

**Desmos:
Design, Inventiveness and Collaboration in a Time of Crisis**

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synopsis

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When an economic crisis arises, excessiveness is questioned. Do we need more public spaces? What happens when we revert to a purely functionalist state of mind, does it yield stagnation in the road to economic recovery? If so, the question becomes, what is it we need to create in excess?

Greece is now entering its fifth year of recession and external sources continue to impose foreign models of larger more efficient operations onto Athens. This thesis aims to signify the importance of informal Athens' micro-economies. It looks at urbanism from the human scale upwards and considers how injecting interventions at the scale of the city block can influence Athens' communication. It proposes workplaces based on resource sharing within underutilized zones in the city: an urban gesture which re-imagines the city blocks of Athens as a system of vibrant micro-agoras, curating talent which already exists. Such a gesture promotes the power of collaborations and reinforces an understanding that we are all bound by a system and community, an ideology which the Greeks call Desmos.

By challenging excessiveness in the workplace, we can reflect on resources and facilities available in bigger companies/systems and strategizes a program aiming at resource sharing. As such, it provides tools only financially viable in larger companies to small scale businesses. It allows Athenians to operate and innovate autonomously with the support of the system, a model which closely resembles the ancient Agora. The necessity for sharing facilities and ideas amongst young professionals sparks a design which provides service spaces such as workshops, print labs, meeting spaces and social spaces woven together with a circulation network in excess of minimal requirements. Injection of collaborative based workplaces into the already vibrant informal center's city blocks (a place with a myriad of expertise) makes the architecture worth investing in. It positions architecture within underutilized voids, allowing Athens to make better use of its spaces and therefore become a much smarter urban center.

Architecturally, the flexible domino house inspired modernist building of the 1970s (known as the Polykatikia in Athens) serves as structural framework to the new architecture. It proves that potentials of the existing concrete post and beam frame buildings have not been exhausted and new spaces and relationships are still possible by simply re-configuring its tectonics. In the center of the city block is the proposed platea, in other words the Greek public square. As in the ancient Agora, the platea acts as the connective tissue, binding the activities of the city block with the street network of the city.

The current tendencies of Athens have proved that resource sharing and collaborations are not a fad, but mechanisms for survival. They are fundamental principles of desmos which holds a special place in Greek culture. Therefore evolving Athens based on desmos not only fosters economic recovery, but is an opportunity to re-design the built environment reflecting Greece's cultural tendencies. Revealing what the culture of Athens has to offer - from the people.