

Creative Place making and Urban Renaissance: The impact of art spaces in the reconfiguration of Athenian neighborhoods

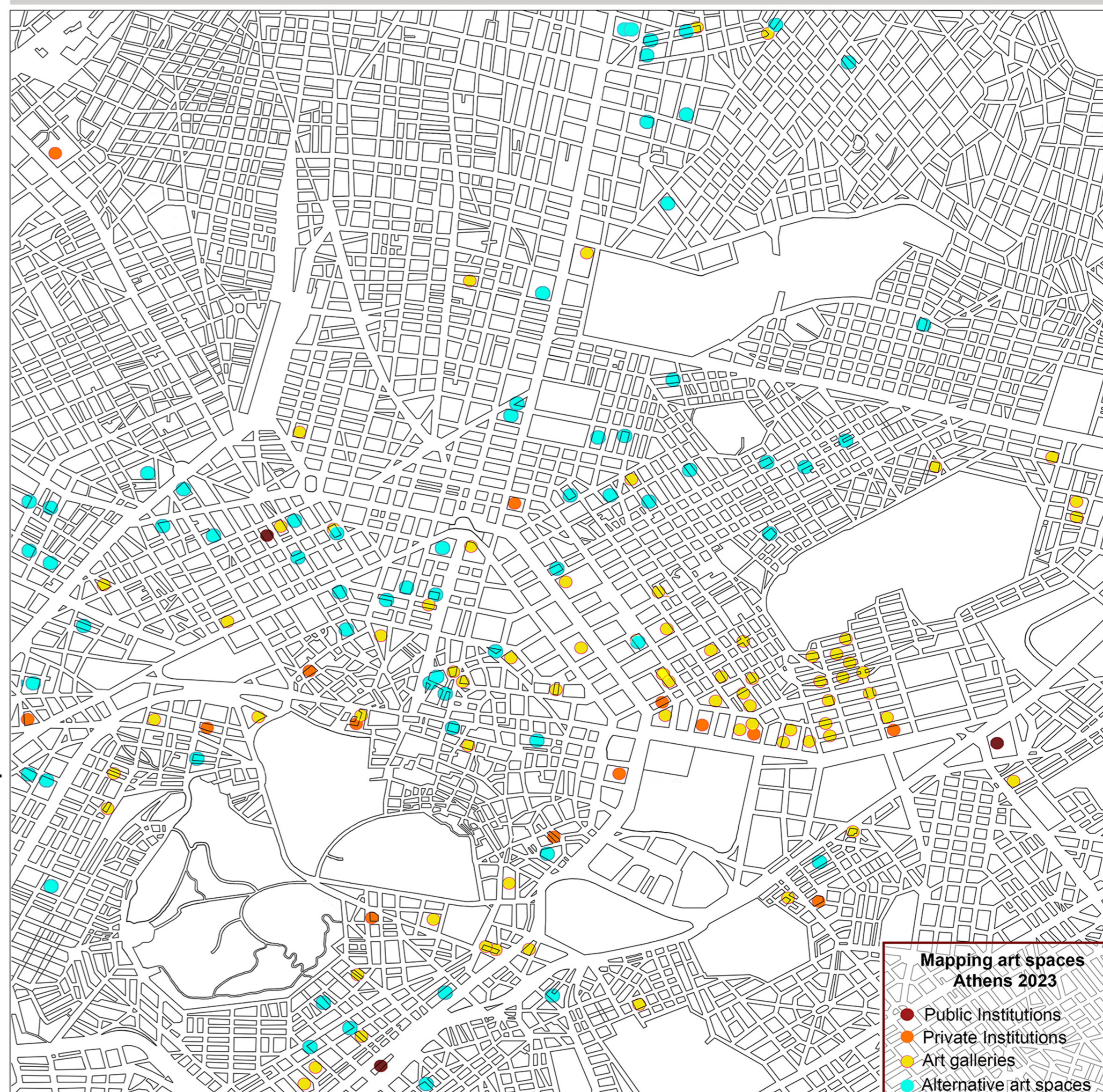
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This work outlines the geography of spaces specializing in the visual arts in Athens - museums, galleries, art residences, and artist-run spaces - which have increased in recent years in the Athenian districts, transforming their countenance and demographic geography. These spaces attract investment and capital as well as new residents and tourists, extraordinarily reinforcing the policies of the current Athenian gentrification processes. The revitalization more accurately describes the role visual arts are increasingly called upon to fulfill in the urban spaces of today's Athens.

The work investigates the spaces specializing in visual arts under a critical prism. Considering culture as a subset of a cultural structure embedded in either the field of class relations or the (national) social space (Bourdieu, 1987), the study connects visual arts with the symbolic capital, which is used as a guide in the exploration of the policies of the new urbanism (Ley, 2003). The study maps the art spaces which try to shape Athens as a creative city, highlighting their socioeconomic effects in the Athenian districts. This work is part of the post-doctoral research entitled "Public Art in Athens: Institutional Characteristics and its Involvement with Urban Policies" at the School of Architecture of NTUA.

Drawing from the international bibliography around the connection of visual arts with urban development mechanisms, the current research aspires to contribute to a deeper understanding of the policies of the "creative city" in the case of Athens. The study has created a primary database for the art spaces activated in Athens, the body of which was constructed in 2016 and is constantly updating, highlighting their particular location in the Athenian urban environment, and trying to outline their impact on public space, housing, demography, and overall on the trends of displacement and internal migration as well as the change of land use they cause.

Art spaces in the spatial unity of Municipality of Athens



The study has identified one hundred and fifty-five (155) spaces specializing in the visual arts, which can be distinguished into four main groups: The public art Institutions. The private or non-profit art organizations. The commercial galleries and the alternative art spaces, most of them have been established in the last six years.



The mapping of art spaces in Athens shows they have multiplied in the last few years. Apart from Kolonaki, which since the post-war era has been the center of the art market in Athens, the prestige axis of Vasilissis Sofias, and the formerly industrial districts of Psiri, Keramikos, and Metaxourgeio, which since the 1990s have been under a culture-led gentrification process, there is significant clustering of alternative art spaces in the historical center as well as in neighborhoods such as Exarhia, Kipseli, Koukaki, and Votanikos. In the next stage, the study will qualitatively explore the art spaces in Athenian districts, mainly focusing on the tight relationship between the visual arts field and the urban development policies.

Main Bibliography

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