

Urban Agriculture in Thessaloniki. An Academic Project Meets Reality

Eleftheria Gavrilidou

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering elegvr@gmail.com

Holm Kleinmann

Jade Hochschule in Oldenburg, School of Architecture

Eleni Oureilidou

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering

Sarantis G. Z. Zafeiropoulos

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering

Abstract

In comparison with most urban agriculture projects in Europe, USA and the Developing World starting in bottom-up processes, a master studio project at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, "Red and Green", presents a proposal for a huge inner city area with focus on the overall socio-economic transformation, considering in particular the current crisis situation in Greece. The approach attempts an integration of both top-down and bottom-up forces, permanent and temporary elements, and by this, the master plan seeks quality as an innovative planning tool. A strategy for a realization in steps was created by KIPOS³, a start-up initiative to bring in Thessaloniki the concept of a common garden to be managed by the residents under also the municipality's stewardship. The first garden was created in 2015 after a long way of mapping and discussions with landowners and potential users. The story of the two intertwined offers a useful lesson on the role of "foodscape" in the reactivation of institutions and communities, a lesson of resilience in a city going through a deep crisis, a discussion on the top-down and bottom-up combination, and a didactic instrument on the path that an academic project follows towards reality.

The "Thessaloniki Red and Green Project" was conducted and presented in academic level thanks to "IKY fellowships of excellence for postgraduate studies in Greece – Siemens program" by the fellows Eleni Oureilidou and Eleftheria Gavrilidou.

The KIPOS3 project could not be realized without the generous support and assistance in all levels by the Angelopoulos GIU Fellowship 2014 and the Ambassador-at-Large of the Hellenic Republic, Mrs. Gianna Angelopoulos Daskalaki.

Keywords

Urban agriculture, landscape planning/design, top-down/bottom-up processes, urban resilience, Thessaloniki.

Received: July 2015 / Accepted: November 2015

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DOI: 10.13128/RV-17588 - www.fupress.net/index.php/ri-vista/

The Urban Agriculture Movement

General outline

Urbanization, in parallel with urban shrinkage, urban sprawl and left over urban voids in inner cities, are all controversy situations that underline the continuously emerging role of landscape in city's form and function (Dubbeling et al, 2009, p. 3). The term of urban sustainability seems to become more and more topical, in the search of the urban conditions that can ensure high standard of living without compromising living quality of future generations and obtains one more meaning, especially in cities facing economic crisis; that of self – sufficiency (McDonough, 2003, p. 185).

The common action and identity, the idea of urban productivity, and the need for a new relation between city and nature, brought the concept of Urban Agriculture (UA)¹ in the forefront of discussion upon the concept of urban resilience.

In Europe, after industrialization occurred, concepts of garden cities and allotment gardens emerged as responses to poverty, food shortages and insecurity, always with a political origin². Later, in the years of World Wars, gardens sprouted in Germany, Canada and U.S.A, reaching in 1943 the Victory Gardens to produce 40% of America's fresh vegetables (Lionatou and Tsalikidis, 2013, p. 368). During the energy crisis in early '70s and after '90s the idea returned

when the sustainability movement started to expand and in parallel with the popularity of Permaculture concept³ and the Slow Food Movement.

UA is understood today as:

- a strategy for more self-determination and subsistence,
- an integrator of different life-styles and social environments,
- a generator of socio-economic transformation towards green economy,
- a creator of synergetic rural-urban linkages and new livelihoods,
- a contribution to sustainable, climate-optimized urban development and also to the city's nutrition (city as a resource),
- a Productive multifunctional Green Infrastructure (P.G.I) for the future city (Giseke, 2011),
- a start point for a new non-centralized economy that starts from the individual.

It links cities and environment, extends the concept of the city formally and functionally being an increasingly acceptable, affordable and effective tool for sustainable urbanization (Mougeot and Luc, 2003, p. 3). It puts into question the dipole urban – rural landscape and promotes an innovative way of envisioning urban life, contemporary as well as productively.

The benefits are ecological: maintain green areas

and buffer zones, preserve biodiversity through the cultivation of forgotten species or local varieties, promote materials reuse, preserve air quality, cool the climate and absorb air pollution. The benefits are also economic, promoting the self-sufficiency especially in times of crises⁴, and social, as a new social environment is created, ideal for education, social integration, empowerment and civic engagement, especially for vulnerable social groups (Dubbeling et al, 2009, p. 3). The allotment gardens and community gardens serve as incubators of socio-ecological knowledge (Barthel et al, 2013, p. 1), build communities, redefine collective action, create common ground and finally contribute to common cultural identity and collective memory forming processes (Barthel et al, 2011, p. 258). Namely, they redefine the democracy notion in public space and city's landscape. They give the opportunity to communities to organize the everyday neighborhood experience, to decide and claim the usage and the quality of their common open space. They finally open a political discussion, in the very small scale, usually with the opportunity of the "food", in the context of the interesting, intriguing and tasteful "foodscape".

UA today in the world

UA forms find ground at residual, or unexploited spaces in Brownfields (derelict land previously oc-

cupied by other uses) or Greenfields (unbuilt areas around cities), in private, sometimes with seasonal ownership plots (allotments in UK and Scandinavia, Schrebergärten in Germany and Switzerland), in community gardens (in unused or abandoned urban sites used by local communities and neighborhoods), in school yards and educational gardens, in rooftop gardens under private or public ownership, or in city/urban farms (Viljoen et al, 2005, p. XIX).

Except for their size and form, the significant difference comes from the regime of organization. Thus, there is the top-down option for the definition of the cultivation areas – usually separate plots – as it happens in the case of Havana, where a National Group for Urban Agriculture was consisted to coordinate the nationwide initiative (Díaz et al, 2005, p. 137), or in the case of the project "Greening the Urban Appetite", run by the City of Philadelphia. An intermediate option of top-down – bottom-up, exists in the case of Casablanca, as a research hypothesis to take place (planning stage)⁵, or in the case of many gardens-parks in cities with pots for limited production (Lafayette Greens in Detroit, PHX Renew in Phoenix, Prinzessinnengärten in Berlin, Andernach community garden in Andernach). The totally bottom-up option, the collectively defined and organized spaces within vacant lots inside the city (guerilla gardens) is mostly popular in USA⁶. The

community gardens are widely spread and green spaces for potential gardens are detected in great scale, as it is showed in mappings like “596 acres” in NY, “Grounded in Philly” in Philadelphia, “LA open Acres” in Los Angeles and “Edible city – The city is an orchard”⁷.

UA today in Greece and Thessaloniki

Traditionally, the scheme house-courtyard with cultivations for domestic needs was traditional in Greek cities. After the abrupt increase of urban densities in late 50s, the multi-storey buildings, *polikantikies* with *pilotis*, eradicated surrounding gardens and orchards (Lionatou and Tsalikidis, 2013, p. 373). This change posed the two concepts of landscape (urban-rural) in a fragile balance. Consequently, part of cities became inadequate to urban facilities, in between the urban landscape, while country settlements followed the urban example forgetting basic agricultural knowledge.

Today, the economic crisis, on the rise of food insecurity problem, in parallel with a kind of social and psychological mistrust, finds the majority of Greek society, skeptical towards institutions. Some people migrate from Greece, some leave the city, but this can be a solution only for a few. The majority of citizens, grown up in urban environments, a new generation of urban residents, have to stay in cities

in lack of basic infrastructure (Kleinmann, 2013, p. 1). A movement “back to the land” is a reality. Some Municipalities, like the Municipality of Alexandroupoli, of Volos and of Larissa, in northern and central Greece, have organized areas for urban agriculture (2-3 ha) in the periurban fringe. Lots of about 20-30 m² are intended to unemployed citizens, while an interesting “bottom-up” movement, usually with political background, is detected to recapture collectively, vacant greenfields within the city core. A case like that is “ParkingParko” in Exarcheia, Athens, a plot designed by the Municipality to become parking area, where citizens reacted in need of more open spaces and converted it into a collective garden, a place for meeting, with some cultivable parts⁸. Respectively, another group of citizens occupied a former botanical garden in Petroupoli, Athens, and converted it into a new garden for cultivations (common and separate), a greenhouse area (in existing greenhouse) and in a hall for meetings and collective activities⁹.

In Thessaloniki, the remarkable “top-down” UA examples are two: a) the Aristotle University’s territory (3 ha) in Thermi Municipality, in the eastern periurban arc of the city, where plots of 100 m² area are given to citizens with a cost of 120 euros/year and for 3 years¹⁰ and b) within the city, in Municipality of Sykies, where an area of 1000m² is given to about

Fig. 1 – Location of Lachanokipi in
Thessaloniki.

20 families (40m² each) selected by the Municipality according to social criteria, without any cost for a period of at least 2 years. In both cases, a group of agricultural experts advises cultivators on a regular basis. Lastly, a self-organized community garden exists also in Thessaloniki, in the area of the former military campus of Pavlos Melas-Karatasou (2 ha), in western districts of Thessaloniki. The group that captured the space in 2011, is called PER.KA (Periurban Cultivators) and started as a group with common political action against the authorities' inertia¹¹. After fights with local Municipality, they occupied the space, they connected it illegally to the water system and divided the area in parcels of 35 m². Today PER.KA counts about 150 members, and focuses in the cultivation and reproduction of organic seeds.

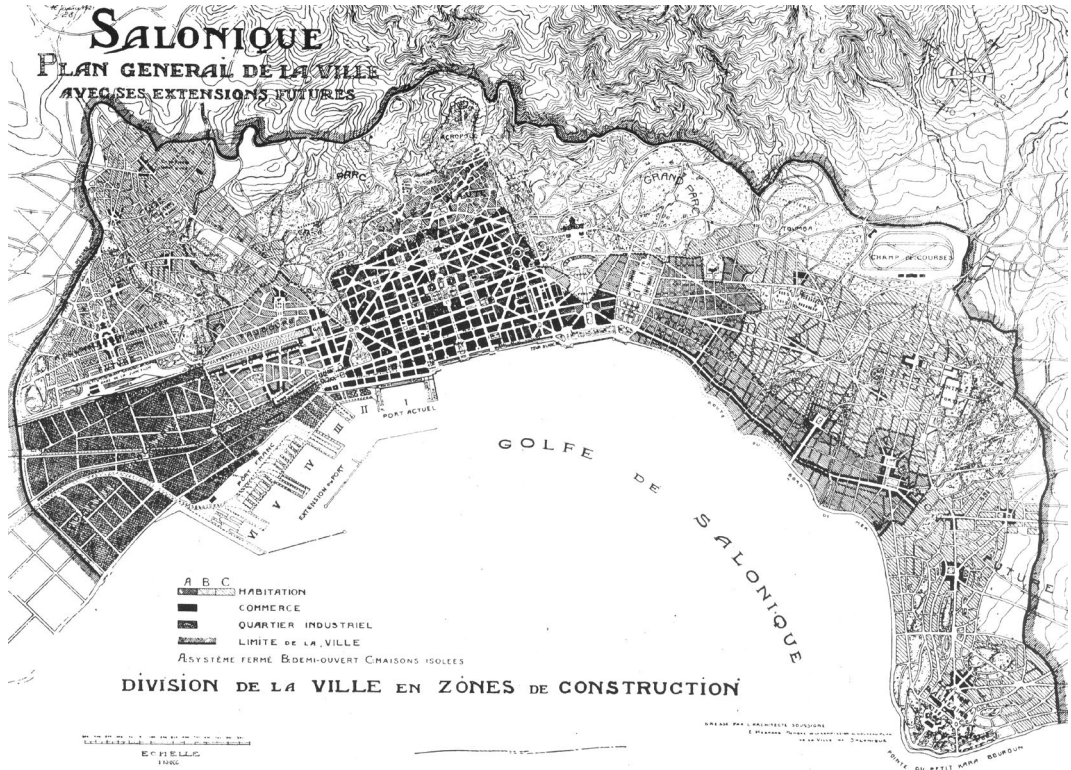
However none of the existing forms of U.A. in Thessaloniki, even in Greece has experimented today the blending of top-down and bottom-up dynamics, the landscape design, the work of the experts with the changing forces of communities. None of the existing forms treats the productive landscapes more as landscapes, in need of "synthesis", and the "food" a planning and design tool with social, economic, cultural, ecological and finally cultural dimensions, as an urban planning tool, more than an illusion of self-sufficiency.

The Thessaloniki Project – Red and Green

Exactly, with this remarks the rural-urban dipole and its impact on self-sufficiency problem in Greek cities, became the main theme for discussion of a course in the Joint Postgraduate Program Landscape Architecture, School of Architecture, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, entitled: "Architectural Design and Landscape", directed by the professors: Holm Kleinmann and Sarantis G.Z. Zafeiropoulos, in the Fall Semester of 2014.

The Thessaloniki Project – Red and Green, as it was named, focused upon the renewal of an abandoned former industrial complex, in the inner city of Thessaloniki, with innovative urban landscape design strategies and approaches. According to Holm Kleinmann "it aimed through design to investigate new solutions in urban and landscape planning. The basic assumption of the studio was the belief that UA can be a center for new energies, a source and initial point for social, economic, educational restart with impact to new forms of integration". The name "Red and Green" derived from the kind of new urban typologies researched through design process, and trying to give answers to problems of transforming a waste land, turning a big green void into a useful area. "Green" represented interventions of green infrastructures, large scale parks or small individual gardens, fruit and vegetable markets, pa-





vilions for leisure, communication and education, places for garden cafes, shadow-spending areas, orchards and olive groves. “Red” played a role model in relation with the social identity, the community living, the political statement. Students were called to start with an urban, architectural, landscape, a social and poetic analysis of the place, to pass from tradition to contemporary, recognizing new identities and current needs for a new typology of urban development, and of urban and landscape design” (Kleinmann, 2013, p. 2).

The study area (52 ha) is called after the wider “Lachanokipi” area. It is located in the west side of Thessaloniki adjacent to important transportation nodes and landmarks of periurban and urban landscape (fig. 1).

The name “Lachanokipi” derives from the 18th century, when the site was a cultivated land (lachano=vegetables, kipos=garden) for the citizens-owners of small, private plots with vineyards, orchards and

vegetables. After the big fire of 1917, Ernest Hébrar’s plan for Thessaloniki’s redesign, determined for Lachanokipi district the industrial land use, since it was a common operation for the cities of the 20th century (Yerolympos, 1996, pp. 109-114) and the area was gradually transformed into a secondary sector core alongside with the new transportation network (railway, highway) (fig. 2).

Today, because of the economic recession, productive activities have stopped, mutating this part into a brownfield, a waste land, a kind of drosscape, according to the definition of Alan Berger¹², without identity, left to decay and in need of regeneration. The proximity to the intercity bus station (KTEL) contributes to the area pollution, keeping it accessible and vivid only during the daylight. The physiognomy of the site is delineated by high density due to immigration of 2000s, new housing district and the adjacent poor residential area, the roma ghetto of “Dendropotamos”. The old character of Lacha-

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Fig. 2 – General Masterplan for Thessaloniki, 1918 (Ernest Hébrar Architect) (Yerolympos, A., 1996).

nokipoi is vouched by the 4-5 remaining small family agricultural units and greenhouses as well as by the big vegetable market of the city that exists nearby, called “Lachanagora”. This complicated mix of sites causes an indeterminable identity of the semi-urban / semi-rural landscape (fig. 3).

Case study 1 – The Agri Labor School

The current economic framework, as well as the need for stronger primary sector, directed the division of the masterplan into two different areas, according to processes of landscape design, top-down and bottom-up respectively, aiming to create an urban multifunctional green infrastructure¹³ (fig. 4). The proposal of Eleftheria Gavrilidou, Eleni Ourelidou, Dionysia Dedousi, architects and Maria Ritou agriculturist, was called “Agri Labor School” (A.L.S.) and suggests an Open School about garden design, agriculture, harvesting, plants’ care, food production, cooking, conservation supported by the primary productive clusters of the city (Sindos industrial cluster, Diavata Agricultural Holding, Imathia Greenhouses), commercial institutions (Thessaloniki International Fair) and the research power of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

According to Zsuzsa Fáczányi, reviewer, A.L.S. would be a core for “product receipts innovation, new food research and agri-knowledge” (Fáczányi,

2013, pp. 7), an interdisciplinary ground for research and experimentation on the field of urban agriculture and agricultural studies, an experimental field of return of food in the city. The concept of “foodscape” was treated in the case of A.L.S., firstly as a common motivation to recompose a new social environment. The community could then rebirth a wasteland and restore landscape legibility in the west border of the city, not arbitrarily but according to a plan, a design, a composition of the landscape, mixing in this way the role of the landscape architect and the power of communities in a contemporary field of interest. The food could also bring together the city’s inactive forces; social groups, educational institutions, entrepreneurs, local food industry. This ambitious goal to recreate a stalled space – but traditional core of city’s food production –, into a pole able to rejuvenate the whole city, formed the vision and the basic concept with great economic, social, ecological, even cultural perspectives, a real “resilience” goal.

Therefore, part A, the “green” is created and designed as a multifunctional green space, with characteristics of extroversion, bringing economic benefits and upgrading the surroundings. Canopies are designed according to the cracked linear system of the initial idea and serve as meeting points, hosting open bazaars and markets. The buildings of A.L.S



Former military campus

Dendropotamos ghetto

Bus Station node

West New housing district

Study area

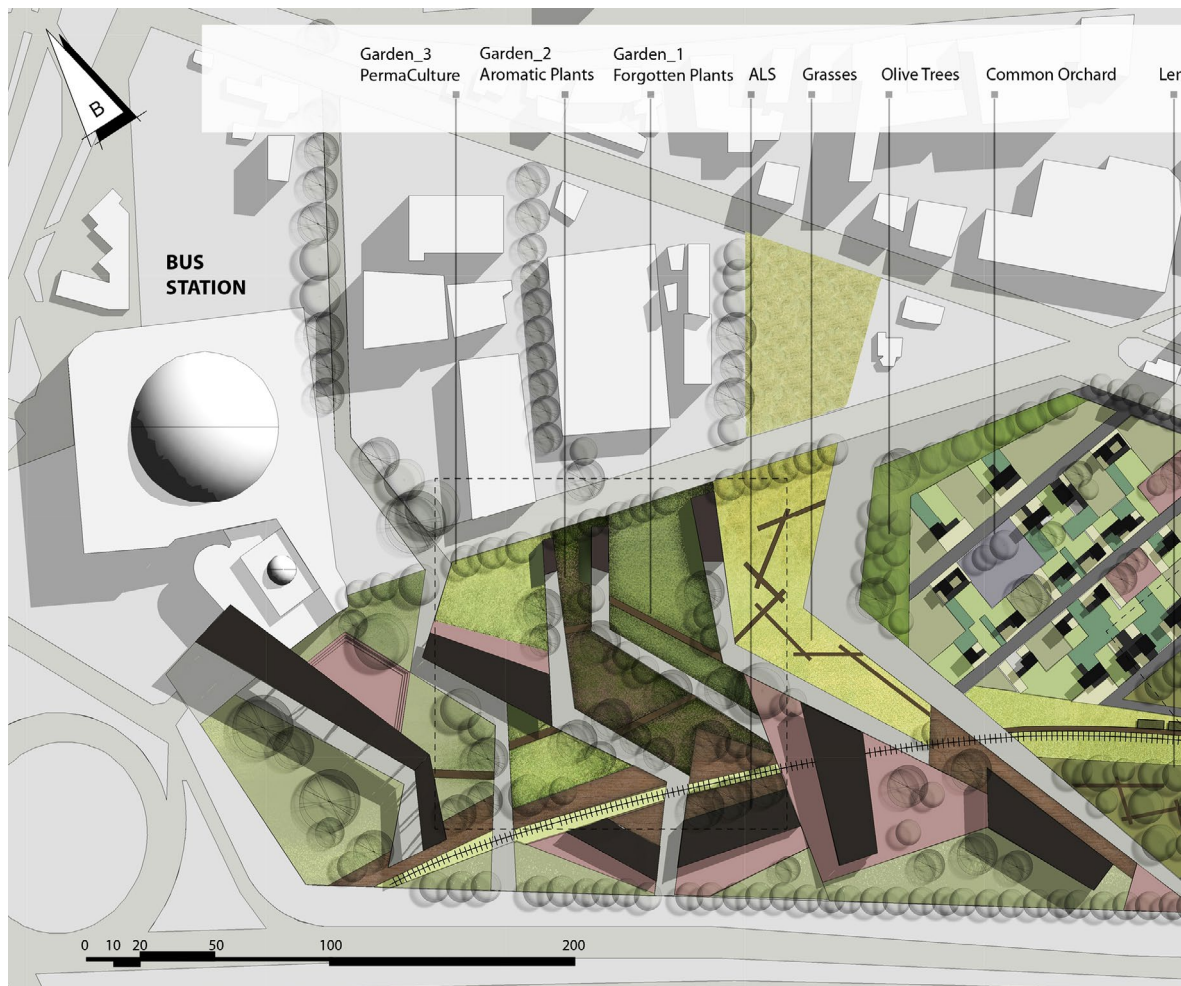
Industrial district 2 and the Port

Industrial district 1

are offered to designers, architects, landscape architects, artists, agriculturists, biologists, geologists, physicians, to study the land and the landscape at scale 1:1, to organize workshops, lectures and seminars, open kitchens and common tables and exhibitions which demonstrate production and consumption procedures (Fig. 4). Thus, three different types of thematic gardens/parks are proposed, the permaculture garden, the garden of forgotten plants and the garden of native aromatics and herbs (fig. 5). Additionally, traces of the pre-existing railway, become a green belvedere. A green route supports structurally the proposal, becoming the root of knowledge, which connects Intercity Bus Station with the proposed thematic gardens. A canopy hosts an open market and leads to a “core of art” located in the center of the bus station, a space designed as a landmark, the entrance for A.L.S. It attracts visitors to follow the route and to experience the process of food production, from cultivations till packaging, promoting the product, marketing it and selling it. Additionally to part A, part B, the “red”, is designed, which represents the concept of communal cultivation. The extrovert route of knowledge penetrates part B and becomes a line of crops, a track of movement and sensation, following the old train line that was serving in the past commercial transport of the food production. On this linear path, wagons

for food storage and appropriate space for food processing are introduced. The whole area is organized in private plots and common points, common cultivations, common orchards, common vineyards and common olive trees, along with points for social gathering in periods of specific cultivation and harvesting. Furthermore, public spaces and smaller squares are hosting second hand bazaars and food exchanging spots. People who reside in the area, are motivated to exchange their products between each other, forming a society based on lack of money. In part B, the different social groups of users are specifically located in the area, including configured buffering zones. Group A (new permanent users) and group B (temporal residents) mix with each other spatially, while group C (users in need of social integration) is partly separated but really incorporated into the new social environment. Squares and public cultivation spaces function as spots for social interaction and integration (fig. 6).

In the end, the designing process follows two different concepts, one top-down and one bottom-up. While the first part is organized by top-down process as a public thematic part for research and educational uses, the second part aims to restore and evoke the sense of community and the need for products' exchange, formed by bottom-up initiatives in a given spatial framework. In both



parts, the ecological aspect defines the design process through an interdisciplinary approach. Finally, combining both parts, our landscape project could operate as a generator for socio-economic transformation. This model, top-down and bottom-up, proposes new life-styles and social environments and envisions a new way of living the urban life ("red" and "green" as "community" and "infrastructure"), where the power of the communities is coordinated by a strategic plan, and a designed framework for the landscape evolution. The "food" becomes in parallel incentive for social empowerment, and conceptual tool for plant-

ings. It brings new aesthetic qualities and describes an opportunity for innovation and research. It finally consists a cultural trace of an old tradition, component of a common identity, part of a new collective memory and a new agent of coherence.

Case Study 2 – KIP0S³ project: a network of community gardens in the city of Thessaloniki

The conclusions generated by the A.L.S. experience, on the role of landscape architect as the orchestrator of evolution, the landscape reading as the basic, creative lens in decision making process, the importance of designing forms regarding the flexible



Fig. 4 – Masterplan “Agri Labor School”.

action of communities, and the role of food as the new capacitor of blending forces, uses, spatial experiences and socio-economic dynamics, were inevitably intriguing insights on a desirable passage to reality. After the completion of “Red and Green” project in “Lachanokipi” and on the occasion of the Angelopoulos Fellowship 2014 program that occurs in collaboration with the Clinton Global Initiative and supports start-up initiatives related with environmental, social and public health issues, another version of UA in Thessaloniki was envisioned¹⁴. E. Gavriliidou, E. Oureilidou and M. Ritou, proposed a community gardens network in the city, reclaim-

ing residual open spaces for a transformation into a green and red infrastructure on a low cost level¹⁵.

The proposal aimed to create a motivation for people to perceive the impact of communal implication in public space, the value of productive landscapes and the power of collective engagement, this time in the core of the city.

The idea of “KIPOS³ – City as a resource”¹⁶, a network of urban community gardens in the dense urban grid, refers to the transformation of unformed spaces and urban voids into spots for com-

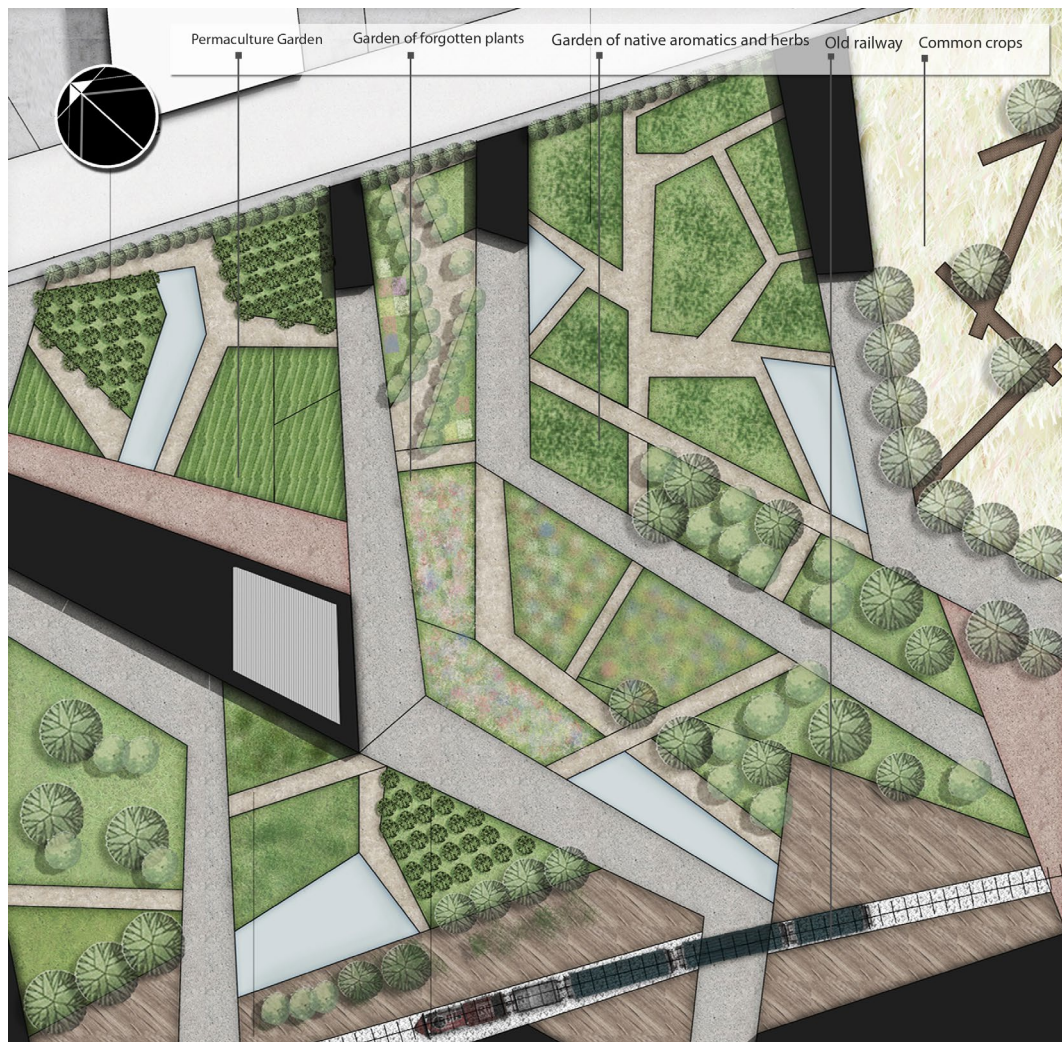


Fig. 5 – “Green”.

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Fig. 6 – “Red”.

mon gardening and alive community activities driving a broader impact on Greek city's everyday life. It shows how the authorities are required to guide citizens' action and how citizens should take initiatives, become more active in relation with their neighborhood, the environment they live in, finding the food again as the magnet for positive change. A module lot of 500 m² as a design model was examined to become a productive garden, containing at least 200 m² cultivation area in pots and 300 m²

circulation and seating areas and other plantings (trees, herbs e.t.c) to cover the needs of families of a whole building block.

Mapping the city

The first phase of the implementation was the detection of the appropriate, possible spaces for a pilot garden inside the city core; a process guided by the Green Department of Municipality. Unbuilt spaces were examined according to ownership pa-



rameters, accessibility and size, sense of neighborhood and appropriate conditions for plants' growth. Among the main owners were the Church of Greece, the monastery Moni Vlatadon, the Metropolitan Church of Thessaloniki, the Catholic Church of Greece, as these own the majority of the last unexploited lots in the dense city core.

This research concluded on top six spaces, appropriate for urban common gardening described below:

1. Agios Nikolaos Orphanos Church in Old City (Ano Poli), a monument under the protection of UNESCO. In that case there is a small scale well protected vegetable garden which could be amplified, creating a bigger entity and occupying a larger part of the existing garden.
2. The "Garden of 4 Seasons", which is part of the new architectural intervention in the waterfront of the city¹⁷. The name refers to an urban valley that promotes the experience of color and texture changes in plants, planted at random. The location would give high attentiveness to the public, a guarantee for best dissemination.
3. Adjacent to the linear waterfront landscape architectural project, an abandoned field owned by

the “Church of Greece” is sited. This space has all needed characteristics, like appropriate sun, right spatial orientation, required for plants growth, area’s size and existing fencing protection.

4. A lot owned by the “Catholic Church of Greece” was studied for its potential reuse as it was also considered as a space in an enclosed neighborhood in the core of the city, well protected by a high fence. The space was in condition of a “jungle”, untouched for decades where trees and plants have grown out of control, preventing any activity or use. The space was converted gradually into a trash hob.
5. The pilot garden could also gain a direct educational impact by being implemented next or inside the courtyards of schools and specially primary schools. In east side of Thessaloniki, empty and misused spaces were spotted next to primary schools, appropriate for transformation. This alternative is still open for discussion.
6. Last but not least, the Municipality proposed to participate in the green extension of a former hack stand in central location in addition to an urban Vineyard, set up about 3 years ago. This option was eventually chosen for the first pilot implementation as the most applicable and gained support by the Municipality of Thessaloniki.

Disseminaton Activities as necessary Start-Ups for an Interplay of “Top-Down” and “Bottom-Up”

On the Foundation level

The starting point for KIPOS³ project was set in Phoenix, Arizona, in March 2014. The project participated in Clinton Global Initiative University Annual Meeting that was held in Arizona State University. The idea was chosen by Angelopoulos CGIU Fellowship as a change-maker commitment. There, the team gained the experience of a big scale community garden and it’s organization for the whole city. “PHX RENEWS”, the initiative of Municipality of Phoenix to reclaim empty lots and transform them into gardens in collaboration with private and public institutions (University, NGOs, Restaurants, Nurseries, Construction Companies, Charities, Volunteers’ networks) was impressive and proved that yes, the vision can be a reality in U.S.A., why not in Greece?

On the level of Media

Next the approach of UA in Thessaloniki as a Resource for the city was promoted then continually with all means; on level of media in the journal Kathemerini¹⁸, in DAAD’s Information Center of Athens¹⁹, in NWZ (Nordwest Zeitung)²⁰, in Journal Pro-to Thema²¹, in the e-magazine Parallaxi²². The project also was promoted via social media and via the

online portfolio “City as a Resource”²³ continuously updated, aiming to provide details on the team’s visions, dispersing at the same time the idea of urban gardens in Thessaloniki and establishing appropriate conditions for the realization of the idea in a typical neighborhood.

On the academic level

Team’s research and projects expanded also on academic level with presentations in the conferences PECSRL 2014 “Unravelling the Logics of Landscape”²⁴, in Gothenburg and Mariestad, Sweden, in URC Urban Regions Under Change, in Hafen City University, Hamburg, Germany, in S.Arch Sustainable Architecture Conference, in Belgrade, Serbia.

On the specialist’s level

On Specialists’ level the projects were presented in Engineers’ Association of Thessaloniki, at the event “Healthy Cities, Happy Cities”, Thessaloniki, and also at the environmental, architectural and landscape architectural exhibition “Imagine the City”, in Thessaloniki.

On the level of Neighborhood

Several actions were employed aiming to get the citizens of Thessaloniki informed about the idea and to poll their reactions. Particularly useful was

the hanging up of posters to inform residents of different neighborhoods about the vision of a community garden and call them to vote for the creation of an urban community garden in their district. Flyers with contacting details, and short description of the project with the motto “Don’t’s Shhhh but ACT!” were hanged up door-to-door.

On the level of Municipality

KIPOS³ had several contacts in all scales of Municipality’s authorities, with a repeated positive acceptance of the idea, but not actual support. The initiative didn’t turn quickly into a strategic vision, an embraced idea that could move on all the mechanisms of city, legal, material, space’s availability, communication and promotion media to get established as an “Innovation for Thessaloniki”. The Mayor of Thessaloniki, Mr. Giannis Boutaris espoused the idea and showed willingness to help with all available means.

On level of Private Enterprise and other Institutions

Among the invitations to external institutions to support the idea in any way, the American Farm School of Thessaloniki, showed interest to become the expertise mentor of the project and a restaurant known for offering social support to unemployed people, “Mageires”. The restaurant’s owner sup-

ported initially the idea, offering the opportunity to promote it, but with the term of owing the whole garden, excluding other users, so it was rejected. Furthermore, the idea was communicated to all institutions responsible for green infrastructures and environmental actions in Greece, like: “WWF Hellas”, who responded positively and immediately, encouraging team’s visions. “Next 2u – Thessaloniki” official volunteers and a special group of volunteers of Municipality of Thessaloniki were unwilling to implicate in any construction works. The PER.KA team (Periurban Cultivators of West Thessaloniki’s former military campus) expressed their interest but focused on the necessity for ideological and political background which was out of the team’s scope.

The Public Vineyard

After completing the process of “mapping the city”, the idea was implemented next to the existing public vineyard. The vineyard, in an open green space, protected with a low fence, was planned for “the wine of the city” with the contribution of neighbors, volunteers and students from the School of Agriculture. The vineyard was boosted some years ago thanks to small fruit trees which were planted to create a unit of vineyard–orchard and possibly vegetable garden. So KIPOS³ main goal is to add a garden for the neighborhood, for a limited time period,

in order to review public approval. Another aspect of this decision is that people should re-use this space, since they expressed publically their disappointment on municipality’s decision to transform the former existing park into a vineyard. The door-to-door dissemination actions described above were implemented in this case also (fig. 7).

Reflections and Conclusions

The academic concept in relation with changing professional realities

The experience of “Thessaloniki Red & Green Project” explored the concept of “Urban Agriculture” in an academic design project, goal-orientated with the idea of a final “master-plan”, but without the preexistence of an organized group of people willing to follow and to keep up the idea of realization. The project posed the questions: Is a “master-plan” at all the right instrument to correspond to an ordered urban development and simultaneously being able to open the scope of wide ranges of structural and spatial specifications and modifications in regard for undefined protagonists and activists, in the field of “Urban Agriculture”? And should the issue of UA be treated in such a large planning scale like this in “Lachanokipoi”?

There are many justified doubts and a lot of criticism on master-plans with its claim of over determi-

Fig. 7 – The KIPOS³ garden near the public vineyard (photo: Eleftheria Gavriilidou).

nation, and we agree totally with today's demands for more complex and softer procedures. Land-use is no longer just defined by design and purpose from "top-down". It is related to the capacity of continuous development, giving room for "the uncertainty or the unpredictability of unplanned instead of ordering precisely structures and functions" (Mostafavi, 2003, pp. 5). It has to adapt to citizen's needs and "bottom-up" initiatives, to local responsibilities, to economic and ecological impulse with many stages of coordination and interventions of all protagonists.

But in spite of this insight the decision to deal with a "master-plan" in an academic studio, is the right tool to work in multiple directions. Both are of strong educational value and a good practice for acting in the future. On the one hand, the students have to put on "professional shoes" simulating the position of a municipality by operating with well-experienced planning equipment and well-known actors of implementation (clients and investors). And on the other hand, there is the challenge to think in programmatic terms – inventive uses, activities, events, installations or happenings, temporarily or permanently, stamped by necessary social cohesion and community spirit, generating a new planning culture of less authoritarian impact from "top-down".



In the future these abilities will be of strong and stronger importance for city planners and architects. The innovative capability for new urban development concepts will ask for skills offering spaces without total determination free for flexible development.

Furthermore due to the decision for a large planning area, project discussions are more directed to strategic thinking compared to “small” projects. In most cases those are bound to a spontaneous idea or action, manageable in both personal and material costs, which approaches easily the well-studied architect’s procedure as a “stroke of genius”. In case of an Urban Agriculture Program this might restrict discussions one-dimensionally, for example in a predominantly occupation of the area only with allotments. There would be hardly any stimuli for a more complex interplay of mixed uses on private and public level, as seen with the integration of a research-center of the university and private enterprise, the proposed idea of public gardens like that of forgotten plants and a network of gardens throughout Thessaloniki.

Research on strategies for a future “public green” and on time-based scenarios

Again this project makes clear, that a new understanding is necessary in dealing with urban unbuilt

areas in the future, in particular with the “public green”. It is a fact that for financial reasons the majority of cities and municipalities can hardly afford new green spaces and the management or maintenance of the existing. But the phenomenon of growing cities all over the world asks urgently and more necessary than ever, for the need of continuous green for climatic and recreational reasons.

Within the field of supply with urban green, new strategies, in respect to the role of Urban Agriculture, have to be studied and developed. There is a need for more scientific research, research by design and applied research on social interaction. Future design studios of architectural and urban education have to deal intensively with these aspects, at the best on an interdisciplinary level.

There has to be a shift to more projects on “public green” with enhanced programmatic and design background of UA for private use and care. And furthermore “time-based scenarios”, bridging over gaps from one use to the next, will get an increasing importance. In time-based scenarios, embedded in an overall urban regeneration strategy with “bottom-up” character, the focus has not to be necessarily on the aesthetic part of architecture and urban design. Much more important, and this might be a decisive element, is the use of its professional potentials for interventions which help to create a

specific chemistry among the protagonists for common action and activity.

One lesson of this project is to gain an understanding that the role of architecture, urban and landscape design might be more modest and less self-effacing. It has to be powerful in presenting spatial premises for a good life, not only an individual life.

Acceptance, relationship and attitude towards a new planning approach and the role of "social spirit"

Could this seminar contribute with regard a) to a serious discussion and assessment on the general meaningfulness and about prospects on success of the topic of U.A in Greece or Thessaloniki, and b) to a critical dissemination outside the university, or c) perhaps even giving motivation to the participation of students to transfer the idea or some parts of it into reality?

Contacting institutions with environmental and social impact, employees of municipality, who are responsible for management and maintenance of green spaces in Thessaloniki, clubs of architects and engineers, volunteering teams and religious institutions filled us with experience on sharing our vision and promoting our idea.

As far as different responses are concerned, our

team faced up with a range of reactions. Municipality appeared willing to help, though not so helpful and accurate on decision making processes. Environmental and social institutions appeared positive, but couldn't provide us with any tangible help, while volunteering teams who were able to work with us on construction and promotion of the idea, didn't respond on time. Meanwhile, clubs of architects and engineers supported modestly the presentation of urban gardening in the city center, sometimes even with doubts, without offering any assistance on its realization and real-size implementation. The neighborhood's reactions were positive with a reserved optimism, but they saw in the background of this initiative one more poll, only a case study or a useless municipality's idea without meaning and far of their real needs for employment, better transportation systems, green infrastructure, playgrounds etc.

Last but not least, the team coped with the negative reaction of church's authorized representatives, although the concept of urban gardening encompasses social contribution, real collaboration between neighborhoods and economic motivations to people in need of economic assistance due to well-known crisis. Even the participating students in "Thessaloniki Red & Green studio" project reacted with distrust to the collective use of public space



and showed difficulty to handle the concept temporality and bottom-up formation within a master-plan.

There are in general worries by the institutions and by private land-owners on informal activities and of temporary actions to become permanent. Even entities with predominant social responsibilities followed without exception a strictly economic market behavior and refused approval.

“Red and Green” and the topic of “social spirit” in Greece

In many European countries a “red” development started strongly with ideas of community facilities, communal mindset and social activities around 1900. The “green” movement followed later, and nowadays we have to detect a considerable overwhelming revival, not least by urban agriculture and urban gardening in many countries of the world. But this doesn’t include Greece. Due to diverse experiences in the last centuries of hardship, occupation, expulsion, wars, dictatorship there is a generalized deep mistrust by Greek people of authorities and any form of external influences and foreign control. For them confidence is only to be found in the family and in close familiar terms.

Does this historic-cultural phenomenon represent a decisive obstacle for planning approaches, which

are based on the idea of “social spirit”? We don’t think so! We rather believe in the field of “Urban Agriculture” as an excellent integrator for a cooperative coming-together, “Urban Agriculture” as a “school” for a trustful living and working together, even outside family structures, and a step towards the direction of “social spirit”.

UA needs both “Bottom-Up” and “Top-Down”. Official start-up-support, legislative, financial, with labor and material, incentives

UA in Greece needs both “Bottom-Up” and “Top-Down” support legislative, financial incentives for a start firstly and maintenance secondly. The latest positive examples from Zürich Switzerland, Andernach, Germany (90% reduction of maintenance costs) and from U.S.A (PHX RENEWS) approve the dynamic and the benefits of this implementation model.

“Foodscape” in “Crisis”

We asked ourselves from the beginning and we were rather curious, whether the material consequences of the economic crisis would possibly influence and activate “Urban Agriculture” projects.

The dramatic “Crisis” in Greece up to this moment doesn’t seem to play any specific role as a possible activator for an enhancement of community and

social spirit orientated projects, like Urban Agriculture. We can't perceive some particular reaction by land-owners, institutions, students in general and not either by the participating students of the academic project. A laudable exception is the Municipality of Thessaloniki with the vineyard and KIPOS³ project as well as the Aristotle University Thessaloniki by providing a huge/large area of university land for individual gardening.

However, both projects, revealed "food" in the core of the crisis discussion, not as a means for self-sufficiency only, but mainly as a key tool for building in a holistic way urban resilience. The re-introduction of production in the urban environment operated in the case of A.L.S. as a strategic means for the overall urban transformation of the west postindustrial land of the city, as a common field for the scattered neighborhoods and the heterogeneous social groups, as a cluster of research with greater impact for the city's economy and innovation dynamics, as a perceptual gesture to restore landscape's legibility. On the process of implementing the academic experience in reality, the "food" in the case of KIPOS³, at the minimum scale of urban intervention, was used as the "carrot" to bring change, as the new, hopeful, unusual in the Thessaloniki's reality, idea, powerful to activate a discussion into the Municipality's offices and also in the city's streets.

It became the "way" Municipality could come closer to its strategic vision "the residents to apply stewardship on public space" and in parallel it operated as a very interesting experimentation for the first 11 neighbors, it appealed more than 3 other neighborhoods in the discussion, one Municipality of Southern Greece, and the interest of the Department of Environment of High and Primary Schools of Thessaloniki, which found "the garden" as an inspiring point for the school courtyards. KIPOS³ became "foodscape", hobby, meeting point, walk, square, everyday coffee hour, landmark for the city, even an encyclopedia of a different nature in urban environment. For the landscape architecture students, it became a new field of study, a light in the dark and an unexpected drive to a new market, a new group of clients, "unconstructed" yet, but very promising. Hopefully, this is the minimum turning point, the very first "taste" of an upcoming "landscape of change".

Note

¹ "Urban agriculture (UA) is an industry located within (intra-urban) or in the fringe of a town, a city or a metropolis, which grows and raises, processes and distributes a diversity of food and non-food products, (re-)using largely human and material resources, products and services found in and around that urban area, and in turn supplying human and material resources, products and services largely to that urban area" (Mougeot and Luc, 2003, p. 2).

² The term Allotment is defined in the Allotments Act of 1925 as "an allotment garden or any parcel of land not more than 5 acres [about 2ha] in extent cultivated or intended to be cultivated as a garden farm, or partly as a garden farm and partly as a farm (Perez-Vazquez et al., 2005, p. 240).

³ "Permaculture is about producing food in environmental-sound way. It's about people growing their own land and using it for themselves, their immediate family and possibly the local community" (Sherriff, 2005, p. 222).

⁴ UA has spread to become a critical source of food for urban populations in countries affected by natural disasters (Honduras), economic crises (Togo), civil wars (Armenia) and disease epidemics (Mlawi) (Mougeot and Luc, 2003, p. 3).

⁵ "Urban Agriculture Casablanca" is a German-Moroccan research project of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) within the megacity research programme "Research for the Sustainable Development of Megacities of Tomorrow, Focus: Energy – and climate – efficient structures in urban growth centers (Giseke, 2011).

⁶ "Urban Farming is growing a green future", Tribute to National Geographic e-magazine <http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/photos/urban-farming/#/earth-day-urban-farming-venezuela_51635_600x450.jpg> (03/01/2015).

⁷ See mappings for American cities at: <www.596acres.org/>, <groundedinphilly.org/>, <<https://laopenacres.org/#10/34.2981/-118.0769>>, <www.ediblecities.org/> (14/12/2014),

"Grounds for change – Activating vacant lands. A project for community progress", <www.gfcactivatingland.org/about/> (03/01/2015).

⁸ Parking Parko <www.parkingparko.espivblogs.net> (05/01/2015).

⁹ Botanic garden Petroupoli <www.youtube.com/watch?v=zE-JNFxoiVgg> (05/01/2015).

¹⁰ AUTH cultivable lots <www.eco.auth.gr/wordpress/?page_id=3425> (05/01/2015).

¹¹ PERKA, <www.perka.org/node/226> (05/01/2015).

¹² The approach of Alan Berger for drosscapes is interesting at this point: "Drosscapes require design to be implemented as an activity that is capable of adapting to changing circumstances [...]. The importance of drosscape is only appreciated through a bottom up advocacy process" (Berger, 2006, pp. 210).

¹³ Final Review on 23.01.2013, Jury Members: 1. Ananiadou – Tzimopoulou Maria, Prof. Agriculturist, Landscape Architect ENSP, Aristotle University Thessaloniki, Greece, 2. Angelis Alexis, Architect BDA, Angelis + Partners, Oldenburg Germany, 3. Fáczy I Zsuzsa, Architect, Ybl Miklós Szent István University Budapest, Hungary, 4. Kleinmann Holm, Prof. Architect BDA, Jade Hochschule, Oldenburg Germany, 5. Morabito Valerio, Prof. Architect, Landscape Architect, PENN University of Pennsylvania, USA, 6. Sack Johannes, Architect, Stuttgart Germany, 7. Tsalikidis Ioannis, Prof. Agriculturist, Landscape Architect MLA, Aristotle University Thessaloniki, Greece, 8. Zafeiropoulos Sarantis, Prof. Architect, Aristotle University Thessaloniki, Greece.

¹⁴ Angelopoulos GIU Fellowship and the Ambassador Mrs. Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki support the ideas of students in Greece with their participation in the annual Clinton Global Initiative University Conference in U.S.A. and with financial assistance for the pilot implementation of their ideas to obtain the dynamic of new a start-up with great social impact in their country.

Angelopoulos GIU Fellowships <www.angelopoulosgiu.org/> (02/01/2015).

¹⁵ 100 Resilient cities of the world. The Rockefeller Foundation <www.100resilientcities.org/cities/entry/thessaloniki#/-Yz5jJmg%2FCd1PWjwb28%3D> (02/05/2015).

¹⁶ "Kipos^{3D}" in Greek means garden. The "Cubed" is related with the idea of a module editable and adoptable in all dimensions



of the urban environment (vacant lots, uncovered spaces, rooftops).

¹⁷ The waterfront of Thessaloniki was redesign in 2001 via architectural competition gained by Prodomos Nikiforidis and Bernard Cuomo Architects according to the concept of twelve "open rooms" or gardens of different spatial qualities (Nikiforidis – Cuomo Architects, 2014).

¹⁸ Kathemerini, Athens, 28.12.2013.

¹⁹ Newsletter in Greek and German Version No. 12, February 2014.

²⁰ NWZ, Oldenburg/Germany 13.03.2014.

²¹ Proto Thema, Athens 27.07.2014.

²² <http://parallaximag.gr/parallax-view/kipos-eis-ston-kyvo> (Accessed January 2, 2015).

²³ Facebook page: City as a Resource.

Portfolio in Issuu: City as a Resource Portfolio <issuu.com/city-as-a-resource/docs/city_as_a_resource_portfolio>.

²⁴ 26th session of the Permanent European Conference on the Study of the Rural Landscape.

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Fig. 9 – The KIPOS³ garden.

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