

THE REFUGEE ESTABLISHMENT IN GREECE OF MODERN TIMES: INSTITUTIONAL AND URBAN TOOLS FOR THE SPATIAL MANAGEMENT

Eleni G. GAVRA

University of Macedonia, 156 Egnatia Street,
GR-546 36 Thessaloniki,
Greece,
egavra@uom.gr ; klel@otenet.gr

Abstract

The problem of housing in refugee Greece of modern times was recognized, admittedly, as the primary and urgent matter. This significance, moreover, emerged as a logical consequence of the successive and exuberant refugee flows of that period, which led as a first result to the deluge primarily of the urban centers by refugees. The latter, upon their arrival - and while the Exodus still lasted, finding temporary shelter in areas of public use mainly, inevitably and despite the efforts of the health services of Greece, were devastated by hunger and epidemics. This situation, by exaggerating the social tension, forced the Greek state to act, initially creating mechanisms - within the framework of its existing public services at that time - and afterwards addressing to the International Community.

A series of institutional tools and regulations related to settlement policy issues - residential establishment and reconstruction of areas in the urban and rural space - had already appeared since the previous periods of refugee movements in Greece. It is worth mentioning in this respect some of these laws, considering them preponderant in the configuration of the map of the first urban planning regulations for the newly established Greek state.

Keywords: refugee establishment, institutional tools and regulations, settlement policy, urban regeneration.

1. INTRODUCTION. THE FRAMEWORK OF THE REFUGEE ESTABLISHMENT IN GREECE OF MODERN TIMES

The Asia Minor devastation is marked in Greek modern history as a "painful" time point, meaning in parallel the beginning of the creation of the modern Greek state. The sudden change in the demographic characteristics and the geographical distribution of the Greek population form the consequences of the mass arrival of refugees in Greece, especially after the Asia Minor disaster and the implementation of the Treaty of Lausanne. The 1928 population census appears to be the only accurate database, which while recording a number of 1,221,849 refugees, including in them also those coming from Bulgaria, the Caucasus, eastern Thrace and Constantinople, distinguishes them in "bourgeois" (urban residents, townsmen) (673,025 in number) and "peasants" (578.824 in number) (League of Nations - Geneva 1926:

22).¹ These two categories - "bourgeois" and "peasants" - suggested the way of refugee restoration², not the origin or the professional status of the groups or individuals though (Giannakopoulos 1992: 16).³

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2. INSTITUTIONAL AND URBAN PLANNING FRAMEWORK

A series of institutional tools and regulations related to settlement policy issues - residential establishment and reconstruction of areas in the urban and rural space - had already appeared since the previous periods of refugee movements in Greece. It is worth mentioning in this respect some of these laws,

¹ 66% of the total consists of women and children under the age of ten, a consequence of the extermination or (also) the captivity of a large part of the male population. Giannakopoulos *Refugee Greece*, p.16. Moreover, according to the data of the Refugee Restoration Committee (E.A.P.), depending on their origin, Greek refugees were classified as follows: Greeks of Asia Minor and Pontus: about 1.000.000, Greeks of Eastern Thrace: about 190.000, Greeks of Caucasus: about 30.000, Greeks of Bulgaria: about 30.000, and Greeks of Constantinople: about 70.000.

² Concerning the term "restoration" and its distinction from the term "installation", see in: Pelagidis 2003: 85, "...The main element of restoration is not simply the installation and settlement, but the mental and moral dynamism of the refugees in this process. If i.e. the installation constitutes a first step, restoration is the second as a conservation and maintenance process."

³ In addition to the above distinction, Giannakopoulos (1992) states that two other major categories can be formed according to the way and the time of departure, meaning here on the one hand the normally exchanged (refugees) and the inhabitants of Eastern Thrace who managed to transfer during the exchange their property or part of it, in contrast to those - and these were the largest percentage of refugees - who lost everything with the disaster.

⁴ "Churches, schools, public buildings, cinemas, theaters, warehouses, sheds, all had been requisitioned to accommodate refugees. A large number of private residences too. Two years later the railway stations were blocked by refugee camps and four years later there are still refugees housed under tents, all season."

⁵ "...Hunger and epidemics created gaps in both categories. In the plague purgatories they die by hundreds. Dysentery and typhus prevailed. All the winter of 1923, the rash typhus had been spread to almost all the ports and cities within Greece, and it is a miracle that the Health Services managed to intercept him in a few months."

⁶ The Greek government originally decided the establishment of the Refugee Care Fund (T.P.P.), which undertook the construction of lodges for the sheltering of the refugees and was operational until May 1925. Already, in the meantime, since 1923, there was founded the Refugee Restoration Committee (E.A.P.), which undertook the continuation of the work of the T.P.P. The E.A.P. was established by agreement between the Greek government at that time and the League of Nations (29/9/1923: signature of the relevant protocol in Geneva between the L.o.N. (League of Nations) and the Greek government, 7/6/1924: first ratification of the agreement by the Greek parliament). The Committee was active until 1930, when it dissolved.

considering them preponderant in the configuration of the map of the first urban planning regulations for the newly established Greek state.

As far as the characteristics of the first refugee establishments in Greece are concerned, i.e. those that emerged during the 19th century, it is estimated that these are rather scattered and "do not affect the development of the network of settlements in the country" (Karamouzi 1997:21). The settlement policy of the relevant period is considered rather fragmentary, while the institutional instruments referred in this respect (resolutions or laws) appear to arise on a case-by-case basis. The refugee issue enters a particularly critical period for the country at the beginning of the 20th century, when there are also noticed the intense population movements, following the Balkan wars initially and the Asia Minor defeat and devastation thereafter. At that point, the regulatory framework is redefined and the urban planning efforts are put on a new basis.

The first relevant GSB / 1907 Law "on settlement and distribution of lands in Thessaly and the establishment of the Agricultural Fund", a derivative of the state care following the annexation of Thessaly (in 1881) defined, for the particular region of the Greek state, areas of establishment (settlements) for the expatriates (homogenous) "from Eastern Romania, Bulgaria and Rumelia ... together with the Thessalian residents" (Kafkoura 1990).

Seven years later (1914), the Central Committee, which was established in Thessaloniki with the main aim of restituting refugees in Western and Central Macedonia, undertook the agricultural establishment and care of a total of 174.000 expatriate refugees (Mpakalpassi 1923).⁷ Later, refugees from the Caucasus and Pontus (1917), from Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria (1918-1919) were added to them. As a consequence of these events, the state, in the context of creating normative regulations and implementing - by analogy - of a housing social policy, introduced the laws 350/1914 "on the settling of expatriate settlers in Greece and elsewhere" and 351/1914 "on the way of purchasing lands or parts thereof by settlers for their own agricultural use". These laws, combined with a series of other laws or decrees, are the main institutional tools for the creation of new settlements for that historical period (Kafkoura 1997: 261-263). However, the planning process, due to the many and intractable restoration problems of that period, was led to marginalisation: the plan often only provided guidelines, allowing beneficiaries the immediate intervention and the elementary - where appropriate - aid regarding construction materials (Pelagidis 1997, Karamouzi 1997: 14-57).

⁷ It is about the restoration of the first refugees who had begun to arrive in 1914 from Thrace and Asia Minor, due to Turkish persecutions. More in: Mpakalpassi, A. (1923). *The refugee issue*, Athens: Prometheus publications.



FIGURE 1 - REFUGEE APARTMENTS IN ATHENS, KALITHEA
(Source: Giannakopoulos, G. (1992). Refugee Greece.
Athens: A. G. Leventis Foundation, Centre for Asia Minor Studies).



FIGURE 2 - TWO-STOREY HOUSE (OF E.A.P.) IN PLATI, IMATHIA
(Source: Giannakopoulos, G. (1992). Refugee Greece.
Athens: A. G. Leventis Foundation, Centre for Asia Minor Studies).



FIGURE 3 - REFUGEE URBAN APARTMENTS
(Source: Technical Chamber of Greece (T.E.E.). (1975). State Activity. The residence in Greece. Athens: T.E.E.
publication, 7-23).

Meanwhile, the foundation of the Ministry of Transport (1914) and the activation of Al. Papanastasiou (1914-1917) in it are combined with the shift of interest in the implementation of Greek urban planning from the center to the north-Hellenic cities, a fact evidenced by the astonishing number of urban plans being implemented, involving small and medium-sized towns and cities, city centers and refugee settlements in the New Countries, especially in Northern Greece. Depending on the planning of urban area during this particular historical period, the positions concerning the settlement of the countryside and the rural restoration of the refugees are developed complementary to those of the earlier period's settlement policy in Greece (Gerolymou 1997: 92-93, 106-108).⁸

The Legislative Decree "on city, town, village and settlement plans of the state and their building", which was enacted shortly thereafter, in 1923, immediately after the critical period 1922-1923, was subsequently to be the general framework of exercising of urban planning policy for the country, by analogy with earlier European ones, respectively especially concerning its content. Complementary to this, the laws and decrees of 1925, 1927 and 1929, on dwelling responsibilities, on building co-operatives and rebuilding on floors, are the main institutional tools for exercising urban planning policy of the period after the Asia Minor defeat and the arrival of refugees.

It is estimated that, despite their "decommissioning" during the implementation in that crucial historical period, these decrees set the foundations of subsequent urbanization and housing development in Greece, recognizing the need for social housing. However, although from the point of view of institutional framework and implementation mechanisms the ability to provide social housing and organized construction in the Greek area appears realistic, yet under the pressure of the conditions (successive waves of refugees that flock to the country), the opportunity for wider-scale (urban) planning is slipping (Gerolymou 1997: 98).

Alongside the legislative work of that period, particularly rich also in urban planning legislation, the state mechanism - which has already played an important role during previous periods in the field of refugee restoration and care - was activated through various schemes, bodies and committees.⁹ However, and despite the good design and regulatory intentions and preconditions, the state mechanism - due to the pressure of the circumstances and the urgent nature of the intervention - ended up functioning with

⁸ "...the Ministry of Transport will attempt to promote its general urban planning positions and draw up plans for all (meaning the cities).... These projects will be subject to repeated adjustments and, once again, they will simply act as a legitimate framework for the already accomplished refugee settlements."

⁹ Typically, we mention: the Refugee Care Fund (T.P.P.), Refugee Restoration Committee (E.A.P.), the Ministries of Welfare and Agriculture, the National Bank of Greece. These are bodies mobilized both in the urban space as well as in the countryside concerning issues of refugee restoration. Alongside the public bodies, well-known private charity bodies or corresponding ones of civil society too, such as the Red Cross, whose help at that time was important, are willingly involved in the effort for restoration and care.

fragmentation and speed, often with sloppiness, on a case-by-case basis (Kalogirou 1986: 488).¹⁰ Meanwhile, the law of 1927 on horizontal ownership was the precursor to the establishment of the urban block of flats. Besides, the refugee residence (Figures 1, 2), a basic derivative of the social policy of that period in Greece, as well as the urban apartment building (Figure 3), joined the field of architectural quests of the time (Technical Chamber of Greece (T.E.E.) 1975: 7-23, Lavvas 2008: 303-305).

It should be noted that refugee settlements were targeted at a population with particular social and cultural characteristics. Despite the concrete and complete nature of the regulations regarding the creation of these settlements (see relatively the 1923 Legislative Decree, as already mentioned in the same chapter), the reasons for their establishment and the urgency of implementation led almost always in fragmentation and sloppiness of the individual solutions. In most cases, especially in urban formations, refugee settlements, rather isolated in the region, were the result of a conscious choice, driven by the tendency to maintain the structure of the existing city unchanged on the one hand, to ensure the homogeneity with regard to the social environment of the urban refugee settlement itself on the other (Technical Chamber of Greece (T.E.E.) 1975).

As mentioned above, the initial distribution of refugees to the country's departments (départements) did not follow any organized planning but was done with direct intervention criteria to meet the emergency (Giannakopoulos 1992:18, Pelagidis 2003: 70). One of the first measures to manage the housing issue in refugee Greece, that one of landed property requisition, legislated by the revolutionary government at that time, proved inadequate. This measure, as part of the state social policy implemented in the event of emergency circumstances, establishing even house requisites within cities, had as a direct consequence the creation of a strong ambience of dissatisfaction on the one hand against the state as well as against the refugees themselves on the other (Micheli 1992: 98-99, 141, League of Nations - Geneva 1926: 13).¹¹

¹⁰ "...The general arrangements are elementary and the buildings are simple and inadequate. Each settlement, in accordance with the law (Legislative Decree "On the rural establishment of refugees", 1923, no.6), is "sprawled roughly and divided into plots".

¹¹ The Law "On requisition of landed properties for the establishment of refugees", which was published on 1-11-1922, resulted in the requisition of a total of 8,000 landed properties. Based on this law, owners of many residences were obliged to accommodate for a long period of time at least one refugee family, in exchange for a compensation to be given to them by the state. The amount of compensation and the delays in payments have been the cause of a climate (atmosphere) of dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, later also - in 1924 - while even more social policy measures in the field of housing had begun to be implemented by the Greek state, the latter also proceeded to new requisitions of residences, mainly within the urban districts. Meanwhile, on 28-11-1924 a law was passed, according to which the state proceeded to the inventory of the houses able to get requisitioned.

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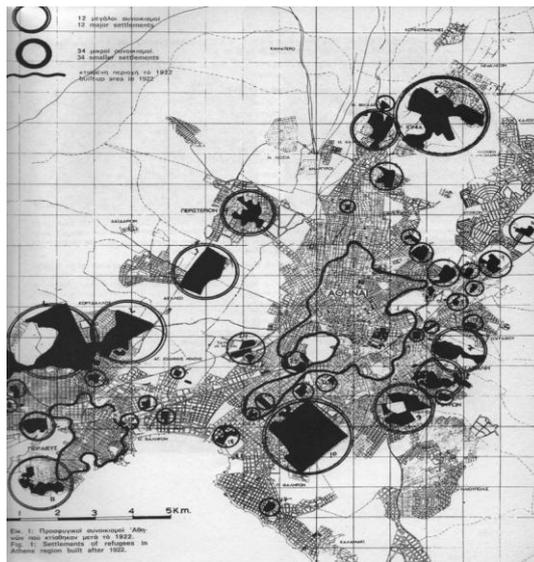


FIGURE 4 - REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN ATHENS, AFTER 1922.
 (Source: Technical Chamber of Greece (T.E.E.). (1975). State Activity. The residence in Greece. Athens: T.E.E. publication, 7-23).

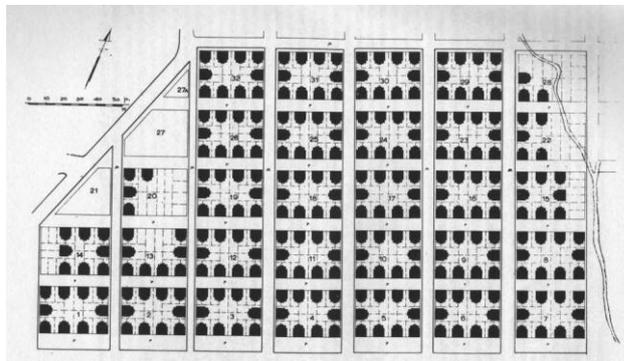


FIGURE 5 - REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN GERMANIKA, NEAR PIRAEUS
 (Source: Technical Chamber of Greece (T.E.E.). (1975). State Activity. The residence in Greece. Athens: T.E.E. publication, 7-23).



Figure 6 - TWIN TWO-STOREY HOUSES
 (Source: Technical Chamber of Greece (T.E.E.). (1975). State Activity. The residence in Greece. Athens: T.E.E. publication, 7-23).

3. STATE AND INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE RESTORATION OF REFUGEES

On 3-11-1922, the State decided to found the Refugee Care Fund (T.P.P.), an independent state organisation, which, staffed by Greeks, including between them also refugees, along with the Ministry of Health and Welfare undertook the construction of lodges for the housing of refugees (Giannakopoulos 1992: 17).¹² The T.P.P. dissolved in May 1925, not because the reasons for its creation disappeared, but because of the establishment - since 1923 - of the Refugee Restoration Committee (E.A.P.) (Pelagidis 2003: 78, League of Nations - Geneva 1926: 17-20)¹³ an autonomous and independent organization, which having as its primary reason of formation the management of the resources of the League of Nations (L.o.N) loan to Greece, would also take over the primary responsibility for the restoration of refugees. We will point out that, with regard to the issue of refugee restitution through the T.P.P. and despite the fact of its seemingly "improvised" to "trivial" handling under the pressure of the emergency, its contribution is considered decisive for the housing of "thousands of people across Greece and particularly in Athens, where it founded the districts of Kokkinia, Kessariani, Vyronas and Nea Ionia" (Giannakopoulos 1992: 18). In addition, the T.P.P., besides the urban settlements on the surroundings of Athens, had also undertaken the construction of three settlements, respectively, in the following provinces: Edessa, Volos and Elefsina. This period of the T.P.P. function is also considered as the first period of implementation of state social policy in Greece, especially in the field of housing (League of Nations - Geneva 1926).

E.A.P. took on - as its main duty - to continue this service of T.P.P., completing the works that the Greek government had begun in the aforementioned settlements, already since 1922, and subsequently promoting further new programs to be implemented for the restoration of urban resident (bourgeois) refugees (Pelagidis 2003: 230). However, despite the Committee's initial programmatic positions, the available funds would not allow it to undertake the project of a comprehensive urban restoration of the refugees, in proportion to the completed respective rural, limiting its activity in the urban area only to dwelling construction. Moreover, according to the Committee's reports, the latter - after the end of the rural colonization - took over the management of the four major refugee districts of Athens (Figures 4,5) as well as those that had begun to be built in the province, while promoting the construction of independent

¹² "But the biggest part of these people is housed by its own means and those who do not have the financial capacity for such a thing deploy their dynamism and ingenuity. Shacks of cheap materials, boards and tines, spring up in streets and squares, on the edges of cities, next to the workers' houses (social housing), around and within the settlements built by the state bodies."

refugee residences (Figure 6) (League of Nations - Geneva 1926: 24-25).¹⁴

Regarding the completion of the establishing project, the Committee - receiving, as mentioned above, the work of T.P.P. - assumed total responsibility, especially for the rural area. Moreover, the rural restoration - in relation to the urban - could be carried out faster and "painlessly", without requiring a redefinition of the already existing situation of the Greek economy, which was mainly based on agricultural production. From the available data it appears that in the Greek countryside until the end of 1928 about 2.000 rural settlements were created by E.A.P., most of which attached to already existing ones and the rest ones (created) new. In these settlements approximately 150.000 families were settled, most of them in Macedonia and Thrace (Figure 7).¹⁵

4. CONCLUSIONS

More generally, in refugee Greece, the acquisition of housing was handled in a variety of ways, depending on the provider (Pelagidis 2003: 242, 285-286). The cost of the lodges on the part of refugees was in most cases not paid, whereas the State itself, being particularly lenient and due to the prevailing conditions, ignored even the occupation of landed properties or the extensive arbitrary construction, a phenomenon more often encountered in the urban rather than in rural areas. At an urban level, it is worth mentioning that the settlements, following very simple geometric engravings - a consequence of the fragmentation (dividing) and the plot making of the suburban land, did not obey to design guidelines that also required at the same time the basic social equipment (Micheli 1992: 132, 142, Kalogirou 1986: 489-491).

Representative of the housing image of the refugees of that period in Greece and the variety of the types of settlements that prevailed, is the extract that follows, derived from reports of E.A.P. (League of Nations - Geneva 1926: 35).

¹⁴ 16,700 apartments had been delivered to the capital and province, including also a number of houses built by the Greek government, handed over to the Committee though. In the meantime, the Greek government built - by its own means - another 22,337 houses of various types.

¹⁵ Detailed quantitative data on the colonization of the Greek rural area by refugees after 1923, apart from the reports of E.A.P. (see relatively in: League of Nations - Geneva 1926, *The installation of refugees in Greece*) are systematized in: Pelagidis, S. (1997) 2003. *Refugee Greece (1913-1930). The pain and the glory*, Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis publications, as well as in: Pelagidis, S. (1994). *The restoration of refugees in Western Macedonia (1923-1930)*, Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis publications. In the latter, the "Macedonia colonization map" is cited (apposed), to which is attributed the mapping of the refugee settlements of this area, in 1926 by the Department of Statistics of the General Directorate of Colonization of Macedonia. Also, for an overviewing presentation of the issue (with photographic material of the refugee facilities from the records of the C.M.S. (Center of Macedonian Studies), mainly during the 1950s) both for the rural as well as for the urban areas, see in: Giannakopoulos, G. (1992). *Refugee Greece*, Athens: A.G. Leventis Foundation, Center for Asia Minor Studies.

"... Well or badly, thousands of destroyed or abandoned houses are rebuilt almost all in some side of Greece. Sometimes brand new in the big urban blocks of flats or in standard apartments of urban suburbs, in farmhouses in the countryside or in temporary shacks, in large requisitioned buildings or sometimes



again in dilapidated mosques, where each family borders its space with blankets or straws thrown around, nearby the small space of neighbors. So, these uprooted people are creating a homemade again in order to gather there in the evening or rest on public holidays. Often this homemade occupies only a space of ten square meters among the homemade of many tens of other families..."

FIGURE 7 - MAURONERI IN KILKIS. GENERAL VIEW OF A RURAL REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

(Source: Giannakopoulos, G. (1992). *Refugee Greece*. Athens: A. G. Leventis Foundation, Centre for Asia Minor Studies).

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