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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Learning from 'Panosikoma': Atelier 66's Additions to Ordinary Houses

Nikolaos Magouliotis

The work of the Athens-based architectural practice Atelier 66 (est. 1965) has been extensively examined by local and international historiography over the past few decades. Most analyses have focused on the office's large-scale projects and have associated them with post-war architectural genealogies such as Team X or Critical Regionalism and, more recently, postmodernism. This article focuses on a set of less acclaimed projects within their extensive oeuvre, namely the small-scale additions to existing houses commonly known as 'panosikoma'. Based on a series of publications on this topic by Atelier 66 from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, and on recent interviews with the architects, the article situates Atelier 66's work in the specific technical and socio-economic conditions of the Greek post-war building boom. It shows how Atelier 66 related to ordinary processes and typologies of housing production in Greece (*antiparochi*, *polykatoikia* and *panosikoma*). Through these minor commissions, the architects theorized and developed their distinct approach to incremental housing via subsequent projects and publications. By concentrating on their 'ordinary house additions', this article aims to unsettle the established historiographical reception of Atelier 66 and invite further interpretations of their work.

## Introduction

In parallel with the more well-known Athenian apartment building, the Greek post-war building boom also gave rise to the vernacular building practice of additions to ordinary concrete-frame houses, commonly known as *panosikoma*. Regarded by architects as a trace of 'financial, social and aesthetic short-coming' (Tournikiotis 2002b: 139), this 'minor' architectural typology of incremental housing was rarely seen as a source of inspiration. Instead, Greek architects looked to international, technologically advanced projects and theoretical discussions on incrementality and flexibility as a potential solution to the housing conditions in their own country. But the specific technical and financial conditions of their local environment did not allow for the application of such solutions. Hence, the gap between the reality of Greek building production and the architects' aspirations seemed unbridgeable.

Atelier 66 was one of the few practices to look at both sides of this spectrum and try to reconcile them. Designing, building and, more importantly, publishing many of these 'minor' additions to houses (from the early stages of their career in the 1960s to the present), they saw these projects as a local answer to the international discussions on incrementality and flexibility. But these projects are almost entirely absent from the monographic publications (Frampton 1985a; Constantopoulos 1994; Tournikiotis 2007a), which favor their more canonical works. However, a series of insufficiently examined

articles on these 'minor' additions to houses, published by Atelier 66 from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, demonstrates that the architects embraced these projects as an integral part of their work. Moreover, they considered them a significant subject matter for theoretical contemplation. This material, along with a set of interviews I conducted with some of the Atelier 66 architects who authored them (Suzana Antonakaki, Dimitris Antonakakis and Costis Hadjimichalis), helps raise crucial questions about the architectural profession and its involvement in housing production in post-war Greece. But they also highlight the evolution of Atelier 66's theory and practice as a converging point of international influences and local conditions.

The article starts with an analysis of the particular conditions of the Greek post-war building boom that gave rise to specific vernacular housing processes and typologies. Moving to the work of Atelier 66, it shows how it evolved in response to this framework. Through a series of publications that Atelier 66 produced on the panosikoma additions, both as a vernacular phenomenon and as a preoccupation within their own practice, the article then traces the evolution of the office's theoretical approach to the issue. More specifically, it shows how Atelier 66 searched for a link between international discussions on incrementality and the ordinary built environment of post-war Greece. I conclude with a re-examination of previous historiographic and genealogical accounts of Atelier 66, especially regarding its recent associations of their work with postmodernist currents. Their interest in the ordinary phenomenon of the panosikoma during a period when discussions about the legitimization of mass culture

were prominent invites a reconsideration of their work within this framework.

### Atelier 66 and Housing Production in Post-war Greece: From the Western Large-Scale Housing Projects to Polykatoikia and Panosikoma

Founded in 1965 and led to this day by Suzana Antonakaki (b. 1935) and Dimitris Antonakakis (b. 1933), Atelier 66 rose to international prominence in the 1980s. Following Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis' earlier theorization (1981), in 1985, Kenneth Frampton published a monograph on their work and placed them in the broader context of Critical Regionalism (see Frampton 1985a and 1985b). But the activity of the office predates these international debates. Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis' careers ran parallel to the Greek post-war building boom and the regional conditions of housing production, from the 1950s to the present. When they established Atelier 66, the two Antonakakis envisioned a collaborative office structure. Friends, family members and other colleagues joined them gradually over the years. For about two decades, they worked together in larger or smaller groups on projects of various scales.<sup>1</sup> According to the Antonakakis, this collective ethos was a preoccupation inherited from local figures such as Dimitris Pikionis (1887–1968) and Aris Konstantinidis (1913–1993). Following in their footsteps, Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis appreciated vernacular architecture as an anonymous and collaborative creative process (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 1985: 6; 2017). But the name they gave to their office also suggests a broader frame of reference, echoing similar post-war cooperatives abroad, such as Atelier 5 in Switzerland or Atelier de Montrouge in France.

Their first big projects, such as the acclaimed Distomo housing complex of 1969 (Figure 1), displayed an affinity to the work of Konstantinidis and Pikionis. But Suzana

and Dimitris Antonakakis were also influenced by the established design formulas of Team X: low rise and high density, modularity and typological categorization, small scale and complex articulations, etc. Atelier 66 was exposed to such international tendencies from the early 1960s. They followed the work of Team X, the Japanese Metabolists and the Dutch Structuralists, initially through publications (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 2017), and later through personal contact with several protagonists of these groups.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the architectural couple followed closely the concurrent international discussions around 'flexibility' and 'incrementality' and looked for ways to adapt them to the Greek context. But projects like Distomo did not achieve the structural flexibility and incremental growth at the scales envisioned by Team X or the Japanese Metabolists. This was largely due to the radically different technical conditions that underlay Atelier 66's work. In Greece, the predominantly low-tech building sector could not adopt Western practices of standardization and pre-fabrication like *Plattenbau*. The local use of concrete was limited to more craft- and labor-based on-site casting. Hence, most Greek architects resorted to simplified, low-tech imitations of international tendencies (Porphyrios 1979).

In addition to the technological limitations, Atelier 66 had to adapt such influences to the locally available scale of commissions. Large housing projects like Distomo were rare exceptions, far from the local reality of built production. The post-war Greek state had limited involvement in the production of housing and rarely provided architects with opportunities for large-scale residential projects. Greek housing was mainly produced through small-scale operations, favoring private initiative and self-help construction. The legal framework and the building sector were organized accordingly: older edifices (19th-century two-storey houses or smaller

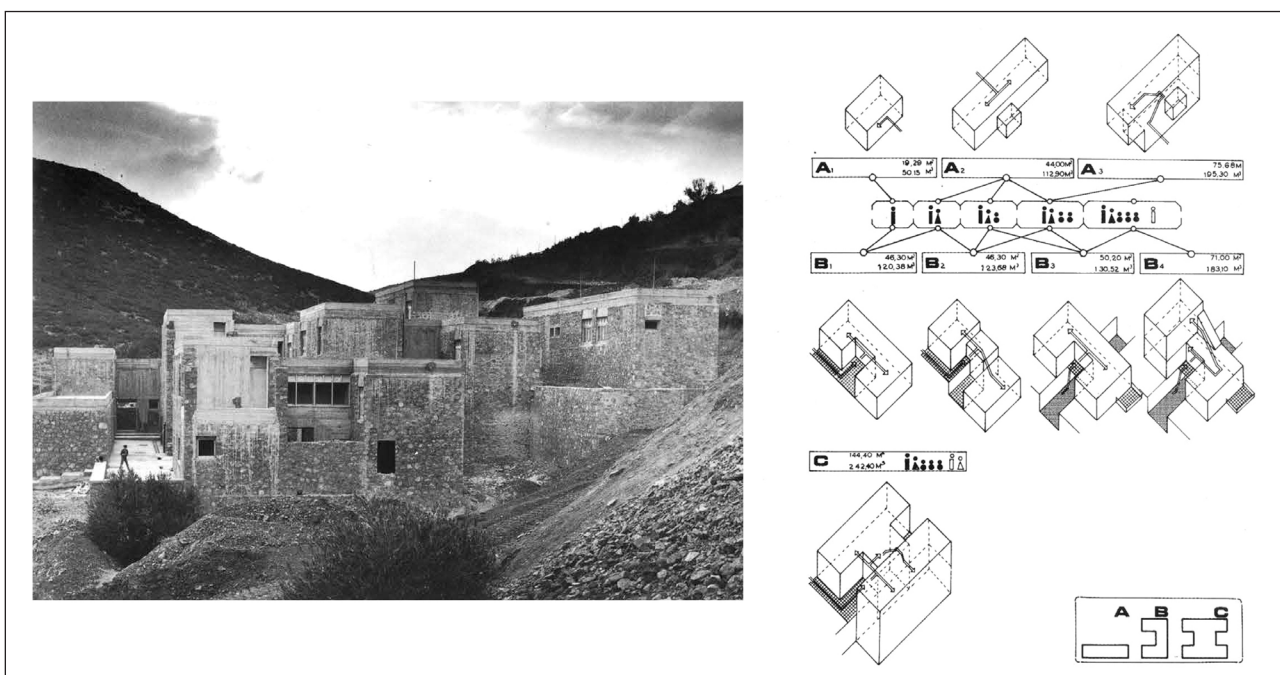


Figure 1: Atelier 66's Distomo housing complex (1969) (Tournikiotis 2007a: 170, 173).

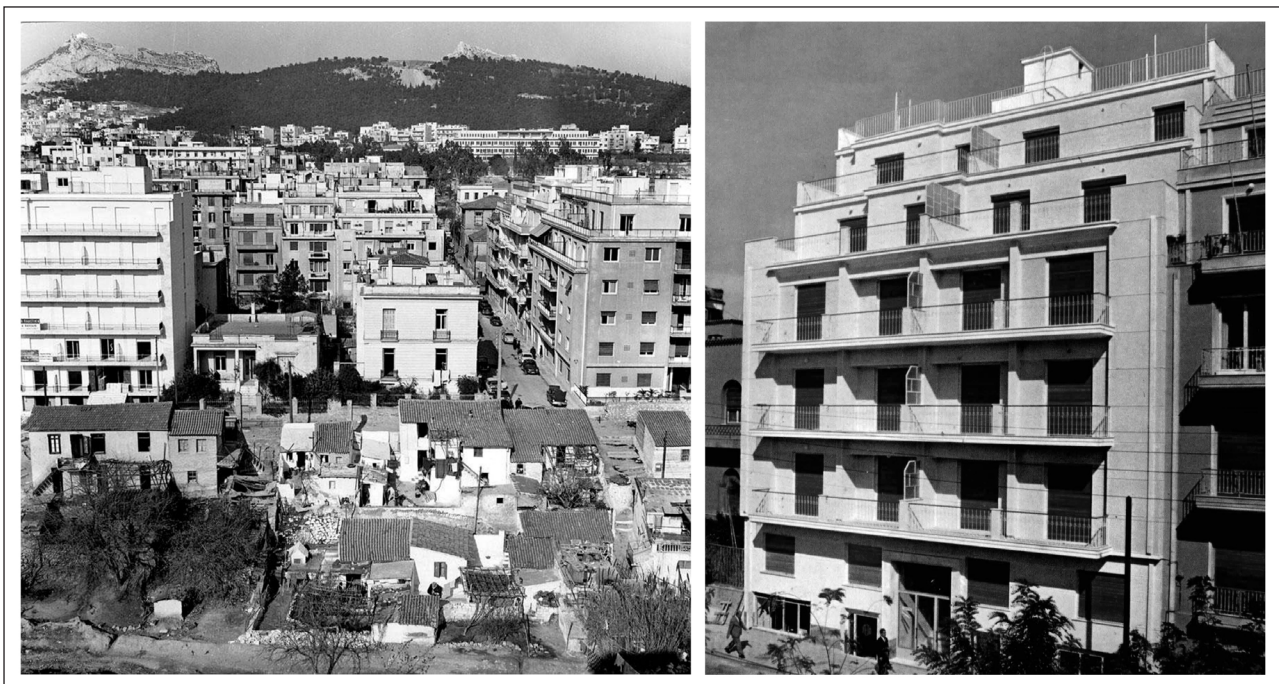
vernacular constructions) were replaced piece-by-piece by new concrete frame apartment buildings (**Figure 2**), the *polykatoikia* (Philippidis 1984: 310). The word 'polykatoikia' (πολυκατοικία, from πολυ-, meaning multiple, and -κατοικία, meaning residence) was initially coined in the inter-war period as a scientific term and used among specialists. But in the post-war era, it was part of the quotidian vocabulary. It denoted the generic, concrete-frame apartment building typology that became the main vehicle for the building boom, beginning in urban areas and then trickling out to the periphery.

The polykatoikia was reproduced through the process of '*antiparochi*' (αντιπαροχή, meaning 'provision in return for something' or 'mutual exchange'). The term stood for a barter system of exchanging land for building. This was not centrally planned. It developed through practice and aimed at producing surplus value from the concurrent adversities, namely the lack of big capital in the building sector and the high degree of land property fragmentation. The process unfolded as follows. The owner of a small-scale lot would allow a contractor to use that lot in return for some apartments in the polykatoikia that the contractor would build for the owner on the lot. The contractor would in turn profit from selling the rest of the apartments to other interested parties. This hastily conducted 'win-win' process often excluded architects and resulted in the repetition of stereotypical designs.

Atelier 66 designed and built several polykatoikia projects (see Antonakaki and Antonakakis 1977, 1978) and attempted to push the envelope of such generic commissions. They focused their critique not only on the architectural typology of the polykatoikia, but also on the process of *antiparochi*. They looked for more immediate, collaborative relations with the future inhabitants

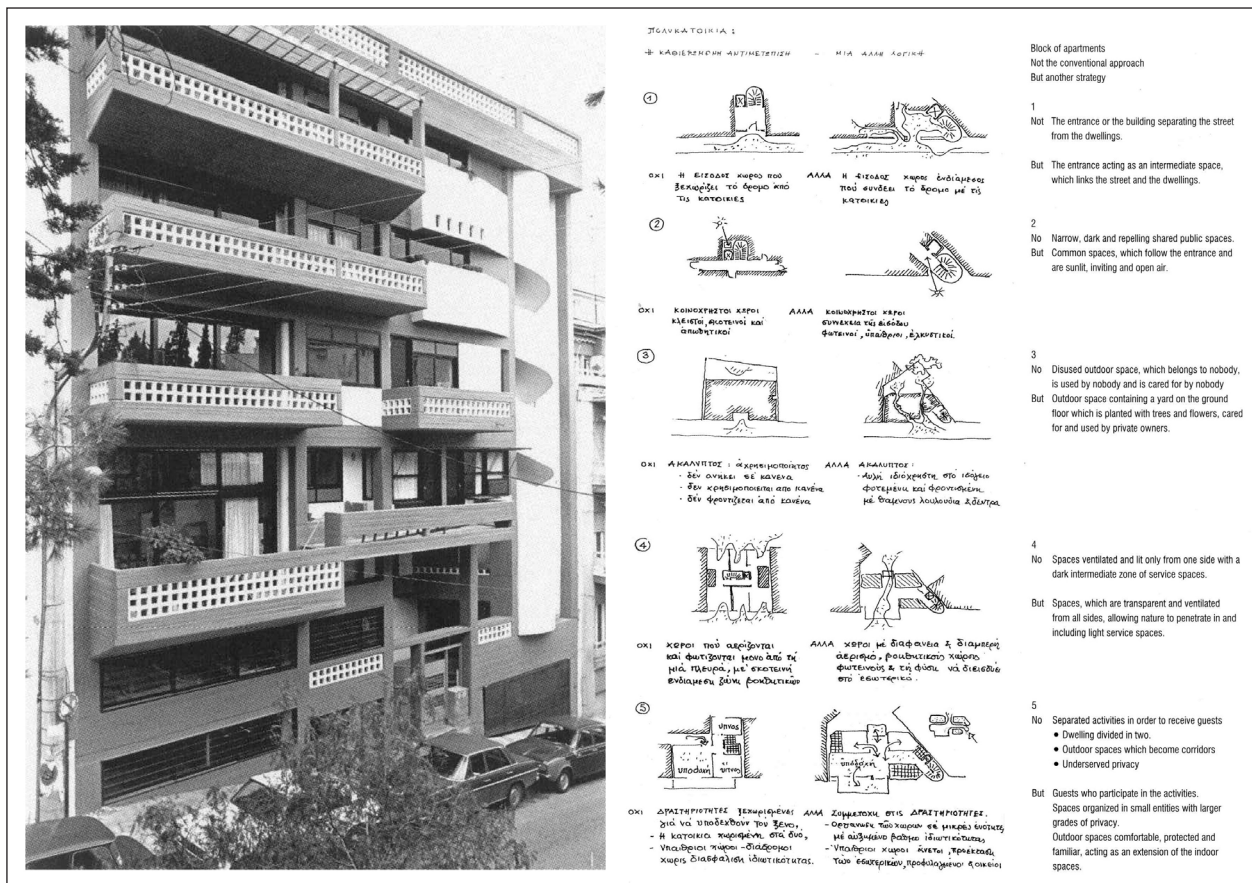
of their designs. The highly acclaimed polykatoikia at 118 Benaki Street, in central Athens, was the highlight of this approach. Completed in 1974 (**Figure 3**), it is the building where Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis still live and work. Working on this and other polykatoikia commissions, the architects gradually formulated a set of problematic points and counter-proposals. These concerned issues of circulation (accessibility and privacy), hygiene (lighting and ventilation) and social interaction (common spaces). Their attempt to reform this generic housing typology appeared again to echo the reaction of their international contemporaries (Team X, and especially Aldo van Eyck) against European post-war modern housing projects. But, as Stylianos Giamarelos (2016a) recently pointed out, 'their adversary was not the large-scale housing complexes of the post-war European metropolises'.<sup>3</sup> Unlike their international peers, the two Antonakakis did not design modular megastructures or mat-buildings to counteract uniform slabs or high-rises. In the Greek context, such large projects were a rare exception, as they occupied less than 3% of the total available residential space in the country (Emmanuil 2006). The starting point for their critique was the other 97% of the polykatoikia, as prescribed by the General Building Regulation and reproduced by contractors.

The Benaki polykatoikia is one of the most widely acknowledged achievements of Atelier 66. Its occurrences in bibliographies have surpassed its original context and the limits of local historiography (Giamarelos 2016a). But projects of this sort were only one side of Atelier 66's pre-occupation with generic housing typologies and processes, and certainly not the only aspect of their everyday reality onto which they tried to adapt their international influences. Their interest in panosikoma additions to existing



**Figure 2:** Typical images of the post-war building boom in 1960s Athens. Left: Apartment buildings replacing older vernacular houses (Philippidis 1984: 314). Right: An example of the typical polykatoikia designs that were built in the 1960s (Cornaros 1962: 254).





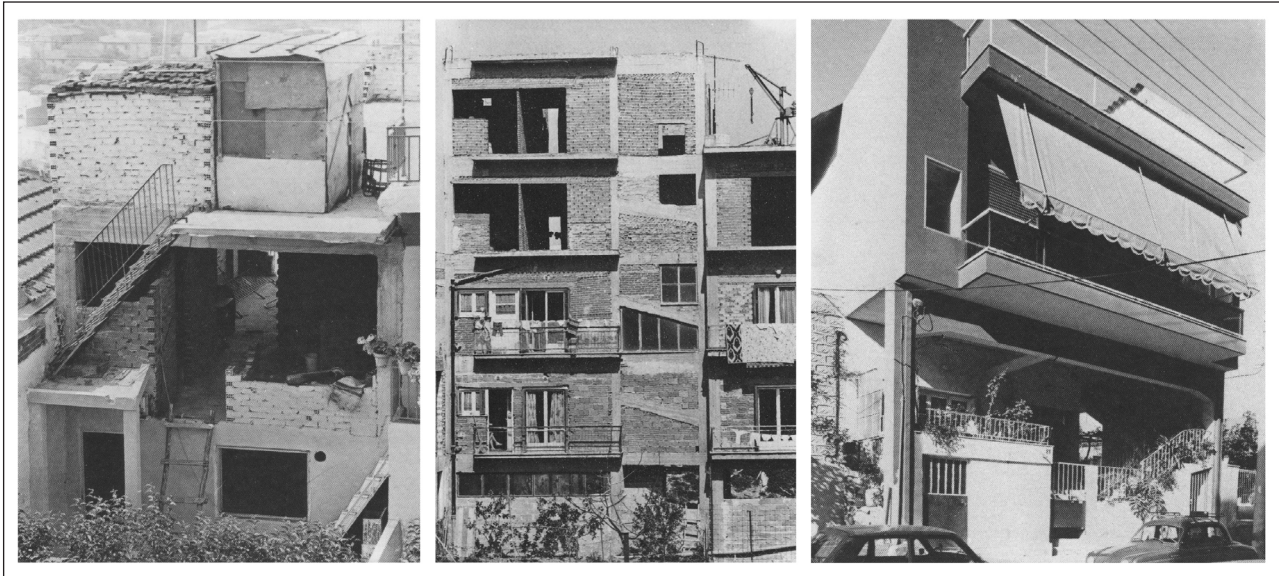
**Figure 3:** Atelier 66's Benaki Street polykatoikia (1973). Left: The main facade of the building (Tournikiotis 2007a: 150). Right: Atelier 66's list of problems of the generic polykatoikia and the counter-proposals exemplified in the Benaki project (Tournikiotis 2007a: 152).

concrete-frame houses is the other less acknowledged side of their distinct approach. Smaller-scale and more ordinary commissions than the polykatoikia projects, these additions have nonetheless constituted an equally significant part of their work over the years. Atelier 66 worked and published extensively on both types of projects simultaneously, from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s. But, unlike their polykatoikia projects, their work on additions to existing houses has not been assigned much value in later years, by neither them nor other authors.

The term commonly used to describe these additions, 'panosikoma' (πανωσήκωμα), roughly translates as 'lift-up'. It denotes the addition of a floor on top of an existing one- or two-storey concrete-frame house. Unlike the word 'polykatoikia', which originated from a more intellectual discourse and was later popularized, 'panosikoma' was probably rooted in the common parlance of the construction site.<sup>4</sup> In the former case, antiparochi signifies the process and polykatoikia is the end result. In the case of the panosikoma, things are more complicated. The term is often used interchangeably to signify both the process of addition and the housing typology that occurred from this process. As I will argue, the dual interest in process and outcome that Atelier 66 had exhibited in their polykatoikia projects was also prominent in their work on panosikoma.

The dissemination of the process and typology of panosikoma was also a result of the local financial, social and technical conditions of post-war Greece. It has often

been described as a complementary phenomenon to the polykatoikia. In less prominent urban and suburban areas, where the commercial interest for antiparochi processes and polykatoikia construction was lower, contractor activity was limited. Most houses were therefore produced through self-help processes (Philippidis 1984: 311–12). Even more architects were excluded from this 'minor' market because the majority of lower- and middle-class families could not afford them. In the absence of trained designers and professional contractors, the widely disseminated building know-how of the concrete-frame polykatoikia was adapted to smaller budgets and self-housing processes. It all took place through ad-hoc craftsmanship by both trained workers and untrained members of the family. Following the spatial needs and the limited budget of their inhabitants, concrete frames were not erected all at once. They grew incrementally over long periods of time, with sequential additions of floors, which were called panosikoma. Through its characteristic appearance of partly un-plastered concrete frame and steel reinforcement protruding from the top (Figure 4), this anonymous architectural mass-culture of the panosikoma formed a significant part of the urban, peri-urban and provincial post-war landscape of the country. With few exceptions (see Philippidis 1972), Greek architects seem to have largely scorned this phenomenon and abstained from direct involvement (Tournikiotis 2002b: 139).



**Figure 4:** Examples of typical panosikoma construction in the periphery of Athens (Philippidis 1984: 313, 383).

Within this context, Atelier 66 constituted an intriguing exception. Their affinity for such commonplace and anonymous architecture sprang from personal experience. Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis said they were 'influenced and motivated [by their] immediate contact with the reality of Greek life' and struggled for an understanding of its people and its buildings (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 1985). The social milieu of their families, which provided their first commissions, consisted largely of middle-class clients who usually hired them for low-budget and small-scale panosikoma additions or interior re-arrangements (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 2017). Growing up in Athens in the 1940s, Dimitris' and Suzana's childhoods were also marked by the harsh conditions of the Greek Civil War (1946–49) and the urban warfare of the Dekemvriana (1945–46) that preceded it, in the aftermath of the Second World War (Delis 2017; Marantzidis 2013). Houses in ruins and their subsequent reconstruction with minimal means were, as the couple stated, formative experiences even before they started studying architecture. This enabled them to understand the mentality generated by the several inflations and legal fluctuations of that era: The prevailing uncertainty about the future led middle-class families to prefer investing their money in small additions to their houses rather than saving it in the bank (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 2017). Commenting on their everyday experiences in different areas of Athens,<sup>5</sup> Suzana Antonakaki recently stated:

When the first commissions came – which were too small: an addition of a kitchen, a transfer of a bathroom, etc. – we considered that we were responsible for them. We assigned great significance to these little projects, because we had the opportunity to talk with the people who had lived in those houses [i.e. the existing structures for which they were called to design additions] and we tried to elicit from them what didn't suit them. (Antonakaki, Antonakakis and Pournara 2017)

In the 1960s, in the early stages of their career, minor commissions like these were the main source of income for the Antonakakis. In later years, after the foundation of Atelier 66 in 1965 and its expansion in the 1970s and 1980s, the flexible structure of the office allowed for the continuation of this preoccupation. While its members worked together for competitions and larger commissions, they also split in smaller groups to design such small projects. This enabled younger members of the Atelier to accept panosikoma commissions from their immediate social circles at the same time as the other projects in the office (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 2017; Hadjimichalis 2017). Such commissions continued throughout their career. At first they were welcome because they sustained the office financially during times when its members were experimenting with more elaborate competition designs. Although over time they would receive larger commissions the ameliorated their financial situation, the architects were ideologically reluctant to refuse these smaller projects and continued to work on them. The panosikoma additions that Atelier 66 have designed and built in Athens and elsewhere in Greece amount to several dozen, constituting a significant percentage of their oeuvre.<sup>6</sup> Not greatly acclaimed, they nonetheless remained a continuous occupation for Atelier 66, serving as a constant pragmatist counter-weight to their work over several dozen.

Most of the office's peers certainly also undertook such minor panosikoma projects, although they rarely considered them worthy of mention or publication (see Tournikiotis 2002b: 139). Atelier 66, on the other hand, not only designed and supervised the construction of numerous projects like these (Figure 5), but they also theorized about them and published them on several occasions throughout their careers, trying to extract theoretical principles through their design practice. This was a persistent characteristic of Atelier 66, one which, several of its members claim,<sup>7</sup> manifested mainly in the larger-scale competition projects. But it also extended to smaller commissions. Costis Hadjimichalis (b. 1945), a long-time





**Figure 5:** Axonometric drawings of two panosikoma projects designed by Atelier 66 in the late 1960s and early 1980s (Frampton 1985a: 40; Hadjimichalis and Vaiou 1986: 69).

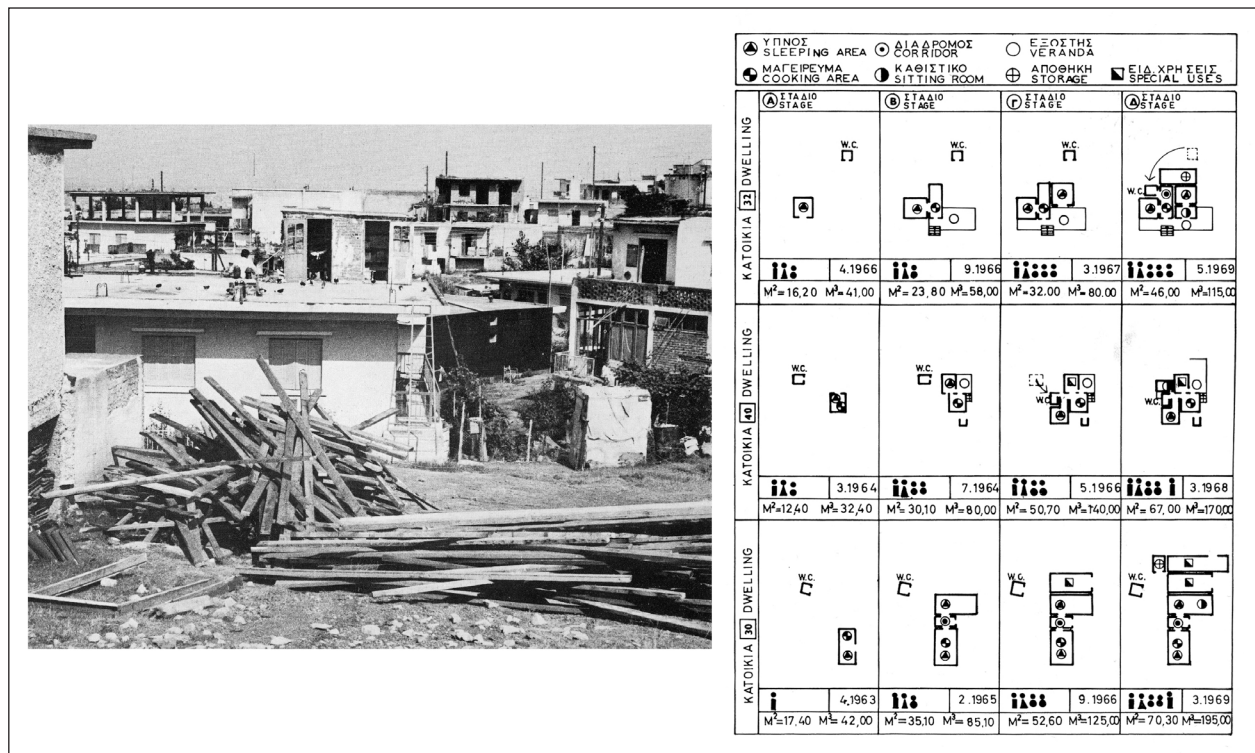
collaborator of the office<sup>8</sup> who was significantly involved in the issue of panosikoma, recently stated that 'a small addition to a house became the starting point for theoretical thinking: how can we really make a realistic and actually flexible house in Greece?' (Hadjimichalis 2016). Atelier 66's urge to adapt international influences in the Greek context, beginning with early projects like Distomo in 1969, would gradually trickle down to their polykatoikia projects and, eventually, their work on the panosikoma.

### The Significance of Minor Projects: Theorizing Panosikoma

Atelier 66's lesser-known panosikoma projects were as crucial as their celebrated works in shaping the ways in which the architects assimilated the international discussions on incrementality and adapted them to the post-war Greek context. By designing, constructing, theorizing and publishing numerous such projects, Atelier 66 developed their own, localized approach to the issue of incremental housing. Their method derived from, and suited, the financial, social and technological conditions of post-war Greece. Hints of this interest in the panosikoma projects were already evident in the publication, by Dimitris Antonakakis, Kostas Gartzos and Kaiti Gartzou (1965), of a house that facilitated the possibility for future additions. Although far less elaborate than their later articles on the

subject, it indicated the Antonakakis' preoccupation with additive projects from the early years of their practice. The evolution of their preoccupation with the panosikoma was certainly not owing exclusively to the efforts of the two Antonakakis, or to an inner core of the Atelier. It was the result of a collective discussion within the group and with related constellations of architects.

Significant local figures like the architect and academic Dimitris Fatouros (b. 1928) shared similar concerns. Fatouros was a friend and collaborator of the Antonakakis and followed the work of Atelier 66 from its early years. From the late 1960s, his research with his students in the Department of Interior Architecture and Industrial Aesthetics in the Thessaloniki School of Architecture attempted to associate international discussions on flexibility with the reality of post-war Greece. Fatouros also worked closely with Hadjimichalis, a cousin of Dimitris Antonakakis, who had studied in Thessaloniki and worked with Atelier 66 in Athens. In 1974, the two architects highlighted the 'self-generated' processes and results of incremental growth taking place within a slum in the periphery of Thessaloniki (Fatouros & Hadjimichalis 1974) (**Figure 6**). The Thessaloniki architecture department mainly experimented with designs for flexible housing (Fatouros 1967). But they were also among the pioneer researchers of the illegal settlements that had sprung up



**Figure 6:** Illustrations from Fatouros and Hadjimichalis' analysis of a slum settlement in Thessaloniki (Fatouros and Hadjimichalis 1974: 155, 148).

in the periphery of Greek cities during the post-war building boom (Fatouros, Papadopoulos and Tentokali 1979).<sup>9</sup> In a recent interview, Hadjimichalis mentioned that when he encountered the architectural landscape of slums in the periphery of Thessaloniki as a young graduate, he was already familiar with Structuralist theories of flexibility.<sup>10</sup> His education facilitated an understanding of the ad-hoc incrementality of such constructions as the unexpected vernacular counterpart of the eponymous theories and projects he saw in publications (Hadjimichalis 2017).

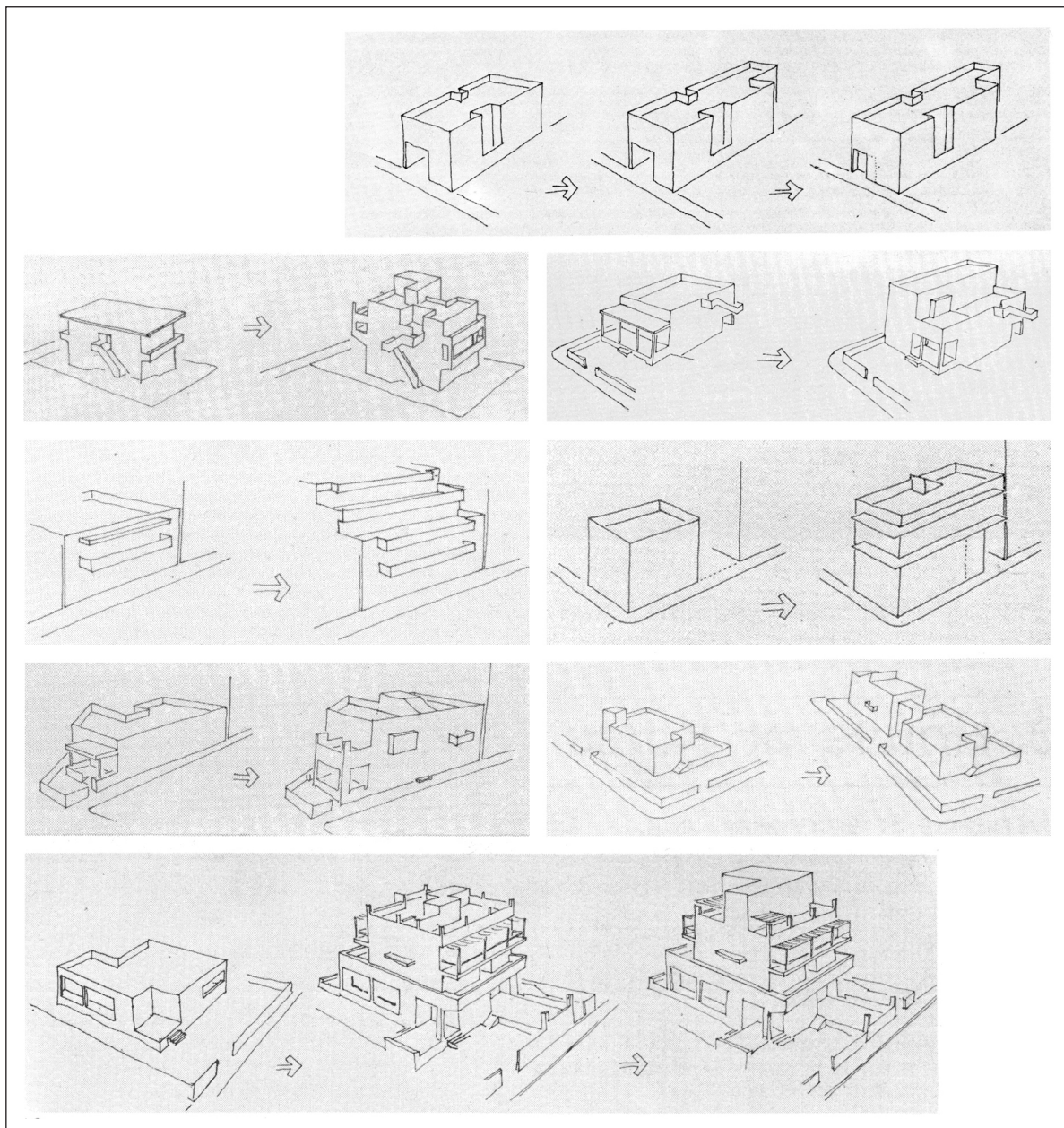
From Athens, Atelier 66 followed these discussions closely, through their connection with Fatouros, Hadjimichalis and other members of the architecture department in Thessaloniki. Soon afterwards they responded by shifting from research on ad-hoc incrementality to an application of such methods in their own design practice. In 1975, Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis, with Costis Hadjimichalis, published an article titled 'Unforeseen Changes in the Dwelling Space' (1975). This was perhaps the first publication by a Greek architectural practice that was entirely devoted to the issue of panosikoma. The timing of the publication was crucial. A seven-year period of military junta (1967–74) had just come to an end, intellectual debates could now transgress the colonels' conservatism. Atelier 66, who had already been working on such projects for more than a decade and had developed a theoretical interest in them, thought the time was right to publish them. Their publication presented eight different additions to existing family houses (Figure 7). This was just a short selection of the projects produced in the first decade of their professional practice.

Hinting at the impact of the international discussions on incrementality and flexibility in Greece, the authors

noted a 'big gap' between the (international) theoretical proposals and the built projects in Greece with which they had experience. By this, they meant that there was more to be done for the adaptation of such recipes to local conditions. They argued that the 'architectural issue' of 'changes in the dwelling space' ought to be related to 'quotidian practice', and namely to 'what we usually call "additions" or, more simply, "panosikoma"' (Antonakaki, Antonakakis and Hadjimichalis 1975: 36). Claiming that 'panosikoma is an architectural issue' was not a trivial statement at the time. Instead of the common architectural jargon of metaphorical associations to 'organic' forms and processes, Atelier 66 opted consciously for a layman's term. This stemmed not only from a realistic mindset, but also from an effort to legitimize the undervalued but omnipresent phenomenon of panosikoma.

The Atelier's affection for the architecture of this ordinary landscape is also apparent in their quoting of well-known postmodernist aphorisms like those of Robert Venturi (1977: 16): 'I am for messy vitality over obvious unity' (Antonakaki, Antonakakis and Hadjimichalis 1975: 37). Stemming from their local education and the international influence of Team X, their architectural sensibility led them to talk about spatial changes not only through abstractions and diagrams, but also through the small gestures by which people appropriate their domestic space. They attempted an extensive categorization of different changes to the dwelling space, from the simple act of moving furniture around and changing the attributed use of a space, to extensive additional constructions. The panosikoma projects, which were presented in the following pages – often including an extensive range of large and small design gestures – were presented as only a





**Figure 7:** Diagrams of the panosikoma projects published in 'Unforeseen Changes in the Dwelling Space' (Antonakaki, Antonakakis and Hadjimichalis 1975: 39–54).

fraction of the office's activity in this field. They were also presented as an even smaller part of such practices which occur within the realm of everyday life and beyond the sphere of influence of architects. In fact, this publication of 1975 was intended as the first of a two-part feature, whose second part was never published.<sup>11</sup>

In this article, the authors also attempted to compare panosikoma with the contingent typology of the polykatoikia. Although Atelier 66 saw the former as a typological derivative of the latter, they had faith in the capacity of this byproduct to escape the generic frame and to produce idiosyncratic and personalized architectures. They posited that, contrary to antiparochi processes that result in stereotypical polykatoikia apartments, in the case of the panosikoma process, 'the dwelling develops naturally' because 'the participation of the user is essential'. Hence, 'there are more chances for the application of solutions [which

can be] different from the ones established in the [housing] market' (Antonakaki, Antonakakis and Hadjimichalis 1975: 37). In tune with their times, Atelier 66 affirmed their faith in participatory forms of design and justified their fondness for such small commissions:

The owner [of the house] discusses the problems of the new construction with his close neighbors and transmits his observations to the designer. So, indirectly, the neighborhood can participate in the decision making ... [T]he impact of the new construction on the neighborhood is essential, since its small scale in relation to the surroundings and its familiar inhabitants make it more easily acceptable, even if the elaboration of its design generates a new and unexpected visual impression. (Antonakaki, Antonakakis and Hadjimichalis 1975: 37)

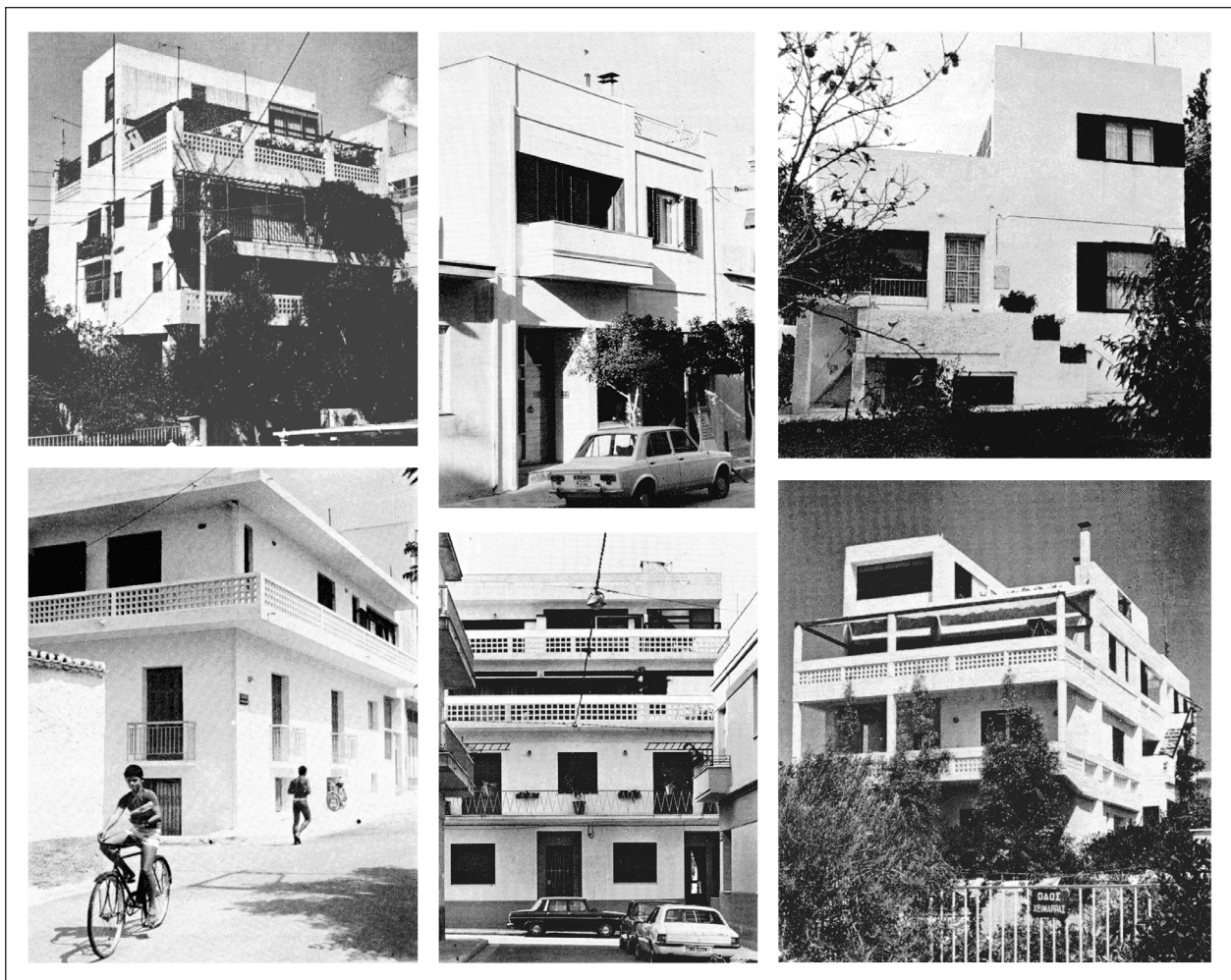


The final form and scale of Atelier 66's additions to anonymous concrete frame houses (**Figure 8**) presented few architectural similarities with the concurrent gigantic mat-buildings of Team X or the capsule towers of Japanese Metabolists. Emerging mostly through local building regulations and available technical skills within small lots, these projects did not stand out from their surroundings. They appeared as discrete twists of the ordinary and the anonymous. Their incrementality was not a result of extensible frameworks and replaceable capsule-components; rather, it was the outcome of conventional concrete frames that were expanded and modified to accommodate new spatial configurations. This resulted in an aesthetic of irregularity and 'non-finito' that was radically different from that of their international counterparts. Traces of imminent or unfinished constructions were a common sight in post-war Greece, and Atelier 66 did not need to accentuate this through their designs. According to Dimitris Antonakakis, their main challenge was to make sense of the unarticulated architectural object and to design an addition whose logic would tie together the new and the old parts of the building within a novel overarching order (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 2017).

In the years following this first article, and while its (eventually unpublished) second part was in progress, Atelier 66

published two more articles on the equally commonplace subject of the polykatoikia (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 1977, 1978). In this period, their preoccupation with 'the architect's role' in a variety of ordinary processes and commissions acquired an increasingly holistic scope. In 1981, Suzana Antonakaki critiqued the elitism of her peers who refused to get involved in the built production of the ordinary. She urged architects to work from within that system and to use the 'materials at [their] disposal' to change it: 'What is needed is ... a persistent quest for quality, regardless of the scale of the project ... from the small to the big apartment, from the little individual house to the apartment building, from the floor addition to the larger building complex' (Antonakaki 2006: 185–186). In her address to the local architectural community, Antonakaki related these issues with the importance of language and words: 'The material, the vocabulary of architecture, is worn out. Our words have no gravitas. So, let us revise them... We need an apprehension of the words "at close range", a revision of the vocabulary of architecture from within' (Antonakaki 2006: 184–86). Atelier 66's earlier adoption of the colloquial term 'panosikoma' in their publication of 1975 had certainly been a crucial move in this direction.

In 1983, a collaboration of Atelier 66 members Suzana Antonakaki, Dina Vaiou and Dimitris Rizos led to another



**Figure 8:** Photographs of the panosikoma projects published in 'Unforeseen Changes in the Dwelling Space' (Antonakaki, Antonakakis and Hadjimichalis 1975: 39–52).

important step in the same vein—the publication of a *Housing Guide* through the Technical Chamber of Greece<sup>12</sup> (Antonakaki, Rizos and Vaiou 1983: 11), which aimed to move ‘beyond the ... texts that are written by “specialists” and address “specialists”’. Instead, they intended to discuss issues of design and construction with the inhabitants. The tone of the texts and illustrations of the *Guide* (Figure 9) was consistent with this intention. They explained the process of designing and constructing a house in ways that could be considered broadly comprehensible, without resorting to oversimplifications. The publication also made extensive reference to issues of construction and craftsmanship. Avoiding unaffordable technical innovations, the authors insisted on exploring the capacities of the conventional concrete frame, which was the basis for panosikoma additions, and similar practices of addition or adaptation (Antonakaki, Rizos and Vaiou 1983: 43). The goal behind the *Guide* was to render future homeowners aware of this potential for customization. It was also intended to instigate a critique of the norms imposed by the housing market, ‘so that their cooperation with the future designers and constructors will be more fertile and substantial’ (Antonakaki, Rizos and Vaiou 1983: 7). By sharing their professional expertise with a broader audience, Atelier 66 pursued a redefinition of the architect’s place within post-war Greek society. The panosikoma projects were an integral part of this long-term pursuit and ideological stance.

Meanwhile, Atelier 66 continued to work on panosikoma projects. In 1986, they published again on this subject. ‘Extensions-Additions to Three Houses’ was authored by two younger Atelier 66 members, Costis Hadjimichalis and Dina Vaiou (1986). Sharing a similar basic format with the publication of 1975, it included more recent panosikoma projects. But, by the time of its publication, the 1960s discussions on flexibility and incrementality, and the problem of their transfer to the Greek context, were already seen as issues of the past. This is why Hadjimichalis and Vaiou set off with a bold observation: ‘In reality, houses

continue to transform in unorganized and unpredictable ways, despite the theories of flexibility’ (Hadjimichalis and Vaiou 1986: 66). Nevertheless, the stigmatization of panosikoma as architecturally non-legitimate or irrelevant persisted, and the authors continued trying to prove the latent potential of such small commissions.

By 1986, Vaiou and Hadjimichalis were so familiar with the ordinary vocabulary to which Suzana Antonakaki had pointed a few years before that they started playing with it. To describe their design for the ‘addition’ of a floor under a house (the enclosure of the pilotis space – a practice as common as floor additions) they paraphrased ‘panosikoma’ (i.e., lift-up) to coin the term ‘katosikoma’, whimsically meaning ‘lift-down’. Finding a common language with the people they designed for while simultaneously avoiding the limitations of the conventional vocabulary of the housing market was a persistent quest for the atelier. Communication with the clients was a ‘mutual lesson’, driven by ‘an effort to make a discussion beyond the clichés’ (Hadjimichalis and Vaiou 1986: 67). This growing confidence in using the common language was also apparent in the architecture of the projects. The elaborate designs of floor additions published in 1986 (Figure 10) went beyond the reserved simplicity of the ones published in 1975. The architects were conquering the limitations and challenges of such small commissions. They could now apply tropes that one could find in their main corpus of works.

These preoccupations of Atelier 66 seem to have culminated in the 1970s and 1980s. But their interest in working on the small panosikoma commissions and addressing a broader audience has persisted, and these two topics also appear in later publications (Antonakaki 2004; Antonakakis 2004). In a newspaper article of 2003, Suzana Antonakaki gave an even broader perspective to this issue of additions and the civic responsibility of architects. She asserted that ‘every architectural proposal in the city fabric ... is in some way an addition. Even constructions that are initiated from foundations work as additions, because

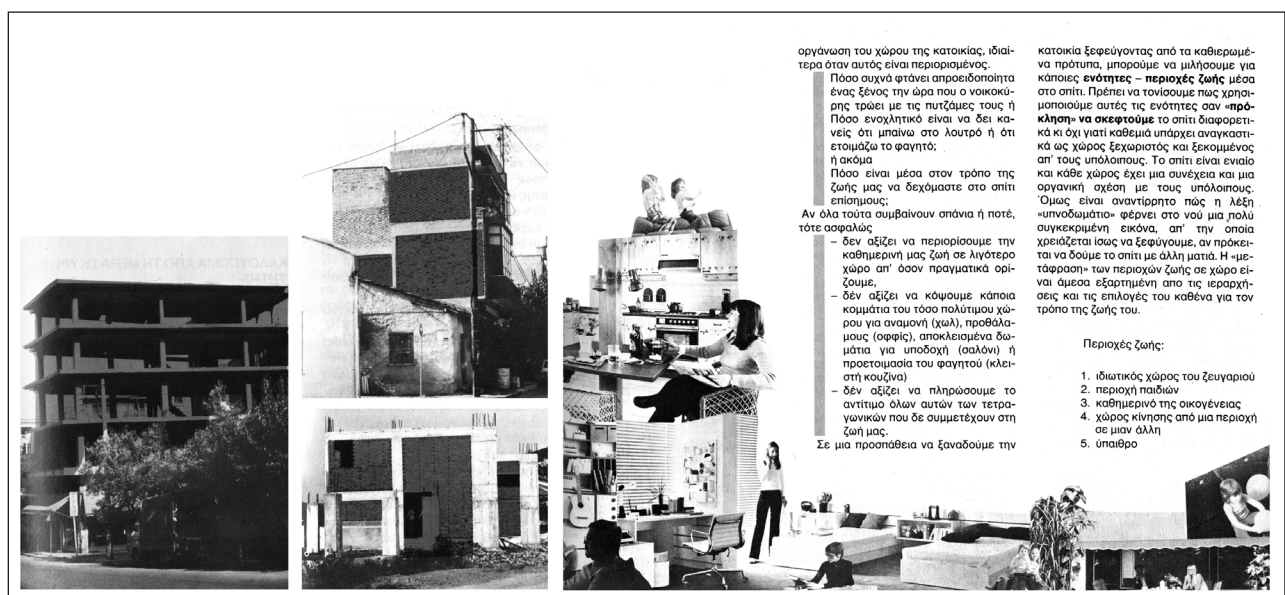
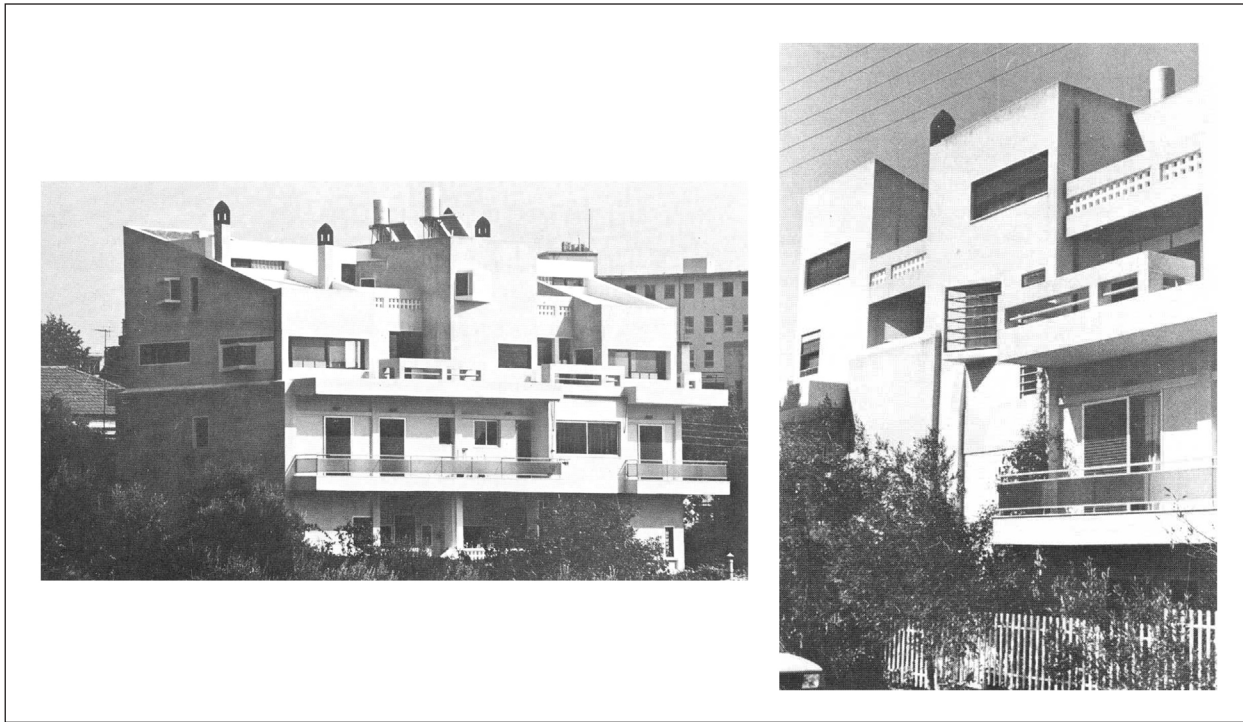


Figure 9: Excerpts from the *Housing Guide* (Antonakaki, Rizos and Vaiou 1983: 27, 57, 61).





**Figure 10:** Photographs of the panosikoma additions published in 'Extensions-Additions to Three Houses' (Hadjimichalis and Vaiou 1986: 70).

they intrude into the environment and unsettle a certain "balance" (Antonakaki 2010: 159–60).

### Historiographies and Genealogies of Atelier 66 through the Panosikoma

Most historians who have written about Atelier 66 have focused on their large- or medium-scale projects and conventional commissions. Decades after Atelier 66 pointed to the architectural value of such minor additions, their historiographic legitimization (both as part of the oeuvre of the office, and as a general phenomenon) is still pending. Panayotis Tournikiotis was one of the first to highlight these projects. In 2007, he referred to Atelier 66's 'additions to simple buildings' (Tournikiotis 2007b: 57), within a monograph that nonetheless excluded them. A comprehensive feature on house additions in Greece – which also included works of Atelier 66 – was only published in 2002 (Tournikiotis 2002a). Tournikiotis presented it as 'an attempt for the assignment of further publicity and awareness to an architectural field which up to now appeared to be limited within a mundane reality' (Tournikiotis 2002b: 140). In other words, the 'stigma of the panosikoma' (2002b: 139) appears to have persisted at least until the early 2000s, if not later. This could be one of the reasons why most analysts of the work of Atelier 66 have not paid much attention to these projects.

The awkward position of these projects within the oeuvre of Atelier 66 is also due to the persisting influence of previous historiographies. Based on a specific selection of more canonical projects, some historians have influenced the perception of their work by positioning it under the label of 'Critical Regionalism', both as part of a local genealogy (Lefaivre and Tzonis 1981) and as a part of a more international network (Frampton 1985b). But their

'regionally inflected practice', as Kenneth Frampton had characterized it (1985b: 4), was not simply a recourse to a pre-modern local building tradition like the ones that people like Pikionis and Konstantinidis cherished. Atelier 66 belonged to a generation that attempted to extend their predecessors' affection for the vernacular to the post-war architectural mass culture of Greece. Thus, they destabilized previous categorizations and broadened the potential field of architectural practice. They developed a theoretical understanding of the everyday practice of panosikoma, but they also became part of it through their own designs and constructions. Atelier 66's 'regionalism' was certainly rooted in their predecessors' sensitivity to the local particularities of climate, landscape, materiality and tradition. But their understanding of panosikoma additions as a 'creative tradition of our times' (Antonakakis 2004) hints of an updated definition of 'place' beyond nostalgic or mystifying resorts to a pre-modern past.

In another equally influential historiographical framing, adopted by several historians and underpinned also by the architects themselves, Atelier 66's work is described as an offshoot of Team X and, more specifically, the Dutch Structuralists (see, for instance, Cohen 2007). Compared to the main corpus of their work and their early, large-scale projects, which display such affinities more clearly, the panosikoma additions seem like an odd exception or a deviance from this claim. But Atelier 66 did not embrace this mass-culture phenomenon to oppose this frame of reference. They presented it, instead, as the local answer to the post-war discussions on flexibility and incrementality. By associating the thinking of groups like Team X and the Dutch Structuralists with the practice of the panosikoma, Atelier 66 created a link between an international avant-garde and their localized and banal reality. To



some extent, they not only extracted the post-war theories of flexibility and incrementality from their original context and employed them as tools for reading the post-war Greek reality, but they also acted within that reality as architects. They understood that modular mega-structures and pre-fabricated elements were incompatible with the Greek building sector and its limited scale of commissions. Hence, while they designed projects informed by these international currents, they derived their architectural form from their local conditions and modes of housing production.

More recent historical analyses have attempted to counter these historiographical tendencies, by tracing the influences of postmodernism in the work of Atelier 66 (Kotionis 2004; Giamarellos 2016b). These analyses have shed light on lesser known Atelier 66 projects of the 1980s. But to a similar extent, they too focused on their conventional architectural commissions. This association with postmodernism, if seen in the broader cultural meaning of the term, can also be useful in understanding Atelier 66's interest in the panosikoma as an ordinary and non-legitimate cultural phenomenon. Throughout the first 20 years of Atelier 66's professional practice (ca. 1965–86), which coincide with their more intense work on the panosikoma, the issue of 'mass culture' was prominently debated outside Greece (for instance, see Eco 1964). In Europe and the United States, the legitimization of previously scorned cultural expressions was emerging as a major issue in scholarly and artistic debates of the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, it erupted as a critique of conventional dualisms such as 'culture' vs. 'civilization' or 'low' vs. 'high culture' (see Storey 2008). According to Andreas Huyssen, one of the main achievements of postmodernism was that it went beyond this 'Great Divide' and embraced cultural expressions that were previously considered decadent or uninteresting (Huyssen 1987). With regards to architecture, Huyssen referred to the famous example of Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour's 'uninhibited learning from Las Vegas' (Huyssen 1987: vii).

In the Greek context, this discussion was far less prominent. The long preoccupation with traditional vernacular architecture, which originated in the first decades of the 20th century (see Philippidis 1984: 149–80), facilitated the reception of post-war authors like Bernard Rudofsky (1964) and Amos Rapoport (1969). It eventually extended to include the marginalized architecture of slums as highlighted by John F. C. Turner (1972). But Izenour, Scott Brown and Venturi's 'ugly and ordinary' (1972), under which one could include the generic post-war polykatoikia and the panosikoma, was something that most Greek architects would refuse to 'learn from'.<sup>13</sup> A significant exception was Dimitris Philippidis (1972), who argued that Greek architects should look closely to the country's 'masscult architecture' and search for inspiration in its different typologies and practices.<sup>14</sup> Within this context, and only a few years before the Antonakakis would publish their minor projects, Philippidis commented on images of panosikoma and wondered: 'Have the architects ever examined such problems seriously enough?' (Philippidis 1972: 70–71). Atelier 66's earlier projects and later publications

on the issue of panosikoma can be seen as the answer to both Philippidis's localized question and the international discussions it reflected. Within the Antonakakis' inclusive attitude towards different architectures as sources of inspiration (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 1985: 8), the field of the ordinary appears to have played a crucial role in the formation of their work.

Their involvement in ordinary buildings practices within their immediate environment gradually led to a conscious search for inspiration in minor and banal subjects: 'Considering every project, even the smallest one, as an exercise in style and manner, as an object to be filled with signification and meaning, we tried to formulate out of everyday practice a vocabulary and a language that would permit us to communicate with things, people, with ourselves' (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 1985: 6). But this sensitivity for the poetic dimension of the ordinary was not limited to a romantic fascination. It was also combined with an operative attitude, which sought to embrace but also to transform the ordinary. As the Antonakakis have stated, they 'assumed a critical stance towards the established vocabulary of everyday practice' and 'ventured in both small and big mutinies, in a constant attempt to discover the meaning, the poetry lost in an eroded and oversimplified architectural vocabulary' (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 1985: 6). This subversive attitude is perhaps what led historian Yannis Tsiomis to comment recently that the Antonakakis are 'delinquent architects': they deviated from the modernist norm, not only by assimilating influences beyond its limit, but also through the way that they 'exercise[d] their profession'. A considerable part of Atelier 66's work focused on 'inventing ways for new types of dwellings, but within the framework and the conditions where others produce[d] a conventional architecture' (Tsiomis 2016), and, I could add, through commissions that their peers would consider trivial.

Aside from the way they were analyzed in this article, the material examined here can serve as a significant basis for further historical research on the post-war quotidian environment. The generic post-war polykatoikia has recently attracted the interest of local and international researchers who have described it as a historical and cultural phenomenon, a socio-economic and political process, an urban component and an architectural object (Woditsch 2009; Issaias 2014; Theocharopoulou 2017). A parallel examination of the panosikoma (and other contingent typological and procedural byproducts) on similar terms could provide a broader understanding of the post-war anonymous architectural environment and the processes that formed it.

But, perhaps closer to the perspective of this article, the case of Atelier 66 could also serve as part of a wider historiography of the local architectural discourse, as well as its relation to international discussions and currents. Although I focused on Atelier 66's work on the legitimization and theorization of Greece's architectural mass culture here, these architects are certainly not the only ones who have worked in this direction in the post-war years. In addition to Dimitris Philippidis, Dimitris Fatouros and the collective or later individual efforts of the members

of the Department of Interior Architecture and Industrial Aesthetics, many more similar cases await historical scrutiny. The varying and conflictual attitudes of different Greek architects towards the vernacular typologies and processes that surrounded their work often remain marginal to historical research. A careful selection and examination of such cases could not only re-articulate the established narratives and linear genealogies of local architectural history; it could also underpin the occasional contradictions between theory and practice. Combined with concurrent discussions about the legitimization of the generic and the ordinary in other geographical contexts, this could also help link the Greek context to the internationally renewed interest in the historiography of postmodernism in architecture.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In 1986, the office shrunk to its initial core and is still active today. For Atelier 66's collaborative structure and the challenges it entailed, see Giamarelos 2018.
- <sup>2</sup> The Antonakakis and other members of Atelier 66 sustained acquaintances and friendships with Team X members like Georges Candilis and Aldo van Eyck, but also Ralph Erskine, Jaap Bakema, Hermann Hertzberger and others (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 2017; Hadjimichalis 2017). Members of the Atelier refer to these acquaintances as pivotal influences on their work.
- <sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the original Greek are by the author.
- <sup>4</sup> One of the first official documentations of the term appears in the early 1960s in a dictionary of popular construction (Tzartanos 1961), but the term could be much older.
- <sup>5</sup> Suzana Antonakaki grew up in the suburb of Kallithea. Dimitris Antonakakis spent most of his childhood in the urban neighborhood around Ippokratous str. in central Athens.
- <sup>6</sup> Dimitris Antonakakis estimates the number of such projects from the early 1960s to the present at: 25 additions (16 of which are within the Athens metropolitan region) and 22 interior transformations (18 of which are in Athens).
- <sup>7</sup> Costis Hadjimichalis, Bouki Babalou, Antonis Noukakis and other former members of Atelier 66 mentioned this at a recent conference in Athens (2016). See the video recordings of their presentations online at <http://www.blod.gr/lectures/Pages/viewevent.aspx?EventID=660>.
- <sup>8</sup> Hadjimichalis had followed the activity of Atelier 66 since his student years. Until the 1980s, he worked in the office as a partner or external collaborator for many projects.
- <sup>9</sup> This could be a local deflection of the international interest in slums and bidon-villes in the 1960s and 1970s; see, for instance, Turner (1972).
- <sup>10</sup> Hadjimichalis had also attended Jaap Bakema's summer seminars in Salzburg. See Hadjimichalis et al. (1969) and Hadjimichalis and Polychroniadis (1974).
- <sup>11</sup> Published in 1975, the first part concerned exterior transformations, i.e., panosikoma additions. The sec-

ond part was to discuss interior changes in existing houses (Antonakaki and Antonakakis 2017). In 1978, Dimitris Antonakakis referred to this second article, titled 'Unforeseen Changes in the Dwelling Space (2)', as a work in progress (Antonakakis 1978: 68–69, 76–77).

- <sup>12</sup> In the early 1980s, Suzana Antonakaki was a member of the *Permanent Committee for Housing* and in 1982 she became president of the *Scientific Department of Architects* within the Chamber. Younger Atelier 66 members Dina Vaiou and Dimitris Rizos participated in a research on the issue of housing in 1980–81, which led to the publication of the *Housing Guide* in 1983. The final format and content was largely edited by the aforementioned, and other, members of the Atelier.
- <sup>13</sup> Published in 1984, the volume titled *Κάτι το 'ωραίο'* — *Μια περιήγηση στην νεοελληνική κακογουστιά* extensively documented Greek mass culture. Although seemingly in tune with international discussions about the re-evaluation of mass-culture, its predominantly sarcastic preoccupation with 'kitsch' and 'bad taste' indicated a more conservative mindset.
- <sup>14</sup> Architectural historian Dimitris Philippidis's efforts to legitimize the ordinary could be seen as parallel to those of practicing architects, Atelier 66. For more on Philippidis's endeavour, see Magouliotis (2018).

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