



## **Project for the Messinas Travel Fellowship to Greece**

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### **Athens Before and After the Olympic Games**

"In the last winter, in a short visit to Athens, I tried to arrive from the new international airport to the city center. This nerve racking ride took me 2.5 hours in a torrential rain, full of traffic jams, road constructions and holes on the highway. It seemed like a fiction that in this lunatic asylum 6 months later, the Olympic torch will be lighted in front of millions of spectators. In my next visit 3 month later the city was still in a pathetic condition. the roads were packed with terrible traffic jams, the preparations looked like an archeological excavation, and the preparations for the event looked hopeless. But then, like in a miracle at the opening shot of the Olympic games all the work was done. . ." [ Moshe Gilad, Ha'aretz Jan. 16, 2005]

Before the Olympics, Athens was considered a dull, crowded city with poor transportation and bad pollution. The work done to prepare for the Olympics greatly improved the city in all these aspects. I would like to examine the changes that the city has passed throughout the preparations for the Olympic Games and the amount of success that the responsible authorities had in fulfilling the plan and getting the city ready for the Olympics.

The purposes of the research:

1. Studying the preparation plans for the Olympics in different aspects:  
The Building projects around the Olympic park, The budget and timetable, including building sports complexes, transportation systems (both within and into the city), infrastructure, beautification, tourist accommodations, access to archaeological sites, reducing pollution, and entertainment.
2. Analyzing the execution of the plans in the given schedule. And understanding the reasons that brought to those changes ( for example: Archaeological sites exposed in the building areas or money problems).
3. Architectural decisions that were taken in the process of planning the new buildings, and reconstruction of old buildings: What building styles were used? And what were the influences they had? Who were the people who planned the renovations? How did all these changes affect the city in the long term?
4. A year later: How do all the new buildings integrate in the being of the city?
5. The tourism in Athens: comparing the scope before and after, the amount of visitors and the average visiting time. Checking if there is a major change in the focus of attention in the ancient town.

## Background

Athens region's populates five million citizens, about 50 percent of Greece's population. The urban city itself populates more than three million people.

The modern part of Athens suffers from over population, traffic problems and a high level of air pollution. All these create a very crowded atmosphere.

The multi-story buildings that were built in the 20's in order to populate the immigrants from turkey and the Greece periphery had a negative influence on the town's image.

The Greece government hoped to take advantage of the Olympic Games as an opportunity to improve the façade of the town . The preparations, starting at 1997 cost Greece over 30 milliard Euro and included the following:

- Paving new roads all around the town
- Widening the excisting roads
- Renovation of the National Airport
- Improvements in the public transportation
- Overall improvement of the city's outlook

35 Sport complexes and many habitation units were built around town , and were planned to serve the poor neighborhoods of town in order to make the lifestyle in those area's better. Along the beach in the Pireous region three new promenades and marines were built. Many neighborhoods were reconstructed and cleaned, and the area of Fasiri,

which suffered from a very high rate of crime has become one of the most popular area's for recreation and tourism. The Gazi area which was an old industrial area was changed into a very popular art zone.

Another great improvement is the 2.5 Kilometer road system that was built to connect all the main Archeological sites. The idea for this project was suggested by Athens previous major Antionus Tribesis 15 years ago. The execution started then and was finished in a hurry before the Olympic Games. This Road starts at the old Olypic stadium where the first Olympics took place in 1896 , passes through a lot of sites that represent Athens golden Era from 500 B.C and arrives at the area of the Acropolis.

### Economics

The organizers expected the event itself to cost 7.5 milliard dollars. After all the event cost 9 milliard dollar, of which 1.5 milliard where invested in security , including more than 100,000 officers and soldiers. This cost comes up to 5 percent of Greece's yearly gross national product.

The Greece authorities hoped that in addition to the direct incomes of the Olympics ( TV broadcasts, Publicity, and the many spectators that will attend the event ), The Olympics will contribute to Greece incomes in the long term by encouraging tourism and providing Athens with a worldwide reputation. The objective is that the city of Athens which was considered by most tourists as a stopping place on the way to the beautiful islands of southern Greece ( After a short visit to the Acropolise) will turn into an important and attractive city.

Tourism has always been a very important factor in Greece's economy and gives an income of 15 percent of Greece's yearly gross national product.

The 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona had a great influence on the City which passed a total changeover and became one of Spain's most popular tourist sites. Athens municipality hoped that the same positive change will happen to Athens too.

The organization of the games is considered a success story. In a research written lately: 82% of Athens's Citizens answered that they believe the Olympic Games are going to improve their lifestyles.

In addition, Greece's image in the eyes of American and European Nations was highly improved and those countries now see Greece as a modern country with the ability of organizing and hosting impressive events.

Indeed it is interesting to learn about how the changes that the city has passed over the last 2 years have influenced the life of its residents and the tourism in the town.

### Research Method

1. Gathering of Background material before the trip : Internet , literature with the help of the Greece Counsel, Academic sources and the http. Site of Athens city council.
2. A 10 day trip to Athens which will include :
  - Meeting with designing apartments in the Athens council
  - Documentation of engineering maps of the city which show the differences that the city has gone through over the past years
  - Visits to the Olympic complexes including sketching, photographing and imaging the places
  - Interviews with several different people who took part in the organization of the Olympic games, along with meeting with the Architects that planned the new buildings.  
The contents of the interviews will be written during the trip after knowing the sights better. The coordination will be taken care of before the trip by phone.
  - One specific building will be checked in a Architectural point of view.
  - Documentation of the new Archeological pass including: description, Painting, Photography based on advertising material and visits of the sites.
  - Interviews with tourist that focus on : Their impression of the sites, and of the changes that the city has passed since previous visits. The approachability of the city and the transportation inside it. 50 interviews all together.

- Interviews with the residents of Athens about the influence that the Olympics have made to their lifestyles.
- 3) Writing a concluding article and creating a presentation about the research and the conclusions. Including maps, Photographs, images, and drawings made during the trip.

#### Budget

- 1) Flight ticket
  - 2) Accommodation: 40 Euros per day.
  - 3) Economy: 20 Euros per day.
  - 4) Transportation: 10 Euros per day.
- Total: 70 Euros per day.
- All together: 14 days X 70 Euro