. Yet what stayed with me was larger than hospitality. The celebration had its own order, its own authority, and its own practical knowledge of the ground. When someone tried to patronise that knowledge by turning it into shame, the woman who answered met the attempt directly. She stood with her head high, with the bodily courage of someone who knew she had every reason to remain. She held the ground with humour, calmness, and force. She refused the shame being offered, turned the moment into a claim to stay, and kept the celebration open.

This moment became a turning point in my fieldwork. It changed how I understood what I had earlier read as Roma absence from the organised commons of the park. Until then, I had recognised defence most easily when it appeared through organised forms: assemblies, legal appeals, public statements, collective campaigns. This scene forced me to see another form of struggle. The woman did not appear as a formal activist, but she defended space with the means available in that moment. She stayed, answered, laughed, and continued the birthday. She did not surrender her bodily authority, and she did not surrender her claim to the ground. Her resistance was practical, immediate, and dignified: the refusal to become apologetic, the refusal to withdraw, and the refusal to let someone else decide what kind of presence could belong there. Through these conditions, her commoning held.

Marilena and Antigoni described the neighbourhood's composition with care: Roma families, Albanian migrants, long-established residents, recently arrived migrants, all using the park. Antigoni named Roma park users as part of what the museum would displace. She understood the Ministry's classificatory logic well enough to mimic it and expose it. And yet, across three periods of fieldwork, I did not encounter Roma families in the assemblies where the defence was organised, in the legal processes it produced, or in the communicative networks through which the park's political community reproduced itself. Whether this reflects the form of the assembly itself, the structural conditions of Roma life in Kolonos, or the operation of the social threshold traced above, I cannot fully determine. What I can say is that the absence was consistent.

The structural conditions that shape this absence are not incidental to the threshold. In Greece, the semiotic devaluation of Roma people carries material consequences: state surveillance, administrative exposure, housing insecurity, and police violence, including fatal shootings of Roma youths in routine encounters (Amnesty International, 2024; Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, 2025; European Roma Rights Centre, 2024; Racist Violence Recording Network, 2024). Greek Roma legal voices articulate the same pattern from within the field of litigation and rights advocacy. In a 2025 discussion of the Nikos Sampanis⁵ case, Alexandra Karagianni frames police violence against Roma as a recurring and racialised problem and connects the intensity of force to the recognition of Roma identity (Kampagiannis, 2025, pp. 3:20-4:28, 7:44-9:17). She also links the police response to stereotypes about Roma and to the material conditions of settlement deprivation (Kampagiannis, 2025, pp. 10:37-11:01, 20:34-22:40). This is where the question of intersectionality became unavoidable to me (Crenshaw, 1989). The birthday scene made the problem concrete before it became theoretical. I had seen a person defend her place in the park with courage, wit, and bodily certainty. I had also seen how easily her right to occupy that place, and to be visible there, could be challenged through harassment. From there, the absence from assemblies could no longer be read through one line of explanation. Ethnicity, poverty, housing insecurity, policing, time, distrust, public exposure, family obligations, and the fatigue of being repeatedly placed under suspicion meet before anyone decides whether to

⁵ Nikos Sampanis was a Roma man killed by police in Greece; the case became a reference point in public debate on racialised police violence against Roma. I cite Kampagiannis (2025) here as a public legal-political discussion, and the timestamps refer specifically to Alexandra Karagianni's account of the case and its wider racialised context.

enter a public political space. Going to an assembly, signing a legal appeal, speaking to a journalist, or appearing in a public campaign requires more than agreement with the cause. It requires time, security, networks, confidence in recognised public registers, and some expectation that visibility will not return as harm. These conditions are unevenly distributed.

Avoiding hyper-visibility is, under these conditions, a rational tactic of survival. Absence from an assembly can therefore indicate a calculation of risk and distrust rather than indifference to the park. For some park users, the everyday defence of space may take place elsewhere: in routes, timings, forms of staying, ways of answering, and decisions about when public visibility is worth the cost. These tactics are also part of the practical production of space. They show how people keep using, knowing, and defending a park even when recognised public defence remains a risky or uninviting terrain.

This also matters for how the Initiative's limits should be read. A movement can articulate anti-racist politics and act on them consistently and the Initiative's record shows it does while still operating inside a society where recognition is distributed through older and deeper classifications. The bench conversation, the birthday interruption, and the casual attribution of dirt to Roma bodies cannot be resolved through an inclusive slogan. They belong to the social field in which the Initiative works, not to a failure of its political commitments. The commons the Initiative defends is shaped by the same social processes that shape the commons itself, including the moral grammars of recognition and exclusion that Chapter 4 identified in the park's everyday social life. The defence is called to contest those, even when its political language reaches beyond them.

Friction is therefore names the visible clash between residents and institutions over the museum plan and the pressures that run inside the commons: between use and recognition, solidarity and structural inequality, open access and unequal safety. The commons becomes ethically legible at the intersection between helping produce a space through daily survival and being recognised as one of its legitimate producers. The Initiative works within this dangerous crossing, trying to keep the passage open and contest the harms that threaten park as a common space. Intersectionality clarifies why the labour of commoning is never carried on equal terms.

6.5 The Initiative's Position

In September 2022, three years before my fieldwork began, the Popular Assembly of Kolonos, Sepolia, and Akademia Platonos was among the signatories of a solidarity statement demanding an end to the forced eviction of refugees from the Eleonas camp. The statement opposed the simultaneous termination of the ESTIA housing programme (the state-funded emergency housing scheme for asylum seekers) and named Bakogiannis's strategy directly: the aim, it read, was to gentrify the area and displace all the poor residents of Eleonas and Votanikos, 'the ragpickers with their street markets, the junk dealers, the transport workers, and the Roma' (Akademia Platonos, 2022). It named the death of Vares Ali Mohammed, a Roma man who had collected scrap metal with a cart to support his family and died in the camp, and demanded institutional accountability. The Initiative's solidarity with Roma communities in the wider neighbourhood is not rhetorical and not incidental. It is part of a sustained political position.

The older man who interrupted Christina's birthday celebration was not an Initiative member. Thetis, whose conversation illustrated the slide from structural neglect to Roma blame, has no connection to the organised defence. The internal social grammar of the neighbourhood that this chapter has traced, operates at a level the Initiative's political language actively reaches across and consistently contests. The solidarity statement, the mimicry of the Ministry's body-policing logic, the defence's insistence on a park for everyone who uses it: these are all interventions into the grammar of recognition that the chapter has described. They do not dissolve that grammar, but they work against it in the public register.

What the analysis does reveal is something structural about the relationship between political language and social recognition. A community organisation can articulate a politics of inclusion, hold to it consistently in its public statements, and act on it in its solidarity practices. It cannot, through those actions alone, reorganise the social grammar through which recognition is distributed at the level of the bench conversation, the birthday interruption, and the everyday attribution of disorder to particular bodies. The commons the Initiative defends is the commons as it currently exists, including the distributions of recognition that constitute it and the thresholds that mark its social boundary. Defending the commons preserves what exists. The question of transforming the grammar of recognition that produces its limits is a different and harder political question, and one the defence has not resolved, because no

organisation operating at the scale and through the forms available to the Initiative could resolve it through declaration alone.

6.6 Toward Chapter 7

What I have traced above is a set of social operations through which the commons at Akademia Platonos draws its own boundary. Roma park users produce the park's lived space through daily practice. They are included in the defence's ethical language and absent from its organised social world. Structural neglect is redistributed, through the grammar of cultural intimacy, onto racialised bodies. Domestic extension into public space is read as belonging or disorder depending on whose bodies perform it and in what classificatory relationship those bodies already stand to the space's dominant social grammar. While the park's spatial threshold is open, its social threshold is not equally crossable. They are the structural conditions of this particular commons, produced through the same social practices that produce its warmth, its practical solidarity, and its genuine political intelligence.

The same operations that constitute this internal grammar do not stay internal. The everyday judgements described above, which practices count as care and which as disorder, which bodies belong and which impose, are precisely what a camera and a broadcast infrastructure can lift from the neighbourhood and project at national scale, hardened into image and stripped of the complexity that fieldwork can hold. Thetis's sharp refusal of the green museum and her slide toward Roma blame exist in the same conversation; television can carry only one of those registers into the public sphere. The birthday party that Evi defended and the older man condemned becomes, in a broadcast frame, evidence for a verdict already prepared. And the laundry that opened this thesis, which is in the park for the same reason the bench women's chairs are there, which is that people bring the material requirements of their daily lives into the public space that is available to them, becomes, in a single media event, the image through which millions of people encountered Akademia Platonos.

Chapter 7 follows that transformation: from the neighbourhood's internal grammar to the image, and from the image to the political consequences that attend it. The problem of the image and the image of the problem, held in reserve since the prologue, returns there as the analytical centre of what remains.

Chapter 7: Plato's Laundry and the Image of the Problem

7.1 The Broadcast Segment

This chapter begins with a televised segment aired on Live You on 26 June 2025 (Live You, 2025). The segment was filmed partly in the studio and partly from the park of Akademia Platonos. The studio discussion included two presenters. In the field, a reporter stood in the park with Giorgos Apostolopoulos, a municipal councillor associated with the Athina Psila faction⁶. I identify the speakers below mainly by role, because the analysis concerns the public sequence of representation over the personal biographies of the journalists. The municipal speaker is identified by institutional position because his words carry the authority of local-government positioning.

The broadcast reached a public already shaped by a specific media landscape. Television remains one of the main routes through which public problems are staged in Greece: in the 2023 Eurobarometer, 65 percent of respondents in Greece named television among the media they had used to access news in the previous week (European Parliament, 2023). Within this media environment, Roma people are systematically represented in mainstream Greek news as potential dangers to public peace, while migrants and refugees are cast as threats in ways that diverge sharply from the reception of wealthy newcomers (Kostopoulos, 2024; Poulakidakos, 2024). European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) place these framings within a broader field of public discourse where Roma, refugees, and asylum seekers remain recurrent targets of securitising language (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2022; Racist Violence Recording Network, 2024; Racist Violence Recording Network, 2025). The segment did not produce this field. It found it already in place and gave it a specific urban scene.

The excerpt below is translated and lightly edited from the Greek broadcast. I have kept the order of the exchange and the key terms through which the discussion moved from the image of laundry to questions of use, presence, and intervention. Minor repetitions and fillers have been removed for readability.

⁶ municipal councillor of Bakogiannis' faction "Athens High"

Female studio presenter: You can imagine. We have seen various things happening in archaeological sites, but clothes being hung out, proper rugs, sheets and so on, as we see in this image from Plato's Academy, I had not imagined that. At least I had not, to be honest. The field reporter is there with Giorgos Apostolopoulos. I do not know whether the hanging laundry has been taken down. Lefteris?

Field reporter: They have been taken down. 'Plato's Academy as a wash-house': an archaeological site, and not only a 'wash-house.' Earlier, you were talking about a wedding, and from what Giorgos Apostolopoulos told me, wedding receptions also take place here, apart from the 'wash-house.'

Municipal councillor: Yes, these 'thrown-together' wedding receptions, of course, which include shanties, makeshift bedding, and various other 'accessories.'

Female studio presenter: Sorry, inside Plato's Academy? Hold on a second, because you are saying this as if it were something normal. Inside the archaeological site, in Plato's Academy, weddings are organised by Roma people? Revelries? So this is what the place is now, a 'reception venue,' shall we say?

Municipal councillor: And this is not a new phenomenon either. I want to be fair. It has been happening for at least the last ten or fifteen years. The police intervene at certain moments. At other times, you know, we have the familiar weakness. The point, however, is that the phenomenon continues, and at the same time we also have vandalism of various municipal infrastructures, from the greenery and the piping to whatever else you can imagine. And this is a phenomenon that exists in the whole wider area, both Kolonos and Sepolia.

Female studio presenter: Giorgos, do they live nearby? Is there, that is, an informal encampment?

Municipal councillor: There is not exactly an informal encampment. These people are passing through, because there are also Roma people who live in the area and who are very serious

people. Nevertheless, these groups move around and spread, usually as far as Kato Patissia, towards the Thymarakia area, as we call it, where we also have similar phenomena.⁷

Male studio presenter: We have many mobile Roma, either from Romania or from Bulgaria. And these Roma are different from our own Roma here, how can I put it now.

Female studio presenter: In many cases Giorgos is right, but perhaps these people do not even know the value of this place. The question is what we do from our side. So, Giorgos, who takes responsibility here? The Municipality of Athens or the Ministry of Culture?

Municipal councillor: I think that, first of all, the competent police authority should intervene. When they are there, even in a polite way, they should discourage them from coming and remove them, again in a polite way.

Male studio presenter: I will exaggerate a little now: if that is the case, let us also go up to the Acropolis and hold a wedding there. I can give you a solution: call the so-called 'mediators.' These are mediators who themselves come from within the Roma community. Bring in one of these people, one of the mediators, to speak to them, 'one of their own.'

7.2 The Words That Made the Scene

The segment begins with a small visual scene: laundry hanging from the railings of Plato's Academy. The image itself does not show who hung the clothes. It does not show a family, a wedding, a group, an encampment, or a person placing the sheets there. What the image offers is cloth on a fence, seen against an archaeological and public landscape. What the discussion produces from that image is something much larger.

The broadcast showed laundry on a fence, and then moved, through speech, toward Roma presence, weddings, revelries, kilims, shanties, makeshift bedding, vandalism, police weakness, removal, and mediation. The visual evidence and the spoken chain were different operations. The image opened a possibility. The discussion gave that possibility a population, a history, a geography, and a governmental solution.

⁷The neighbourhoods named in the broadcast — Kato Patissia, Thymarakia, Ilisia, Evangelismos, Kolonaki — form a loose arc across central and northern Athens. Kato Patissia and Thymarakia lie immediately north and northwest of Akademia Platonos; Ilisia and Evangelismos to the east; Kolonaki to the southeast. Their invocation maps Roma movement as a city-wide phenomenon rather than a localised presence, converting a scene at one park into evidence of a mobile urban condition.

The term *πλυσταριό* [wash-house], accelerated this movement: Laundry names a practice. A wash-house names a place. Through that word, Plato's Academy was reclassified almost instantly: no longer only an archaeological park where laundry had appeared, but a place imagined as having been turned over to domestic labour. It seizes an everyday act and makes it spatial, turning a temporary tactic of necessity into evidence of what the place has become. In de Certeau's terms, the tactic had been to use a governed space for an immediate practical need, without any claim to own or permanently alter it (de Certeau, 1984, pp. xix-xx). The broadcast converted that tactic into pollution, in Douglas's sense: matter that had crossed a boundary the social order depends on keeping intact (Douglas, 1966, pp. 36-37, 123-124).

The same term also carried a temporal connotation. A wash-house belongs to an older infrastructure of domestic labour, before washing machines made laundry largely private and interior. To call Plato's Academy a wash-house was therefore to make the image appear both spatially and temporally improper. Sheets on railings placed against archaeology. Domestic labour placed against heritage and national identity. The shock of the image depended on that crossing. The laundry became matter out of place, and the word *πλυσταριό* took it further still: matter out of time.

Lefebvre's distinction between conceived space and lived space gives this naming its political stakes (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38-39). The conceived space of Plato's Academy is the space of designation: archaeological site, heritage field, cultural asset, future museum. Against it stands the lived space of people for whom the park functions as an extension of domestic life, an outdoor room where the work of daily survival can be performed when no other surface is available. The question the broadcast never asked is the one Lefebvre frames most clearly: who has the authority to define what practices are allowable in a given space, and what happens when that authority is contested not through argument but through the persistence of use? The segment answered the question before asking it. It treated the conceived space as the only legitimate one and converted the evidence of lived use into degradation. The broadcast did not ask what values were being produced through the practices it condemned. It asked whether the people involved knew the value already assigned to the site. The first question would require listening. The second permits instruction.

The force of the segment lies in how quickly it closed that complexity. The broadcast's movement from laundry to intervention depended on making associations feel immediate rather than constructed. The image did not have to prove the chain that followed. It only had to become available to it. This is where Gramsci's account of common sense works here as a precise analytical tool: common sense is a practical field of recognition through which some connections already feel obvious before anyone has demonstrated them (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 323-324). In this field, laundry among antiquities could feel shameful before the question of who hung it had been answered. Roma presence could make the image socially charged before any Roma person appeared as a speaking subject. Kilims and remaining in the space could suggest improper occupation before the practical meaning of resting, waiting, drying, or staying had been considered. The segment strategically mobilised associations already available in political discourse and made them operative in this particular representation of the park; and Herzfeld's structural nostalgia clarifies the emotional register that made activation so effortless: the dignified Academy and the degraded wash-house are produced together, and heritage is made to require rescue because the present has been staged as decline (Herzfeld, 2016, pp. 142-143).

The next cluster of words thickens the scene: rugs, kilims, sheets, makeshift bedding [σπρωματσάδες] bedding or sleeping arrangements laid directly on the ground, shanties [τσαντίρια]: makeshift shelters or tents, accessories. These are not neutral words in the segment. They are small material signs through which the park becomes legible as misused. Yet most of these objects are also ordinary technologies of public life. They allow people to sit, lie down, protect children from the ground, eat, rest, wait, gather, watch, or remain. A towel, a mat, a rug, a blanket, or a sheet can make an outdoor place inhabitable for a few hours. The broadcast places them inside a strict moral arrangement.

The word *σπρωματσάδες* is especially charged. It suggests bedding or makeshift sleeping arrangements, but it also evokes a body settling where it should not settle. *Τσαντίρια* carries an even sharper public force in Greek. It can mean makeshift shelters or tents, but in everyday public language it easily slides toward racialised itinerancy and images of improper settlement. *Γλέντια* [revelries], by contrast, is a warm word in many contexts. It can carry the sound of collective joy, kinship, music, food, weddings, dancing. In the broadcast it changes temperature. It becomes nuisance, excess, and evidence that the archaeological site is being lowered into something else.

The vocabulary of governance then enters quietly. The police should discourage people from coming and remove them, 'even in a polite way.' Someone without a uniform might speak to them. A mediator from within the Roma community, 'one of their own,' might make the message acceptable. The language softens the surface of coercion. It does not change the direction of the intervention. The desired result is that certain people, certain objects, and certain practices stop appearing there.

This is where the sequence matters. No single word carries the whole operation. The chain does. Laundry becomes a wash-house. The wash-house becomes Roma weddings. Roma weddings become *Γλέντια*, *τσαντίρια*, *στροφιατσάδες*, *κιλίμια* and, finally, the very act of remaining in the space. Remaining becomes a matter of police, municipality, Ministry of Culture, and mediation. The original object becomes increasingly distant from the social problem built around it.

7.3 What Was Shown, What Was Assigned

When I returned to the park after seeing the broadcast, this distinction between what was shown and what was assigned became difficult in a more personal way. I saw the laundry and moved to the side to write notes. I did not photograph it. Part of the reason was simple: I did not want to reproduce the exposure of people who were already being made available to a public gaze. A photograph would have given me evidence, perhaps. It would also have repeated the gesture that troubled me.

What unsettled me more was that I had already begun to read the scene through the categories supplied by the broadcast. I had not seen the person who hung the laundry. I had not spoken to anyone about it. Yet the attribution had already become available to me. This was an ethnographic moment about perception. The broadcast did not invent its associations from nothing. It drew on a field of recognition wide enough to reach into my own first reading of the scene.

The issue is how easily a material act without a visible actor could be given a racialised and governable form. The laundry did not have to prove the chain. It only had to open it. Once opened, the chain could attach Roma presence, wedding celebration, makeshift settlement, vandalism, weak policing, and the need for mediation to the same scene.

The park itself disappeared into that movement. Akademia Platonos became less a neighbourhood space than a surface of exposure. The railings became evidence. The sheets became a sign. The archaeological name supplied moral weight. The Roma attribution supplied social anxiety. The presence of a municipal councillor made the discussion sound administratively grounded. By the time police and mediators entered the exchange, the image had already been elevated as a governance issue.

7.4 A Counter-Calendar of Use

The broadcast made one image carry the weight of the park. Against that compression, the park's public calendar during the months around my fieldwork offers another way of seeing Akademia Platonos, however as a comparative frame. The same materials that appeared in the broadcast keep returning across these events: cloth, ground, children, food, music, walking, remaining, gathering, staying late. What changes is not the material but the grammar of permission that surrounds it, and who performs the practice.

The first counterpoint is use itself. In October 2024, before my first fieldwork period began, the Initiative of Struggle for Plato's Academy Park and the local assembly of Kolonos, Sepolia, and Akademia Platonos organised a combined emotional mapping action in the park (Akademia Platonos, 2024). The call did not begin from the question of how the park should be protected from use. It asked what feelings emerged in its different points, how many ways a park could be used, and how another version of the park might be imagined by those who live with it. Participants were invited to walk with maps, record impressions, and compare the park as lived now with the projected redevelopment involving the removal of 580 trees and the construction of a museum. Feelings, routes, drawings, memories, worries, and possible futures became ways of knowing the park.

The broadcast later treated 'the value of the place' as something already settled, something that some people perhaps failed to understand. The mapping action placed value elsewhere: in relation, memory, walking, attachment, fear of loss, and a sense of structural nostalgia (Herzfeld, 2016).

By spring and summer 2025, the park was also repeatedly activated through authorised public culture. On 1 May, the Municipality of Athens opened a festival with Urban Picnic at Plato's Academy Park (This Is Athens City Festival, 2025). The event brought children's activities, workshops, theatrical performances, music, entertainment, a DJ set, and family leisure into the same space that the broadcast would later describe through laundry, revelries, and improper receptions. Food, children, performance, and extended occupation of the park were not treated as degradation in that frame. They were the very form of municipal culture.



Figure 3 Action for Palestine, June the 8th 2025, source: Own fieldwork

The solidarity event *Kravgi gia tin Palaistini*, held on 7 and 8 June, made this even clearer⁸. I was present in the park that day. From early afternoon until late evening, people gathered for storytelling, puppet theatre, creative workshops, food prepared by the café of Plato's Academy and members of the Palestinian community in Greece, theatre, projections, polyphonic singing, and collective fundraising for Gaza. The event did not separate politics from children, food, performance, or shared bodily presence. These were its public form. People came, stayed, ate, watched, listened, contributed, and moved between activities. The park became a

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/events/1006802714940403/>

place where solidarity was declared and materially organised in the same breath.



Figure 4 Action for Palestine in the Park source: Own fieldwork

Nine days later, on 17 June, Plato's Academy entered another authorised calendar, this time through the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and its 'NKUA in the City' programme (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2025). Denis Robichaud's lecture placed the site inside a public university frame of philosophy, education, and cultural presence. This was the most easily recognisable version of Plato's Academy: as philosophy, as institution, as inherited thought. It is an important version of the place. The problem begins when it is treated as the only one.

The strongest material contrast came in July, after the broadcast. The 15th Athens Open Air Film Festival (Athens Open Air Film Festival, 2025) held its 80s Horror Marathon at Plato's Academy Park and invited spectators to bring mats, towels, or folding chairs for a night of cinema lasting until morning. The festival's own photo-report described nearly one thousand spectators filling the park, staying until the early hours, and watching films lying on the grass. The vocabulary comes very close to the one used in the broadcast: cloth, ground, bodies, duration, night-time presence, people remaining in the space. Yet the public meaning changes completely. Under the sign of cinema, mats and towels become equipment for participation. Bodies on the ground become audience. Staying until morning becomes urban summer culture.

Alongside these public events were the ordinary rhythms already traced in earlier chapters: the older women who returned to their bench with their own chosen accessories brought from home; the children moving between stones, paths, trees, and open ground; the cat-feeding rounds that made care into a daily route; Christina's birthday party, with cake, speakers, tables, music, dancing, and unexpected hospitality. These practices did not need a poster, a municipal frame, or a university title. They made the park through repetition. They were quieter, but no less constitutive.

The counter-calendar therefore does not redeem the park by replacing a shameful image with respectable events. It shows how narrow the broadcast's image was. Akademia Platonos was being made, at the same time, through mapping, walking, philosophy, municipal leisure, solidarity, cinema, birthday celebration, sitting, feeding, playing, drying, resting, and remaining. These rhythms did not form a harmonious whole. They overlapped, rubbed against one another, and received very different degrees of recognition.

Lefebvre's *polyrhythmia* helps hold this density together. Urban space is composed through multiple rhythms that overlap without resolving into a single order (Lefebvre, 2004, pp. 67-68). Akademia Platonos during the fieldwork period was archaeological site, neighbourhood park, political commons, walking route, outdoor cinema, children's space, resting place, cat-feeding terrain, site of solidarity, and place of domestic extension simultaneously. The broadcast selected one rhythm and allowed it to stand for the whole.

Laundry on a park fence and mats on grass are different practices, but materially adjacent enough to reveal the classificatory system. A towel at a festival is expected. A mat for cinema is practical. A sheet on a railing becomes shame. A kilim attributed to Roma users becomes evidence that people are spreading through the space and remaining there. The object does not carry its own stable meaning. Meaning forms at the meeting point of object, body, place, and permission (Douglas, 1966, pp. 36-37).

The phrase 'they remain in the space' is important. Duration is not neutral in the broadcast. It becomes suspicious. People visit, pass, or participate. These particular people remain. In the festival archive, remaining until the early hours is part of the event's success. In the broadcast, remaining becomes one of the signs that intervention may be needed. Time itself changes value according to who is imagined to be occupying it.

There is a further irony in this asymmetry. The broadcast frames “Roma” practices as a form of improper settling, remaining where one should not remain. The festival, by contrast, invites people to occupy the park through the night, to bring cloth, to lie on the ground, to stay until morning. The state promotes temporary nomadism as culture while treating the Roma attempt to settle, to use the park with duration and domestic extension as disorder. De Certeau helps name this practical layer of the scene. Mats, towels, folding chairs, kilims, sheets, and blankets are not only objects. They are small techniques of use, ways of making ground, shade, waiting, and duration liveable. The festival could openly invite such techniques because its public frame authorised them in advance. Roma-attributed textiles, by contrast, entered the broadcast without that permission. The same kind of practical adjustment that could appear as participation in one frame appeared as improper occupation in another.

Lefebvre describes abstract space as a space that appears homogeneous and transparent while concealing its own production and reducing lived complexity (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 287-289). The broadcast performs this reduction in visual and media form: it flattens the park into a surface where certain objects appear as errors, turning lived experience into an administrable image (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 51-52, 313). The counter-calendar restores the thickness of use: ground made usable, bodies staying, objects carried, arrangements made for comfort, attention, celebration, or care.

The classificatory boundary between legitimate and improper use circulated in ordinary park conversation, and across languages. Two Lebanese residents of the neighbourhood, encountered at a bench during fieldwork, moved through a familiar sequence of park complaints before arriving at the Roma. Dogs fouling the grass came first. The municipality's failure to water the trees came second. Then: 'The bigger problem is when the Roma come with the car. They make everything dirty. Noise pollution, waste pollution' (semi-formal interview, 18 July 2025). The escalation is analytically significant. Dogs and municipal neglect figured as failures of maintenance: addressable, ordinary, frustrating. The Roma figured as something categorically different, a source of pollution rather than a problem of infrastructure. The word dirty performed the Douglas operation directly, attaching a stained quality to a group, and through the group to whatever space they occupied.

These speakers were not Greek. They had no stake in the cultural-nationalist grammar of archaeological heritage through which the broadcast framed its argument. Yet the classificatory move was available to them in English, at a bench in Kolonos, in July 2025. Gramsci's account of common sense is precise here: the associations did not require a shared national language or a shared cultural inheritance. They required only the practical field of recognition through which Roma presence, spatial disorder, and the language of pollution have been made to feel connected before the connection is argued (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 323-324). The broadcast did not produce this field. It found it already in place and gave it institutional form.

7.5 Festivity and the Park as Public Room

The comparison in the preceding sections has concerned cloth and duration. Here it concerns the practice of festivity itself with celebration, gathering and collective joy, and the very different moral registers through which the park authorises or condemns it depending on who performs it.

In the broadcast, the first explicit attribution of the park's festive life to Roma families came not from the studio presenters but from the municipal councillor. Offered the opening, the question of whether wedding receptions also take place in the park, he took it and loaded it: 'these completely thrown-together wedding receptions, of course, which include shanties, makeshift bedding and various other accessories.' The contempt was distributed across two moves. The adjective thrown-together carries connotations of disorder and lack of restraint, attached degradation to the events before any organiser was identified. The word accessories applied the grammar of consumer surplus to objects that were, materially, the requirements of shelter, sleep, and celebration. The councillor's institutional position, a named municipal representative appearing beside a journalist, gave this vocabulary administrative weight. Common sense, in Gramsci's sense, does not require argument: it requires only a speaker whose authority makes the associations feel like documentation (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 323-324). The segment produced a semi-official record of disorder.

The broadcast also turns on festivity more broadly. Weddings, revelries, clarinets, trousseaus, and these thrown-together receptions become signs that the archaeological site has been

lowered into a reception venue. The repeated question is whether this can happen 'inside Plato's Academy.' The name of the place is asked to discipline the event.

Other events in the park used the same public materials: food, music, children, performance, workshops, and extended gathering. The Athens Urban Picnic filled the park with municipal leisure, children's activities, creative workshops, theatrical performances, music, and outdoor enjoyment. The Palestine solidarity event brought storytelling, puppet theatre, collective food, workshops, projections, polyphonic singing, political fundraising, and many hours of public presence. These gatherings did not hide their festive qualities. They depended on them. Food and performance were not marginal to their public form. They were the form through which people gathered.

The birthday party described in Chapter 4 sits between these authorised events and the ordinary social world of the park. Tables, speakers, cake, music, children, dancing, and the easy extension of hospitality toward a passing researcher: the party made room without being asked. When an older Greek man invoked Plato's Academy as a reason the party should not be there, the host's answer folded the heritage name back into her own claim to remain. These are not grand gestures of spatial authorship. They are closer to what de Certeau calls the practices of everyday life: dispersed, tactical, often unnamed ways of operating within spaces whose official meanings have been set elsewhere (de Certeau, 1984, pp. xix-xx). In Lefebvre's terms, they are part of the lived production of space (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). In the broadcast, some of these practices could appear only once they had been detached from this everyday intelligence and edited into disorder.

This scene helps locate the broadcast's vocabulary of receptions and revelries. Celebration in the park is not rare. It is one of the ways the park becomes socially available. The question is how celebration is named, and through whom. Municipal festivity appears as city culture. Solidarity festivity appears as ethical public presence. Neighbourhood festivity appears as ordinary social life. Roma-attributed festivity appears in the broadcast as nuisance, excess, and a problem requiring intervention.

The same family of practices can be moved across different moral registers. Food can be care, leisure, nuisance, solidarity, or disorder. Music can be culture, noise, memory, joy, or excess. Children can be the intended public of a family event, or the image through which precarity

becomes shocking. The park does not decide these meanings by itself. They are produced through social permission.

Public embarrassment often gathers around practices that are too familiar to be comfortably disowned and too socially marked to be admitted into official self-representation (Herzfeld, 2016, pp. 7, 11). The broadcast goes further than calling laundry illegal or inappropriate. It stages the image as shameful, almost embarrassing, because it interrupts the desired face of heritage. The phrase 'Plato through the sheets' condenses this embarrassment. It is a joke, but it is also a structure of feeling: the national-philosophical name is imagined as being seen through domestic cloth.

7.6 Roma People and the Uneven Commons

The broadcast addresses Roma users primarily as a problem of communication and governance. They are discussed as people who may not know the value of the site, who have a particular way of life and reaction, and who may require mediators from within the Roma community, 'one of their own,' to approach them. They are spoken about through police, municipality, Ministry of Culture, and specialised intermediaries. They do not appear as speakers about the park.

This institutional vocabulary had already entered local government. In April 2024, a councillor of the Fourth Municipal Community, elected with the Bakogiannis faction, submitted a proposal for a 'task force' involving the Municipal Police, the Hellenic Police, and a prosecutor to inspect whether residents had legal rental contracts and to remove those described as illegal residents. I cite the proposal here through its public reproduction and contestation rather than through the municipal record itself: Loukas Stamellos reproduced and analysed the text in Omniatv (Stamellos, 2024), while Kostas Papadakis publicly requested its withdrawal from the agenda (Papadakis, 2024). Papadakis's intervention was not a procedural objection. In a video uploaded on 18 September 2023, after a 7 September visit to Akademia Platonos as candidate mayor with Ανατρεπτική Συμμαχία για την Αθήνα⁹, he described the park as a free green space used by families, Athenians, and migrants, and opposed the Bakogiannis redevelopment as commercialisation and privatisation of common urban ground (Papadakis, 2023). His April 2024 request therefore interrupted the police-housing proposal

⁹ Ανατρεπτική Συμμαχία για την Αθήνα (Disruptive Alliance for Athens): a left-opposition civic party in Athens municipal politics.

from within an already formed oppositional reading of the park one that joined public space, housing, policing, and anti-commercialisation into a single frame. The proposal itself joined legality, safety, hygiene, and neighbourhood protection into a police-administrative language that attached migration, informal residence, poverty, and spatial disorder to one another. The response from Laiki Synelefsi Kolonou–Akadimias Platonos–Sepolion, republished on the Akademia Platonos site, read the proposal from inside the neighbourhood struggle: as a racist and classed intervention tied to tourism, real-estate pressure, the targeting of open spaces in Akademia Platonos and Votanikos, and the museum project (Laiki Synelefsi Kolonou–Akadimias Platonos–Sepolion, 2024). Placed next to the broadcast, the point sharpens. The park struggle was never only about trees or a museum. It belonged to a wider neighbourhood field where anti-racist, housing, policing, and public-space politics already met.

Against this field of othering, the birthday celebration described in Chapter 4 showed another register of park life from within. A Roma mother welcomed me into her child's celebration with immediate hospitality, without knowing my identity or purpose. Inside the gathering, the event produced warmth, food, play, and recognition. The older man's abrupt and intrusive intervention showed how quickly this atmosphere could be interrupted by an external demand to discipline the space and define its proper uses. Her response held the gathering together: the proximity, the celebration, the children's ease, and the park as she had produced it in that moment, with dignity and tactical acuity under pressure. The scene showed both the openness of the gathering and the conditions under which such openness had to be maintained.

The birthday scene must be read against the wider field of common sense that the broadcast crystallised. The repeated association between Roma users and urban degradation is also a form of devaluation. By attaching disorder to Roma use, the broadcast helped make the park appear to be declining and in need of correction. In Greece, such semiotic devaluation carries material consequences: surveillance, police exposure, administrative vulnerability, and police violence against Roma, including fatal shootings of Roma youths (Amnesty International, 2024; European Roma Rights Centre, 2024; Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, 2025; Racist Violence Recording Network, 2024). Avoiding hyper-visibility can therefore be a rational tactic of survival under a historically charged condition of risk.

The wider public archive of the park produces uneven visibility. Roma people appear in the broadcast as users, suspects, mobile groups, objects of concern, and subjects of possible

removal. They appear less clearly as named participants in the organised grammar of the commons. My material does not allow a measurement of Roma participation in the organised public defence of Akademia Platonos. It does show however an asymmetry of appearance: Roma presence is highly visible as use and as problematisation, and far less visible as participants in articulated public claim.

The local political archive contains explicit anti-racist language. In October 2024, a call circulated through the Akademia Platonos blog for a mobilisation in Sepolia against racist attacks on unaccompanied refugee minors and a migrant delivery worker. The call spoke of building neighbourhoods of solidarity between locals and migrants (Laiki Synelefsi Kolonou–Akadimias Platonos–Sepolion, 2024). This makes the problem more specific. The difficulty around Roma inclusion cannot be explained by a simple absence of anti-racist language in the area. It concerns the position Roma people occupy within the social imagination of the park itself.

Chapter 6 traced this limit from inside the commons. The broadcast intensifies it. It moves from an unattributed act to Roma presence, from Roma presence to improper festivity, from improper festivity to removal, and from removal to mediated communication through 'one of their own.' The people whose practices help produce the park as lived space are placed at the edge of civic address. They are inside the territory, but outside the ordinary channels through which the territory speaks about itself.

The commons is produced through use, care, protest, mapping, and defence. It is also produced through unequal recognition. Roma presence exposes this unequal recognition because it appears at once as part of the park's everyday life and as the point where the language of public legitimacy becomes unstable.

7.7 The Object Was Never Only the Object

The chapter has moved through cloth, festivity, duration ordinary park life and a mechanism operating across all of them.

Cloth on a fence, mats on grass, folding chairs, kilims, sheets, and festival towels are materially adjacent. They are all ways of making ground usable, of staying somewhere, of

bringing the body's requirements into a space not designed for them. The bench women do it every afternoon. The cinema audience does it every summer. The birthday family does it for a celebration. The person who hung the laundry did it because a surface was available and clothes needed to dry. None of these acts is, in itself, a statement. None claims the space permanently. All of them are, in de Certeau's terms, tactics: temporary adjustments made within terrain organised by others.

What distributes them across different moral registers is not the object but the grammar that receives it. That grammar assigns meaning before the object arrives. It operates through rhythms — the rhythms Lefebvre names as the multiple, overlapping temporal patterns through which urban space is produced and reproduced (Lefebvre, 2004, pp. 67-68). The park holds many rhythms simultaneously: the mapping walk, the cinema night, the solidarity feast, the bench afternoon, the birthday, the laundry. These rhythms do not resolve into a single order. What the broadcast did was select one rhythm, declare it the disorder, and allow it to stand for the whole.

The selection was not arbitrary. It followed the grammar of recognition that Chapters 6 and 7 have traced from the bench conversation to the national screen. That grammar does not live in objects. It lives in the relation between objects, bodies, places, and permission. A towel becomes equipment when a festival programme authorises it. A kilim becomes evidence when the speaker is a municipal councillor and the body is Roma. The same cloth, the same ground, the same act of remaining — classified differently not because the act changed but because the classificatory system assigns value before the act is performed.

The unequal distribution of permission is therefore not a side effect of the broadcast. It is the broadcast's primary operation. The chain from laundry to governance moved quickly because it drew on a field of recognition already in place: in bench conversations, in neighbourhood attributions, in institutional proposals, in the everyday common sense that makes some presences ordinary and others visible, problematic, and correctable.

The so-called laundry on the fence had already been taken down. We never learned whose clothes they actually were, whether they belonged to someone who needed to air their washing, an artist making an installation, or anyone else entirely, because no one in the broadcast simply asked. Yet the image remained: looped, repeated in a television window beside the reporter, the municipal councillor, and the full apparatus of the studio, serving one

purpose only. It was the image through which the average viewer would be fed not only the idea of a space in decline, in this case, Plato's Academy, but the idea of who was to blame for that decline.

Chapter 8: What Remains in Common

While I write this, the park remains unresolved. The trees still stand. The Initiative continues to meet. People return in the evening. Children move through paths older residents remember from their own childhoods. Animals are fed. The ground holds cinema, transit, rest, conversation, conflict, care, and political assembly. The broadcast archive can still replay the park as disorder, but the park itself continues to be produced through mixed, unequal, contested practices that make that image inadequate.

This is a good place to stop and look back at what the thesis has shown. The chapters that precede this one were not moving toward a unified portrait of Akademia Platonos. They were tracing a set of operations: how a space acquires value through use; how that value becomes a target; how people translate institutional language back into lived consequences; how recognition is distributed unevenly across the social world of the commons; and how a camera can lift those distributions from the neighbourhood and harden them into national image. Bringing these operations together is what this conclusion attempts.

8.1 The Park as an Uneven Commons

What the fieldwork made visible was not disorder. It was a space dense with social production: daily movement, territorial familiarity, seasonal use, intergenerational knowledge, and the small, accumulated adjustments through which people make a place habitable over time. The park worked as a commons because all of this could coexist without requiring full agreement about what the park was or should become.

Chapter 4 traced how that commons was produced: through the bench women's afternoon choreography, the cat-feeding rounds, the children's paths across ancient stones, Christina's birthday, and the political assembly that shared the same ground with all of them. None of these practices required institutional permission. Each was, in Lefebvre's terms, part of the park's lived space: the embodied, repetitive inhabitation through which a place accumulates social meaning. The commons was not declared. It was practised.

Chapter 5 showed what happened when that value was named from above. The language of upgrade, greening, heritage, and bioclimatic design made the park appear as a surface awaiting improvement rather than a ground already made through use. Counter-knowledge

was the Initiative's response: a practice of re-attachment that took official vocabulary and brought it back to what it left uncoun­ted: the tree that gives shade in August, the road a body crosses under pressure, the transport study that was never commissioned. The struggle was over the authority to define what the park already was and for whom.

Chapter 6 traced the boundary the commons draws around itself. Roma park users help produce *Akademia Platonos* through daily spatial practice. They know the park's topography, celebrate milestones on its ground, and extend domestic and social life into a space that is publicly available to them. And yet across three periods of fieldwork, they were absent from the assemblies where the park's defence was organised. That absence is not explained by indifference. It is explained by the structural conditions under which different people can safely appear as public actors — conditions that converge before participation is even possible, and that intersectionality names as the analytical key to what happens before appearance (Crenshaw, 1989). The same social grammar that gives the park its warmth and solidarity also distributes recognition unequally. The defence inherits those distributions even when its political language reaches beyond them.

Chapter 7 showed how the neighbourhood's internal grammar reaches a national audience. The broadcast did not invent its associations. It found them already in place — in bench conversations, in neighbourhood attributions, in institutional proposals — and gave them institutional form. The so-called laundry on the fence had already been taken down. We never learned whose clothes they were, because no one in the broadcast simply asked. The image remained: looped, repeated, serving one purpose only. It was the image through which the average viewer was fed not only the idea of a space in decline but the idea of who was to blame for that decline.

What these four movements share is a single mechanism. Existing social value is first rendered incomplete, inefficient, unsafe, or disorderly. Intervention is then justified through a language of improvement. People close to the threatened infrastructure translate that language back into lived consequences. And the people who produced the value in the first place find themselves either incompatible with what their labour has made investable, or available as evidence that the space requires correction.

The unevenness described throughout this thesis does not disqualify *Akademia Platonos* as a commons. It defines the kind of commons it is. Commoning is not a settled condition of equality but an ongoing and unequal practice. The park is a commons produced through friction: between use and recognition, solidarity and structural inequality, open access and unequal safety. That friction is not a failure of the commons. It is, as Chapters 6 and 7 showed, the pressure through which the commons becomes ethically legible — visible at exactly the point where helping produce a space and being recognised as one of its legitimate producers come apart.

8.2 The Analytical Shift

The mechanism that became visible through this research did not appear all at once. For a long time I stayed close to the immediate material: the trees marked for removal, the weekly assembly meetings, the legal action at the Council of State, the practical anxieties about gentrification. I had entered *Akademia Platonos* already shaped by earlier frictions and political struggles in other places, but I did not carry those experiences as an explicit analytic framework. They were part of my formation, not yet part of my argument.

Understanding came gradually, through the frictional labour of returning to fieldnotes, recorded conversations, administrative documents, and theory until the separate pieces began to hold together. Conducting fieldwork through a structure of returns, meaning moving between intensive periods in Athens and intervals of distance in Norway, provided the estrangement that continuous presence would have absorbed. Returning to the park after weeks away made visible what sustained proximity had rendered ordinary: the choreography of daily occupation, the unspoken thresholds of safety, and the ways the familiar environment was being quietly prepared for a different, more selective public.

Through this movement between proximity and distance, my own background became analytical. The same paired vocabularies kept returning. From above: upgrade, greening, rationalisation, modernisation, culture, and future value. From below: heat, distance, access, maintenance, exposure, traffic, bodies, care, and risk. These were not competing opinions. They were different forms of knowledge about what the park already was and who it already served. Scott's account of legibility, Harvey's analysis of dispossession, and de Certeau's attention to tactical practice met inside this contrast. My earlier political experiences did not

serve as evidence for Akademia Platonos. The park functioned as the analytical lens through which the pattern became visible.

8.3 Common Infrastructures of Life

Common infrastructures of life names spaces and services whose value is already produced through commoning before they are captured by market, administrative, heritage, or development logics. Parks, hospitals, forests, and public services hold social value through the use, care, dependence, memory, and collective defence of the people who live through them. That value does not begin when institutions redesign, price, or brand the infrastructure. It is already there.

Akademia Platonos is one instance of a wider pattern. The contesting of common infrastructures move simultaneously from above, through the strategy of polished and benign language that obscures the dangers and consequences of planned interventions, and collides with the struggle from below through the tactic of reading this language against the lived value for which these commons are defended; and it's challenged and shaped from within by the uneven conditions under which the struggle takes place

8.4 What Remains

Belonging to a place is produced through practice. It appears in the word Plataniotissa, in the children playing on ancient stones, in the flowers Thetis planted with her own hands. Friction gives commoning its labour. Intersectionality shows the unequal conditions under which people can appear inside a struggle.

Thetis said it plainly when she defended the park against the language that would make it into something else: "Neither green nor blue museum. The only green I want is the park for its people." Then she exhaled and imagined the old rivers, the olive groves, the history beneath the worn ground where she had been sitting for years. She mourned a park being dismantled by the abstract language of heritage and future value; in the same breath, she produced the park as a living commons through her daily endurance, care, and use. But the final measure of that politics cannot rest only with those already able to appear as the park's ordinary defenders. It also rests with the Roma mother whose answer to the old man kept her child's celebration open under pressure. Akademia Platonos will be common in the strongest sense when she can enjoy the ordinary invisibility that others receive as a privilege: the ability to

gather, celebrate, refuse insult, and remain without being turned into evidence of disorder. That is the political horizon this thesis leaves open.

I take full responsibility for the argument, analysis, interpretation, sources, and conclusions of this thesis. As a Greek researcher who entered higher education later in life after many years outside academia, and who writes in English as an additional language rather than a native one, I used language-assistance tools during the writing and revision process. These tools supported grammar, phrasing, clarity, structure, and readability, helping me communicate my research in academic English. The ethnographic material, field observations, interviews, theoretical engagement, analytical interpretations, and conclusions presented in this thesis are my own.

Bibliography

- Ahmann, C. (2024). *Futures after progress: Hope and doubt in late industrial Baltimore*. Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press.
- Akademia Platonos. (2022, September 9). *Διαμαρτυρία αλληλεγγύης στη δομή του Ελαιώνα*. Retrieved from ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΟΣ στο Δήμο Αθηναίων: <https://akadimia-platonos.com/2022/09/09/διαμαρτυρία-αλληλεγγύης-στη-δομή-του/>
- Akademia Platonos. (2024, February 4). *Πρώτη νίκη των κατοίκων στο ΣτΕ για την Ακαδημία Πλάτωνος*. Retrieved from ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΟΣ στο Δήμο Αθηναίων: <https://akadimia-platonos.com/2024/02/04/πρώτη-νίκη-των-κατοίκων-στο-στε-για-την/>
- Akademia Platonos. (2025, May 11). *Αγωγή σε πολίτες επειδή κέρδισαν στο ...ΣτΕ!* Retrieved from ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΟΣ στο Δήμο Αθηναίων: <https://akadimia-platonos.com/2025/05/11/αγωγή-σε-πολίτες-επειδή-κέρδισαν-στο/>
- Amnesty International. (2024, September 16). *Greece: Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee, 142nd session, 14 October–7 November, ahead of the examination of Greece's State party's report*. Retrieved from (Index No. EUR 25/8525/2024): <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur25/8525/2024/en/>
- Asad, T. (1986). The concept of cultural translation in British social anthropology. In J. Clifford, & G. E. Marcus (Eds.), *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* (pp. 141-164). California, USA: University of California Press.
- Athens Open Air Film Festival. (2025, July 14). *'80s Horror Marathon at Plato's Academy Park: You had to be there!* Retrieved from Athens Open Air Film Festival: https://aoaff.gr/photos_2025/arthro/15_aoaff_horror_80s_plato_s_academy-15556995/
- Πρωτοβουλία Αγώνα Ακ. Πλάτωνος. (2026, January 13). *Ο Σταύρος Σταυρίδης για το πάρκο της Ακαδημίας Πλάτωνα 1*. Retrieved from YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaqlTcHA8h8>
- Bauman, Z. (1989). *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Ithaca, New York, USA: Cornell University Press.
- Chen, N. N. (1992). "Speaking nearby": A conversation with Trinh T. Minh-ha. *Visual Anthropology Review*, 8(1), pp. 82-91.
- Clifford, J., & E., M. G. (1986). *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. (J. Clifford, & M. G. E., Eds.) Berkley, California, USA: University of California Press.
- Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights. (2025, May 16). *Memorandum on the human rights of Roma in Greece*. Retrieved from (CommHR(2025)31). Council of Europe: <https://rm.coe.int/memorandum-on-the-human-rights-of-roma-in-greece-by-michael-o-flaherty/1680b60ac0>
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*(1), pp. 139-167.
- Cupples, J., & Kindon, S. (2003). Far from being "home alone": The dynamics of accompanied fieldwork. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 24(2), pp. 211-228.
- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life*. (S. Rendall, Trans.) Berkley, California, USA: University of California Press.
- Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and Danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo* (Routledge Classics 2002 ed.). New York, USA: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- EfSyn. (2024, April 20). *Γλέντι οικονομικής ενίσχυσης για τη διάσωση του αρχαιολογικού άλσους της Ακαδημίας Πλάτωνα*. Retrieved from Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών:

- https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/koinonia/430243_glenti-oikonomikis-enishysis-gia-ti-diasosi-toy-arhaiologikoy-alsoys-tis/
- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. (2022, September 22). *ECRI report on Greece (sixth monitoring cycle)*. Retrieved from Council of Europe: <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-first-report-on-greece-adopted-on-28-june-2022-published-on-22-se/1680a818bf>
- European Parliament. (2023, October). *Media & news survey 2023: European citizens' news consumption*. Retrieved from [Flash Eurobarometer]. European Union: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3153>
- European Roma Rights Centre. (2024, December 16). *Ruthless and racist: Policing Roma in the Balkans*. Retrieved from <https://www.errc.org/reports--submissions/ruthless-and-racist-policing-roma-in-the-balkan>
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. (Q. Hoare, G. Nowell Smith, Eds., Q. Hoare, & G. Nowell Smith, Trans.) New York City, New York, USA: International Publishers.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. (S. Hall, Ed.) United Kingdom: Sage/Open University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2004). The "new" imperialism: Accumulation by dispossession. *Socialist Register*, 40, pp. 63-87.
- Herzfeld, M. (2016). *Cultural intimacy: social poetics and the real life of social institutions - Third edition* (3. edition ed.). New York, USA: Routledge.
- Jackson, A. (1987). *Anthropology at home*. (A. Jackson, Ed.) London, United Kingdom: Tavistock Publications.
- Kampagiannis, T. (2025, December 29). *Είναι λογική χρήση αστυνομικής βίας οι 36 σφαίρες κατά Πομά; [Audio podcast episode]*. (N. 24/7, Producer) Retrieved from ΔΗΚΕΟΣΙΝΗ με τον Θανάση Καμπαγιάννη: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkVt3Ix8gEk>
- Kavoulakos, K. I. (2013). Κινήματα και δημόσιοι χώροι στην Αθήνα: χώροι ελευθερίας, χώροι δημοκρατίας, χώροι κυριαρχίας [Movements and public spaces in Athens: Spaces of freedom, spaces of democracy, spaces of dominance]. In T. Maloutas, G. Kandyliis, M. Petrou, N. Souliotis, T. Maloutas, G. Kandyliis, M. Petrou, & N. Souliotis (Eds.), *Το κέντρο της Αθήνας ως πολιτικό διακύβευμα [The centre of Athens as a political stake]* (pp. 237-256). Athens, Greece: National Centre for Social Research (EKKE).
- Kostopoulos, C. (2024). Invaders vs investors: The importance of class in the framing of migration in the Greek press. In Y. Mylonas, E. Psyllakou, Y. Mylonas, & E. Psyllakou (Eds.), *Class, culture, and the media in Greece* (pp. 83-103). Palgrave Macmillan Cham.
- Laiki Synelefsi Kolonou–Akadimias Platonos–Sepolion. (2024, April 22). *Ρατσιστική πρόταση "λαγός" για τον εξευγενισμό της Ακαδημίας Πλάτωνα!* Retrieved from ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΟΣ στο Δήμο Αθηναίων: <https://akadimia-platonos.com/2024/04/22/ρατσιστική-πρόταση-λαγός-για-τον-εξε/>
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*. (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.) Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: Basil Blackwell Inc.
- Lefebvre, H. (2004). *Rythmanalysis: Space, time and everyday life*. (S. Elden, & G. Moore, Trans.) New York, USA: Continuum.
- Lialios, G. (2024, April 25). *Ενστάσεις κατοίκων για το πάρκο Ακαδημίας Πλάτωνος*. Retrieved from Η Καθημερινή: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/562997464/enstaseis-katoikon-gia-to-parko-akadimias-platonos/>

- Live You. (2025, June 26). *Ακαδημία Πλάτωνος: Ρούχα απλωμένα ακόμα και δεξιώσεις γάμων σε αρχαιολογικό χώρο* | Live You | 26/06. Retrieved from YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJkzSK5yULk>
- Low, S. M. (1996). Spatializing culture: The social production and social construction of public space in Costa Rica. *American Ethnologist*, 23(4), pp. 861-879.
- Low, S., Taplin, D., & Scheld, S. (2005). *Rethinking urban parks: Public space and cultural diversity*. Austin, Texas, USA: University of Texas Press.
- Maloutas, T., Frangopoulos, Y., Makridou, A., Kostaki, E., Kourkouridis, D., & Spyrellis, S. N. (2024). Exploring spatial proximity and social exclusion through two case studies of Roma settlements in Greece. *Land*, 13(2), p. Article 202.
- Ministry of Culture and Sports. (2023, March 14). Retrieved from Hellenic Ministry of Culture: <https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/SitePages/default.aspx>
- National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. (2025, June 17). *Διάλεξη του Denis Robichaud: "From the Good to the Good: On the Value of Platonism"*. Retrieved from To EKPA stin Poli: <https://hub.uoa.gr/dialexi-tou-denis-robichaud-from-the-good-to-the-good-on-the-value-of-platonism-to-ekpa-stin-poli/>
- Papadakis, K. (2023, September 18). Retrieved from YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QOwQax_PoA
- Papadakis, K. (2024, April 22). Retrieved from KOMMON: <https://kommon.gr/dimokratika-dikaiomata/item/16529-aitima-kosta-papadaki-gia-aposyrsi-ratsistikou-thematos-apo-tin-imerisia-diataxi>
- Poulakidakos, S. (2024). Media representations of the Roma population in Greece: Negative stereotyping and class politics against the indigenous "Other." In Y. Mylonas, E. Psyllakou, Y. Mylonas, & E. Psyllakou (Eds.), *Class, culture, and the media in Greece* (pp. 105-125). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Racist Violence Recording Network. (2024). *Annual report 2023*. Retrieved from Racist Violence Recording Network: https://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2023-RVRN-Annual-Report_eng-v_fn.pdf
- Racist Violence Recording Network. (2025, July 14). *Concern over the worsening climate against refugees and migrants in political and public discourse*. Retrieved from Racist Violence Recording Network: <https://rvrn.org/en/concern-worsening-climate-refugees-migrants-in-political-public/>
- Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven, Connecticut, USA: Yale University Press.
- Simpson, A. (2007). On ethnographic refusal: Indigeneity, "voice" and colonial citizenship. *Junctures*(9), pp. 67-80.
- SOMO. (2015, March). *Fool's Gold*. Retrieved from SOMO (Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations): <https://www.somo.nl/fools-gold/>
- Stamellos, L. (2024, April 22). *Οι «παράνομοι», οι «άνθρωποι» και τα «διαφυγόντα κέρδη»: Ρατσιστική πρόταση από σύμβουλο της παράταξης Μπακογιάννη*. Retrieved from Omniatv: <https://omniatv.com/853490063/oi-paranomoi-oi-anthropoi-kai-ta-diafygonta-kerdi-ratsistiki-protasi-apo-symvoylo-tis-parataxis-mpakogianni/>
- Stavrides, S. (2016). *Common space: The city as commons*. London, United Kingdom: Zed Books.
- Strathern, M. (1987). The limits of auto-anthropology. In A. Jackson, *Anthropology at home* (pp. 16-37). London: Tavistock Publishing.
- This Is Athens City Festival. (2025). *Athens Urban Picnic 2025*. Retrieved from This Is Athens City Festival: <https://cityfestival.thisisathens.org/en/event/athens-urban-picnic-2025/>

- Thompson, S. M. (2016). *Designing modernity: Seeing urban greenspace as infrastructure in Buenos Aires*. University of Oslo, Centre for Development and the Environment. Oslo: University of Oslo.
- Tremlett, A. (2017). Visualising everyday ethnicity: Moving beyond stereotypes of Roma minorities. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 24(6), pp. 720-740.
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2014). R-words: Refusing research. In D. Paris, T. Winn, D. Paris, & T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 223-248). Sage.
- Wacquant, L. (2007). Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality. *Thesis Eleven*, 91(1), pp. 66-77.

