From Shrieks to Technical Reports:
technology, disability and political processes in building Athens metro

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At the Faculty of Arts and Science at Linköpings universitet, research and doctoral studies are carried out within broad problem areas. Research is organized in interdisciplinary research environments and doctoral studies mainly in graduate schools. Jointly, they publish the series Linköping Studies in Arts and Science. This thesis comes from the Department of Technology and Social Change at the Tema Institute.

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To the memory of Georgia Tsinou
Contents

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. 9

Preface: economist gone sociologist ................................................................................... 13

1. Introduction: background, problem, and theoretical understandings ............................. 17
   Background – an accessible metro? .................................................................................. 19
   Purpose and research questions ...................................................................................... 20
   Theoretical understandings of technological development and disability as co-production 21
   The co-productionist view ............................................................................................... 22
   Perspective I. Actor-Network Theory: enacting the material ........................................... 25
   Translation: four distinct sub-processes .......................................................................... 27
   Running chickens, flying babies, and the emergence of politics in the ANT vocabulary 28
   Academic asymmetries .................................................................................................... 28
   Theory of discrimination or discriminating theory? ........................................................... 31
   Actor-networks vs. hybrid collectives .............................................................................. 33
   Perspective II. The involvement of concerned groups: research in the wild vs. confined 35
   research
   Hybrid forums as negotiating spaces .............................................................................. 37
   Perspective III. Disability studies – defining disability ................................................... 39
   Medical vs. social model of disability ............................................................................. 40
   Transport disability ......................................................................................................... 43
   Summary and conclusion: mobilizing key perspectives and concepts for this study .......... 44

2. Method ............................................................................................................................. 47
   Choosing epistemology: issues of neutrality and reflexivity ............................................. 48
   Identifying relevant organizations and time periods ....................................................... 54
   Locating the informants – identifying interview persons ................................................ 55
   Access denied .................................................................................................................. 58
   Interviews: form and content .......................................................................................... 61
   Written material .............................................................................................................. 63
   From data to analysis ...................................................................................................... 64

3. Problematizing disability issues in Greece 1932-1985 .................................................... 67
   Views of disability in ancient Greece .............................................................................. 68
   Disability in the twentieth century ................................................................................. 70
   Emergence of disability organizations ............................................................................ 72
   The 1980s: problematizing disability politics in public administration ......................... 76
   The Greek National Confederation of Disabled People, ESAEA, is established .......... 80
   Summary and conclusions .............................................................................................. 81

4. Developing the metro: long political discussions 1955 - 1985 ........................................ 85
   A new metro system for Athens? A long problematization process ............................... 87
   Policy measures during the New Democracy administration ........................................... 94
   The metro during the PASOK administration ................................................................ 97
   Summary and conclusions .............................................................................................. 100
5. Disability issues in public planning and transportation 1985-1991: co-producing accessibility and the built environment 103
Social policies vs. infrastructural projects during the 1980s 104
Department for Research on People with Special Needs - a Trojan horse or a new obligatory passage point? 106
A disabled architect enabled the problematization of accessibility 107
The accessibility awareness project: creating accessibility working groups within the public administration 115
Working groups in action 117
Mobilizing accessibility: design principles for facilities and spaces in the built environment 120
Configuration of outside spaces used by pedestrians 122
Materializing the principles after the publication of the handbook 126
Procurement for the Athens metro 126
Metro procurement and the Department for Research on People with Special Needs 132
Summary and conclusions 135

6. The launch of the metro project – “backlash” 1991-1993 139
Disability issues in the early 1990s: gains, institutionalization and expectations 140
Moving forward by going backwards: return to the philanthropic approach and destabilization of the accessibility network 144
The first metro contract in June 1991: parliamentary debate on ratification 149
Conflicts over establishing Attiko Metro S.A. as a limited state company 151
Conflicts over lack of basic study 153
Conflicts over absence of “social participation” in the project: who gets represented on Attiko Metro’s board? 154
Procurement, parliamentary debate and after: destabilizing accessibility? 156
The accessibility clause in the metro project: a triumph of disability organizations or a weak clause? 159
Backlash 161
Imposing accessibility in the metro – a confined process 165
Summary and conclusions 168

Legitimizing accessibility in the metro 173
PASOK’s return to power and the need for revising the first metro contract 173
Involvement of concerned disability groups: the blind break the confinement? 175
Parliamentary debate on the second metro contract: enacting accessibility 180
Disability issues under modernization: institutionalizing obligatory passage points and the creation of new hybrid forums 186
ESAEA becomes “Social Partner”: the institutionalization of an obligatory passage point 187
The emergence of the first disability committee: a hybrid forum 189
Directive 1: accessibility in the built environment and public buildings 193
Directive 2: central administration and disability 195
Athens metro – the final countdown 197
Summary and conclusions 201
8. Stabilizing accessibility in the metro 1997-2003 __________________________ 205
   Athens, an Olympic city ____________________________ _______________________ 206
   The second disability committee: a hybrid forum for accessibility in transportation _____ 209
     The second disability committee in action ____________________________ ________ 211
     Mobilizing accessibility allies: an enacted effort and/or subject to political manipulation? ____212
   Year 2000: the metro comes to town ____________________________________________ 219
     The second disability committee and the metro: proposals for the improvement of accessibility and
     the reaction of Attiko Metro ____________________________ __________________________ 221
     Accessibility and the Olympic/Paralympic Games: implications for the metro ____________ 227
     Further interventions in the metro project and a debate concerning accessibility _________ 231
   Summary and conclusions _________________________________________________________ 235

9. Summary and final discussion: hybridity and the co-production of technology and
disability ________________________________________________________ 239
   Enacting (transport) disability in Greece ____________________________________________ 241
   Concerned groups in the configuration of the built environment ________________________ 245
     Hybrid forums as obligatory passage points for problematizing accessibility ____________ 246
     Hybrid forums: theoretical concept or policy instrument? ____________________________ 247

Appendix I. Attiko Metro’s reply to my letter requesting access to its archives ____ 249
Appendix II. List of interviewed informants ____________________________________________ 251
Appendix III. Participants in the second disability committee at the Ministry of
Transport and Communications ______________________________________________________ 254

References ___________________________________________________________ 255
   A. Literature __________________________________________________________ 256
   B. Archival Sources and Newspapers __________________________________________ 267
Acknowledgments

While I write these lines I still wonder ‘what is more difficult to do: doing a Ph.D. or expressing in two pages the gratefulness and appreciation for the support and encouragement one has experienced during this process? In this very moment, I undoubtedly answer the latter. Where to begin and who to thank first? I started reading older dissertations and I tried to get some inspiration from colleagues. I found them very well written and moving but I would never be able to articulate my thoughts in the same way. But still, I need to be personal this time. It is the only place in this book that I am allowed to be personal. But what does personal mean eventually? Who am I and who really produced this book? During this pseudo-philosophical investigation of my situation, my eyes fell on an article that describes one of the main theoretical concepts that I employed in my study, namely hybrid collective. Then I started paraphrasing and applying the concept to my case.

The creation of Vasilis as Ph.D. can’t be detached from the business of creating texts of the right kind. And, to be sure, other materials too [...] For what we call ‘a doctor’ (a particular kind of agent) is created in part during the process of writing texts. Texts which allow the Ph.D. (or more appropriately the Ph.D. collective) to see if its hypothesis are right. And in part through its interactions with other materials which help the Ph.D. (the Vasilis hybrid collective) to produce ideas, to formulate questions, and offers the collective the possibility of acting to perform its identity as a doctor. Which were these other materials, or entities, or even actors that helped me to enact my identity as a Ph.D.? These were both humans and non-humans. While I am really thankful for the help I got from my computer, my desk, all the means of transportation that took me back and forth, I deliberately choose to discriminate against non-human entities and dedicate this part of the book to all human actors that supported me in becoming a Ph.D. agent. Let me first define the boundaries of the collective.

One of the most inspirational settings for producing and developing ideas for this book was the Department of Technology and Social Change, at Linköping University (Tema T). Tema T is said to be an interdisciplinary department with focus on the study of science and technology, but for me it is much more than that. When I started my doctoral studies in Autumn 2001 I felt totally lost, incapable of dealing with the Swedish language limitations that I faced and the whole new academic world that appeared in front of me all of a sudden. Back then I used to identify myself as a poor Greek economist that would never be able to write a single article. After five years of extensive interactions within the borders of Tema T, my identity, self-confidence and academic ability was translated into something new. I was re-enacted! I became a stateless, but confident, S&TS-researcher that had published this book. And this is thanks to Tema T. The translation of my intellectual capacity into a book, however, went through a number of interactions with other researchers and doctoral students. These interactions mostly took place within seminars. I am really grateful for the hospitality and inspiration provided by the participants in the so-called P6 seminar series (Technology, Practice, and Identity). I would also like to thank all of my colleagues participating in the seminar series Technology, Values and Political Processes (TVOPP) for their comments and engagement in reading my texts. Keep up the good work!

Turning again to theory, I will borrow actor-network theory’s obsession for powerful actors in order to express my gratitude to my supervisors. If we tried to identify a heroic actor in this story then it would not take us long to come up with the “Jane Summerton phenomenon”. By this I mean… (Just kidding Jane)! I could
write many lines about Jane’s competencies and ways she helped me with my project, but this would be common knowledge. Instead I want to talk about what she did in the following way. When things went wrong, and I did not have the slightest idea about the seriousness of the situation, Jane was always there to attribute me with an agency: that of feeling calm and good about myself, that I can accomplish my goals and write a good dissertation, that I belong somewhere, and that this somewhere is important. Apart from being a very dedicated supervisor, Jane had this magic ability, which others would call great pedagogical skill, to bring out something beautiful from her doctoral students. And this is what I call the “Jane Summerton phenomenon”. Thanks for everything Jane! Another important actor in this collective is my secondary supervisor, Jonas Anshelm. Was it our unfinished business with football, was it the hours fishing, was it the long abstract discussions or was it our fights on music? I do not really know, but Jonas was very generous in offering his personal devotion to my project and his professional eye to every detail of this book. Many thanks!

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Pelle Gyberg and Francis Lee are two persons that I owe much (do my acknowledgements perform dualisms or is it only me?). Apart from being an excellent researcher and supportive colleague, Pelle has been the older brother that I never had. Always there, no matter what! This “thank you” shrinks in comparison with everything that you have done for me. Francis has been my alter ego for the last three years. Much of my academic identity has developed during hours of discussions with him. A big part of my lifestyle is influenced by his positive thinking. A great part of my personality is constructed by his friendship! Thank you both for your existence.

One of my problems with this kind of theory is that it disregards the contribution of invisible but very important entities during the production of facts. This part of the book constitutes the first site where I will struggle against this kind of omission. With this in mind, I would like to thank Kajsa Ellegård and Boel Berner for their support and for being there when things were ugly; Johan Sanne for his comments during my half-way seminar; Sven Widmalm, Anders Persson, and Claes-Fredrik Helgesson for providing me with valuable advice and constructive critique during my final seminar; all the doctoral students of the DO1-cohort in particular John Sjöström (for being the best office mate in the world and an excellent friend), Charlotta Isaksson, Mark Sellenthin, Wiktoria Glad, Corinna Kruse, Lindy Newlove and Robert Hrelja; Professor Charles Edquist for accepting me as a doctoral student and Leif Hommen for his comments at the start of my doctoral studies; my colleagues Anna Green, Anders Hansson (tillit Xenofon), Martin Hultman, Anders Johansson, Ericka Johnson, Jenny Palm, Karin Skill, and Eva Åström for creating such an inspirational and friendly environment at the department; Petra Jonvallen, Jenny Lee and Ulf Mellström for their friendship, advice and moral support; Mia Holmberg for helping me in the start of this journey; Jonas Anastasopoulos and Alekos Kastrinos for continuing being my friends despite the distance; Foteini Papadopoulou (you know why); Dimitris Tsinos and Peter Drosos for being supportive cousins; Christos Antonopoulos and Katerina Vrotsou
for their friendship and encouragement; Dimitra Georgiou for designing the cover of this book; Gray Gatehouse for the language correction.

The production of facts also involves the contribution of concerned groups. My informants in Athens have been very generous in providing me with information and materials. In particular, I would like to thank Dimitrios Batsos, Athos Dallas, Stratis Hatziharalabous, Marili Hristofi, Markos Katsiotis, Panayiotis Kouroublis, Argiro Leventi, Gerasimos Polis and Georgios Tsioubos. I am also grateful for the help of Nikos Perdikaris and for being such a good friend.

My theoretical framework says nothing about the involvement and support of the closest actors and this is probably the greatest omission. In any case, this effort would never be translated into a book without the devotion of my family: many thanks to my parents Varvara and Giorgos, and my brother Dimitris for supporting my choice to live and work so far away from home. Living together with a doctoral student must be a nightmare! I am really grateful to Lara for tolerating me all these years, encouraging me in completing this book, and making this journey meaningful. I am looking forward to travel more with you…

Linköping in October 2006
Preface: economist gone sociologist

“Yes, but what will you write on the empirical part of your dissertation, Vasilis?” my supervisor wondered impatiently, again! What will I write on the empirical part of my dissertation, I asked myself with abstract curiosity. “You should know, a Ph.D. is a very lonely thing to do”, wrote a friend of mine in her acknowledgements. It was time for me to make a big decision, to decide where I will invest a great deal of my loneliness. However, I hate to be alone - like everybody I guess. I like to work with and be among people. I am constantly attracted by and interested in human behavior - the processes with which we communicate, socialize, and solve our problems. One of the most striking things with humans, though, is that in order to communicate, interact, and solve problems, we have invented and designed practices and technological artifacts. Haraway notes concerning the impact of technologies on humans:

[…] Technologies are ways of life, social orders, practices of visualization. Technologies are skilled practices. How to see? Where to see from? What limits to vision? What to see for? Whom to see with? Who gets to have more than one point of view? Who gets blinkered? Who wears blinkers?21

To write a thesis about humans and technological artifacts, I need however to focus. I need a good recipe. As the story goes, I am an economist exposed to plenty of theories on how economy influences our lives and how we influence economy: how the interplay between demand and supply creates equilibriums and how technology disturbs the economic behavior of economic agents. No, I will not get into a detailed analysis of economic theories. However, even as an undergraduate I was frustrated by the fact that economic education at Greek universities focused mostly on traditional economic models, such as the neoclassical model that treats technology as an exogenous phenomenon. Generally, there is a distinct acceptance that traditional economic science has to a great extent neglected technological innovations.2 Economists did realize, progressively, that “other things” might be of equal importance for economy and economic theories, and through the development of numerous economic models they integrated technological innovation and change into the analysis.3 The emergence of evolutionary economics, for example, contributed to the opening of the previously unexplored “black box” of technology and put technological innovation and change in the focus of economic analysis.4

2 For an extended discussion on this issue see Freeman & Soete, 1997. The Economics of Industrial Innovation.
4 Evolutionary economists are often neo-Schumpeterians and particularly interested in the relations between technical and economic change. One important characteristic of evolutionary economics has been its criticism of neoclassical economic theory. MacKelvey, 1994: 18. Evolutionary Innovation: Early Industrial Uses of Genetic Engineering.
As a reactionary soul, however, who tends to believe “that official ideologies about objectivity and scientific method are particularly bad guides to how scientific knowledge is actually made”\(^5\), I realized rather fast that evolutionary economics were not a God-sent theory but rather another version of the famous God-trick.\(^6\) One of the “deadliest sins” that evolutionary economists committed was their initial disinterest in considering the demand or user side as an important determinant of technological evolution. Metcalfe notes about the obsession of evolutionary economics for the supply side:

> A related feature of the study of innovation is its almost exclusive supply side emphasis. Ever since Schumpeter's Theory of Economic Development, the consumer or user has been given a rather passive role in the explanation of innovation. The study of user-supplier interaction within the innovation systems literature has begun to remedy this defect but much more remains to be done, particularly in relation to the role of the final consumer. Indeed this is an area where the sociology of innovation has been ahead of the economics.\(^7\)

I am getting closer now. I know that technology should not be treated as a black box, that the under-theorized user side could be the locus of my research, and that the sociology of technology has more to contribute to my understanding of this area than traditional economics. I still need to identify, however, a theoretical context that will allow me to study humans as users or consumers of a technology, technology as a network of social and material entanglements, and processes as all interactions between humans and technological artifacts during the formation of a technical network. I also need to find or create a vocabulary that highlights “user” dynamics and that differs from economists’ vocabulary. This should be a central theme in my study. In order to do that I have to choose an empirical area that provides me with the space to study a technological network in the making and to analyze specific processes and negotiations that contributed to its design and realization.

I want to study interactions among social groups, users, producers and providers of a technology, and in doing so I need to “ask whether the artifact (or technological network) has any meaning at all for the members of the social groups under investigation”.\(^8\) I am interested in how users are involved in the shaping of technology and how technology and users are co-produced in the processes by which technological networks are formed. Various social groups and individuals have, however, different motives and possibilities to utilize the technology and to affect its development. An old classmate of mine who is confined to a wheelchair pointed out that people with disabilities could be such a group.\(^9\) “Perfect”, I thought

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\(^{5}\) Haraway, 1991: 576.
\(^{6}\) By “God trick” is meant the ability to see like a God or interpret for a God from a position transcendent and outside of lived experience, through which certain humans flee from the messy responsibilities of argumentation and decision making. Grassie, 1996: 293. “Cyborgs, Trickster, and Hermes: Donna Haraway’s Metatheory of Science and Religion”.
\(^{9}\) Nikos Perdikaris was a great source of inspiration for this project. Several discussions with him helped me to locate my empirical interest and to formulate my research questions. Nikos is bound to a wheelchair due to cerebral palsy.
but what more specifically characterizes disabled people’s relationships to technology? Why would it be interesting to study disabled people’s interactions with technology? What kind of technological networks have meaning for this social group? Who are disabled people anyway? What is the relation of disability to technology, in terms of urban environment, technical or social barriers configurations?

Talking about urban environment and barriers, it immediately struck me that transport networks constitute localities where people move, meet, get excluded, and shape their identities in different ways. One could perceive transport networks as generators of social behaviors in which artifacts, providers, and social groups are intertwined and mutually configured. Seen in that way, transport networks shape included and marginalized groups. Disabled people could be an example of a social group that does not have the same resources to influence the development of a transport network, as do other social actors without disabilities. What happens then? How are transport networks configured, to what extent do these configurations include accessibility provisions for accommodating people with disabilities and what are the processes by which people with disabilities are engaged in shaping these configurations? These are the questions I was interested in exploring. A transport network is, however, a very broad concept. What I needed to identify was a transport project in which disabled people were involved in its procurement and design. It did not take me long time to realize that a relevant locus of transport design and construction was to be found in my own city of origin, Athens, Greece, namely the process of designing, constructing and implementing the Athens metro.

* * *

Organization of the book
This book is organized as follows. In the first chapter I outline the purpose and the research questions of this study, as well as present the theoretical framework that will help me to answer these questions. In chapter 2 I discuss methodological issues. Six empirical chapters follow. Chapter 3 constitutes an account of how disability was historically perceived in Greece and how disability organizations evolved from the 1930s to the mid 1980s. In chapter 4 I discuss the initial developments of the Athens metro project during the 1950s and specific policy initiatives taken by various governments up to 1985. Chapter 5 deals with the establishment of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs in 1985 and the specific actions taken by this department for materializing accessibility in the Greek built environment. This chapter also discusses how the initiatives of the department affected the course of the metro project in the late 1980s. In chapter 6 I present the process of procuring for the metro project in relation to the first metro contract. In this chapter I also discuss under which circumstances and in which forms accessibility became part of the metro agenda. Chapters 7 and 8 describe and analyze significant factors that strengthened the implementation of accessibility provisions in the metro such as the return of the Socialist Party to power in 1993, the hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2004 by the city of Athens, and the launching of two disability committees. Finally, in chapter 9 I summarize the most important results of this study and draw some theoretical conclusions.
1. Introduction: background, problem, and theoretical understandings

Walking towards one of Athens’ new metro stations and helping my friend Nikos to hurdle all the physical obstacles that a person who is bound to a wheelchair can face in an urban environment, I started to think of how diffuse the notions of accessibility and participation are. While I was pushing his chair among speeding cars that were steered by impatient and rude drivers, I began to realize how differently we experience the constructed environment that surrounded us. All of the sudden, I became aware of all the cracks in the road, the lack of enough roadbeds, the parked cars on the pavements and all the other obstructions. Despite the difficulties and my obvious anxiety, Nikos looked relaxed, almost familiar with the impediments that hindered our route to the metro station. For me, though, it was like discovering a whole new world.

Figure 1. Walking towards the Ethniki Amyna metro station, Athens
Photo: Vasilis Galis
I am probably describing something self-evident: an able-bodied person has a totally different perception of the surrounding built environment than a disabled person. But, how self-evident and, in addition, how (dys-) functional is the configuration of the built environment for disabled people? How do people with disabilities experience the design and construction of urban milieus? Moreover, to what extent are people with physical disabilities included in the configuration of an urban area? While all these thoughts struck me, Nikos observed my confusion and astonishment and took the initiative to start the conversation:

The Athens metro is good concerning accessibility issues. But the problem of reaching the stations and to use the transport is a different question. There are serious obstacles relating to the access to the stations, but it is not the responsibility of Attiko Metro.\(^\text{10}\) This, however, does not interest the user. The user wants to transport fully and integrally… It is like you are having a warm bath and at the end they tell you that there are no clothes to wear. Go out and freeze…\(^\text{11}\)

By the time we reached the surroundings of the station the word “they” occupied my thinking. But who are “they” who enact the notion of effective transport and who decide whether a transport network will be functional for everybody or not? It was rather obvious to me that Nikos was referring to one of the most heated recent debates within the field of science and technology studies, that of the division between “the political and technological spheres but also between those who know and those who do not, those who decide and those who are subjected to their decisions”.\(^\text{12}\) “The design and construction of Athens new metro constitutes a process where different political and material configurations can be traced and studied.

This study is the story of one of the most complex works that has ever taken place in Greece - the Athens metro project - and the involvement of disabled users in its design and implementation process. Apart from its large scale, the metro project represented a significant milestone in Greece because it was the first infrastructural project that was designed as to be accessible to groups with disabilities. I will discuss how the Greek disability organizations evolved and interacted with such a complicated technical project, what the results of this interaction were and how these results were materialized in the Athenian built environment.

This chapter will outline the purpose of the study and identify the research questions that I intend to answer. I will present theoretical concepts from two areas of scholarly work, namely actor-network theory\(^\text{13}\) and studies on disability theory,\(^\text{14}\)

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\(^\text{10}\) Attiko Metro is the company responsible for the operation of Athens metro network.
\(^\text{11}\) Nikos Perdikaris, interview November 20, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
which will be used to analyze the empirical material in coming chapters. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a discussion of the theoretical aspects that I will apply in my analysis.

**Background – an accessible metro?**

In February 1987, the Greek government announced an invitation to tender for the design and construction of the Athens metro. Thirteen years later, in January 2000, the first two lines began partial operation. One of the biggest and most complicated infrastructure projects that has ever been constructed in Greece, Athens new metro system started carrying 300,000 passengers daily.

As the official website of the metro project clearly indicates, the metro was not initially designed to integrate facilities and provisions for people with special needs, neither in stations nor in trains, which reflected the stance of Greek society towards disability in the beginning of the 1990s. Architect Markos Katsiotis notes that “the metro was not originally designed as an accessible system (for disabled people). It required an additional contract that included elevators and all the necessary elements for an accessible system.”

The process of designing, constructing and implementing an accessible metro was thus far from self-evident or linear. Instead, it entailed complex interactions among groups with divergent interests, expectations and goals, as well as struggles and conflicts between representatives for disability organizations, politicians, engineers, public administrators, architects and managers of the project. These interactions concerned negotiations about whether and how accessibility provisions would be applied in the project and how technical problems were to be solved.

During the 1990s and parallel with the start of construction work for the metro, disability organizations had increasingly claimed extensive participation in policy and decision-making processes. As the metro project unfolded, disability organizations were involved in different phases of its development and with varying results. Despite their increasing political influence, it was not clear, however, to what extent the metro would be accessible or what role disability organizations would play in shaping the project. The initial negligence of accessibility provisions by the government and protests by disability organizations were successively replaced by the formal involvement and engagement of Greek disabled people in the design process.

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15 This term has been used in Greece for people with disabilities until recently.

16 Markos Katsiotis, interview November 14, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
After these interventions, the final version of the metro system indeed included facilities and services for people with disabilities. Today the Athens metro symbolizes not only a landmark for accessible systems in an otherwise inaccessible city, but also a distinct sociotechnical controversy between the Greek government and disability organizations, as well as between metro engineers and disabled people.

**Purpose and research questions**

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the process of applying accessibility standards in the Athens metro, that is, to conceptualize how the question of accessibility was materialized into guidebooks, manuals, ramps, elevators and other specific facilities for the accommodation of people with disabilities. I will reconstruct and analyze the complex negotiations between disability organizations, architects, public administrators, engineers, managers, and politicians that ultimately led to the realization of the accessible metro. The study seeks to identify actors’ roles and to discuss the constructions of disability that were produced together with the Athens metro within an eventful thirteen-year period from 1991, when procurement for the metro took place, to 2003 when it began operating. The theoretical and methodological framework of the study suggests a symmetrical approach to record sociopolitical and material configurations linked to the construction of the metro. In other words, I will investigate how disability issues were co-produced together with the configuration of the Athens metro. The research questions that this study seeks to answer are:

- How did disability organizations evolve in Greece and how did the construction of the emerging metro affect the growth and strength of disability organizations and the enactment of disability in Greece?
- How were disability organizations, as concerned groups, involved in the process of procuring for, designing and implementing the Athens metro? Did other actors enroll disability actors or was there a mutual enrollment?
- What negotiations took place between actors in the process of configuring the Athens metro and how did these negotiations encourage/hinder the involvement of disabled users? How did the outcomes of these negotiations materialize in the context of the metro project, in terms of configuring an accessible environment?
- What was the role of various parts of the Greek government, political parties and public administration in negotiations and debates on disability and accessibility issues concerning the metro project and the built environment of Athens more generally?
- What was the role of the various hybrid forums that emerged in the design and planning of the metro and how did these forums influence its configuration?

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17 Callon, 2003: 56.
18 Ibid. 54.
Theoretical understandings of technological development and disability as co-production

In this section I will present the theoretical concepts that will be used to answer the research questions that were just identified. This study rests on the assumption that disability issues are produced together with the evolution of infrastructural projects such as the new Athens metro. This kind of co-production, to which I will return, works here as a theoretical tool to account for how social and political configurations are constructed and interwoven in the shaping of infrastructures. The theoretical perspective is grounded in the empirical material collected for this study: one of the most insistent arguments put forth by several of my informants was that there was a kind of co-evolution between technology and disability in Greece. For example, Polis, who is a disabled public servant at the Ministry of Health and Welfare, recognizes the significance of technology for people with disabilities:

There is no other social group, even in countries with no significant technological development, which has capitalized on the evolution of technology more than people with disabilities. Given that, until a country develops the necessary technological infrastructures and adopts a so-called social sensitivity, having a mobile phone if you are deaf and communicating through sms, or having a high-quality wheelchair or a customized automobile are things that do not wait for society. You simply buy and order them and you can improve your life dramatically. Thus we can say that technology has played a tremendously important role for people with disabilities in Greece.19

Assistive technologies and accessible urban spaces constitute important means for how disability is enacted. In other words, the abilities and disabilities of disabled groups emerge and evolve from their interactions with materiality. Urban environments consist of heterogeneous networks of humans and technological artifacts. Winance argues that human actors can be able or disabled depending on the heterogeneous networks in which they are included.20 Disability emerges as a relational phenomenon enacted by the associations between humans and the material world. Similarly, another informant in this study, Georgios Tsioubos, who was a member of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs which played a major role in the metro project, claims:

The relationship between Greek society, the Greek state, and disability reflects the condition of the built environment.21

Figure 2. Athens Metro in the making (1990s)
Photo: www.ametro.gr

19 Gerasimos Polis, interview, September 8, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
21 Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
The approach of this study calls for a conceptual framework that treats the interactions between the built environment (materiality) and disabled people (human actors) in a symmetrical way. By this is meant that the analysis will use a theoretical apparatus that treats carriages, stations, the notions of disability and accessibility as well as laws and regulations concerning the construction of the metro not as “black boxes” remote from society and culture, but as results of interactions, relations and processes of co-production of both human and non-human entities.

The theoretical basis for this study will be located at the intersection of two broad fields, namely science and technology studies (S&TS) and disability studies. Through its interdisciplinary perspective, the study will analyze how interactions between disabled users and the designers of the metro contributed to the co-production of an accessible metro system and disability issues. Particularly, concepts and approaches within selected areas of S&TS will support the analysis of the empirical material by interlinking sociotechnical and political processes that led to the development of the metro. Technological networks can be viewed as material and semiotic meeting points for artifacts, public policies, user groups, manuals, engineers, politicians, etc. Similarly, disability studies will provide this study with two conceptual models (specifically the medical and the social model of disability) concerning the construction of disability and transport disability, which will strengthen the analysis by emphasizing what constitutes disability for various groups and what the implications are for interactions between disability and the built environment. Disability studies will also provide conceptual tools for analyzing the development of Greek disability organizations in a historical perspective.

This section is divided into three thematic parts that focus on the three main theoretical approaches that form the basis for the study. In Perspective I “Actor-Network Theory: enacting the material”, I will present concepts developed within actor-network theory (such as translation, obligatory passage points, hybrid collective) as well as two distinct sources of criticism against this approach that are relevant for this study. In Perspective II “The involvement of concerned groups: research in the wild vs. confined research”, I will suggest a complementary conceptual vocabulary as developed by proponents of actor-network theory. This vocabulary relates to the emergence of what Michel Callon refers to as concerned groups. This concept then serves as a link to Perspective III “Disability Studies”, where specific concepts regarding definitions of disability in general and transport disability in particular will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a summary of key concepts that will be employed in the analysis of the empirical material, as well as a discussion of the integration potentials between ANT and disability theory.

Before doing this, I will discuss the concept of co-production within S&TS and how it is related to actor-network theory (ANT).

**The co-productionist view**

An important point of departure for this study is the notion of co-production, which is often used by different schools within S&TS and related areas of the social sciences to “gain explanatory power by thinking of natural and social orders as

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being produced together.” 23 The “idiom of co-production”, as Jasanoff calls it in order to avoid classifying it as a consistent or distinct theory has been integrated in the argumentation and vocabulary of many social scientists who study science and technology.24 But what does co-production stand for in this context? Jasanoff defines the perspective as follows:

Co-productionist accounts avoid the charges of both natural and social determinism that have featured in recent academic debates around the field of science and technology [...] Science, in the co-productionist framework, is understood as neither a simple reflection of the truth about nature nor an epiphenomenon of social and political interests. Rather, co-production is symmetrical in that it calls attention to the social dimensions of cognitive commitments and understandings, while at the same time underscoring the epistemic and material correlates of social formations. Co-production can therefore be seen as a critique of the realist ideology that persistently separates the domains of nature, facts, objectivity, reason and policy from those of culture, values, subjectivity, emotion and politics.25

Jasanoff’s formulation underscores that the co-productionist view suggests a symmetrical approach to social and material phenomena in the study of sociotechnical processes in order to avoid the pitfalls of natural and social determinism. What does this symmetrical approach imply for this study? The case of the Athens metro and the issue of accessibility are not to be confined within the margins of either a vocabulary monopolized by human-centered terms (sociologism) or a technology-centered conceptual framework (technical determinism). By this I mean that the study will not focus only on the technological development of the Athens metro, nor exclusively on negotiation processes among spokespersons for disability organizations, engineers, and politicians. Instead, the study will use concepts that eliminate traditional distinctions between culture and nature, politics and artifacts, subjects and objects, the metro system and its users. In other words, the study will strive to show how technology and disability issues were co-produced and how this co-production was specifically materialized in accessibility provisions, manuals, laws, and signs that constituted the technical configurations of the metro.

The co-productionist approach thus implies an analytical symmetry between human and non-human entities. One of the great questions to be asked is to what extent the methodological symmetry between society and technology or between humans and non-humans should and can be applied. In other words, are technological artifacts to be treated as humans, having intentions, feelings, and plans? Do humans share the same functions as technologies? Jasanoff notes that there is no univocal stand among S&TS researchers on the degree of symmetry and the extent of co-production:

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24 For an account of the scholars who have dealt with the concept of co-production, see Jasanoff, 2004: 15-36.
25 Ibid. 3.
STS scholars have differed importantly in how they view the role of the material and inanimate in constituting social order, and the degree of agency that they are prepared to grant to non-humans.26

One specific co-productionist stand within the S&TS tradition that this study aims to develop in relation to the empirical material is that of actor-network theory, and its extensions. S&TS researcher Moser notes that ANT scholars resist the notion of social construction concerning science and technology. They argue that nature is co-produced with society and culture instead of being “given” outside society or socially constructed.27 One of the leading proponents of ANT, Latour claims that “Society is no less constructed than Nature, since it is the dual result of one single stabilization process. For each state of Nature there exists a corresponding state of Society.”28 According to this view, the study of science and technology should depart from the assumption that nature is immanent in society and vice versa. Elsewhere, Callon and Latour encouraged any study that would simultaneously show the co-production of nature and society.29

26 Ibid. 21. See also Pickering, 1992. Science as Practice and Culture, for examples of different views on the symmetry issue.
28 Latour, 1993: 94-95. We Have Never Been Modern.

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Perspective I. Actor-Network Theory: enacting the material

ANT is a theory initially developed by sociologists Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law in the early 1980s within ongoing theoretical debates among social scientists concerning how to study scientific knowledge and practices. During the 1970s, an intellectual approach known as the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) had been developed that emphasized the importance of the human and the social in the production and use of scientific knowledge. SSK draws attention to the social aspects that are interwoven in the configuration of scientific knowledge and practices. This point of view was rather innovative at the time in the sense that “this dimension had long been ignored in mainstream history and philosophy of science”.

The focus of SSK lies exclusively, however, on the construction of knowledge and understanding of technoscientific practices in terms of social interactions. Within this framework, the study of technosciences is dematerialized. Social groups that are relevant to technoscientific questions, together with social interests and interactions, shape the construction of scientific facts and technological artifacts. A fact or an artifact is a social construction produced by the “whole network of knowledge surrounding it”. The indifference of SSK to record material aspects of technoscientific processes and practices gave, however, rise to significant reactions. Pickering, for example, notes that SSK does not take the material seriously. Sismondo recognizes that the exclusive focus on social interactions and relevant social groups is not accepted in practice by the work of most sociologists of science and technology. Especially in the study of the development of technological artifacts, sociologists need to record the material and practical aspects and effects of such processes. Similarly, Russell notes that technological processes also refer to material products with material results.

ANT emerged in part as a response to SSK’s emphasis on the social in the construction of scientific knowledge and technological systems. Hess notes that ANT succeeds in avoiding these limitations by providing a way for nature or technology to influence the processes and results of technoscientific controversies. How does ANT describe technosciences and what do actor-networks stand for? To emphasize the materiality in the study of technosciences, ANT researchers introduced the specific concept of actor-networks. Actor-networks are interconnected complexes through which human and non-human entities evolve, interact, and contribute to the production of artifacts and statements, processes and

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34 Sismondo, 1993: 541. “Some Social Constructions”.
technologies. This process implies a series of transformations for both the entities and the network.

ANT describes how entities within a network take their form and acquire their attributes as a result of their interactions with other entities in the network. There is a mutual dependency between entities and networks. An entity needs to be placed in a network and a network would not exist without entities: “for an actor there is also a network”. In other words, ANT illustrates how entities and networks are produced in relations and applies this to all materials, human and non-human. This entails important theoretical and methodological implications for the study of society and technosciences. ANT allows the analysis to deal with nodes and associations between entities, by which is meant that the understanding of sociotechnical phenomena involves identifying and recording interactions between humans and non-humans as a relational and intermixing process.

ANT attempts to bridge the divide between the material and the social in the analysis of technosciences by ascribing a “generalized symmetry” between human and non-human actors. What does this generalized symmetry imply? Latour accuses sociologists of being discriminatory against non-human actors in the sense that they ignore the fact that technology and technological artifacts can delegate a behavior, or “prescription,” to humans. ANT eliminates discriminations and the domination of either texts or nature or society over each other in the analysis. Thus using ANT does not involve the privileged study of either pure technical or social networks. It is instead the set of interactions between humans, the semiotic, and the material world in the form of networks which attract the attention of ANT researchers. Latour explains that a central point of ANT is the claim that “it is utterly impossible to understand what holds the society together without reinjecting in its fabric the facts manufactured by natural and social sciences and the artifacts designed by engineers”.

ANT also claims that actor-networks lack conventional fixed boundaries; instead, networks are effects and their boundaries are determined by the interactions, transformations, compromises, and negotiations enacted by their entities. Simultaneously, by posing specific questions and following specific entities, the ANT researcher enacts the boundaries of a network. As Latour notes, ANT is a method for social scientists to enter sociotechnical sites and to go about systematically recording the network-building abilities of the sites to be documented and registered. Thus the scope of a network is determined by the interactions between the entities that the researcher chooses to investigate. The dynamics of the interactions that occur in a network is described by the concept of translation.

37 Law, 1999: 3. “After ANT: complexity, naming and topology”.
39 Law, 1999:5.
40 Akrich, 1987. “Comment décrire les objects techniques?”

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Translation: four distinct sub-processes

The concept of translation provides this study with an analytical tool that captures the dynamics of sociotechnical phenomena. Latour defines translation as the interpretation given by the fact-builders of their own interests and that of people they enroll.\(^{45}\) The process of translation describes the relationship between two or more entities whereby one defines the other, thus imputing it/him/her with certain interests, plans, desires, strategies, reflexes or afterthoughts.\(^{46}\) This process involves the displacement of interests and the formation of alliances. The concept of translation signifies semiotic associations and negotiations which at the same time imply materiality: ideas and claims must materialize, while symbols must be inscribed.\(^{47}\) This course of action is deconstructed into four sub-processes: problematization, interessement, enrollment, and mobilization.\(^{48}\)

The problematization phase involves the first steps for creating a network. This implies defining a problem, identifying entities, and delegating roles and identities to these entities. The network-builders attempt to formulate a problem by linking it to other human and non-human entities and to the filaments in-between. At the same time, they configure the topology of the network by establishing themselves as “obligatory passage points”.\(^{49}\) By this is meant that the network-builders establish their own actions and identity as a suitable solution or territory within the network that is transformed into a control station that must be passed. Entities must pass through specific locations within the network in order to accomplish their interests.

The second step of the translation process is the interessement phase. When the problem is defined and the entities are identified, the network-builders employ a set of actions for recruiting other entities as allies. Callon notes that interessement involves “actions by which an entity attempts to impose and stabilize the identity of the other entities it defines through its problematization”.\(^{50}\) By this is meant that the process of translation involves constructing actions and practices of others by displacing or recreating their interests. The realization of an artifact, a statement or an idea needs the recognition and receptivity of others. For example, entities that were concerned with accessibility related to the metro attempted to displace and recreate others interests by spreading awareness on disability and accessibility issues through handbooks, protests, press releases, regulations etc.

This brings us to the next phase: enrollment. Enrollment refers to the case in which interessement succeeds and allies are enlisted. Callon defines the tactics of enrollment as a “group of multilateral negotiations, trials of strength and tricks that accompany the interessements and enable them to succeed”.\(^{51}\) The creation of alliances is, however, not enough: the translation of a project into an established technology entails gaining power over allies.

\(^{47}\) Czarniawska, 2002: 7. *A Tale of Three Cities: Or the Glocalization of City Management*.
\(^{49}\) Ibid. 205.
\(^{50}\) Ibid. 207-208.
\(^{51}\) Ibid. 211.
Thus, the realization of the aim requires the mobilization of allies. To secure their allies, the network builders attempt to establish stability in the network by institutionalizing or standardizing the translation process. If the interests of politicians, public administrators etc alternated or the implementation of accessibility measures and regulations were not institutionalized, the accessibility network would be destabilized. Latour notes that if people are not interested, or if they do something entirely different, the spread of a fact or of a machine in time and space does not take place.\(^{52}\)

The empirical part of the study will illustrate several moments of problematization, interessement, enrollment, and mobilization. The process of imposing accessibility standards in the Athens metro entailed both material and semiotic elements, that is “what exists and what is created; the relation between humans and ideas, ideas and objects, and humans and objects […]”.\(^{53}\) I will show how issues related to people with disabilities and their organizations were produced together with technical solutions and the means for implementing them (regulations, designs etc). I will argue that the process of realizing disability organizations’ claims is captured by the notion of translation, which implies both semiotic aspects (e.g. ideas, organizations’ proposals, alliances) and material solutions (e.g. elevators, roadbeds, ramps). As Czarniawska notes, an idea or a proposal does not constitute a solution by itself; words and images cannot travel within a network until they are materialized, embodied or objectified.\(^{54}\)

**Running chickens, flying babies, and the emergence of politics in the ANT vocabulary**

As with all controversial approaches in the social sciences, ANT attracted enthusiastic followers but also faced hard criticism. Two main critiques that are relevant to this study focused on the issue of generalized symmetry and ANT’s lack of interest in the political aspects of the translation process. What follows is an account of these criticisms as well as an extension of ANT’s conceptual framework in the form of conceptual tools that will support this study in studying the less privileged entities which are not examined in ANT approaches.

**Academic asymmetries**

The claim of ANT scholars that social science analysis of technology should treat both humans and non-humans symmetrically has confused many social scientists and remains controversial. Does this symmetrical approach imply that tunnels, trains, and handbooks have intentions and feelings? Can non-humans be actors? Do non-humans have agency? And then there was war. One of the most aggressive articles against ANT specifically on the issue of agency was put forth in a debate in an anthology edited by Andrew Pickering in 1992.\(^{55}\)

In an article in this anthology, Harry Collins and Steven Yearley (C\&Y), proponents of the SSK approach, attacked the “French School” of ANT on several counts. Their starting point was the claim by ANT theorists that the main argument of SSK is that

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humans in social negotiations attribute independent power to the natural or material world. C&Y argued that by putting humans in the center of the analysis, SSK succeeds in challenging the authoritative power of natural scientists and engineers. C&Y point out that the symmetry suggested by ANT removes humans from their pivotal role by delegating agency to non-human actors. C&Y accused ANT of mixing the notions of behavior and action, which constitute the great distinction between machines and human responsibility. However, according to C&Y such a radical view reveals lack of methodological control over fantasy, which allows ANT scholars to develop concepts such as “delegation of agency” that is, delegating actor status and thus power to technological artifacts. In other words, C&Y’s criticism stemmed from the traditional sociological conceptions of actorship and agency where generally actors are assumed to be humans.

Callon and Latour responded to Collins’ and Yearley’s criticism with an article published in the same anthology, defending their symmetrical view on human and non-human agency:

We do not want to accept the respective roles granted to things and humans. If we agree to follow the attribution of roles, the whole game opens up. […] Nonhumans are party to all our disputes, but instead of being those closed, frozen and estranged things-in-themselves whose part has been either exaggerated or downplayed, they are actants – open or closed, active or passive, wild or domesticated, far away or near, depending on the result of the interactions.

The ANT approach treats agency as a matter of attribution and delegation. By this is meant that human and non-human agency depends on the entity’s role within the network, that is, agency can be continuously transformed from one entity to another. Callon and Latour argued that the generalized symmetry principle implies that all entities, both social and material, are products of a process of interactions/associations in a network.

Pickering notes that ANT’s generalized symmetry accentuates the intertwining that exists between material and human agency. While humans are endowed with logic, choice, and intentions, this performative agency would not be possible if not for the existence of material surroundings. Agency in this context occurs as a co-production between the material, the semiotic, and the human. By themselves, things and humans do not act, but there are relations, negotiations, interactions, and effects between human and non-human entities.

57 Ibid. 320.
58 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid. 17.
In this study, agency will be conceptualized in line with Pickering’s argument, which treats symmetry as a metaphor that seeks to capture technoscientific practices by focusing on alliances or associations between human and non-human entities. I will treat non-humans entities as an important component of the emergent network that constituted the metro project. Artifacts and technological solutions enable people with disabilities to (re-)enact their identities and reduce their impairments. This does not, however, imply that non-human actors consciously chose to support disabled people or that I will extend intentionality to non-human entities. I am talking about entities that perform actions rather than construct or possess them. In a human-centered vocabulary, these actions are often called “intentions” or “goals” while in a non-human terminology these are called “functions”. The idea of symmetry is useful for this study since it complements the co-productionist view, that is, the attribution of agency cannot be detached from the surrounding material and semiotic entities. In the case of the Athens metro, disability cannot be detached from the existence or not of accessibility provisions. By this is meant that to be disabled is not only determined by the physical impairments of an individual’s body but also by the interaction of the body with material aspects of the built environment.

This study will not focus only on constructions and understandings of disability and accessibility but how they are “done and enacted.” The enactment of disability and accessibility plays a significant role for this story. As Mol notes, objects that are performed do not come alone: they carry modes and modulations of other objects. Thus in order to understand disability as a form of enactment, the researcher must symmetrically study both human and non-human entities and their interactions.

For example, the way that the built environment is configured and the way that human bodies interact with it attribute ability or disability. It is the interactions and their heterogeneity that are important here, since these interactions enact (or ascribe or distribute) agency. Imagine what would happen if we were to design and construct urban environments only for wheelchair users, write books mostly in the Braille language, or communicate in sign language. Who would be disabled in those cases? What is ability and what constitutes disability? In this respect, disability and accessibility are two conditions that are realized or enacted through the interactions between different entities such as human bodies and technological artifacts.

Similarly, accessibility provisions in the Athens metro were to attribute a new kind of agency to disabled people. Disabled people become able because there is a set of interacting heterogeneous entities that allow them to move, read, travel and communicate: ramps, signs, audio or visual announcements alter the ability of disabled people by reducing their disabilities. Thus, as Moser notes, disability and ability are also a matter of attribution of agency and actorship depending on the

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68 Mol, 1999: 77. “Ontological Politics”.
69 Ibid. 81.
actor-networks a person is a part of. The interactions or associations between entities determine their abilities/disabilities.

There is a serious methodological constraint in this view. While it is relatively easy to theorize and indicate beforehand the significance of materiality and semiotics in a sociological analysis, it is extremely difficult to employ or use an analytical language that speaks on behalf of the non-humans. The language social scientists tend to use performs dualisms (such as human/non-humans) and treats people as special, as the only entities that act, choose, decide, speak or vote. I could mitigate this problem by simply admitting that my situated ability to describe the world and analyze sociotechnical phenomena is always constrained by my humanness and my everyday conceptions of the world. My inability as a human actor to speak for technological artifacts and the acknowledgement that non-humans do not possess intentionality leads to the conclusion that agency is a relational phenomenon within the network of entities in which is enacted.

**Theory of discrimination or discriminating theory?**
The second main source of criticism that is relevant to this study concerns ANT’s lack of interest in the political aspects of the translation process and its obsession with powerful actors. Traditional ANT refers to human competence through a Machiavellian perspective: empire-building abilities as manifested by Machiavelli’s prince are essential for establishing and spreading a technology. This aspect of ANT is problematic since it does not allow for recording the politics of discriminations and exclusions that emerge during the translation process. Star argues that the social and political order described by ANT is warlike, competitive, and oriented towards the winners’ perspective. ANT does not say anything about which entities are excluded from the network and why, despite the fact that the formation of networks often entails the efforts, practices, and functions of less visible entities. ANT scholars know how to deal with scientific translations, but they cannot say much about the laboratory technician or the lab’s janitor. Collins and Yearley ask rhetorically: why have only some actors been able to get away with enforcing their view of the world? We still wonder why these actors rather than others? In an article theorizing on the mixing of humans and non-humans during the replacement of a doorman by a hydraulic door closer, Latour himself has acknowledged this deficiency by stating that ANT does not solve all problems, since it excludes segments of human populations such as the old and the disabled.

Moser notes that the obsession of ANT with powerful actors and winning stories contributed to the reproduction of the “penchant of the humanist and liberal traditions for heroic stories about strong actors, agency, tests of strength and ground

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75 Ibid.
76 Collins & Yearley, 1992: 323.

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breaking discoveries”. This has specific consequences. Focusing only on power does not allow for an extended and broad analysis of networking since “it ignores such phenomena as learning, development of expertise, complementarity of resources, and know-how in network construction”. The question emerging from this preoccupation with power is what happens to less privileged entities in the network? How does ANT record the exclusion or the influence of less powerful entities?

Even ANT scholars have recognized the limitation that ANT gives epistemological privilege to powerful actors in designing and applying technoscientific systems and overlooks the contributions and participation of other social groups. Law warns for managerialism and the establishment of a hegemonic vocabulary that favors heroes and heroic stories:

[…] If we always choose the powerful, or those who seek, with some possibility of success, to be powerful, then there is a real chance that we will succumb to the perils of managerialism. Our analyses will be filled with active, manipulative, agents who stand some chance of ad-hocring their way to organization and success – who stand some chance, like Pasteur, of shaping the world in which they are operating […] But there are many other actors around for whom/which resources are few, their strategies are restricted, their expectations are scaled down. The consequence may be fragmentation, pain and silence – not possibilities that are easily entertained within managerialism.

In a reflective article on the contribution and development of ANT, Latour argues that while twenty-five years ago the term ‘network’ critically opposed notions such as institution, society and nation-state, it has currently lost its cutting edge and is often associated with a flat and unmediated access to technical or information systems, such as the World Wide Web. On the other side of the hyphen and as already discussed, the term ‘actor’ has also been associated with problematic characters such as “the Machiavellian, male-like, hairy gorilla-like” hero/manager. Latour admits that the concept of actor-networks is problematic and recommends abandoning it since most of misunderstandings regarding ANT originated from the association of actor-networks to the traditional divides of social theory. Does this kind of criticism imply that ANT should be limited, as John Law suggested, or

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80 A similar argument has been made by Lee and Brown who accuse ANT of not properly including all entities in the analysis, Lee & Brown, 1994. “Otherness and the Actor Network: The undiscovered Continent”.


82 Latour, 1999: 15.

83 Ibid. 16.

84 Ibid.

85 Law, 1999: 12.
should I substitute the terms ‘network’ and ‘actor’ with “some other light and beautiful creature”? How does this criticism affect the metro study?

The empirical part of this study will not focus only on stories about the powerful actors engaged in the development of the metro. I seek to answer the question of how people with disabilities engaged themselves in the process of designing the Athens metro and how they articulated their demands. In the metro context, disabled people were not an influential group, at least not from the beginning of the project. The limited political influence of their organizations did not initially allow for considerable interventions in the design processes. As noted earlier, neither the issue of accessibility nor the means for implementing it was part of the initial plan for the metro. How can we with the help of ANT capture and conceptualize the complex processes of adjusting the metro to accessibility provisions and the struggle of disabled organizations to intervene? Because disabled people were not important entities within the metro network, this fact makes them immediately invisible from a traditional ANT analysis.

ANT’s conceptual apparatus is thus insufficient for totally capturing the processes that I will describe in the empirical part of this study. What is needed then is an alternative or complementary conceptual vocabulary which broadens the dynamics of the translation process, overcomes the biases inherited in the notions of ‘actors’ and ‘networks’, and also answers crucial questions regarding the participation of unprivileged entities in the configuration of sociotechnical phenomena.

**Actor-networks vs. hybrid collectives**

In view of these weaknesses, some ANT scholars have later used a less reductionist concept to describe joint associations of human and non-human entities, namely *hybrid collectives*. Already in 1993, Latour referred to ‘hybrids’ and ‘collectives’ as conceptual tools to describe the association of humans and non-humans. 

Two years later, Callon and Law defined a hybrid collective as all emergent effects created by the interaction of the heterogeneous entities that make it up. In my interpretation, a hybrid collective constitutes a concept to describe the materials and interactions that sociotechnical processes consist of, while avoiding a managerial bias. A hybrid collective encompasses social actors, symbols, architectures, artifacts, as well as different organizational arrangements. Within the collective, all entities are created equal and what differentiates them are (re-)distributions of performative agency.

Similarly to the traditional ANT, the notion of the hybrid collective revokes divisions between humans and non-humans, nature and society, culture and technology, actors and networks. A hybrid collective also entails that there are no autonomous entities but relations or associations between them, both material and social. In this way, it avoids the distinction between individuals and society, and describes individual agency and action as collective effects. So far, hybrid collectives resemble the notion of actor-networks.

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90 Moser, 2003: 44.
A hybrid collective, however, takes the analysis one step further by providing an alternative metaphor to that of ‘actor-networks’ and by opening up for an analysis that is not limited to the calculated, managerialist and Machiavellian relations of early ANT studies. According to Callon and Rabeharisoa, the prior metaphor of networks limits the analysis to a predetermined topology of static, quantitative and technical considerations. The notion of hybrid collectives instead provides the analysis with a multidimensional conceptual apparatus that explores different technical, social and political configurations on different levels and in different contexts. Hybrid collectives refer to the plurality of settings and the richness of the interactions that perform them.

In this study, applying the concept of hybrid collective means that the focus is not limited to what happens in powerful forums such as the Parliament, architects’ offices and political parties, but extends to the interactions and negotiations among entities, whereby initially politically weak disability organizations progressively intervened in the process of configuring the metro. Thus the notion of hybrid collectives creates spaces for analysis that were invisible in the power-oriented concept of actor-networks. Within these spaces, which Callon and Law define as discretionary places, the social scientist can study how less privileged entities form their roles, articulate their arguments and advance their claims. For example, the hybrid collective of accessibility-metro enacted several distinct roles: members and non-members, included and excluded, disabled and able.

In other words, the process of adjusting the metro to accessibility standards was enacted in different contexts and was articulated through different collectives that consisted of political struggles, negotiations between disability organizations and experts, interactions of humans with urban environments, and the production of laws and handbooks. In that sense, accessibility constitutes both material and semiotic configurations, that is, it encompasses not only physical aspects of the metro (morphology of stations, carriages, etc) but also political debates, documents, and meetings in many different contexts. This process cannot be reduced to network metaphor.

To eliminate the risk of excluding less powerful entities from the process of translation, Callon suggests the concept of concerned groups, which will now be discussed.

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93 Callon & Law, 1995: 496.
Perspective II. The involvement of concerned groups: research in the wild vs. confined research

Callon and Rabeharisoa note that while theoretical tools within ANT have been valuable for analyzing technology and the controversies that it creates, they have not paid attention to questions regarding relations between engineers and non-engineers, scientists and lay people. For a fuller understanding of a scientific artifact or technology, one should pose a specific question: Who is concerned with the technology? This study will follow Callon and Rabeharisoa’s suggestion that the contribution and involvement of concerned groups should be incorporated in the scope of the analysis. More precisely, their objective is to indicate that it might be fruitful to consider concerned groups as (potentially) genuine researchers who are capable of working cooperatively with professional scientists. But which groups are identified as concerned and what roles can they play in cooperative sociotechnical processes?

Concerned groups are those social groups that are linked in some way to the production of scientific facts or technological artifacts and the controversies they imply. Examples are patient organizations, environmental groups, consumers’ associations, involved individuals, and disability associations that are influenced by the development of technosciences and seek to intervene in the configuration of these collectives. The notion of concerned groups resembles at least two other concepts in S&TS, namely the SCOT-inspired concept ‘relevant social groups’ and Clarke and Montini’s concept ‘implicated actors’. Pinch and Bijker argue that even if there is no cookbook recipe for how to identify a relevant social group, this concept aims to describe a group that ascribes the same set of meanings to an artifact. Clarke and Montini also highlight the need for specifying all key actors involved with a technology, although their analysis is not restricted to actors who are present, articulate, and committed to action but also those who are implicated by the technologies. Concerned groups lie closer to implicated actors since both concepts describe groups that do not necessarily shape the technology being studied. What differentiates Callon’s concept from Clarke’s is that concerned groups constitute groups that also seek to intervene in research processes and the development of technology. This kind of involvement lacks, however, the endorsement of the conventional scientific community. The involvement of these groups in the production of technoscientific phenomena affects their social role and deranges their social, political and economic status for better or for worse. Callon provides examples of concerned groups as follows:

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98 Clarke & Montini, 1993: 45.
Concerned groups can be large or small (for example, all consumers or only the people living near a dump); they may already exist as consolidated groups with a legitimate spokesperson (for example, the inhabitants of towns situated near airports, and their municipalities) or simply be loose groups of unrelated individuals who suddenly learn that they share the same fate (for example, workers poisoned by asbestos) and then progressively acquire a collective identity that totally reshapes their individual identities (what they are and want, their interests and the needs they express).  

The point at which concerned groups become conscious of their collective identity is extremely important. Collective identity is a perception of a joint condition or relation, which may be described rather than experienced directly. It is different from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity. According to Callon, the process towards the formation of a collective identity leads to concerned groups that not only assert their existence, enact their identity, and formulate their demands, but also stick their noses into science, technology, and politics. Callon has divided concerned groups into three categories, namely orphan groups, hurt groups and voicy groups, as follows:

- **Orphan groups**, groups for whom the dominant design does not include the satisfaction of their expectations and needs, since they were not participants in the formation of a sociotechnical network. Their interests, demands and expectations have not been taken into account and can no longer be taken without profound reconfigurations being decided.

- **Hurt groups**, groups in which their identities and interests have not only not been taken into account but who also suffer from network *overflowing*.  

- **Voicy groups**, groups who are engaged and integrated in different technoscientific processes.

The concept of concerned groups describes a dynamic process by which different types of concerned groups develop/change/transform from one type of group to another depending on their negotiability and their participation (or not) in the configuration of technoscientific phenomena. In this study, disability organizations will be treated as concerned groups in transition. Specifically, I will show how disability organizations, from having been an orphan group (namely a social group that was disregarded by state policies and was marginalized by Greek society) was transformed into a hurt group (that is, a group striving to impose its claims and

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100 Polletta & James, 2001: 285. “Collective Identity and Social Movements”.  
101 Callon, 2001: 5.  
102 The notion of *overflowing* lies close to what economists call externalities or spillovers. These externalities might be positive or negative. A positive externality could be the creation of new jobs. The construction of exclusions and the emergence of accessibility problems for some actors constitute a negative externality. According to Callon, those actors that fail to participate in the configuration of sociotechnical networks suffer from overflowing, Callon, 2001. “Economy of Qualities, Researchers in the Wild and the Rise of Technical Democracy”. For a similar discussion see also Star, 1991 “Power Technologies and the Phenomenology of Conventions: On being allergic to onions” and Law, 1984 “How much of society can the sociologist digest at one sitting? The ‘macro’ and the ‘micro’ revisited for the case of fast food”.  
participation in different sociopolitical processes but still negatively affected by the existing configurations). Eventually disability organizations established themselves as a voicy group (that is, they became active participants in the configuration of the Athens metro). Thus the transition of concerned groups is closely related to the degree to which they participate in the configuration of sociotechnical processes. How can the analysis capture this participation and what are the spaces that contribute to the transformation of concerned groups?

According to Callon, a theoretical focus on the participation of concerned groups, such as disability organizations, implies a change from traditional decision-making models: the exclusion of concerned groups cannot be accepted any longer and the excluded groups make exclusions progressively more illegitimate. Their engagement and involvement deliver a first blow to the traditional division between scientists and lay people. This is the process that Callon refers to as research in the wild, whereby concerned groups take action and participate in producing and implementing technologies and scientific facts. In order to achieve this participation, they establish new practices, exploit existing knowledge, negotiate with other groups, and form new organizational configurations. Callon and Rabeharisoa define research in the wild as the process through which concerned groups accumulate and compare the experience of their members and build up a collective expertise that is equally authentic as that of “experts or scientists”, even if it is different. In contrast to confined research, by which is meant research that is conducted by experts in milieus that are not part of the public sphere (for example, in confined worlds such as laboratories, architects’ offices, scientific committees, and private offices) research in the wild does not claim or possess ‘scientific’ purity. Instead, it is confronted with compound, impure, polluted realities.

How are concerned groups involved with research in the wild and what does that imply for the processes through which technology is developed? The concept of research in the wild highlights the perspective that the design and translation of technoscientific facts and artifacts does not have to follow the traditional route via the laboratory, which often implies a relatively passive role for the public sphere and a domination of scientists and engineers. New settings for the co-production of human and non-human entities involve moments of interactions and negotiations with different concerned groups such as disabled people who were otherwise invisible in the ANT context. After all, concerned groups possess expertise concerning their own needs and demands, which is important knowledge for the design and implementation of different technologies and which emerges from research in the wild.

**Hybrid forums as negotiating spaces**

These interactions/negotiations between research in the wild and confined research often take place in public spaces that Callon calls hybrid forums: forums because they are open spaces where diverse groups can discuss technical choices concerning the collective and hybrid because these heterogeneous groups and the spokespersons who claim to represent them constitute different concerned groups consisting of

107 Ibid. 46.
patients, citizens, politicians, architects, doctors, engineers and others. Hybrid forums constitute institutional mechanisms where the concerned groups that carry out research in the wild negotiate with the scientists, engineers and other experts who conduct confined research on technoscientific issues. For example, national governments can launch debates between users of technological artifacts (such as citizens’ groups or disability organizations) and scientists (such as engineers and architects engaged in the production of the technology in question). In other words, hybrid forums constitute cooperative research efforts that not only encompass discussions on technical or scientific choices, but also the exploration and exploitation of expertise that lies outside the frame of confined research. In these forums, the roles of concerned groups can be discussed and reconfigured.

The research questions of this study also, however, center on disability, which means that the study also needs a theoretical vocabulary to approach the concept of disability. Thus another theoretical endeavor will be the integration of ANT concepts with theoretical perspectives from disability studies. Moser notes that even if the ANT approach is not readily found in or recognized by disability studies, the integration of these two distinct intellectual traditions can be appropriated in order to deconstruct and challenge dominant perceptions of what counts as disabled and able. Therefore, theoretical tools from disability studies will be used to analyze how concerned disability groups participated in different social, political, and economic processes related to the development of the Athens metro. What follows is a review of perspectives on relevant definitions and understandings of the interrelated concepts of disability, accessibility, and transport disability.
Perspective III. Disability studies – defining disability

Disability is nothing but a situation that we have invented all by ourselves (disabled or not), trying to explain the difference, the hardship, the things that are impossible to understand or the random facts. Most of the times, we decide to speak of ourselves starting with the word ‘not’. We say: ‘I cannot walk, I cannot see, I cannot hear’. This is the worst thing we can do. Without understanding it, we align our existence with a huge problem that is impossible to solve precisely because we insist on emphasizing the problem and not its solution. We should say: ‘I can become someone great’, persuading others and ourselves that we have equal rights and obligations. That’s the only way we could really help you understand that there is indeed a reason to rate us highly as people who claim a place in the empire of able-bodied people.

And I go on saying: ‘Despite being a person with a disability, I have the right to live and therefore I can, if I want to, go for a walk to the supermarket and then just look at the ceiling of my house. Nonetheless, the important thing is that with much effort and a little luck I can achieve thousands of things so as to have absolutely no reason to feel sorry for myself or for the people who are in my place or in an even worse state. When this happens, I stop being or being considered problematic and I can laugh at you who might still believe the opposite. (Somewhere deep inside I suspect that, if you look straight into my eyes you may even fall in love with me. Would you really take that?)’.

Theorizing on disability in general and transport disability in particular draws attention to issues concerning the provision and availability of public transport as well as disability discrimination caused by exclusion from transport networks. Most of the existing studies concerning disability and transportation have, however, been informed by a positivist tradition and based on quantitative data. Moreover, they have concentrated on providing an evaluation of transport systems as end products. These studies have failed to investigate the existence and the extent of intervention of disabled users during the design and implementation of transport systems. Abberley explains that this shortage was almost certainly due to the fact that large scale surveys and detailed quantitative analyses have been favored by advocates of the “personal tragedy” approach to disability, which can never capture fully the complexity of the everyday experiences of disabled people.

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113 Porter, 2002: 10. “Compromise & constraint: Examining the nature of transport disability in the context of local travel”.

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I will attempt to overcome the limitations of the quantitative research perspective that has dominated studies of transport and disability until now by shifting the focus of the analysis to qualitative aspects of disability and accessibility. In doing so, I will discuss and compare two different perspectives within disability studies: the medical (or individual or personal tragedy) model and the social model of disability.

**Medical vs. social model of disability**

The medical model treats disability as the effect of a bodily impairment caused by damage or disease. Within this framework, disability is associated with the physiological status of the individual on the one hand and the individual’s socio-cultural beliefs and features on the other. Bodily characteristics as well as the beliefs and identities of voluntaristic individuals determine the existence and the degree of disability. Thus the word ‘impairment’ seems better here than the word ‘disability’, since the focus lies on the individual’s physical rehabilitation and social adjustment to impairment. Disability is a ‘condition’ that needs to be ‘treated’.

The other dominant approach in disability theory is the social model. Although here disability also has material and cultural dimensions, society as a whole is in the center of the analysis in contrast to the medical model’s focus on the individual. According to the social model, physical, structural, or institutional barriers together with social constructions determine the notion of disability. From this position, disability is a politically, economically, structurally, materially and patriarchally created collective phenomenon that is constructed under the influence of social values and cultural views.

The social model of disability emerged as a reaction to the medical model, “where disability is applied as the unproblematic description of objective conditions, characteristics and functionings of individualized bodies and persons”. The medical model stresses difference over commonality by drawing attention to impairments or individual experiences. In contrast, the social model opposes this individualistic approach by stressing commonality, at the expense of difference, in the collective experience of discrimination and oppression among disabled people. This approach bypasses the notion of self and enacts disability in terms of urban and social environments that disabled people live in. In this framework, physical/structural and intellectual barriers in labor, urban design, and institutions,

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115 Disability studies constitute a broad field that consists of two different traditions: one US-American and one British. The American tradition draws on the work of Parson, Goffman, Becker and Scott. Their work focuses mainly on the sociology of medicine, the process of stigmatization, the social construction of deviance, and the social construction of dependence by professional care. For a further discussion on the history of disability studies and the American tradition see Moser, 2003: 6 and Barnes, 1997. “A Legacy of Oppression: A History of Disability in Western Culture.” This study follows the British tradition, which is often identified as the social model of disability.


118 Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000: 158.


together with biased cultural perceptions on difference and dissimilarity are the sources of disability.\textsuperscript{122} Bennett argues that without the social model, there would be no organizing principle or academic theory by which disabled people could collectivize their experience in order to resist academic theories that medicalize or individualize their needs.\textsuperscript{123}

As Moser notes, what the social model does further is to conceptualize disability in economic terms.\textsuperscript{124} Scholars linked to the social model of disability, such as Oliver, associate the concepts of normality and disability to the ability of individuals to perform physical work. Oliver notes that if the perception of normality is “based on such criteria of physical and mental ability then it is also based on the reverse, that is, what is excluded from the social production of labor and labeled as abnormal”.\textsuperscript{125} This Marxist approach that relates disability to labor draws attention to one aspect of the social model. To Oliver “normality” is an ideological construction indissolubly connected to the development of capitalism and the “social production of labor”, that is, the production of healthy and unimpaired workers who are able to meet factory life requirements. In this context, the medical model is renamed as the “individual” model, emphasizing the “organic” ideology of individualism that is fully connected to the capitalistic system.\textsuperscript{126} The antagonistic and individualistic environment of the capitalistic society tends to exclude those who failed to manage the physical requirements.

The social model of disability also lies close to the perspective of some postmodernist or feminist approaches to disability that focus on social rather biological constructions of gender:

> Within the social model of disability, ‘disability’ refers to social processes and ‘impairment’ to biological factors, yet arguably ‘impairment’, although linked to biology in a comparable way to a person’s sex, is also a social process with its significance being associated with the meanings prescribed.\textsuperscript{127}

These approaches echo the concerns of many writers regarding the renewal of the social model and the need for including in it the diversity of experiences within the disability community.\textsuperscript{128} Many would claim that disability belongs to the category of concepts that could be enacted in different ways depending on the position and situation of the observer, namely, that it expresses the observer’s situated knowledge.\textsuperscript{129} Haraway for example rejects the “God trick” perspective on

\textsuperscript{122} For further discussion on the ‘social’ and ‘medical’ model see Priestley, 1998 “Constructions and Creations: idealism, materialism and disability theory”; Porter, 2002 “Compromise & constraint: Examining the nature of transport disability in the context of local travel”; Voghera, 1999 \textit{Makt över teknik för funktionshindrade} (Power over technology for people with disabilities).
\textsuperscript{123} Bennett, 2002: 821. “Disabled by design”.
\textsuperscript{124} Moser, 2003: 7.
\textsuperscript{126} Sim, Milner, Love & Lishman, 1998: 54. “Definitions of Need: can disabled people and care professionals agree?”
\textsuperscript{127} Fawcett, 2000: 45. \textit{Feminist Perspectives on Disability}.
\textsuperscript{128} Barnes, 1997: 10. “A Legacy of Oppression: A History of Disability in Western Culture”.
objectivity by suggesting that the only position from which objectivity could not possibly be experienced is the standpoint of authority. Following the social model of disability and extending Haraway’s argument to the construction of disability, I argue that there is no objective perception of ‘disability’, or an ‘accessible environment’. Instead there are particular standpoint positions that disabled people speak from. I, as an able-bodied individual, experience the built environment in a different way than my friend Nikos who has to overcome all the physical obstacles with his wheelchair. What the social model of disability does is to deconstruct or critically question taken-for-granted assumptions or structures. It is, therefore, far from clear what is or should be considered accessible or functional in a specific context. The same phenomena that able-bodied individuals might perceive as “normal” and standard could be viewed by disabled people as dysfunctional, discriminatory and inaccessible. Moser argues:

The difference is that those of us who have a ‘standard’ set of bodily functions, features and abilities, who fit into a statistical norm that in turn forms the basis for whole sets of technical standards, building regulations etc., are enabled and made capable of acting, and are thus given status as independent and self-reliant actors, whereas those who fall outside this pattern are literally disabled.

One of the strongest arguments in support of the social model of disability is that disability can be conceived as social constructions and physical barriers imposed by able-bodied people. Disability is an ambiguous concept and it should not only be focused on the individual handicap or the impairment, since it has some collective existence in the social and the material world beyond the existence or experience of individual disabled people. Does that ring a bell in relation to my earlier discussion of processes of co-producing disability issues and technology? Social relations and material configurations co-produce the concept of disability together with material artifacts, urban spaces, and transport networks. I will dare to write that the social model of disability silently adopts a certain extent of symmetry between the social and the material world. This kind of symmetry constitutes a meeting point for the social model of disability and the ANT approach.

The focus of this theoretical study lies on the physical and social barriers imposed on people with impairments. Within this context disability and accessibility are reduced to participation and non-participation, access or exclusion, in other words, to what people can do or cannot do. This study examines how disability organizations managed to impose their involvement in the configuration of the Athens metro. This is the study of how impairment bodies formed organizations, groups and alliances that were involved in the configuration of a metro system and that confronted or (de-)constructed transport disability. What then is meant by transport disability?

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130 By “God trick” is meant the standpoint of the master, the Man, the One God, whose sight produces, appropriates, and orders all differences. Haraway, 1991: 193.
131 Fawcett, 2000: 38.
Transport disability

There is growing awareness among transport planners that transport systems must be developed in ways that address the needs of current and potential disabled users. However, while progress has been observed within the field of transport planning, the links have not yet been effectively made between transport planning and the major developments in theoretical understandings of disability that have taken place in recent years. Existing studies have attempted to measure transport disability but have generally failed to link it to wider theoretical or structural concerns or to explore disabled people’s responses to transport disability.

Within transport research, only a few researchers have broken the dominant silence on disability. While research has been done regarding the configuration of the built environment, “equivalent work informed by theoretical developments in the study of disability has been lacking in relation to transport”. The concept of transport disability, “as the unnecessary exclusion of disabled people from current forms of transport”, has been treated rather vaguely. Transport disability is a concept that can be also approached by both the medical and the social model of disability. Inspired by both these models, Porter has classified five aspects of transport disability:

- An aspect of the body, for example, someone may be considered transport disabled if they have no legs or are blind (medical model)
- Relative disadvantage, compared to the norm (medical model)
- An administrative category or label which the transport disabled people bear (medical model)
- Something that affects and modifies personal relationships (social model)
- One aspect of the various social or material barriers which an individual may experience (social model).

Thus according to Porter, transport disability viewed as an aspect of the body, disadvantage or administrative category corresponds to the medical model of disability; the individual is an impaired person who is not able to travel. Conversely, transport disability viewed as social or material barriers constitutes part of the social model perspective, which points out the significance of the social and constructed environment for creating disability. From this perspective, configurations and relations that occur during the design and implementation of transport systems shape disablement. Borrowing Moser’s argument, transport disability is a matter of the specific situations that disable or enable us. Transport disability, then, is not a given...

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137 Ibid.
139 Porter, 2002: 11.
141 Porter, 2002: 11.
bodily condition, but a result of specific interactions and co-productions between people with impairments and transport networks.\textsuperscript{142}

The point of view that this study takes up concerning transport disability follows the social model: transport disability can be seen as a sociotechnical production in both the physical and cultural sense, meaning that it is not the bodily handicap or impairment that makes a person transport disabled, but rather all material, cultural, and social barriers that are imposed as a result of social practices, the configuration of the urban milieu, and cultural stereotypes. Existing literature has failed to capture the dynamics between transport disability and disabled users’ involvement in the design of transport systems - specifically how transport disability and transport networks are co-produced. In order to study these responses and dynamics the researcher should go back to the formation, engagement, and participation of disability organizations and follow their actions in relation to the configuring of significant transport networks.

The design of transport networks is thus a site of ongoing configurations and emerging relations. By this is meant that the configuration of transport systems affects the ability of people with disabilities to move and participate in the social sphere. A whole body of work within disability theory criticizes the construction of excluding infrastructures. Imrie is an example of a disability scholar who goes so far as to contest that the planning of urban areas is characterized by “architectural apartheid.”\textsuperscript{143} Kitchin argues that the configuration of the built environment constitutes a site “whereby planners, architects and building control officers are guilty of constructing spaces which ‘lock’ disabled people out; which prioritize the dominant values of the ‘able-bodied’ community”.\textsuperscript{144} The processes of configuring transport networks thus constitute an excellent site to study whether concerned groups, such as disability organizations, are integrated or locked out from designing these networks.

Summary and conclusion: mobilizing key perspectives and concepts for this study

The conceptual framework of this study can be summarized as follows. Drawing on ANT, the materiality and configuration of the built environment plays an important role in the analysis of sociotechnical processes, in which technologies, artifacts and texts perform agency. Agency in this context is not defined in terms of anthropomorphic intentionality but as associations within a network that produce and attribute roles to entities: actions and non-actions, abilities and disabilities, restriction and autonomy. The dynamic character of the associations between entities is captured by the notion of translation. Translation describes different phases entailed in stabilizing a sociotechnical network. The concept of translation provides the study with an analytical tool that can be used to analyze the dynamic processes of configuring the metro. The empirical part of this study will show numerous examples of the four moments of translation, namely problematization, interessement, enrollment, and mobilization.

\textsuperscript{142} Moser, 2000: 224.
\textsuperscript{143} Imrie, 2001: 232. “Barriered and Bounded Places and the Spatialities of Disability”.
\textsuperscript{144} Kitchin, 1998: 347. “Out of Place, ‘knowing one’s place’: space, power and the exclusion of disabled people”.
However, the inability of ANT to capture political aspects of the translation process as a result of its focus on powerful actors and the singularity of its metaphor of the ‘network’ led ANT scholars such as Callon and Law to develop the complementary concept of hybrid collectives. Thus in this study the hybrid collective Athens metro-accessibility describes how different entities meet, negotiate, construct, and configure the emergent project and their roles.

Using the concept of hybrid collectives enables the sociological analysis to explore spaces unexplored by the ANT approach, such as the involvement of less privileged entities with the development and production of technoscientific facts and artifacts. The formation of hybrid collectives also implies the emergence of concerned groups. These groups are identified as concerned since they are affected by the configuration of technosciences. The theoretical concept of concerned groups allows this study to visualize how disability organizations sought to participate in the configuration of the metro. The development and construction of the Athens metro implies that some of its potentially concerned groups may participate in the configuration of the network and some others may be excluded. These exclusions and inclusions lead to the emergence of orphan, hurt or voicy groups, which attempt to increase their ability to influence the evolution of the project (in the case of orphan or hurt groups) or to maintain their privileged position (in the case of voicy groups).

The study intends to explain how the co-production of the Athens metro and concerned groups resulted in the re-enactment of disability. I will show how interactions between disability organizations and the designers of the metro concretely contributed to the materialization/realization of disability. The more that disability organizations gained negotiability and materialized their demands on the project, the more disabilities were reduced.

The transition of concerned groups occurs within hybrid forums. The concept of hybrid forums describes institutional meeting points for research in the wild and confined research. By this is meant that the concept of hybrid forums focuses on the dynamic negotiations between both concerned groups (e.g. disability organizations) and experts (e.g. engineers, architects, and managers) involved with the development of the metro project. In this context, hybridity does not only refer to the inclusion of materiality in the study of sociotechnical processes, but also to the coordination or rather integration of research in the wild and confined research (in the form of hybrid forums).

Specifically, the hybrid forums that I will study in particular detail are two committees and several working groups where people with disabilities and public administrators who were engaged in the design of the metro assembled, negotiated, and contributed to the construction of an accessible network. I will describe how the committees attempted to become obligatory passage points, as well as if and how the formation of these committees allowed for the transforming of Greek disability organizations from hurt to orphan groups or even to voicy groups. I will also describe how the committees succeeded in adopting an accessibility agenda and reducing transport disability.

Neither ANT nor Callon’s work on concerned groups has, however, focused explicitly on disability and accessibility issues. Therefore, these theoretical
approaches will be complemented with concepts from *disability theory*. The study will discuss how the understanding of disability in the metro project shifted from the *medical* to the *social model of disability*, that is, from a view of disability as described by the individual’s physical impairment to a view that focuses on the configuration of the built environment and social attitudes toward disability. I will ask what that shift implied for the enactment of disability and disability demands in the project.

The combination of the ANT approach and disability studies is crucial here, since ANT allows for an abandonment of the disabled individual as a starting point and shifts the focus to the hybrid collective, that is to the associations and interactions which occur between disabled people and the built environment within different contexts and in different forms. Moser notes that ANT suggests that ability and disability are results of our associations with our surroundings or the set of relations of which we are part.  

Correspondingly, I will try to investigate how the hybrid collective Athens metro-accessibility materialized disability and/or enabled disability organizations’ involvement in sociotechnical and political processes. In order to operationalize and apply this conceptual apparatus on the empirical part of this study, I will employ a number of methodological tools. The following chapter will discuss the methods that I used to collect the empirical material, the difficulties that I faced during my fieldwork and how I handled these, and the methods I used for conceptualizing my results.

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2. Method

Being able-bodied and doing research on controversies concerning disability can be extremely messy. It is potentially messy in the sense that “those conducting disability research for a Ph.D. or other qualifications cannot resist demands for their projects to be shaped in ways which are not only a waste of time, but also are oppressive, both of themselves, and of disabled people being studied”. However, as Moser notes, “everyone is in the middle of the mess they study, and knowledge emerges in those connections”. Aware of these considerations, and adopting Moser’s warning over methods’ non-neutrality, I tried to collect the necessary material for this study.

The study aims to contextualize and develop the theoretical discussion, which I presented in the previous chapter, by applying and testing it to the case of the Athens metro. Particularly, I will discuss how disability was enacted and how accessibility was materialized in the metro context. This study applies an abstract theoretical discussion to a concrete empirical case consisting of a complex network of interacting entities. In an attempt to reconstruct the development of the metro and to conceptualize this process in relation to concepts such as disability and accessibility I intend, according to ANT, to follow and record interactions and associations between entities. Latour argues that ANT locates the focus on the recording; it is the dynamics of the hybrid collective that the analysis focuses on. This kind of recording centers on the study of negotiations, conflicts, and agreements between different entities that contributed to the realization of an accessible metro.

As Eisenhardt points out, case studies combine data collection methods such as archival work, interviews, questionnaires, and observations. The metro project and the issue of accessibility constitute a complex process that involved the production of hundreds of documents, such as laws, contracts, directives, letters, essays, reports, meeting records, and parliamentary records. The nature of the processes to be studied required the use of a variety of approaches and the acknowledgment that what is called “good social science method, which treats reality as a concrete or/and a singular phenomenon,” is problematic. Accordingly, a crucial point in the methodological framework that I intended to develop and apply was the choice of an epistemological standpoint.

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148 Ibid. 307.

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Choosing epistemology: issues of neutrality and reflexivity

One of the most significant aspects of adapting a good social science method as inspired by science and technology studies (S&TS) is that technology is not to be treated as an end-product, as a black box. By that is meant that technology is not to be approached as “a finalized entity with fixed boundaries that cut it off cleanly from other objects and social processes on its outside and endow it with a taken-for-granted (but unexamined) ‘inside’ that is assumed to account for its shape and stability”. ¹⁵² I needed to adopt an epistemology that would allow me to trace and analyze the processes that co-produced individuals or social groups with artifacts and technological networks in relation to their social and material surroundings. Expressed another way, behind the development of technological artifacts and networks lie politics and intentions, hopes and interests, etc. The methodological approach of this study thus focuses on the processes that lead to the creation of a black box, that is, to the technological network of the Athens metro, by reconstructing negotiations, interactions, protests, agreements, and conflicts among entities engaged in the implementation of accessibility provisions on the metro.

The concept of technology as an outcome of the co-production of technical and social entities entails the revealing and questioning of taken-for-granted processes and phenomena. Star argues that one should not acknowledge the current built environment as a self-evident material configuration or as the only alternative, but instead we should all get familiar with the concepts and processes of “inscription, construction, and persuasion entailed in producing any narrative text or artifact; to try to understand the processes over a long period of time”. ¹⁵³ As Aune et. al. note, technologies are not made for every social group and their design often involves political or social mechanisms that produce neglects and/or exclusions:

Most, if not all, new technologies are not intended for everybody; frequently they are designed for a small segment, a group of especially interested pioneers or an audience of experts. ¹⁵⁴

The central methodological prescription of this study is based on the following ambition: it is to “follow the actors both as they attempt to transform society and as they seek to build scientific knowledge or technological systems” ¹⁵⁵ since “actors know what they do and social scientists have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it.” ¹⁵⁶ Thus the study will attempt to reveal the relevant entities and analyze the processes that contributed to creating new ways of designing infrastructure and new ways of configuring the built environment in Greece. ¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ I prefer to use the notion of entity here instead of actor. Helgesson argues that the term actor is often associated with organizations or individuals, while the concept of entities “leaves more open the question of attribution of agency and action as a collective property”, Helgesson, 1999: 31. Making a Natural Monopoly: The Configuration of a Techno-Economic Order in Swedish Telecommunications.
follow and accurately reconstruct such processes is not an easy task. On the contrary, as Berner notes, there is no pure reality reconstructed by scientific research without any limitations; “reality”, as it emerges in this context, is a constructed reality.  

Studying sociotechnical controversies often implicitly stipulates certain neutrality on the part of the researcher. Both positivist and relativist approaches have suggested that a controversy should be treated as something external to the researcher; the social researcher should not be part of the controversy. But what happens to neutrality when the researcher becomes a part of the controversy or sympathizes with one of the opposing sides? This question can be answered in line with the view that the background of the researcher must also be acknowledged in any full-blooded controversy study. By that is meant that the researcher consists of personal, political and intellectual standpoints that should be made visible and reflectively examined during the research process. Methodologically this implies that I must reflect on my role as a researcher and analyze how my background influences the carrying out of this study.

The identity of the researcher also influences the choice of an epistemological standpoint. As Burgess notes, social researchers who study their own societies may find their personal experience of particular roles and social settings significant for their research. It was an extremely difficult task for me to maintain a symmetrical neutral epistemological stance as a researcher (with specific personal, political and intellectual identities), while studying such a complex process that consisted of many actors, interests, and interactions in my own home society. In other words, the process of formulating the topic, the research questions, and the methods for conducting this study became a result not only of a theoretical and intellectual enquiry but also of my personal interests. While I was a stranger to disability issues and an indifferent Athens metro passenger before writing this study, certain aspects of my personal background awakened my interest in why and how the metro became accessible and what the implications of this process were for people with disabilities in Athens. How did I become interested in these issues?

As already mentioned in the introduction of this study, one of my friends, Nikos Perdikaris, is a disabled person who is confined to a wheelchair. My interaction with Nikos considerably inspired the formulation of this study and continuing discussions with him provided me with ideas on how I would operationalize my study. At the same time, Nikos is an active member of the Greek disability movement, which meant that he provided me with several contacts regarding informants as well as a partiality towards people with disabilities and their political agenda. How did this affect the development of this study?

The choice of conducting an investigation of the process of developing and applying disability facilities on the Athens metro is in its very nature political. By this I mean that the study contributes to an ongoing debate concerning issues of exclusion and

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160 Ibid. 491.
161 Burgess, 1984: 32. In the field: an introduction to field research.
discrimination against disabled people and acknowledges that “disabled people, as a group, are in an oppressed position”.\textsuperscript{162} As a result, the methodological framework of this project also includes elements of an emancipatory research paradigm. An emancipatory paradigm requires strong commitment from the researcher to the interests and needs of disabled people. Barnes notes on this:

Emancipatory research is about the demystification of the structures and processes that create disability, and the establishment of a workable dialogue between the research community and disabled people. To do this, researchers must put their knowledge and skills at the disposal of disabled people. They do not have to have impairments themselves to do this.\textsuperscript{163}

In this study, disabled people were given an active methodological role and were not treated as the \textit{Other} or as “an urban tribe or band, a self-contained community wandering the streets of the city.”\textsuperscript{164} Doing research on disability implied that I undertook research that could be of “practical benefit to the self empowerment of disabled people and/or the appraisal of disabling barriers”.\textsuperscript{165} Does that mean that I am adopting a standpoint perspective? Yes and no. I am willing to promote issues concerning disabled people and to avoid a claim of infinite objectivity. After all, “only partial perspective promises objective vision”.\textsuperscript{166} At the same time, it would be almost impossible for me to dissociate myself from being viewed by disability organizations or my friend Nikos as an ally in their struggle. However, I am not a disabled person myself, and even if scholars of the emancipatory paradigm claim that able-bodied researchers can contribute to the “demystification of structures and processes that create disability”, my able-bodied position does not allow for adopting a disability standpoint in every respect.

Simultaneously, employing a critical perspective as provided by the theoretical discussion of this study constitutes, at least to some extent, a safety net against a \textit{total capture}\textsuperscript{167} by my disabled informants. By this I mean that the theoretical tools of the study supported the empirical analysis with a framework that conceptualized the data provided by the informants and linked my study to a wider theoretical debate regarding how disability is enacted and how accessible infrastructures are realized. Those who read this study carefully will notice that I am not uncritical of aspects and methods established by disability organizations and their advocates. If my work, however, becomes an instrument for disabled people to strengthen their position in the Greek society, this does not constitute a problem for me.

Another significant factor that influences the epistemological standpoint and the sense of neutrality of the researcher is the methods that the researcher employs for selecting the informants and establishing contact with them. These methods can be strongly affected by the social status, political preference, and circle of contacts,
friends, relatives and acquaintances of the researcher. During my fieldwork in Athens, I utilized personal contacts of acquaintances and relatives of mine. These contacts derived to a considerable extent from the socialist party of PASOK that was in office at that period. Since the study of the Athens metro and its accessibility draws on socio-political aspects and processes, enrolling several informants who are identified as members of a political party or sympathizers could be characterized as problematic or biased. This is not, however, necessarily true. What was the case then for my study?

The fact that I contacted mainly PASOK members, politicians or voters/sympathizers would probably be the only tenable approach regardless of my political background or which access point I utilized in order to enter the empirical field. Three factors speak for this hypothesis. First, the socialist party had been in power for almost twenty years (1981-1989 and 1993-2004). The issue of accessibility emerged from ministries and other institutions of the public sector that were administered by PASOK politicians for almost the entire period that is the scope of this study. This implied that PASOK politicians who held governmental or public administration posts constituted highly relevant informants for the focus of my study since they had a closer and long-lasting interaction with the public sector. Second, given the clientelistic nature of the Greek political system and the period that PASOK was in power many public administrators (among them many of those who worked with the issue of accessibility) were PASOK sympathizers. As a result, a significant number of architects, engineers, directors, managers, consultants and other public administrators whom I interviewed were positively disposed towards PASOK or were members of this party.

The third factor that influences the neutrality of this study, and as I will also show below, was the fact that locating politicians or members of the other major Greek party, the conservative New Democracy which was engaged with the metro project and the issue of accessibility, was only partially successful. New Democracy had been in power for only three years during the period 1981 to 2003 (namely from 1991 to 1993) and this constituted an important factor behind the fact that the opinions of politicians from New Democracy were not represented as extensively as those of PASOK sympathizers during my fieldwork. One of my informants Hristofi, who was a member of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, did not express any political preference and was equally critical to New Democracy and PASOK during our discussions. She supports my view:

PASOK had been in power for a longer time during the last twenty years and as a result a lot of developments occurred during PASOK’s time. When disability organizations began to evolve and the issue of accessibility gained more attention, it was PASOK that was in power.169

168 Political scientist Lyrintzis explains that the Greek state machinery was gradually colonized by party mechanisms starting in the 1980s. Both major Greek parties PASOK and New Democracy have employed clientelistic networks, primarily through their party mechanisms, in order to promote and enhance their electoral clientele in the Greek public sector. Lyrintzis, 2005: 248 “The Changing Party System: Stable Democracy, Contested ‘Modernization’”.

169 Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
It was not only Hristofi who did not express a clear party stance during my fieldwork. Many other informants approached the issue of accessibility and the development of the metro from a critical perspective. However, I also share the acknowledgment that a symmetrical method is an illusion. I am aware of the fact that my point of departure was not symmetrical, that my research perspectives were influenced by PASOK’s standpoint, and that this kind of influence had concrete effects on my analysis. How did this lack of symmetry affect my analysis and how did I counterbalance my non-neutral interpretations and the interpretations provided by PASOK members?

I attempted to counterbalance the lack of symmetry in the selection of sources by studying pre-election programs and other documents of New Democracy regarding disability issues during the period that constitutes part of this study. Moreover, I contacted some informants who were positively disposed to New Democracy but did not belong to the party (as far as I know). Further, I tried to contextualize the role of the conservative party by investigating two parliamentary debates regarding the metro project and by utilizing other empirical studies that analyzed and compared the political role and strategies of the two major parties during the same period.

Nevertheless, neither these informants nor these sources of data can be characterized as neutral or a guarantee for a symmetrical methodological approach. In my view, this is particularly true in doing research on sociotechnical processes where interest groups participate and often have a tendency to capture the researcher. According to Scott et al, the side of a sociotechnical controversy with lower scientific or social status is more likely to attempt to enroll the researcher, while the side with better “credentials” or more resources views an epistemologically symmetrical analysis as threatening its cognitive and social authority, and it is more likely to react to the researcher with hostility or suspicion.

Several of my disabled informants who were representatives of disability organizations perceived my work as a means to express complaints regarding the oppression that people with disabilities face in Greece, to promote their claims and demands, and to make their voices heard. In other words, these informants attempted to deploy my work in their effort to achieve a better hearing for their claims. This does not signify the capturing of my research since it constitutes a conscious methodological choice that I made in accordance with the emancipatory research paradigm, which I discussed in the start of this section. Emancipatory research on disability implies that disabled people are the true experts of disability issues. At the same time, the emancipatory researcher engages in political action in “challenging oppression and facilitating the self-empowerment of disabled people”. As Richards argues in a similar controversy regarding the capture of the researcher, “what I am advocating is more democratic participation in treatment evaluation and regulation”. Similarly, what I am advocating is more democratic

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170 Scott, Richards, & Martin, 1990: 491.
171 Ibid. 490.
173 Ibid. 703.
174 Richards, 1996: 344. “(Un)Boxing the Monster”.

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participation in the processes that contribute to the configuration of the built environment and more policy initiatives for reducing disabilities.

Many informants with technical backgrounds, such as employees of the Attiko Metro or public administrators, perceived my social science approach towards the issue of accessibility as inadequate and my research effort as trivial. One characteristic episode during my fieldwork describes this kind of skepticism: I was to interview one of the architects working with accessibility facilities at Attiko Metro. When I entered the architect's room I was welcomed by a big smile on his face and a feeling of common understanding, which reduced my nervousness. The old man, almost hidden behind tons of architectural illustrations and pens, rubbed his hands with satisfaction and asked me: “So you are studying in Sweden?” “Yes”, I answered in a rather relaxed manner. “Architecture?” he asked me again, closing one of his eyes. I froze and did not know what I should answer. Finally, I answered no and attempted to explain what my background was, what interdisciplinary research implies, and what the aim of my study was. I knew, though, that at the same moment I had said no, I had somehow lost his confidence. Immediately his facial expression changed and the initial sense of common understanding left the room forever. “Ok then, ask me what you need to know and please do it quickly because I have many things to do”, he told me impatiently.

All of a sudden, I became an ignorant sociologist who just stole his time with not very “scientific” questions. The second and final shock came when I asked him if I was allowed to tape our discussion. He looked very confused and suspicious. “No, I do not do stuff like that”, he answered. “I do not understand why you are doing this. These questions are not important; people with disabilities did not contribute much to the application of accessibility. It was we, the engineers and architects who contributed to the realization of accessibility in the system”. That was the summary of our discussion, more or less. He was totally wrapped around an orthodox “scientific” position. Everything else, including my own research effort, constituted, as Scott et. al. would argue, “unscientific, irrational, unproven, mistaken” claims.175

Similarly, certain informants from the public sector treated the notion of accessibility as an end product, that is, they were not interested in the process of designing accessibility and explicitly including disabled people, but they were keen on discussing the result in terms of technical glitches or advantages of the metro system. My inability, though, to show familiarity with technical jargon and state structures caused intolerance and impatience among certain public administrators. Some of them avoided answering questions concerning the process of designing or the participation of disabled people by undervaluing their importance or, simply, by calling them “strange questions”. The anecdote with the Attiko Metro architect and the public sector employees raises the question of how I presented my project and its purpose to my informants. In these cases, I had to re-state my questions and explain that the objective of my study was not accessibility itself, but the ways accessibility provisions were materialized in the Athens metro.

Finally, a number of representatives of disability organizations and certain employees of the public sector who upheld a specific party political stance attempted to take advantage of our discussions and to advance their political interests either by

175 Scott, Richards, & Martin, 1990: 484.
scorning everything that the government or the opposition had achieved or by predicting impending calamities. In other words, they experienced the interviews and consequently the study as a forum for exercising what I view as petty politics.

Instead of biases and asymmetries, these considerations constitute, however, important methodological and analytical tools for this study. My friendship with Nikos initiated the idea for the study and provided it with several contacts among people with disabilities. The relation of my circle of relatives and acquaintances with PASOK provided me with an entry point to the field, and the skepticism of certain architects, engineers, and public servants towards my research enriched and sharpened my investigation and analysis on how the metro became accessible. In the following, I will present the key organizations for this study and I will describe how I identified my informants.

Identifying relevant organizations and time periods
The most significant actors in the processes that I am investigating were affiliated with the following key organizations:

- **The Greek government**, particularly four Greek ministries – the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works; the Ministry of Transport and Communications; the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization; the Ministry of Health and Welfare
- **Attiko Metro S.A.**, the operating company that supervised the design, construction and implementation of the metro
- **Disability organizations**, specifically the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People\(^{176}\) (ESAEA), the Panhellenic Association of the Blind, the Panhellenic Union of Paraplegic and Physically Challenged, the Greek Paraplegics Association, and the Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients

The investigation involves the study of a sociotechnical network that emerged through various negotiations between actors within the aforementioned key organizations. The negotiations between representatives of these organizations were carried out to a large extent in specific organizational forums. Particularly, the organizational forums that this study focuses on are:

- **The Department for Research on People with Special Needs** at the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works (1985- ), consisting of working groups of experts on accessibility issues (both disabled and able-bodied state officials) who designed and enacted regulations for accessible constructions and assisted the formation and the work of the cross-ministerial committees. The Department significantly affected the design process of the Athens metro.
- What is termed the “**first disability committee**” (1996-2002): this cross-ministerial committee for accessibility was initiated by state officials of the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization with the main objective of supervising and promoting accessibility in public buildings.
- What is termed the “**second disability committee**” (1998-1999): this cross-ministerial committee of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, where representatives of the ministry and underlying institutions (among them Attiko Metro, experts on accessibility matters and representatives of the Greek National

\(^{176}\) ESAEA IS the umbrella organization of all Greek disability unions.
Confederation of Disabled People, ESAEA) participated and worked on issues concerning the adjustment of transport and communications to accessibility standards.

The value of these entities is critical for this study: they were the only forums in the public sector where disability and accessibility issues were discussed among both representatives of disability organizations and representatives of public organizations. Moreover, the fact that these discussions could be traced by interviewing members of these committees or by consulting agendas from meetings or officially transcribed decisions provided the study with valuable empirical information.

The time period during which these processes took place will be divided into three sub-periods: the first period is the decade of 1981-1991 when significant political changes occurred in Greece. In 1981, the socialist party PASOK won the national elections for the first time in the history of the Greek state and brought significant changes in state policies concerning people with disabilities. During this decade, the Greek government re-initiated the metro project and launched a procurement process.

The second period is 1991 to 1993. In 1991, the conservative New Democracy government did the procurement for the Athens metro and in 1992 construction work began, but without provisions for accessibility being included. Protests from disability associations and the work of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs at the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works during this period influenced the political leadership and contributed to making accessibility an integral part of the agenda. The disability organizations placed high demands on the system in terms of more sophisticated solutions concerning accessibility and the shaping of an accessible environment. At the same time, a new kind of social debate began that focused on the participation of concerned groups, specifically disability organizations, in the design and production of technology and the built environment.

The third period is 1993 to 2003. In the start of the third period, PASOK returned to office and re-negotiated the turnkey contract of the metro project. The new government succeeded in integrating facilities for people with disabilities in the final agreement, which was expressed in terms of e.g. elevators, access ramps, and special rest rooms. During the same period, the cross-ministerial committees of the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, as well as the Ministry of Transport and Communications, were formed and played a significant role for planning and implementing accessibility amendments to the project. This period ended with the completion of the metro and the start of the operation of the system. During this period considerable progress had taken place with regard to the role of people with disabilities in the planning and design of the urban built environment. Their participation in the aforementioned committees had established their position as important social actors and partners of the government.

Locating the informants – identifying interview persons
In this section, I will describe the informants for this study and the complex nature of the negotiations and interactions that constituted my requests for access. In order to investigate processes one must deconstruct them, that is, identify and record roles
and entities, interactions and constraints, conflicts and compromises. Who were the informants I contacted and how I did find my path into the labyrinth of the Athens metro, avoiding the Minotaur called black boxing or neglecting relevant actors? Which forums and negotiations were studied to make it possible to answer the research questions? What entities did I exclude and how could I have been more inclusive?

Conducting this study involved identifying two kinds of actors: collective actors (i.e. organizations and institutions) and individual actors (i.e. representatives of disability organizations, employees of the public sector, engineers of Attiko Metro and politicians). Examples of significant collective actors that are included in the analysis constitute the Greek government, the European Union, the construction consortium Olympic Metro Consortium, the state owned company Attiko Metro SA, and several disability organizations such as the National Confederation of People with Disabilities, the Panhellenic Association of the Blind, the Greek Paraplegics Association and others. These collective actors are very large and need to be deconstructed. For example, the Greek government constitutes a major category of actors to be investigated, but the word government is a very broad concept. In the framework of this study, the Greek government consisted of a number of specific institutions:

- The Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works (including the Department for Research on People with Special Needs) that generated regulations and design principles for the configuration of an accessible environment;
- The Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization that launched the first disability committee;
- The Ministry of Transport and Communications that took over the supervision of the metro after the completion of technical work and launched the second disability committee;
- The Ministry of Health and Welfare and its Directorate for the Protection of People with Special Needs;
- The state-owned Attiko Metro that supervised the construction process of the metro;
- The Greek Parliament to which the government submitted contracts for the implementation of the metro.177

Similarly, the European Union constitutes a gigantic structure that affected the course of the metro project, but only some documents were relevant to the analysis (see chapters 6 and 7 in particular). Finally, within the disability area there is often a considerable heterogeneity between actors with regard to their positions, identities, and interests. Thus the focus of the material collection and the interviews I conducted with different actors also centered on the roles and standpoints of these individuals, rather than only on their institutional identities. The roles of individual actors as representatives of the aforementioned institutions are not as self-evident as one would think. Callon asks: is the spokesman representative? Who speaks in the

177 All these institutions consist of departments, directorates, and divisions. The same can be applied to the large Olympic Metro Consortium that constructed the metro.
name of whom? Who represents whom and what?\textsuperscript{178} For example, disabled people constitute a wide and diffuse category of actors. Who, though, are disabled people?

One could divide the disabled into people with different kinds of disabilities: difficulty with walking, moving about, seeing or hearing, communicating with people, learning disabilities and ill health, etc. That would have potential value for the study, since different disability groups require different approaches and standards concerning transport issues, and one would expect that the negotiations for configuring the metro to accessibility standards took place largely between experts, state officials and representatives from various disability groups. At the same time, certain types of disabilities and particular disability organizations seem to have greater negotiability than others. Thus an important methodological implication for me was the fact that I had to track down disability organizations and actors that were poorly represented in the dominant disability agenda, such as the Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients.

Another remarkable and at the same time controversial aspect in identifying individual actors is that several informants seem to bear overlapping roles or, as post-modern feminists put it: “the subject positions adopted, and also the ways in which subjects are positioned, are often multiple and contradictory.”\textsuperscript{179} This type of actors includes informants from almost all the aforementioned organizations. Particularly, disabled politicians, disabled public administrators who also belong to disability organizations, able-bodied architects and architects who are interested in disability issues, and able-bodied employees of disability organizations are examples of such actors. To claim that these actors only represented their organizations or their institutions is a misconception, since they embodied different standpoints as a result of both their various organizational roles and their bodily characteristics.

The hybridity of these actors has specific methodological consequences. While it can be beneficial for the analysis of the sociotechnical process to include actors who represent both sides of the process, it becomes complicated for the researcher to evaluate which interests are represented, how representative the spokespersons are and for whom. It is also extremely difficult for the researcher to distinguish between the different roles and interests that the informants have. But what can be done to balance the effects of the hybridity of the actors? It is important that the researcher adopts a critical stance and cross-checks all the data. I filtered all the information I received from actors with overlapping roles by comparing this information with written material or testing it with other informants.

The selection of the key informants was followed by a snowball effect. Initially, individuals with personal engagement in the metro project and disability issues were chosen. Particularly, I started the investigation by exploiting my contacts in the PASOK administration and getting in touch with actors at the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of Health and Welfare. These persons recommended other potential informants and so on. Twenty-four interviews were conducted with representatives from the following organizations:

\textsuperscript{178} Callon, 1986: 214. “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation”.

\textsuperscript{179} Fawcett, 2000:133. Feminist Perspectives on Disability.
In the following, I will describe the limitations I faced in accessing those informants.

**Access denied**
The previous discussion of key informants leads to the issue of validity. How valid is the scientific method when some actors involved in the process or controversy are asymmetrically represented in the text, as a result of their refusing to participate in the study? What should the researcher do when access is denied to archives and written material? How should the researcher deal with chaotic, incomplete and unsystematic archives? As Burgess argues, gaining access in the research process is a prerequisite for research to be conducted and for the reliability and validity of the data collected.\(^{181}\) This study faced two concrete cases of *access denied* during the collection of the empirical material. First, certain elites and gatekeepers were skeptical or refused to participate in my research. Gatekeepers are those individuals in an organization who have the power to grant or deny access to people or archives for the purposes of research.\(^{182}\) According to Undheim, accessing power and information has always been a problem for the researcher when studying politicians and state officials.\(^{183}\) Second, the lack of systematic or accessible archives hindered the collection of written material. I will now discuss each of these factors and their implications.

The process of gaining access to the field has a twofold methodological value. It does not only provide data that are relevant for developing and understanding the research questions, but it also generates data on the ways in which different individuals perceive an organization or the researched topic.\(^{184}\) The problems of gaining access have been discussed by many scholars/researchers. Among them, Hornsby-Smith argues that the researcher has to decide whether or not to inform the informants about his or her role and about the specific objective of the proposed investigation.\(^{185}\) In other words, the researcher has to choose between two different approaches for accessing different types of research situations, namely overt and

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180 For a detailed presentation of the informants see Appendix II.
181 Burgess, 1984: 45. *In the field: an introduction to field research*.
182 Ibid. 48.
183 Undheim, 2000: 9. “Getting connected: How Sociologists can access the high-tech elite”.
184 Burgess, 1984: 49.
185 Hornsby-Smith, 1993: 53. *Gaining access*. 

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covert approaches. During my fieldwork I employed only overt methods for entering the field, that is, I explained from the beginning the aim of my research and the nature of my questions, even in cases where I faced resistance. Researchers and professional experts sometimes expressed skepticism towards my research and were not willing to discuss with me. According to Hornsby-Smith, elites and powerful people often deny access because they do not wish to be studied or because they want to assert their rights to privacy. ¹⁸⁶

This kind of dynamics did indeed become an access problem in this study. Specifically, one of the most significant obstacles to access within the framework of this study was the fact that a number of actors refused to participate in the investigation and conduct interviews with me. Three categories of able-bodied informants were particularly skeptical towards my research, namely a few engineers and architects working for the supervising company Attiko Metro, several public administrators working for different ministries, and a small number of politicians engaged with the metro project. For example, certain employees of Attiko Metro were skeptical to my social researcher status and were unwilling to discuss with me. This was not the only time during my fieldwork that I was confronted by such skepticism; access was also denied by some of the able-bodied public administrators whom I attempted to interview. They either refused to participate or rejected the possibility of recording our discussion. I was unfortunate enough to conduct my fieldwork in Athens during a period when a popular TV-journalist had recently launched a program where he engaged politicians or state officials in off-the-record interviews. These interviews were recorded without the permission of the informants and if something blameworthy was mentioned or discussed, the journalist would reveal it on his show.

I will not comment on the ethics of such a method. I want to explain, however, that this exceptional phenomenon in the Greek media had significant side effects for my own research. When I attempted to book interviews with able-bodied public administrators at different ministries, they literally interrogated me on my identity, my role as a researcher, and what I intended to do with the collected material. They were extremely suspicious towards my questions and me, but above all towards my tape recorder. As a result, I faced difficulties in acquiring the information and data that I needed, at least initially. My response to their skepticism was that I emphasized my university identity during our discussions and expressed an explicit distance from journalism. I provided my informants with a formal letter from my university that stated that I was a doctoral student and that I conducted academic research. At the same time, I also tried to gain their confidence by discussing the importance of ethical standards in the research process and to assure them that I would never use their assertions if they did not approve of this use.

Another important drawback that affected access was the fact that a few politicians avoided any discussion whatsoever concerning the issue of accessibility and the metro project. Most of these politicians belonged to the New Democracy party. Admittedly, their engagement with the metro project took place in the start of the 1990s when New Democracy was in office (1990-1993). These kind, older men replied to my emails or told their polite secretaries to contact me, but their responses were for example “I would really like to help you, but it is almost thirteen years

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 55.
since I worked with these questions” or “It is a very interesting topic and I wish I could contribute to your research, but I did not keep an organized archive back then, so I am not able to answer your questions right now. Call us back in a couple of weeks”. The weeks went by and I spoke even more with their polite secretaries, who began to recognize my voice and feel pity for my efforts. The result was the same, though: in a polite or impolite way, access was denied.

Arguably, these circumstances have contributed to a certain bias in the documentation of the controversy; however, this bias is not necessarily to the advantage of disability advocates or to the opposition party PASOK. As I explained earlier in this section, the lack of sources from representatives from the conservative party was counterbalanced by studying the party’s governmental program and the parliamentary debates regarding the two metro contracts. In studying these documents, I tried to analyze how the conservative party addressed disability and materialized accessibility. The results of this analysis were then compared to the claims of disability representatives, PASOK members or politicians, and other informants without obvious political preferences.

Another major obstacle to the collection of material was the refusal of Attiko Metro representatives to allow me access to the company’s archive for correspondence. Attiko Metro, the owner and supervisor of the metro, had corresponded extensively with the consortium that constructed the network. Moreover, this archive included memorandums, letters, and guidelines for applying accessibility that had been sent between Attiko Metro and various disability organizations. I requested several times and through different forms, such as emails, phone calls, and utilizing contacts from my circle of relatives, to access Attiko Metro’s archive. The official answer was that I had received a great deal of documents from the company, but that Attiko Metro does not allow access to its formal and informal correspondence concerning disability provisions (see appendix I). However, I was convinced that there were numerous other documents that would have allowed a deeper investigation of the process and Attiko Metro’s refusal of archive access became a methodological constraint that I was not able to deal with completely. This constituted a serious gap in the collection of material, since these documents were significant for the completion of this study. How did I deal with this form of access denial?

I managed to obtain part of the relevant Attiko Metro documents through my personal contacts with disability organizations, for example the Panhellenic Association of the Blind and ESAEA, and by exploring their respective archives. There I found letters and recommendations sent by both Attiko Metro and the respective organizations. In addition, an “insider” architect (who has asked to remain anonymous) also provided me with certain written material and letters that corresponded to Attiko Metro’s archived documents. Despite the fact that I obtained a significant part of this material, this does not imply that I acquired all relevant documents. In order to compensate for the missing documents I conducted extensive interviews with employees of Attiko Metro and other actors involved with the configuration of the metro. These interviews provided the study with an overall picture of the negotiations and decisions that contributed to the implementation of disability provisions in the metro. Nevertheless, and as I will discuss in following

187 Scott, Richards, & Martin, 1990: 488.
188 Haris Tsimatzis, personal communication April 7, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
chapters, the denial of Attiko Metro to grant me access to its archive provided me with an important analytical observation: it indicated the confinement of the process for adjusting the metro to accessibility provisions, that is, the somewhat closed nature of the process of designing and implementing accessibility provisions to the metro and the exclusion of disability organizations.

Finally, the complexity and scope of the metro project involved the collaboration of many public administration institutions and ministries. My attempt to re-construct the process of integrating accessibility in the metro implied cross-checking documents from many of these institutions. However, there was a distinct lack of organized archives of public documents in Greece, especially before 1996. After 1996, a great computerization effort within the public administration and many private archives was initiated which made the collection of written material easier. The unsystematic organization of written material constituted, however, another form of access denial. Hristofi comments on the chaotic condition of these archives:

> I am sorry to say that you will not be able to find much of this material either at the department or at ESAEA. Nobody has kept organized information about these processes and if they have, it is extremely difficult to find it. It is unbelievable but this is the Greek way of working…

My visit to the Department for Research on People with Special Needs will provide a vivid example. The physical location of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs is on the fourth floor of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, which is situated in central Athens. The main entrance to the building and the elevator are fully accessible for disabled people. In order to enter the “department”, one has to pass through a long corridor and find a door on the left side, almost next to the office of the minister. The door opens up to a rather small, rectangular room. The first surprise was the fact that the department is actually an old room, literally filled with files and documents, and consisting of three desks tightly placed in a T-format. Another remarkable observation was the piles of dust covering almost everything in the room, despite the fact that the disabled director of the department is allergic to dust. My informants welcomed me to search in the archives with an ironic “good luck”. It was impossible to conduct archive research under these circumstances, so I constrained my efforts to my informant’s selections of material. As a result, the documents I collected at the Department for Research on People with Special Needs were chosen by its employees and not by my thorough examination of their archives.

In order to compensate for the lack of archival material and to complement the selective reconstruction of the initiatives of the department, I conducted numerous interviews with members and other informants who had interacted in various ways with the Department for Research on People with Special Needs. Moreover, I obtained additional material related to the department from other ministries that circulated directives and design principles produced by the department.

**Interviews: form and content**

One of the aims of this study is to articulate and critically analyze the agenda of a number of organizations and individuals. Thus, the methodological approach was

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189 Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
based on conducting a series of interviews with informants representing key organizations, and linking these interviews to important documents in order to reconstruct the political processes and interactions between state officials, politicians and representatives from disability organizations. As noted by Undheim, interviewing is the paramount research situation since it provides the researcher with immediate access to witnesses of a sociotechnical process by asking and watching reactions, restating questions, following up details or pursuing remarkable points brought up underway.\textsuperscript{190} Despite asymmetries in accessing informants and written material, I conducted a number of in-depth interviews with a broad variety of actors. As noted earlier, I conducted twenty-four interviews: seven interviews with representatives of the metro construction companies, nine interviews with representatives of disability organizations, and eight interviews with public administrators. Appendix II shows the list of informants from different institutions and disability organizations with whom I conducted interviews.

I have to mention here that several of the aforementioned informants had overlapping roles in relation to disability issues: they are both professionally employed in organizations/offices with responsibilities for disability issues and members of disability organizations. For example, Arigio Leventi is the director of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs but is also a member of the Greek Paraplegics Association. Gerasimos Polis is an employee of the Ministry of Health and Welfare but is also a member of the Greek Paraplegics Association and former member of ESAEA. Panayiotis Kouroublis is a former chairman of ESAEA but also former General Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Welfare and member of the Greek Parliament. There are several additional examples.

Thus, conducting interviews with representatives from different institutions and organizations who also reflected overlapping roles implies that the interviewer has to maintain a balance between the different roles and standpoints that the informants have. Such an approach calls for a flexible agenda of questions instead of a narrow questionnaire, which meant that semi-structured interviews were carried out instead of a strict, fully-structured interview. The reason for choosing open-ended questions lies in the nature of my study. In order to reconstruct and operationalize the extremely complex process of designing and procuring for the Athens metro, a process that I was not initially at all familiar with, I had to formulate questions that would allow my informants to be descriptive and provide me with extensive information regarding the construction of the metro. These questions had a twofold character. On the one hand, I sought to collect data concerning the metro and the development of accessibility provisions. On the other hand, I needed to gather information and references on other informants and organizations whom I should contact.

Particularly, in the beginning of my fieldwork, I sought to collect general information from disability representatives about the Greek disability organizations and the engagement of disabled people in political processes in a general sense. As my investigation proceeded, I carried out more focused interviews with public administrators engaged in disability issues, both able-bodied and disabled, asking more specific questions on structural issues concerning disability organizations and the Athens metro. I then conducted interviews with engineers and architects engaged
with the metro issue, specifically focusing on the actual process of designing and implementing the metro project. Finally, I made several follow-up interviews seeking details in relation to technical features and the process of implementing accessibility in the system, as well as references to other relevant informants, explanations regarding the terminology used during our discussions, and information about the identities and the roles of the informants.

Most of the interviews took place in Athens in the fall of 2003 and the spring of 2005. A number of interviews, including some telephone interviews, were carried out in the fall and winter of 2004. The time length of the interviews varied. While discussions with representatives of disability organizations typically lasted 1-2 hours, interviews with representatives of the public administration were usually short and difficult to maintain, apart from those with disabled public administrators.\(^{191}\) As noted earlier, numerous able-bodied informants were not convinced about the objective of my study and employed excuses such as lack of time or expertise from their side. During these cases, I tried to be more descriptive concerning the aim of my research and to ask concrete questions in a short time. In this way, I managed to maintain the discussion and obtain the information I required. Five of the interviews were not tape recorded at the request of the informants; the rest of them are all taped. Generally, enrolling different informants for this study proved very effective and the method of interviewing can be acknowledged as the most suitable in this case.

**Written material**

The written material that I collected for this study constitutes a variety of documents: laws of the Greek state, publications of disability organizations (including press releases, studies and correspondence), ministerial decisions and directives, records of parliamentary debates on issues concerning the metro and accessibility, technical reports and manuals, accessibility handbooks, records of disability committee meetings, and newspaper articles. As already stated, I often did not obtain these documents by searching in organized archives but by utilizing contacts with various informants. Thus, it was not only my choice of documents that would allow me to re-construct the metro-accessibility story but the availability and diversity of the material. While most of the disability representatives were willing to provide me with documents that substantiated their claims, a few able-bodied public administrators, politicians, and employees of Attiko Metro were less helpful.

However, there were significant exceptions as well. The general secretary of one disability organization was doubtful whether he should provide me or not with a report that his organization had written concerning the accessibility on the metro. His response was: “I want to give you this document but I am afraid that you might damage the reputation of the metro and Attiko Metro”. In the end, I gained his trust and he provided me with the document. Similarly, a former minister engaged with the issue of accessibility on the metro provided me with full access to his comprehensive personal archive. Again, I employed the method of cross-checking the selected material to verify the accuracy of the sources by interviewing several actors and collecting different types of documents from many different organizations.

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\(^{191}\) Both of my interviews with the representative of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Georgios Tsioubos, constitute an exception, lasting for more than two hours.
From data to analysis

“It is always hard to say where data gathering stops and data analysis begins” and thus, it is tricky to separate the data from the analysis. At the same time, fieldwork is a constant process of analysis. The researcher tries out her/his ideas and theoretical concepts while collecting the empirical material. When I started my fieldwork in Athens during the fall of 2003, I had not crystallized my research questions or specified the linkages between my theoretical enquiry and the empirical material I was to collect. One of the initial aims was to identify, with the assistance of theoretical concepts, focal points in the development of the metro project and its emergent accessibility. This phase constituted a preliminary mapping of the field. The process involved a lot of preliminary hypotheses about the importance of the phenomena being observed and recorded. When I had gotten an initial glimpse of the empirical field, I started testing the significance of the points that I had preliminarily identified as central to my story. This involved cross-checking and verifying these data and events via interviews and the analysis of documents.

During the actual collection of the material and the work of identifying the empirical themes that I intended to include in my study, I tried to integrate my own observations and assumptions into the general theoretical framework that I attempted to develop and vice versa. By that is meant that the research process constituted a reciprocal exchange of observations and concepts between theory and the empirical material. By configuring the field, I opened the door for developing the theoretical framework, which provided a roadmap for expanding the empirical research. Berner notes that during fieldwork the researcher has the opportunity to test the authenticity of different assumptions but also to discover empirical proof for the parts of the model that lack data.

In this manner, the collection of material was rather explorative at first. By interviewing different informants on issues regarding disability and accessibility, I tried to link these very first data to the conceptual framework. For example, one of the first responses I received when I asked about the participation of disabled people in the configuration of the built environment in Greece was references to the disability committees. As noted earlier, these committees were groups of actors with different backgrounds, standpoints, and roles (architects, politicians, public administrators, representatives of disability organizations, etc). Immediately, I turned to the theoretical discussion of Michel Callon regarding hybrid forums and this assisted me in carrying on with my fieldwork. This time, though, I was looking for patterns in the empirical field that corresponded to theory.

When the collection of data is completed a number of reductions must take place. Thus I started sorting out the material by removing irrelevant documents and organizing the existent documents in chronological order. As already stated, part of the written material that I obtained was selected by my informants. These informants also provided me with data that was outside the scope of the study. Since there is no significant ongoing or previous research on the issue of accessibility in Greece, they perceived any issue regarding accessibility as relevant for my study. Therefore, I acquired a surplus of documents that were irrelevant for my research.

194 Ibid. 200.
At the same time that I sorted the written material, I transcribed all the recorded interviews myself and attempted to identify themes, patterns, and inconsistencies in the discussions I had with my informants. This process involved cross-checking the written information and the transcribed interviews. The next step involved organizing the material into relevant thematic and chronological categories: the evolution of disability organizations in Greece, initial plans for the metro, disability and accessibility in the public sector, metro and disability, implementation of accessibility on the metro, etc. In doing that, I applied central concepts which had emerged during the fieldwork or analytical terms inspired by various theoretical frameworks.

Berner argues that the researcher can construct or borrow concepts either from classifications provided by informants, or from emerging terms from the empirical material, or even by constructing typologies of the studied phenomena. Even if certain terms already exist in established social scientific traditions, this does not imply that they constituted my point of departure or concepts to be tested in my analysis. To be specific, while there is a comprehensive theoretical discussion on the notion of disability (see previous chapter), I tried to discuss disability through an interaction of theoretical concepts and my own empirical observations. One of the research questions of this study is how the development of the Athens metro contributed to the enactment of disability in the Greek context. The on-going use of theoretical concepts that I was to review enabled me to analyze the empirical information that I collected. These concepts allowed me to develop the story and new understandings of the data within the realm of what had been observed or been told.

However, anyone doing qualitative research is influenced not only by her or his own interpretations, but also by the reflections and interpretations made by people involved in the setting being studied. My aim is not to give a precise reconstruction of the controversial metro-accessibility hybrid collective. My ambition is to integrate into my analysis my own reflections and the views of my informants, interwoven into theoretical understandings of transport, disability, and participation of concerned groups in the development of sociotechnical networks. Such a task involves many detours, rewriting, and reassessment of the collected material until the final result is accomplished. Therefore, after completing the first draft of this study I sent it to a selected number of informants. Most of them were very receptive and contributed further with comments and corrections. Others did not respond at all, while a couple of them attempted to actively intervene and influence the completion of the study. By this is meant that these informants had radical ideas and suggestions about the collection of the material and the focus of the study. I have to mention that these comments were not integrated in the final result. What is the final result then? How does one know that the analysis is completed?

The completion of the study’s analytical part involved conceptualizing findings and developing selected concepts. Theorizing is a deeply personal process regarding the shaping of dispersed ideas into a comprehensible form. The conceptualization of

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195 Ibid. 205.
197 Ibid.
my findings has a twofold character, a “double fitting” of theory and empirical material, the creation of keyhole and key at the same time, as Berner argues. First, the study attempts to develop the theoretical stands presented in the text. Second, the study contributes to an empirical investigation of a field that has not been qualitatively approached before. The few transport disability studies that have taken place in Greece have had a quantitative character and aimed at evaluating finalized systems. The analysis is completed when the study has answered the research questions and has made its contribution to relevant ongoing debates regarding disability and accessibility. What are these potential contributions?

The case of the Athens metro provides the debate with useful data but it also holds the potential to contribute to new theoretical insights for understandings the materialization and enactment of disability in the configuration of a sociotechnical transport network. A careful study of a case can lead researchers to see new theoretical relationships and to question old ones. By that is meant that this study provides space for comparing its results with existing or forthcoming studies. At the same time, the study creates a forum where existing theoretical terms are developed. These results constitute neither “final interpretations” nor are they “definite or singular”. They do, however, constitute empirical and theoretical templates for broadening the discussion on transport disability and the configuration of accessibility in Greece, which can be potentially applied in other studies of this kind.

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199 Ibid. 209.
3. Problematizing disability issues in Greece 1932-1985

We were already in the elevator of the metro when I asked Nikos what was the greatest contribution of the metro project to the Greek disability movement:

The metro constitutes the most important step for the application of policies that eliminate inequalities among people with disabilities and their fellow citizens concerning mobility and more. This fact has significant and multi-dimensional implications for every aspect of social life. It helps us to become visible, to claim, to configure our existence within the social web... 204

Figure 3. Elevator and Nikos
Photo: Vasilis Galis

204 Nikos Perdikaris, interview November 20, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
This chapter discusses and analyzes how disability organizations evolved in Greece and chapter 4 focuses on initial developments of the metro project. The reason that I choose to describe these two distinct historical courses of events separately in two chapters lies in the fact that before the realization of the metro idea into an established governmental plan and the launch of construction work, disability issues and transport planning were not connected in any way. As I will show, transport networks and disability issues were not produced together in this time period since there were no major transport infrastructures in progress and the Greek disability organizations had not yet developed their claims concerning how the built environment should be configured into accessible facilities. It is important, however, to understand how disability organizations emerged and evolved prior to the emergence of the metro project, as well as how these organizations raised and translated disability issues into concrete political claims. Moreover, it is important to record patterns and differences in the enactment of disability among groups of actors in a historical context. At the same time, unfolding the complexity of the processes during the period before the realization of the metro will highlight the importance of the metro for the mobilization of the Greek disability community and its claims.

In this chapter I will discuss the development of disability organizations in Greece prior to the emergence of the Athens metro in 1985. I will start with a brief overview of some indications of historical perceptions on disability in an attempt to highlight historical stereotypes that to some extent have characterized disability diachronically in Greece. The purpose of this discussion is not to claim cultural continuity in perceptions of disabled people in Greece but rather to indicate an example of the medical model of disability as defined by Priestley. Most of the historical references build on the work of Kouroublis and other disability researchers such as Braddock and Parish, Barnes, Campbell and Oliver.

**Views of disability in ancient Greece**

Ancient Greek mythology dealt with people with physical impairments as misfits or sinners. The perception of the human body was based on an obsessive pursuit of intellectual and physical perfection. According to Barnes, bodily imperfections constituted a drawback in comparison to the ideal Greek male who was expected to compete both individually and collectively in the pursuit of physical and intellectual excellence. Impairments did not fit, for example, with the ideal of the Olympic Games. People with physical handicaps were typically objects of pity, charity, and punishment. Barnes notes:

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206 Kouroublis is a legendary representative of the Greek disability movement and former member of the Greek Parliament, who has also attempted to record the historical evolution of “the Greek disability movement” in the twentieth century. Moreover, Kouroublis was the first blind individual who attained a governmental position and first chairman of the Greek National Confederation of People with Disabilities (ESAEA).


208 Ibid.
It is significant that there was only one physically flawed God, Hephaestus, the son of Zeus and Hera. Indeed, Zeus practiced a sort of infanticide by banishing his son from heaven. Later Aphrodite, the goddess of love, takes pity on Hephaestus and marries him. Yet the marriage did not last as she takes an able-bodied lover, Ares, because her husband is a ‘cripple’. The now familiar association between impairment, exclusion and impotency is clear.  

Other researchers argue, however, that the ancient Greek societies did not treat disabled people only as a marginalized group of incapable, pathetic and unproductive individuals. Braddock and Parish claim that reviews of the scant documentary records from ancient Greece indicate that the Greeks did not perceive deformity as absolutely negative but this perspective was developed by historians during the nineteenth century who applied contemporary contempt for people with disabilities to their assessment of the ancient world. In ancient Greek society with its high rates of disease and war, physical impairments were very common. Solon in his Laws ordered subsidies for people who became disabled during a war. Research on Greek records and ancient history revealed that public acknowledgment of providing economic support for the unprivileged prevailed in Athens dating from at least the sixth century BC. There was, actually, a primitive health care system that reportedly provided the citizens of ancient city-states with a kind of care and economic support, in fact similar in its approach to the benefits and measures that were implemented in Greece during the 1980s.

According to Kouroublis, ancient Athens was probably the first organized society and state that regulated public support for vulnerable citizens. This fact signifies the initial seeds of the concept of a “welfare system” that provided sympathy and institutional support to the disabled and other unprivileged members of the society. However, it took almost 1,500 years until the concept of a welfare system that reflected a social model of disability was to be consolidated in practice. As I will show in the following, throughout modern Greek history, the struggle of people with disabilities for recognition, equality and participation in social processes faced strong contempt and resistance from traditional institutions, such as the church or the state, as well as through social representations, biases and stereotypes concerning disability. The starting point of disability issues was anchored in a strong medical model perspective but, as I will show in following chapters, this perspective was to be altered progressively. By the end of the twentieth century, a social model perspective was to take over certain parts of the public administration and the configuration of the built environment.

209 Ibid.
213 Kouroublis, 2000: 242
214 Priestley, 1998: 80-81. See also chapter 2.
Disability in the twentieth century

Has modern Greek society developed biases, stereotypes, and discriminations related to disability that are similar to those developed in the ancient world? Georgios Tsioubos, who in the 1980s was an employee of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, notes that there was/is a relative ignorance and lack of awareness concerning the causes of disability that are often linked to rituals, superstitions, metaphysical explanations, and consequently the conveying of responsibilities and guiltiness. For example, priests in the countryside reportedly advised the mothers of disabled children to visit the church and confess their sins, which were the reason that they gave birth to such children.216

Sim et. al. argue that the ideological construction of “normality” is linked to the development of capitalism and the social production of labor, which relied on a steady supply of workers able to meet the physical rigors of factory life.217 The same argument could be applied in the framework of the early twentieth century Greek agricultural economy that depended on the supply of able-bodied land workers. There are indications that disabled people were not considered productive in the context of a rural economy. A representative of the Greek disability movement notes that the situation in the countryside was tough for people with disabilities:

The agricultural family needed members that could hold a spade; if you could not do this then you would immediately become a misfit. Then others say that it is the parents’ sins that caused disability […] it was a horrible mixture of beliefs and superstitions.218

Tsioubos argues that this kind of confrontation with disability created the conditions for a latent or explicitly expressed social racism that implied that people with disabilities should not be visible. Disabled signified the Other in society, a synthetic notion that helps the rest of the able-bodied community to define itself by providing the feeling of being normal, being right, exorcizing the evil.219 At the same time, this kind of thinking implied what disability researcher Young refers to as cultural imperialism that condemned disabled people to marginalization:

To experience cultural imperialism means to experience how the dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one’s own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one’s group and mark it out as Other.220

Several members of Greek disability organizations claim that before the emergence of disability associations in Greece, the choices for tackling problems related to disability involved various methods of institutionalization for individuals with physical or mental impairments. For example, the first governor of the Greek state Ioannis Kapodistrias (1828-1833) attempted to apply some kind of social welfare by establishing a number of hospitals and orphanages.221 Another early attempt of the Greek state to create a welfare institution took place in 1932, when the government

218 Spyros Staurianopoulos, interview November 12, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
221 Kouroublis, 2000: 301.
submitted a bill to Parliament to establish the Social Insurance Organization (IKA). The aim of the IKA was to insure private sector employees against sickness, disability, and old age in large urban centers such as Athens and Thessalonica.\(^{222}\) However, the role of IKA was rather limited due to lack of sufficient funds and, therefore, social protection at that time was constrained to “institutional charity and clientelistic provisions.”\(^{223}\)

According to Tsioubos and Staurianopoulos, until recently wealthy Greek families typically kept a disabled child in the “back room”; they hid them cautiously and assumed the responsibility silently.\(^{224}\) Very poor families often took disabled children on the road and used them for begging. When the family could not provide the disabled individual with the necessary means for her/his survival, she or he often turned to society and began to beg on her/his own.\(^{225}\) In that way, a social representation of people with disability as beggars was constructed and established. My friend Nikos highlights the role of begging for the shaping of perceptions on disability:

> I will never forget the first time I waited alone for a friend of mine outside a café. Passing people just started giving me money like I was a beggar. I will never forget that. I cried after this incident. I thought it was humiliating but after a while I got used to it. When I grew a bit older, I even began to think it was funny, I called them names like ‘Scrooge’ or ‘miser’. It was really funny actually.\(^{226}\)

Church and religion also played a significant role in demonizing and/or constraining disability issues to charity and begging practices. Barnes acknowledges Christianity in its infancy as the religion of unprivileged social groups, such as slaves, women, and people with disabilities. Charity was fundamental to its appeal and, indeed, its very survival.\(^{227}\) However, the Christian church treated and labeled these groups as charity objects, something that could also be observed in Greece in the period prior to, but also parallel with, the emergence of disability organizations starting in the 1930s. Thus, people with disabilities constituted the perfect vehicle for the “overt sentimentality and benevolence of others – usually the priesthood, the great and the good”.\(^{228}\)

Nevertheless, Kouroublis indicates that in the Greek context the covert goal of church and charity organizations was to direct the dynamics of people with disabilities into conservative channels that accommodated the interests of those at the top of clerical hierarchies.\(^{229}\) The emergence of disability organizations and the broad politicization of disability organizations in Greece throughout the twentieth century, especially after the fall of the junta and political changes starting in 1974, began to contest the dominant perceptions within established power structures.

\(^{222}\) Mossialos & Davaki, 2002: 4. *Health care developments in Greece: Looking back to see forward?*


\(^{224}\) Interviews with Georgios Tsioubos, November 18, 2003; and Spyros Staurianopoulos, November 12, 2003.

\(^{225}\) Kouroublis, 2000: 363.

\(^{226}\) Nikos Perdikaris, interview November 20, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).


\(^{228}\) Ibid.

\(^{229}\) Kouroublis, 2000: 327.
Emergence of disability organizations

Despite the fact that disability issues were confined to charity initiatives and disability was enacted through religious bias, new organizations successively began to emerge and claim that people with disabilities are also human beings who participate in social life and have the same rights as able-bodied people. The maintenance of these rights could not be restricted to charity, begging, or mercy. Disability researchers Campbell and Oliver argue that a key factor for the emergence of disability organizations was “the gradual recognition by disabled people that neither party politics nor charitable and voluntary organizations were serving their interests appropriately or well”. Specifically in Greece, the first attempt to challenge the role of charity organizations and to extricate disabled people from the oppressing protection of these institutions took place in the 1930s.

One of the first organizations that specifically dealt with disability issues in Greece was the Panhellenic Association of the Blind. It was established in 1932 and was the first organization for the blind that was administered by blind people. From the very beginning, the Association challenged prevailing social mentalities such as the charity approach towards disability. Instead the Association claimed and fought for social inclusion and the right of blind people to work, to be educated and to participate equally in social life. As Kouroublis notes, the Association’s first dynamic mobilization took place in 1934, when a group of blind citizens reacted to the humiliating living standards of begging and parasitism and decided to employ new ways for asserting their rights. Under the auspices of the Association, they tied themselves (physically) on the tram rails outside the office of the Prime Minister Panayiotis Tsaldaris in central Athens, demanding social measures against the problems that blind people faced. The government ordered the city’s fire brigade to throw water and ink on the demonstrators but they refused to leave. After the intervention of the opposition, the Prime Minister agreed to meet the blind protesters in the presence of a Greek army general. When he heard the requests of the blind, the general reportedly responded:

You beg all day and then you get drunk and seed babies, which you want the government to take care of [...].

The response of the general reveals the strong prejudices against blind people and people with disabilities in general at the time. This very first mobilization nevertheless symbolizes the initial important steps of disability organizations in Greece and the first signs of politicization of their movement. In the early 1950s, the Greek government attempted to recover from the wounds of WWII, the German occupation, and the severe civil war (1946-1949) and to establish a new welfare system. In 1951, the government ratified the first law (N.904/51) that acknowledged that the state had the responsibility to educate the blind and grant them an economic benefit. This is the first enacted governmental initiative that recognized disability

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231 Kouroublis, 2000: 304.
233 Ibid.
234 Kouroublis, 2000: 305.
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid. 325.
issues as part of the political agenda, even if this law was not activated until some years later. Generally, social policies during the 1950s were inspired by the Beveridge Report in England and aimed at an approach to insurance that covered unemployment, maternity, old age, disability, sickness, and death.

Parallel with these modest advances in the Greek health and insurance policy, disability organizations continued to emerge and expand in the 1950s. In 1955, graduates of the Rehabilitation Center for Mobile Disabled formed the second disability organization. Between 1955 and 1960, several organizations were formed and claimed participation in the social scene: the Associations for the Deaf, Infantile Paralyzed, Paraplegics, and the Panhellenic Disability Movement. The families of people with disabilities, who formed their own organization in 1960, also played an important role in broadening and supporting the struggle of disabled people. According to Kouroublis, the emergence of all these organizations gave birth to a new political regime for disability and strengthened conflicts with the dominating and racist social mentality, social manipulation, the state disinterest, and the mercenary interests of the leaders of charity organizations.

In the late 1970s, several of these organizations for disabled people, especially the Association of the Blind, began to politicize considerably their efforts and to question the factors and mentalities that marginalized them. Mouzelis and Pagoulatos point out that the fall of the dictatorship in 1974 and the re-establishment of a parliamentary system led to a considerable spread of awareness of civil, political, and social rights among the entire population. Thus the mercenary mentality of church and charity organizations, which opposed the emancipation of disabled people, did not befit the general political and liberal atmosphere that dominated Greek society after the fall of the junta. Consequently, conflicts of interest led to extensive protests and demonstrations as disabled people began to question established political structures and to collectivize their efforts. This kind of questioning led to an open contestation concerning who were the patrons (i.e. those who behave as the protectors and controllers of disabled people’s rights) and who were the dependents. Kouroublis explains how disability organizations began to formulate claims related to their identity and to identify potential allies:

Why do some members of society become dependents and assign the right to some other groups to be the patrons? This contestation and questioning gave birth to mobilizations and initiated a social debate. Within this context, the first great alleged rupture began between blind people and the Greek Orthodox Church, which was in charge of all the institutions for the blind. Blind people sought to detach their schools from charity and church institutions. These schools should be publicly owned. The state should undertake the task of educating blind children. Thus, in the 1970s the

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240 Ibid. 326.

struggle of disabled people began to have a political character and that implied the organization of all categories of impairments into associations and federations.\textsuperscript{242}

The politicization of disability organizations implied an opposition against the mentality typical of conservative charity institutions that sought to control people with disabilities. According to this way of thinking, disabled people should not belong to political parties; the disabled person had to be neutral, without political consciousness, in order to be able to receive protection and respect from all possible directions.\textsuperscript{243}

The blind, again, played the lead in a number of protests that reached their peak with the occupation of the House of the Blind in 1976 and a deep conflict with the Greek Orthodox Church, which controlled most of the charity institutions. The House of the Blind, which was administrated by the Orthodox Church led by the archbishop of Athens, was a very rich institution due to endowments and constant donations, but it did not re-invest this money to compensate and rehabilitate the blind and thus contributed significantly to the phenomenon of begging.\textsuperscript{244} This fact led the blind to a dynamic reaction. On May 2, 1976, the Association of the Blind occupied the House of the Blind in Kallithea (now the Rehabilitation and Training Center of the Blind).

The Association demanded that the House of the Blind change ownership and that the new proprietor should be none other than the Greek government. The occupation of the House of the Blind lasted for five months and led to the signing of an agreement that started negotiations which led to the transfer of the ownership of the House of the Blind to the state on October 8, 1976. This was the start of a long-lasting period of struggle when the blind, under the banner of “Bread, work and no begging”, made their most important demands to society and claimed resolution of these demands. From then on a galloping development started.\textsuperscript{245} The Association’s protest shocked Greek society, attracted broad social and international support, and was extensively covered by Greek and international media. The demonstration of the blind signified a definition of their new identity as well as an invitation to other institutions, particularly the government, to join their forces.\textsuperscript{246}

The initiative of the Association of the Blind was to be followed by other disability organizations. Another important disability organization, which also played a significant role in the evolution of the disability movement in Greece and the design of the Athens metro, was the Greek Paraplegics Association. It was initiated in 1977 by “some starving-to-death disabled young men who one day decided to march and demonstrate at the heart of Ilion\textsuperscript{247} about matters concerning the survival of people with disabilities”.\textsuperscript{248} The founding of the Greek Paraplegics Association was yet another indication that disability organizations were starting to realize that only through an organized struggle would they succeed in confronting established

\textsuperscript{242} Panayiotis Kouroublis, interview December 22, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
\textsuperscript{243} Kouroublis, 2000: 327.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{247} Kouroublis, 2000: 331-355.
\textsuperscript{248} Gerasimos Polis, interview September 8, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
mentalities and in materializing their demands into concrete measures. This effort can be compared to a similar process of collectivization of disability organizations that can be observed in Great Britain during the same period. Campbell and Oliver comment on the driving force behind the rise of the disability movement in England:

> Coming together and beginning to organize around particular issues had a consciousness-raising effect that forced disabled people to consider some of the wider issues.²⁴⁰

Even in Greece, the emergent disability organizations constituted a network under construction where different disability actors attempted to identify problems, to create and collectivize a shared agenda. One of the first most burning “wider issues” was the economic status of individuals with disabilities and their financial security. Not only access to education and employment, but also physical accessibility to buildings was extremely restricted in Greece and there was no state financial assistance for the disabled at the start of the 1980s. The chairman of the Greek Paraplegics Association, Viglas, explains that there were significant problems concerning education: there were special schools, but most of them were in Athens and there were not enough. Employment was a problematic issue as well. The Greek Paraplegics Association was trying, through its proposals for legislative arrangements, to protect disabled people and to promote employment among people with disabilities.²⁵⁰

The lack of access to education and employment was a disadvantage that affected disabled people significantly. One representative of the disability movement describes how the low educational levels of people in disability organizations affected their performance:

> We have been fighting for providing disabled individuals with a piece of bread. Unfortunately, even the disabled organizations are also problematic. If I show you the CVs of the members of the council of our association (maybe I should lower my voice now), only two of them have higher education, two of them have studied at high school level and then chaos. How can our team be successful and effective? How can we work?²⁵¹

Kouroublis distinguishes between two periods in the integration of the disability agenda into the central political scene in Greece. The first encompasses the period between 1951 and 1981, when initial legislative measures of the Greek government regarding the enactment of laws and policies concerning people with disabilities were initiated. Kouroublis also points out that it is very important to record the dominating role of charity during that period: irrespective of its good intentions, charity contributed to the maintenance of social stereotypes that led to social marginalization of people with disabilities.²⁵² The second period of integration of disability issues with politics that Kouroublis refers to is the period from 1981 until 1996, which I will now discuss.

²⁴⁰ Campbell & Oliver, 1996: 50.
²⁵¹ Spyros Staurianopoulos, interview November 12, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
The 1980s: problematizing disability politics in public administration

The 1980s could be characterized as the most dynamic and effective decade in Greece in terms of asserting and fulfilling the rights of blind and disabled people in general. While the 1960s were the decade during which the new movement of disabled people began to emerge in some other countries\(^{253}\), the majority of disability organizations in Greece were not established until the 1980s. During this period, disability issues began to become objects of concern for state policies and politicians. According to Kouroublis, three significant factors contributed to the introduction of disability issues on the political agenda in the 1980s:

First, the accession of Greece in the European Union. Second, the socialist party PASOK came to power and applied a totally different approach to disability issues. The leader of the socialist party, Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou, had a personal interest in disability matters and during the programmatic declarations of the new government in 1981, for the first time in the history of the Greek state, he stated in the Greek Parliament that there was an open, serious and ongoing deficiency concerning disabled people. Finally, the Greek disability movement […] asserted and demanded intensively and dynamically participation in different spheres of decision-making […].\(^{254}\)

In 1981, PASOK won the national elections and came into power for the first time in the history of the modern Greek state. This change in Greek politics contributed significantly to altering and revising the state’s approach towards disability. The chairman of the Greek Paraplegics Association observes that the first focal point of reference can be traced to the start of 1980s when a real revolution took place within the disability field:

PASOK’s new approach gave the chance for people with disabilities to start demanding and negotiating for their rights in life and for social inclusion. In the early 1980s, the leader of the socialist party and Prime Minister of Greece, Andreas Papandreou, explicitly referred to disability issues. Then there started a long period of growing demands for social, political, economic and cultural inclusion of disabled people.\(^{255}\)

Prime Minister Papandreou (1981-1989) showed a special interest in issues concerning disability and contributed to the emergence of participatory processes in both the government and the socialist party. People with disabilities participated for the first time in PASOK’s candidate discussions for the elections of 1981, which resulted in the nomination of two candidates in the elections and, for the first time, engagement of a political party in disability issues.\(^{256}\) Immediately, PASOK became a major ally for the Greek disability organizations, which attempted to enroll and stabilize PASOK’s political and financial agenda to promote the interests of people with disabilities. What do I mean by this statement?

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\(^{253}\) However, we must emphasize that there were forerunners of this going back into the nineteenth century; organizations controlled by disabled people which had been modeled on working-class and trade union struggles, Campbell & Oliver, 1996: 46.


\(^{255}\) Athanasios Viglas, interview July 4, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).

\(^{256}\) Kouroublis, 2000: 329.
As Campbell and Oliver point out, a crucial factor in the emergence of disability organizations internationally was the growing awareness that disabled people were not sharing the wealth of the affluent society. This problem was also well articulated by the Greek disability organizations. The coming to power of PASOK was accompanied by an income redistribution that contributed to a significant relocation of economic resources and that was very welcomed by the Greek lower classes. However, economists characterized this as a “fiscal suicide”.

PASOK’s rise was of historical importance as it meant incorporating the losing side of the civil war, thus healing the entire post-civil war trauma and putting an end to the sense of social disenfranchisement of left-of-center citizens. On the economic side, PASOK’s socialist objectives were served predominantly by expansionary and redistributive policies, whose financial cost, however, was bound to rise to unsustainable proportions. Indeed, the 1981 government’s professed aim of economic stabilization was soon overrun by a demand stimulus, hailed both as a strategy of recovery and as an instrument for income redistribution.

Through a set of actions organized mainly by the Greek Paraplegics Association, disabled people raised issues of a financial nature and attempted to promote laws that contributed to improving their quality of life, abolishing discriminations and social barriers, and endorsing participatory processes for disabled people with regard to the public administration and public policies. These actions were supported by PASOK’s program, which was entitled ‘change’ (Allaghe) and expressed the broad need for radical social reforms in Greek society. Public Health sociologists Mossialos and Davaki claim that the program in general terms aimed at national independence, social liberation of the working classes, sovereignty of the people, and participatory democracy. The means for the realization of such a radical endeavor involved the socialization of investments, regional growth, upgrading of local and regional governments, abolition of income disparities, decent housing for all, socialization of health care and expansion of social insurance to the whole population, including mothers, children and the disabled.

Within a short time, PASOK appointed disability representatives to a number of public agencies, such as the administration boards of the Councils of the Centers for Vocational and Social Rehabilitation of People with Special Needs, as well as different institutions that played a significant role for the development of Greek welfare policies, such as the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Greek Manpower Employment Organization, the General Secretariat of Sports and the Ministry of Physical Planning. For example, in 1982 Panayiotis Kouroublis became the first

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257 Campbell & Oliver, 1996: 52.
258 This term was explicitly used by Pagoulatos, 2002 “Greece, the European Union, and the 2003 Presidency”. Other researchers also discussed PASOK’s economic policy (1981-1985) in a similar way; see for example Mossialos & Davaki, 2002 Health care developments in Greece: Looking back to see forward?; Kioukias, 1997 “Interest Representation and Modernization Policies in Greece: Lessons Learned from the Study of Labor and Farmers”; Tsakalotos, 1998 “The Political Economy of Social Democratic Policies: The PASOK Experiment in Greece”.
260 Mossialos & Davaki, 2002: 8. Health care developments in Greece: Looking back to see forward?
261 Ibid.
disabled citizen who was assigned to a governmental post, specifically as consultant to the Minister of Health and Welfare.\textsuperscript{263}

It has been suggested that during the 1980’s Greek society was re-politicized by the PASOK government in the sense that larger numbers of people were being drawn into active roles within the political system, a process that was characterized as ‘populist’ by certain analysts.\textsuperscript{264} The access of disabled people to the public administration signified an increasing stabilization of their role and a growing mobilization of disability issues. Concretely, in 1981 the newly elected PASOK government enacted, through article 42 of Law 1140/81, a so-called \textit{non-institutional benefit} that provided disabled individuals with an income that equaled the wage of 20 workdays of a blue-collar worker. The enactment of this benefit initiated a series of laws, benefits and economic relief measures for people with disabilities which to a large extent can be viewed as accomplishments of the early disability organizations in Greece. The Chairman of the Greek Paraplegics Association describes one of the most important achievements of the disability movement:

A number of economic measures, specifically a social benefit that was characterized as a non-institutional benefit, were enacted for the first time and gave disabled individuals the chance to live fairly decently. This is the greatest achievement of the disability organizations concerning matters of a financial nature, at that time, which helped further the lives of disabled people. This benefit is still granted to people with disabilities.\textsuperscript{265}

During the period of PASOK government 1981-1989, the following measures were ratified as part of Greek social policy for the disabled:

- The right to purchase cars on a tax-free basis
- The right for people with severe disabilities to purchase tax-free fuel
- Laws that stipulated special benefits for homecare assistance
- Laws that enacted the right of disabled people to employment in the public sector, Law 1320/82, article 23
- Reform of the General Building Code and ratification of clauses for the construction of accessible buildings, Law 1577/85
- Enactment of a law for the protection of the disabled, victims and disadvantaged of war, Law 1648/86.\textsuperscript{266}

The 1980s could thus be characterized as the first period during which the government worked systematically with disability issues. The new political will corresponded to the demands of disability organizations for participation in every decision-making sphere that concerned them.\textsuperscript{267}

\textsuperscript{263} Kouroublis official Website, 2005. Available at: \url{http://www.kouroumplis.gr/main.htm}

\textit{Curriculum Vitae} (in Greek).

\textsuperscript{264} Lavdas, 2005: 298. “Interest Groups in Disjointed Corporatism: Social Dialogue in Greece and European ‘Competitive Corporatism’”.

\textsuperscript{265} Athanasios Viglas, interview July 4, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).

\textsuperscript{266} Greek Paraplegics Association, 2003. Available at: \url{http://users.otenet.gr/~parapleg/}

\textsuperscript{267} Kouroublis, 2000: 378.
There was a clear and close interaction between PASOK and disability organizations. Tsioubos, who was member of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs and consultant of the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, argues:

The basic reason of this ‘marriage’ of interests lies in the extreme difference of perceptions and philosophy between the conservative party New Democracy and people with disabilities. The old-fashioned political perception of New Democracy on issues concerning disability could not correspond to the needs of disability organizations as expressed through the dedicated and active members of the disability movement. New Democracy’s policy was rather instrumental in the sense that they funded institutions and special schools, gave out benefits, and at the same time tried to control the field of disability and win votes. That was all! Thus it was impossible to develop a common understanding. This resulted in the fact that the majority of the organized unions of the disability movement could not converge with New Democracy and, accordingly, they looked towards PASOK. Of course there was another reason why PASOK was the upcoming social movement. It constituted the political expression of the new social movement of the middle and working classes, the pensioners, the land workers, of all marginalized social groups, including people with disabilities.268

The PASOK government expressed the need for reform and change in Greek society, and the Greek disability organizations actively supported and allied with PASOK’s ideological and political goals. However, PASOK’s attempt was not free of mistakes and excesses. New social conflicts emerged along clientelistic lines and jeopardized the whole “Allaghe” project.269 Mossialos and Davaki note that while almost 100,000 new employment posts in the public sector were created in order to accommodate PASOK sympathizers (Mossialos actually uses the word ‘voters’), this policy also contributed to increases in public expenditure by 40% and an even greater rise in public debt.270

According to Sotiropoulos, new social movements also appeared in the areas of environmental awareness, consumers’ rights, culture, public health and social provision.271 Within this political context, disabled people began to engage in the general restructuring of Greek society that was in progress. Particularly, the decade of the 1980s ended with the formation of a national body that would represent all Greek disability organizations.

268 Georgios Tsioubos, interview December 23, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
269 Kioukias argues that the while period under consideration was characterized by a generous redistribution in favor of the lower classes, it is equally true that the greatest beneficiaries of the new social order were the particular groups that were able to command sufficient economic and political resources to achieve privileged, clientelistic access. Kioukias, 1997: 313. “Interest Representation and Modernization Policies in Greece: Lessons Learned from the Study of Labor and Farmers”.

79
The Greek National Confederation of Disabled People, ESAEA, is established

At the end of the 1980s, leading disability representatives worked for the unification of disability organizations to collectively represent the disability movement.272 The movement achieved perhaps its strongest organizational milestone in 1989, when a group of leading representatives of disability organizations, led by Kouroublis, formed the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People (ESAEA). Disabled individuals and their families initiated ESAEA in order “to protect issues of common interest for all categories of disablement and to constitute an independent unit of representation for disabled people and their families in the Greek state and society”.273 ESAEA’s main objective was/is to protect the inalienable rights of people with disabilities and to challenge the discriminations that they face. This mission was also to be realized through the promotion of policy measures and binding legislative arrangements.274 ESAEA thus mobilized the hopes and expectations for defending and promoting the rights of people with special needs in Greece.275 Kouroublis became its first chairman (1989-1993).276

ESAEA became the tertiary union of the Greek disability movement and represents people with all kinds of disabilities. The current president of ESAEA, Vardakastanis, comments that in Greece, a country with extremely bureaucratic, inaccessible, and often not even existing public services, it was a challenge to unite different categories of disabilities and to have people with different kind of maladies under the same organizational umbrella. Very few countries have succeeded in doing this. According to the current chairman of ESAEA Vardakastanis, the confederation achieved this result through a didactic and scholastic process of solidarity, respect and understanding […].277

According to ESAEA’s website, since its founding ESAEA has aimed for the equalization of opportunities for disabled individuals in every aspect of social life, provision of decent conditions of living for the disabled, and full inclusion of the disabled in society. The confederation has participated in different decision-making spheres representing disability in negotiations with the Greek government, conducted systematic checks of legislative arrangements, and generated proposals to the Greek government on issues concerning accessibility to education, employment, information society, and the built environment.278 All these actions are based on the approach of the social model of disability that the confederation has adopted:

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274 Ibid.
275 Ibid.
ESAEA adopts the social model of disability, which defines the concept of disability in relation to a socio-political background, connecting it with the barriers that the individual must overcome in order to participate equally in the society. The social model focuses on the need for identifying and confining the “disabled” sides of the society and the obstacles that they imply for the unreserved and equal participation of people with special needs.\textsuperscript{279}

ESAEA also introduced democratic practices and methods that allowed for the election of its representatives/spokespersons and embraced all kinds of issues that concerned disabled people in different areas of the country. Among other things, the confederation currently organizes an annual conference where people with disabilities elect their representatives. The current chairman of ESAEA explains that ESAEA is the “top of the mountain” and takes action in every aspect of the Greek socio-political scene. There are many federations that belong to ESAEA, which have many departments in the whole of Greece. Parallel to these domestic activities, ESAEA also participated in the evaluation of EU’s third Community Support Framework (CSF) and in all committees regarding constructions and investments in Greece, concerning disabled people or not.\textsuperscript{280}

In my view, the initiators of the confederation did not only aim to create an umbrella organization for people with all kinds of impairments, but also to establish a vital center for formulating and promoting disability issues. The emergence of ESAEA provided people with disabilities with a unifying organizational structure, a forum for articulating disability issues and representation in political decision-making spheres. As I will show in the following chapters, the role of the confederation proved to be crucial for the ability of disabled people to articulate their claims. At the same time, the establishment of ESAEA created objections and disagreements among members of disability organizations: Who speaks in the name of whom? Who represents whom? How representative was/is the role of ESAEA spokespersons for disabled people? These are questions that I will attempt to answer in relation to the metro story and the involvement of people with disabilities in its design. The end of 1980s symbolizes, however, an important phase of the Greek disability movement, as well as the end of the first period of socialist government in Greece.

**Summary and conclusions**

During the twentieth century, disabled people in Greece went through a long process of formulating their common fate, organizing their own associations, and constructing their own agenda. New disability organizations needed to formulate their own identities and claims within many areas of social and political life in Greek society. Their negotiating power and political status was to be constructed through conflicts and clashes with long-standing discriminatory practices and mentalities, as expressed in their association with begging and institutionalization. The period during which the Greek disability organizations emerged (1932-1989) was initially characterized by a medical or “personal tragedy” approach to disability,

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\textsuperscript{279} Greek National Confederation of Disabled People, 1999: 5. “Report on the accessibility of people with disabilities in the built environment, collective means of transportation, communication and information”.

\textsuperscript{280} Yannis Vardakastanis, interview June 6 2004.
in which the involvement of ecclesiastic and charity organizations in disability issues was rather strong.

The initiation of the first disability organization by the blind and the politicization of disability organizations during the 1970s, especially after the fall of the junta, gave the first strong evidence of the problematization of disability issues. By this is meant that disabled people began to articulate their claims and to establish themselves on the Greek political agenda. As noted earlier, the Association of the Blind, for example, launched a conflict with one of the most dominant institutions in Greek society, namely the Orthodox Church, claiming the disentanglement of disability institutions from charity organizations. Moreover, the coming to power of the socialist party PASOK at the start of the 1980s created a political space for measures that would potentially lead to increased emancipation of previously marginalized disabled people. The space that was created through PASOK’s new political and economic approach allowed for broad problematization of claims and demands that would provide disabled citizens with decent living standards and the chance to intervene in social and political processes.

PASOK immediately became a major ally for the Greek disability organizations, which attempted to direct PASOK’s political and financial agenda towards disability issues. These efforts were materialized primarily in policies promoting the assertion of economic benefits and the establishment of participatory processes. The mobilization of disabled people in the public administration also signified an increasing stabilization of their role and a growing integration of disability issues in governmental programs. At the same time, people with disabilities attempted to tackle and counterbalance their physical impairments by demanding allowances and consuming luxury goods. Disabled architect Leventi recalls:

> The initial phase of disability issues in Greece focused on welfare and economic aspects. Ecclesiastic and charity organizations were strongly involved, but even the philosophy of disability organizations was mostly oriented towards the “how are we going to get more?” direction. The first demand that the Greek Paraplegics Association won was the tax-free car. All of a sudden, we all had Mercedes. When we had elections in the Association and we all met, there were so many luxury cars parked outside that one could think that there was a ship-owners’ gathering (laughs). Their shame for their disabilities was transferred to the car. On the other hand, the Road Traffic Act obliged people with disabilities to have stickers on the drivers’ door in order for other drivers to know where to park their cars and not block the door for the disabled. Today they do not have disability stickers on their cars. They do not want to be called ‘disabled’. They have hidden behind the car until now.281

These initial actions constituted, however, a modest step forward and not the solution to all the problems that people with disabilities faced. Instead disability organizations responded to emergent issues of a financial nature and formulated a first declaration of existence: “we live in this society too and we have the same needs as you do”282. Former ESAEA chairman notes:

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281 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
282 Georgios Tsioubos, interview December 23, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
This initial movement constituted a beautiful but painful and excruciating struggle. It excavated a huge social group from its social grave and it turned into a productive social unit.\(^{283}\)

At the end of the 1980s, the establishment of ESAEA signified the start of a new era for Greek disablement as disabled people translated their struggle into an organized association that was to collectively represent disability issues on the Greek socio-political agenda. ESAEA was the first institution that progressively attempted to become an *obligatory passage point* for disability issues. By this I mean that its initiators aimed to establish ESAEA as the major institutional and political expression of the Greek disability movement that was to deal with and solve all questions and claims related to disability issues.

Finally, one could claim that the starting point of disabled people in the process of developing their identities and demanding their rights was that of a non-organized *orphan group*. According to Callon, orphan groups are concerned groups that do not belong to the established sociotechnical networks and “cannot be taken into account without profound reconfigurations being decided.”\(^{284}\) Despite significant progress, the role of disabled people in the Greek socio-political scene was still very weak and the need for profound reforms and configurations that would allow for the substantial involvement of disabled concerned groups in different socio-political processes was acute. Accessibility was still not part of the established sociotechnical regime, and the government to a great extent still aimed to provide allowance solutions rather than addressing transport disability by adjusting the built environment to accessibility standards. In the mid 1980s, however, a significant institutional turn in the evolution of disability issues in Greece took place, which will be described in chapter 5.

\(^{283}\) Panayiotis Kouroublis, interview December 22 (in Greek, my translation).

4. Developing the metro: long political discussions 1955 - 1985

When I talk about the metro, I describe my short everyday journeys in the city. I am not describing the Athens of everyone else who wanders around freely on the pavements and zebra crossings. This is somebody else's Athens. For me, it is almost impossible to become familiar with the environment that surrounds me.²⁸⁵

Figure 4. Everyday journeys
Photo: Vasilis Galis

²⁸⁵ Nikos Perdikaris, interview November 20, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
The implementation of the metro system dramatically improved the transport map of the city of Athens and triggered a number of processes that allowed for the involvement and intervention of disabled people in configuring the urban environment and its transport networks. This chapter constitutes a historical account of the processes that contributed to the realization of the metro plan into a concrete project. The chapter starts by describing how abstract references to the need of constructing a metro network in Athens during the 1950s developed into formal studies during the 1960s and 1970s. The chapter will also include an account of measures, decisions, and plans that influenced the evolution of the project as implemented by two different political regimes, namely the conservative government (1974-1981) and the socialist government (1981-1985).

This historical account will enable us to grasp the extent of the complicated political processes and socio-material controversies that the metro project involved and to identify the specific translations that led to the construction of the metro. The notion of translation, as I showed in the first chapter, implies a series of interactions and negotiations between different entities that lead to the implementation or materialization of particular ideas, interests, projects, etc. Callon notes that how a system is translated depends on past translations. Thus, the investigation of the process of translation requires a historical approach that reveals the interactions, processes and entities involved: roundtable discussions, public declarations, texts, technical objects, embodied skills, parliamentary debates, and organizations. A number of interactions contributed to the translation of this colossal (by Greek standards) infrastructure project, which entailed such heterogeneous activities as test drillings, tunnel excavations and extensive negotiations and political conflicts between politicians, engineers, architects, and town planners. These processes initially provided minimum space for issues like the rights of people with disabilities to an accessible built environment.

The chapter draws upon records from a debate in the Greek Parliament concerning the first metro contract, which includes many background materials and references to the history of the metro project. The debate developed, however, into a broad historical and political account of the metro project, with references to the evolution of the metro idea and the political processes that had accompanied it since the 1960s. Thus citations from the record of the debate, which was published by the Greek Parliament in 1992, will be utilized in the analysis. The chapter is also based on significant information about the development of the Athens metro in the research conducted by Balourdos, et. al. in the framework of an EU project, as well as written material by architect Dimitrios Batsos, who participated in the design of the metro project from the early 1980s and today works at Attiko Metro.

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287 SCENESUSTECH: Scenarios for a sustainable society: car transport systems and the sociology of embedded technologies.

86
A new metro system for Athens? A long problematization process

Following World War II (1940-1944) and the civil war (1944-1949), the Athenian public transport system started facing pressure after the severe depopulation of the Greek countryside and strong waves of internal migration and urbanization. During the stage of post-war reconstruction and following the rapid industrialization process after 1950, Athens attracted large sections of the rural population. As people flocked to Athens looking for better employment opportunities than those existing in the provinces, the demand for public transportation services started to increase sharply. Up till then, the railway system was a limited commuters’ line from the southern port of Piraeus to the northern suburbs via the center. In the coming decades however, voices calling for the extension of the existing railway and the construction of a more complex railway network began to rise. There was a growing demand for abandoning or expanding the limited commuter train and adapting it to a more extensive metro network. The idea for a metro was first expressed in the 1950s, when the possibility of extending the existing railway line (which was 28 km long at the time) was raised concretely, according to Balourdos et. al. It is not clear who raised the idea.

Batsos dates the early history of discussions regarding the necessity (or not) of implementing a metro system in the city of Athens to 1957. Particularly, French transport experts from the Independent Organization of the Paris Metro (RATP) submitted a proposal with relevant designs that included a metro network with the proposed north-south line along the Patission - Panepistimiou - Vas. Amalias - Vas. Sophias - Syngrou axes (see figure 5). This line extended from Patission Avenue (which links the center of Athens to the northwestern suburbs) to Panepistimiou Avenue (one of the main avenues in Athens’ center), to Vas. Amalias (also one of Athens central Avenues) to Vas. Sophias (which encompasses the northern side of the historical center), to Syngrou Avenue (which links Athens’ center to the southern suburbs and the port of Piraeus).

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292 Batsos, 1993: 15.
293 RATP (Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens) was the responsible authority for the implementation of the Aramis project, which is described in the book Aramis or the Love of Technology by Bruno Latour. See Latour, 1996: 22.
294 Batsos, 1993: 15.
Figure 5. RATP’s proposed metro network, 1957
Map: University of Athens Website
www.uoa.gr
The RATP proposal signified the start of a long period during which various design ideas and suggestions were submitted from different authorities and construction consortiums concerning the implementation of the metro network. Most of RATP’s suggestions had been developed in France and had mainly a consultative character. However, they never reached materialization due to lack of sufficient public funds to support the project, extremely poor urban and transport planning, party-oriented or personal political conflicts that led to accusations of corruption and lack of transparency, and technical problems that emerged from the fact that the Athenian subsoil is full of antiquities.

In 1963, the government of Georgios Papandreou ordered a study on the Athens public transportation system which became known as the “Smith study”. The study was conducted by the American consultant firm Wilbur Smith and Associates under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Works. The goal of this study was to analyze and map transportation patterns in Athens and to develop an integrated design for public transport. This study, which was presented in 1964, outlined concretely the construction plan for a metro network which would solve the emerging traffic problems of the city of Athens. According to Batsos, the Smith study initially specified a metro “network distributed along the axes of Patission-Lenorman-Panepistimiou-Syngrou, branching into Vouliagmenis Avenue and Vass. Sophias” in the center of Athens. This recommended network consisted of two lines. The first line was a route from Attiki through the city center to Dafni (on the so-called Ellinikon branch) as well as to Pantios (on the so-called Faliron branch), see figure 6. The second line extended from the port of Piraeus to Ag. Paraskeui at the northeast side of Attica’s basin and through the city center towards the western suburb of Peristeri. This study did not lead to a political decision. However, it raised once again the issue of the metro and provided a preliminary design.

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296 Father of the impending Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou.
299 Batsos, 1993: 15.
**Figure 6.** Athens Basic Survey and Study of Mass Transportation and Stations (Smith Study) – recommended lines, 1964

------------- Existing line of Athens railway system

- - - - - - - - - - - - - Recommended Metro lines

*Source: Batsos, 1993. “Transport projects and arrangements: the METRO in its implementation course and its intervention in the shape of the city”.*
One contributing factor to why the Smith study did not lead to realization was the establishment of the Greek military junta on April 21, 1967. This fact suspended the debate and all investigations concerning the prospect of constructing a metro system and no significant action was taken on this issue for several years. At the same time, the rate of private automobile ownership in Greece increased dramatically during the 1970s. While the ratio between automobiles and inhabitants was 15 cars per 1000 inhabitants in 1960, by ten years later it had soared to 60 per 1000. In 1971, seven years after the Smith study, the Greek government commissioned a new preliminary investigation that was also conducted by Smith and Associates. The first volume of the second Smith study was issued in December 31, 1973 and the second volume in May 15, 1974. The aim of the new study was to provide a concrete and functional proposal on the configuration of urban transport networks in Athens and the Attica Region. The first volume specified this:

Athens Greater Area (GAA), the most complex part of the country, is the objective of this study [...] Searching for an eligible and adequate Regulatory Plan for this region constitutes a continuous effort that demands all kind of design and planning principles. The interplay of different factors such as employment spaces, green areas or houses, and transport infrastructure make this study more complicated. Our aim is to create a balanced network of transport systems, which will serve the future needs concerning mobility, adjusted to the development of the region. We recognize that transport networks imply great effects for the development of a city and a region [...]. The present study constitutes one of the several surveys that were conducted within the framework of Athens Regulatory Plan. The Greek government intends to integrate the results of all these surveys in a general Regulatory Plan for the Attica Region. This plan will be exploited as a guide and model for the future development of GAA.

Specifically, the study followed the first Smith study in its construction plan for developing metro lines across the main axes of the center of Athens. The first volume of the study contained a summary of all surveys on existing traffic and travel conditions, as well as a full description of the mathematical models used to simulate traveling in the region. The second volume discussed projections for increased travel based on expected regional land use development and argued for the need for a continuing regional transportation planning process.

The Smith study was part of a broader investigation endeavor, the so-called Regulatory Plan of the capital or Athens Master Plan, which had been issued in

300 Strimmenou, 2000.
301 Thermal Buses SA (ETHEL), 2002: 18.
302 Ibid.
303 Ibid. 16.
306 Consistent with Bill 1262/72, a Regulatory Plan implies a plan that defines the function and control of urban development, concerning use of land and infrastructure networks. Bill 1262/72,
1972. After World War II, the Greek governments had composed many such plans with the ambition to modernize large urban centers and allay problems that occurred due to land ownership and traffic difficulties.  

Not all of these efforts, however, had an institutional legitimacy, and the suggested plans did not contribute to mitigating the problems.  

Significantly, the 1972 Athens Regulatory Plan had also recommended the construction of a metro system. According to Diamantopoulos, however, this idea “met the same fate as all endeavors concerning democratic design and programming in Greece, namely they were stored in ministerial closets reminding us of specific political choices that were never implemented due to lack of political will or social reactions.”

Returning to the second Smith study of May 1974, the authors of the study recognized that an extensive enlargement of the existing railway system and the development of a new metro would be a major improvement of public transportation within the Attica Basin. The second Smith study’s recommendations for the creation of the new metro system largely duplicated the plans that had been included in the first Smith study from 1964. Particularly, the 1974 study proposed the following regarding the existing railway system and the construction of a new metro network:

- Abandoning the existing section of track between Victoria and Attiki and extending instead the existing Piraeus-Victoria line into Kypseli.
- Building a new line that would link Agia Paraskevi (one of the largest north-eastern suburbs) to Aigaleo (western suburb) and southwards to Nikea and the port of Piraeus.
- Extending the existing Kifissia-Attiki line to Omonia and Syntagma squares, then south to Kalamaki On Attica’s west coast.
- Building a line from Ellinikon (south-western suburb) to Peristeri (western suburb) via Syntagma and Omonia.
- Developing a line which would cross the Attiki-Syntagma line, from Zografou (where the Athens’ university campus is located) to Peristeri (see figure 7).

By recognizing the socio-economic factors that characterized Athens at the time, the second Smith study confirmed the need for implementing a full-scale metro.

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Regulatory Plan, Article 2, Clause 2, cited in Diamantopoulos, 1990: 28. “Για ποιό Ρυθµιστικό;” (For Which Regulatory Plan?).

Diamantopoulos, 1990: 28. “Για ποιό Ρυθµιστικό;” (For Which Regulatory Plan?).

Economou, Getimis, Demathas, Petrakos, & Pyrgiotis, 2001: 49-50. Ο Διεθνής Ρόλος της Αθήνας (The International Role of Athens).


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92
After the fall of the junta in August 1974, the New Democracy government, under the pressures of increasing traffic problems in the capital, took up the Smith study’s proposals, which resulted in a new initiative. According to Batsos, this initiative consisted of preparing a new preliminary study in the form of a new Master Plan for the construction of the metro lines in a first phase, which was completed in 1975.\footnote{Batsos, 1993: 15.}

It is somewhat unclear what the exact content of the new initiative was. There are indications, however, that the New Democracy administration reached a decision in May 1976 about the overall traffic and transport system of the capital, which also promoted the solution of constructing a metro system.\footnote{Ibid. 16.} Again, it is not clear what the content of this decision was.

\footnote{Based on the records from the parliamentary debate on the first metro contract, June 4-25 1991, where the Deputy Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Katsigiannis, stated that the New Democracy government with the decision of May 1976, which included among other things the commencement of a preliminary study for the central network of the metro, re-established the metro issue. Greek Parliament 1992: 166. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.}
Policy measures during the New Democracy administration

A year later, in 1977, the New Democracy administration made a decision to order a preliminary study for the actual construction of two metro lines. After an international competition, the government commissioned a preliminary study from the French and Greek research consortium SOFRETU-SGTE-SOGELENG-ADK. This study was important because it later became the basis for the actual design and construction of the Athens metro in the 1990s. Specifically, in 1982 the SOFRETU consortium suggested two lines, from Geraka to Aigaleo (line A) and from Dafni to Sepolia (line B), in contrast to the complicated networks and many different lines and extensions previously proposed by the two Smith studies (see figure 8).

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Figure 8. The SOFRETU consortium’s preliminary design for the first phase of metro development, lines A and B, 1982. 
Source: Batsos, 1993.

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316 This consortium is a consulting and development firm for guided transportation systems that is owned primarily (80%) by the Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens, RATP, Latour, 1996: 313.
317 This is based on the assertion of the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Stefanos Manos (1990-1991), who during the parliamentary debate on the first metro contract stated that the SOFRETU preliminary study described the metro as the Greek government intended to construct it in the 1990s. Greek Parliament 1992: 201. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.
In October 1977 first steps were taken to construct the metro in the form of test drillings in central Athens, but they were never completed. According to an article published in the daily newspaper *TA NEA*, these tests were known as “the metro holes” and became an object of extensive mockery by the Athenian public “since it was rather obvious that the metro project did not get the planning and significance it should have.” In the late 1970s, the New Democracy government nevertheless implemented a number of concrete policy measures that proved essential for the realization of the metro project. Several references to this period indicate that the government was positive to the construction of the metro. After a governmental meeting in July 1978 under the supervision of Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanolis, the administration decided to approve lines A and B as specified by the SOFRETU study and to appoint as supervising authority the Urban Transport Organization (OAS).

The OAS, an independent public enterprise, was established in response to the perceived need for systematic planning, as well as for drawing up a financial policy for urban transportation modes. Specifically, OAS was charged with coordinating and supporting three pre-existing transport enterprises, namely the Athens-Piraeus and Suburbs Electric Bus Company (ILPAP), the Athens-Piraeus Electric Railways (ISAP), and the State Urban Transport Company (EAS). In October 1978, the government appointed OAS as the supervisor and manager of the metro project on behalf of the state by virtue of Law 588/77. Thus, a central authority that supervised the metro project had now been finally established. Notably, the new law did not include allocation of any funds to carry out this work.

In September 1979, the National Council of Country Planning and Environment approved a new Athens Regulatory Plan. Within the framework of the new plan, which had been issued by the Ministry of Public Works under the title “Athens 2000”, architects, engineers and town planners were invited to evaluate the role of a metro network in the Greek capital. This signified yet another important policy initiative towards the realization of the metro that was taken by the New Democracy government. State officials, city planners, and engineers engaged with the metro issue perceived the project as a concrete means for

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improving planning and transport structures in Athens. City planner Kloutsinioti notes that all researchers, state officials, and experts who participated in the planning processes of “Athens 2000” responded positively to the prospect of building a metro in Athens.\(^{322}\) The implementation of the metro was perceived as a stimulus for the gradual transformation of land use and town planning of the capital towards the desirable goal, namely the improvement of Athens’ spatial quality.\(^{323}\)

Although the metro project thus began to gather support from the public planning community, many things still remained to be done in order for a realistic procurement and implementation of the project to become reality. The 1970s ended promisingly for the metro: two preliminary studies had been completed (the Smith study and the SOFRETU study) and the project had gained increasing attention among government officials, city planners, and engineers in relevant companies.

The New Democracy administration continued to enact measures and to study the possibility of constructing a metro system. In the spring of 1980, the government signed a supplementary contract with the French consortium SOFRETU. The new contract concerned “the extensions and certain arrangements on difficulties that emerged as a result of the application of the initial contract”.\(^{324}\) In September 1980, the government commissioned SOFRETU to study exactly where exploratory underground boreholes for the metro should be located. On September 27, 1980, the Athens-Piraeus Electric Railways (ISAP) took over the metro project’s supervision from OAS through the enactment of Law 1074/80 that superseded the previous Law 588/77.\(^{325}\) The new law stipulated that ISAP was assigned with the responsibility of conducting all studies and investigations concerning the metro, as well as responsibility for the construction of the metro.\(^{326}\) The rationale behind this decision was the fact that ISAP was regarded by the government as the appropriate organization for implementing the metro project since it had relevant experience and competence as accumulated from the operation and supervision of the Athens-Piraeus railway. According to clause 6 of the new law, a new metro division within ISAP was established with the task to supervise and coordinate the metro study.\(^{327}\) Law 1074/80 also specified three sources of funds for the sponsoring of the project:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a. Funding from the state budget or the budget for public investments
  \item b. Loans from public or private actors in Greece or abroad
  \item c. Revenues from the metro (tickets).\(^{328}\)
\end{itemize}

However, this law did not specify the amount of funds that were necessary for the realization of the project nor did it formally allocate a specific amount of funds for each of the three sources above. The new division within ISAP undertook the supervision of the exploratory boreholes and in December 1980 the division

\(^{322}\) Kloutsinioti, 1990: 27. “Το μετρό της Αθήνας ως στοιχείο αναβάθμισης της ποιότητας του χώρου της” (Athens metro as an element of Athens’ spatial improvement).

\(^{323}\) Ibid.

\(^{324}\) Batsos, 1993: 17.

\(^{325}\) Ibid.

\(^{326}\) Official Government Gazette (FEK), 1980: 2653. Law 1074. “About the assignment of the Underground Railway of the Capital (Metro) to ISAP S.A”.

\(^{327}\) Ibid. 2654.

\(^{328}\) Ibid. 2653.
submitted a preliminary design for line B. The ISAP’s metro division thus proceeded with the project based on the previous OAS work.

**The metro during the PASOK administration**

In October 1981, PASOK won the national elections. According to Pagoulatos, who was member of the government’s Council of Economic Advisors, the new government’s economic strategy focused mainly on redistributive policies that aimed at social and economic inclusion of marginalized citizens, such as left-of-center citizens, rather than on investments on major infrastructures. As a result, significant funds were relocated away from infrastructure plans and the metro project was suspended. Moreover, there were major bureaucratic, economic and political obstacles that prevented an immediate procurement process. As maintained by Balourdos et. al. the most important barrier to the progress of the project was the decision by the newly elected PASOK government in December 1981 to put off all major infrastructure projects and to withdraw resources from the capital. Also, according to the newspaper *TA NEA*, Antonis Tritsis (the first socialist Minister of Zoning, Settlement and Environment) literally “hated” the idea of the metro and claimed that Athens needed a tram system instead: “if engineers entered the subsoil of the city, they would never reach the surface again”. Another justification was the fact that Athens did not have a stabilized Regulatory Plan and, according to the advocates of this argument, the metro should wait until the relevant authorities developed one.

The progress of the metro project was thus suspended until the completion of a new Regulatory Plan for Athens, which was submitted by Tritsis in 1983. The plan was initiated as the General Town Plan, later renamed the Structural Plan, and the government finally presented it in the Parliament as the Regulatory Plan. Nevertheless, the plan raised objections and concerns within other parts of the government and among city planners regarding its effectiveness. As indicated by town planner Kloutsinioti, the plan was characterized by obvious “design complexity”. Kloutsinioti also points out that the new plan did not explicitly refer to or recommend the construction of a metro network. In line with previous criticism, the plan lacked sufficient concrete measures that would have led to significant interventions in the built environment. Instead the plan was restricted to abstract concepts and did not express any explicit political will for building public works, implementing specific measures, or allocating funds.

In the first half of the 1980s, the construction of the metro thus became a political question without evident or concrete answers. While actors with different technical and political standpoints argued for or against the realization of the metro, its progress froze, test drilling stopped and all testing was suspended. Representatives from New Democracy, which advocated the metro’s implementation, ascribed this

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333 Ibid.
336 Ibid.
stagnancy and delay to the socialist government. PASOK politicians, on the other hand, claimed that delays were only to be expected. According to this opinion, the extent and complexity of such infrastructure endeavors were not compatible with the capacity and competence of the public administration.

At the same time, growing traffic and pollution problems in the city of Athens indicated that the need for the construction of a metro was increasingly acute. The use of private automobiles, which provided two thirds of all urban transport, dominated transportation and lowered the quality of life by undermining public health and inflicting death and disability due to high rates of traffic accidents. Traffic congestion and constantly worsening environmental downgrading of the capital, with various consequences for health, the economy, town planning, and the necessary modernization of the city underscored the significance that the construction of the metro implied.

In 1985 the PASOK government made the decision to again bring up the metro idea in order to address Athens’ traffic and environmental problems. The project became part of a conscious policy that was reflected in a new Regulatory Plan known as the 1985 Regulatory Plan for Athens as enacted by Law 1515/85. This new law aimed at the structuring and planning the greater Athens area (GAA) within the framework of a national policy concerning structural zoning, transport systems, technological and social infrastructure, land and housing policy. Particularly, the new plan proposed two previously suggested metro lines, the A and B lines: the Piraeus-Aigaleo-Gerakas line (line A) and the Peristeri-Glyfada (line B) as previously indicated in figure 8. The metro division within ISAP submitted a final proposal for the underground network compatible with the new plan. The lines described by the SOFRETU plan as A and B were renamed lines 2 and 3.

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338 PASOK’s former Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works (1988-1989), Vasilis Kedikoglou stated in the Parliament during the debate on the first metro contract in June 1991 that the delays in the metro project between 1981 to 1985 were normal and reflected the political cost that such an endeavor involved. He pointed out that perceived political costs affected the pace of its progress. By political cost was meant the negative consequences that a political decision implied and how these consequences are perceived by public opinion. Greek Parliament 1992: 169. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.

339 Thermal Buses SA (ETHEL), 2002: 18.


Nevertheless, the inclusion of the metro idea in the plan was also characterized by imprecision and led to controversial understandings of the motives for constructing such a system. By this I mean that there were certain incompatibilities between the Regulatory Plan and the plan for the metro. According to the new Law 1515/85, all services and organizations of the public administration were obliged to adjust their operational programs concerning the GAA to the Regulatory Plan and to a program for the protection of the environment.  

Thus the government included the metro project in the Regulatory Plan. Some ministries, however, opposed the metro plan since according to them the design of the metro network was not compatible with the proposals for urban land use that were outlined in the Regulatory Plan. According to these critics, the proposed metro network collided considerably with the 1985 Regulatory Plan. Topographer Kloutsinioti, for example, noted that “the sum of proposals for the metro were inapplicable, not only for the current operational conditions, but also for the framework specified by the Regulatory Plan of 1985”.  

In addition, the construction proposal of SOFRETU’s preliminary study, which constituted the basis for ISAP’s work, was also questioned concerning methodological issues such as mining techniques and appropriate types of boring machines. The problem partly stemmed from the concern about antiquities buried in the Athenian subsoil and partly from anticipated disruption of the city.  

However, despite conflicts between the metro idea and the 1985 Regulatory Plan as well as skepticism among town planners and others, the PASOK government decided to proceed with the procurement for the metro regardless of whether or not it would be part of the Regulatory Plan. As a result, in 1985 the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works established a special directorate with the task to further explore the possibility of building a metro and, together with the ISAP metro division, to actively promote the project. The ministry completely took over the supervision of the project in December 1985 through Law 1977/85, and the new directorate, which was named EYDE METRO, was “charged with the realization of the project and preparation of the ground for the international tender”. EYDE METRO thus took over responsibility from the ISAP’s metro division, which the government dissolved with the motivation that it lacked the capacity and experience to accomplish a project of the metro’s scope. Instead, the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works consisted of committees and engineers who were viewed as sufficiently experienced to solve the potential problems that could occur.

345 Ibid.
348 Balourdos et al, 2001: 9
349 This is grounded on the explanation of the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works (1990-1991), Stefanos Manos who, during the parliamentary debate about the first metro contract, asserted that the PASOK government correctly decided to transform the supervision of the metro project from ISAP to the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, even if ISAP was the most relevant organization for such an assignment, since ISAP was not competent to carry out such a task. Greek Parliament 1992: 196. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.
350 This is how the former PASOK Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works (1988-1989), Vasilis Kedikoglou, justified PASOK’s decision to establish EYDE METRO, during
This chronological analysis of events of the evolution of the metro project will be temporarily suspended here since parallel developments that are related to the integration of the accessibility issue in the public administration’s agenda occurred during the same period. In 1985, a Department for Research on People with Special Needs was established at the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, signifying the launch of the first public administration department that linked the question of disability to the configuration of the built environment. Specifically, the department was established to carry out work that would lead to the development of manuals and design principles for constructing accessible infrastructures, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

**Summary and conclusions**

The very first decisions and planning concerning the Athens metro were a result of interrelated and complex political and technical processes developing since the 1950s. The long period of *problematizing* the Athens metro idea began in 1957 when the French consultant company RATP submitted a proposal for alternative designs for transportation systems in the Greek capital. RATP’s proposal was followed six years later by a transportation study for the greater Athens area conducted by the international transportation planning office Wilbur Smith & Associates. The initial Smith study included the first distinct reference to the need of constructing a metro network in Athens. Almost ten years later, because of delays due to political instability and a military junta, the first Smith study was followed up by a second study conducted by the same office. The second Smith study, which was part of Athens’ Regulatory Plan of 1972, suggested the implementation of two metro lines in Athens that were essentially a duplication of the first Smith study. A number of governments, both conservative and socialist, dealt with the extent and complexity of the project and produced several studies, agreements, and research, but these initiatives were also followed by delays. The complexity and unwieldiness of the project is highlighted by the frequency with which the responsibility for supervising the project was continually moved from the one organization to the other.

In 1977, the conservative government New Democracy authorized the French consortium SOFRETU to conduct a preliminary study for the metro and to begin test drillings. A year later, the newly established transport organization OAS took over the supervision of the project. In 1980 supervision was transferred to the Athens-Piraeus Electric Railways SA (ISAP). ISAP was considered to be the public organization that had the resources and the most experienced employees for implementing such a project. In 1981, the election of the socialist government PASOK disturbed the development of the project and the relocations of funds and a different transportation policy contributed to suspending the project. Under pressure of increasing traffic problems in the Greek capital, in 1985 the Greek government launched a new directorate at the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works with the explicit task to further explore the possibility of implementing a metro system. In December 1985, this directorate, EYDE METRO, took over the supervision of the project entirely. Figure 10 summarizes the debate in the Greek Parliament about the first metro contract. Greek Parliament 1992: 171. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.
chronologically the authorities and planning offices that were involved with the design of the Athens metro project from 1957 to 1985.

The metro project constituted a large infrastructure challenge by Athenian and Greek standards and implied a huge amount of financial resources. Also, the instability and uncertainty that characterized the Greek political system under the second half of the twentieth century was an additional factor that led to an inefficient study and procurement process. Finally, none of the Greek governments were eager to run the risk of investing a huge amount of money in a project that was accompanied by objections, skepticism and complexity.

Following Callon, the *problematization* phase of the metro constituted a very long period consisting of numerous interactions and indeterminate alliances. The number of entities involved in the process did not provide evidence of network stabilization. The fact that several organizations, studies, and laws were appointed to deal with the metro project (such as the Smith studies, SOFRETU plan, OAS, ISAP, EYDE METRO, several laws) interrupted the process of *translating* the metro into a concrete project. By this I mean that none of the governments and institutions that dealt with the metro project succeeded in ratifying a concrete and long-lasting law or governmental decision that would launch a procurement plan for the realization of the metro. The metro project lacked a stable and definitive *obligatory passage point*, that is, a concrete set of actions initiated by a governmental or private organization that would establish itself as the only and appropriate institution that would procure for and construct the metro.

While political processes failed to launch the metro project, non-human factors such as environmental asphyxia in the city of Athens during the 1980s and increasing traffic disorders proved more influential than politicians and engineers were. Finally, the PASOK government *mobilized* a special directorate EYDE METRO at the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works in order to prepare the procurement process in 1985. EYDE METRO was to become the first obligatory passage point in the construction of the metro, but not the last.

The participation of disabled people in these processes is conspicuously absent: the design and construction of the metro did not involve their participation. Instead the development of the metro was a *confined* process, by which is meant that engineers, managers and architects carried out their work relatively isolated from the rest of the Greek society, without engaging with the public such as people with disabilities.\(^{351}\) This situation was, however, to change in the mid-1980s as disabled people became actively involved in the work of configuring the built environment and influenced the development of the metro.

1957
Idea for metro proposed by the Independent Organization of the Paris Metro (RATP)

1964
The first Smith Study proposes 2 lines

1974
The Second Smith Study, similar to the first, proposes metro lines compatible with the Regulatory Plan

1977
The conservative government appoints the French-Greek consortium SOFRETU to conduct a study and proceed with the construction of the metro

1978 October
The government appoints OAS as supervisor of the metro project

1980
ISAP takes over the metro supervision from OAS by amendment of Law 1074/80

1985
The ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works establishes a special directorate (EYDE METRO), alongside the ISAP Special Metro division, with the task to explore further the possibility of building a metro

1985 December
EYDE Metro takes over the complete supervision of the project

Figure 10. Athens Metro – Overview of Main Developments
5. Disability issues in public planning and transportation 1985-1991: co-producing accessibility and the built environment

While we were waiting for the next train to come I noticed that my mood had changed completely. I was not stressed anymore about any obstacles that might hinder our route, I was not afraid that Nikos would feel bad or humiliated by strangers staring at us. I could even notice that he did not need me pushing his wheelchair any longer. The elevators, the ramps, the lights, the signs, everything indicated that the metro had nothing to do with the chaotic outdoor environment that we had both experienced moments before we entered one of the new stations. The metro constituted an accessible micro-world independent from the rest of the Athenian landscape. However, this kind of independency seemed to bother Nikos:

A work, once it is constructed, should not be independent. It exists and evolves in relation to the surrounding environment. Thus, something becomes effective and functional as the whole and not in a condition of isolation.\(^{352}\)

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352 Nikos Perdikaris, interview November 20, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
This chapter deals with the establishment of a special department, *the Department for Research on People with Special Needs*, at the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works in 1985 and its early work. This department played a key role for the public administrative agenda in enacting, ratifying, and imposing accessibility in the public built environment, as well as in developing design directives of a technical nature concerning the implementation of specific accessibility provisions. These directives had the status of proposals for good practices, which ultimately were also applied to the metro project.

The chapter is organized as follows. First I will describe the nature of social policies and the status of transport infrastructure prior to the emergence of the metro. Second the chapter will deal with the establishment of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs and the effects that it had on disability issues and the promotion of accessibility awareness. Particularly, this part of the chapter will focus on the initiation of working groups on accessibility questions by the department and the development of a handbook of technical specifications for the configuration of an accessible public built environment. Third I will discuss how the metro project developed from 1985, when the socialist PASOK government initiated the special directorate EYDE METRO that prepared the procurement for the project, to 1991 when the conservative New Democracy government signed the first metro contract with the construction consortium. The year 1985 brought with it the introduction of disability issues in public planning and transportation. The commencement of co-production between disability issues and public works was closely linked to the establishment of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs.

The actors involved in the aforementioned processes constitute concrete examples of individuals with overlapping roles. By this is meant that these actors commute/d between different standpoints and interests, roles and identities: they were engineers or architects and at the same time disabled or not; they were public administrators but also representatives of disability organizations. Simultaneously, they created working groups consisting of actors that negotiated and interacted with other entities. The establishment of the department provided the institutional space for interactions between disabled people, politicians, engineers and the material world. It played a crucial role in enabling disabled people to participate and intervene in policy processes and in the shaping of public spaces that were accessible.

**Social policies vs. infrastructural projects during the 1980s**

There were no major public transport or infrastructural projects in progress in Greece during the 1980s. As indicated by transport expert Pallis, investments in transport infrastructure accounted for approximately 0.5% of the GDP during the period 1981-1988, while the respective EU average fluctuated around 0.9%. The First Community Support Framework grant by the EU to Greece (1989-1994) increased, however, the transport infrastructure investment rate to 0.58% of Greece’s GDP.

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354 Ibid.
The objectives and programmatic strategies of the governing socialist party PASOK during its first term of office (1981-1989) did not include plans for investments in infrastructural projects. PASOK attempted instead to reform and improve social conditions by “extending participation and social control over the economy and providing the means for the promotion of economic development”. Economist Tsakalotos argues that PASOK’s first election was based on a broad coalition which focused on a radical program that promised measures for social justice and democratic participation for previously excluded groups. Political scientist Lyrintzis argues that PASOK’s program was translated into a new mode of participation in terms of incorporating into the political system social groups that had been traditionally excluded from power. As noted in chapters 3 and 4, these groups consisted mainly of marginalized left-to-center citizens, people with disabilities, working class groups, and farmers. PASOK’s participatory program, however, involved the enlargement of the public sector, the launching of social policies supported by borrowed funds, and representation of corporate interests as the interests of the Greek people. As a result, the Greek economy faced severe difficulties in the end of the 1980s. The government’s social expenditure rose from 20% of GDP in 1982 to 24% in 1987 with detrimental fiscal consequences as the public deficit increased by almost 50% between 1981 and 1985. In addition, the economic resources required for PASOK’s integration and redistribution program did not allow for substantial investments in transport and other infrastructures.

By the mid-1980s, the initiation of the EU’s Integrated Mediterranean Programs (IMPs) highlighted the need for reform in the policy-making spheres. Paraskevopoulos notes that PASOK’s integration and redistribution program was...
assisted by the European Community’s impetus (through the IMPs) for decentralization of power, extensive institution building and experimentation with new – for Greece – forms of social participation in the policy process.\textsuperscript{363} Stimulated by IMP, the PASOK government did not intend to invest in the modernization of infrastructures but rather in its social program for the abolition of social inequalities, income imbalances, and reform of administrative structures. In the case of disability issues, the government did not have the ambition to integrate people with disabilities by initiating and spreading accessibility awareness about the built environment. The political and economic integration of disability groups constituted a priority in the government’s social program rather than accessible infrastructures.

The government’s lack of a conscious policy for the implementation of accessibility provisions in the built environment was reflected in a survey entitled \textit{Athens, an inaccessible city for people with disabilities} conducted by the Spastics Society Athens\textsuperscript{364} in 1984. Particularly, this survey showed that there was a significant shortage of ramps, elevators and broad entrances in different public buildings, as well as a lack of accessible means of transportation.\textsuperscript{365} Apart from this survey, there are no other references or indications that there were any discussions on issues concerning accessibility in buildings and transport.

The question of accessible transport networks was thus not a prioritized issue for either the government or disability organizations in the early 1980s. However, as the following discussion will show, there was a growing awareness within the public administration that was to influence state policies, stimulated by the launch and the initiatives of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs. The rise of the accessibility debate was partly a result of the government’s initiatives and one could argue that the establishment of the department befitted the socialist government’s rhetoric for inclusion of marginalized groups and their claims in the political agenda. Accessibility awareness, however, also was a bottom-to-top process, where specific disability actors within the public administration began to problematize the issue of accessibility and enroll certain politicians, engineers, and public administrators.

\textbf{Department for Research on People with Special Needs - a Trojan horse or a new obligatory passage point?}

In 1985 the government took a step that had significant effects on accessibility awareness. This step was the establishment of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs at the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works. The \textit{co-production} of disability issues and urban spaces was about to begin with the invasion of the Greek public works administration by a Trojan horse that influenced the administration from within it. In the following, I will describe and explain how and why the department was established, who the driving actors behind it were, and why it was important for the metro project. The formation of the department is closely linked to the initiatives of a goal-directed disabled architect:

\textsuperscript{363} Paraskevopoulos, 2005: 450. “Developing Infrastructure as a Learning Process in Greece”.

\textsuperscript{364} This organization has recently been named Cerebral Palsy Greece.

Argiro Leventi. Her contribution to the unfolding of this story was important and the following section draws considerably upon interviews I conducted with her.

**A disabled architect enabled the problematization of accessibility**

The Department for Research on People with Special Needs was directed by a disabled female architect, Argiro Leventi, who had a decisive role in shaping the department. Leventi began her professional career as an architect at the Ministry of Public Works on the Greek island of Samos in 1971. In 1972, she was transferred to the technical service of the Greek Postal Service in Athens, where she worked on architectural designs for post office buildings and offices and supervised their construction. In 1977, she became confined to a wheelchair due to a car accident. Leventi recalls the period immediately after her accident and its significance:

> I had the accident in 1977 and ended up in a rehab clinic in England. There I stayed immobile in a bed for three months. When I eventually could move they took me to the first floor of the building, to the lounge of the clinic, where I met other disabled people. One day I heard some people talking in Greek. They were the Greek athletes who participated in the Para-Olympics and had started a disability organization in 1977, around the time I had the accident. This was the Greek Paraplegics Association, which was the first organization for people with mobility disabilities. During our meetings they convinced me that they work despite their disability, so I was also persuaded to continue working. They lied to me… (Laughs).366

Leventi was far from alone in having become disabled through an accident on the road: high rates of traffic accidents in Greece resulted in a significant number of disabled people annually. According to an EU report from 1998 about health status in Greece, road traffic accidents represented a serious health problem for the country.367 Figure 12 shows the death rate and the distribution of injuries from car accidents for Greece 2001 - 2005.

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<td>2005</td>
<td>22,930</td>
<td>1,470</td>
<td>2,521</td>
<td>19,133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 12.** Road traffic accidents and casualties in Greece, 2001-2005

*Source:* Greek Traffic Police368

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366 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
Despite the decline in traffic accidents, the number of deaths and serious injuries was substantial. While road traffic accidents constitute a major source of disability, most of the seriously injured people had been born without physical disabilities, had professional careers and had developed an able-bodied way of life prior to their accidents. Topographer Marili Hristofi argues that traffic accidents led to the reinforcement of disability issues in Greece:

Traffic accidents in Greece constitute the salvation of the disability movement. I am fully aware of the fact that something like that sounds extremely crazy, but it is true. There is a huge difference between people born with disabilities and people who become disabled because of an accident. If Argiro Leventi had not had an accident, it is very possible that the issue of accessibility would not have been promoted in Greece until fifteen years later when the European Union imposed it.369

According to this view, people disabled by road accidents contributed significantly to the surfacing of disability issues.370 Leventi recalls the significance of the experience of becoming disabled for her engagement in promoting accessibility awareness:

After my crash, I said that some architects in Greece should have an accident in order to realize the problems and to do something about them.371

After her accident, Leventi became a member of the Greek Paraplegics Association and a member of its board (1979-1984). Immediately she started arguing for the inclusion of accessibility on the agenda of the Association and the public administration, influenced by her status as an architect and from her experience during her stay in England, where the issue of accessibility had already been put forward. Leventi explains that initially her ideas were viewed as rather radical and did not gain much attention, not even among her colleagues at the Association.372 She argues that the rest of the members of the Association focused on claims regarding economic issues:

They were indifferent to accessibility. The only thing they had in mind was the provision of benefits. When some of their financial claims were satisfied, however, they realized that they could not get about.373

As discussed, the issue of accessibility was not, however, part of the Greek political agenda at this time. Leventi was one of the few actors arguing for the importance of an accessible built environment starting in the late 1970s. In 1979, she was transferred back to the Ministry of Public Works, specifically to the directorate of

369 Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
370 This reminds me of M. J. Fox, the famous actor who suffers from Parkinson’s disease and has created an international institution for research on Parkinson’s, when he revealed in a TV interview that many of his friends who also suffer from Parkinson’s became really glad when they were informed that the disease had struck him too (interview of Michael J. Fox in the Late Show with David Letterman, February 2, 2005). They knew that this was a potential opportunity for them to be heard, represented, and, perhaps, to be cured.
371 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
372 Ibid.
373 Argiro Leventi, personal communication February 23, 2006 (in Greek, my translation).
the design for road works, where she worked as the link between the aforementioned ministry and the Ministry of Zoning, Settlement and Environment. This new post constituted her point of departure for promoting accessibility and the building of working groups on accessibility within the public administration. Leventi describes the conditions and the context under which she started to work on accessibility issues:

People with disabilities were not allowed to work before 1979. On September 1, 1979, however, a new law was enacted that provided disabled people with the right to work. I used this law and, after the expiration of my sick leave, I again started working at the Ministry of Public Works in Athens. At a certain point during 1981, my directorate moved to another building that I could not enter with my wheelchair. I stayed in the old building, on the same floor as the minister, in an office that my directorate had kept […] I worked mostly with technical issues. I asked for work from my director, he gave me some tasks, but after a while, he told me: why don’t you work with the issue of accessibility, which is more serious than the projects we are working with?

The idea of her director was translated into Leventi’s participation in a working group that contributed to the revision of the General Building Code (GOK) starting in December 1981. The GOK is a general law that specifies conditions, restrictions, and requirements concerning all constructions within or outside city limits in order to protect the natural, built, and cultural environment and serve the public good. It provides a framework of definitions and construction rules concerning town planning and architecture as well as the protection of the natural environment and buildings with cultural value, in addition to providing standards for unobstructed mobility for people with disabilities. The General Building Code had previously been revised in 1929, 1955, and 1973.

The latest revision implied a long process and the formation of several working groups that dealt with different themes of the new GOK (such as rules for construction, town planning, environment and culture regulations, housing, and mobility) from 1981 to 1985. These groups consisted of architects, civil engineers and town planners, representatives of the National Technical Chamber as well as employees of different relevant departments of the Ministry of Public Works. Leventi explains that each group submitted proposals concerning the aforementioned topics, but the final revision of the GOK was to be decided by the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works in 1985. Leventi notes on her involvement with the first GOK group in 1981:

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374 These two ministries merged in 1985 as the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works.
375 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
377 The National Technical Chamber (TEE), established in 1923, is an institution functioning under public law and supervised by the Ministry of Public Works. TEE is by law the technical consultant to the state and the corporate body of all qualified engineers and builders in Greece. Its main objective is to promote, in general, the technological level in the country. TEE, 2006. “Role and objectives”.

109
In 1981, I began working for the first working group assigned with the task of revising the General Building Code. This process started following the initiative of Minister Tritsis and lasted until 1985. My involvement with one of the groups was the result of my own proposal to the minister. I told him that the issue of accessibility must be integrated into the new GOK and thus I had to be part of the group. That is how I started.\textsuperscript{378}

For the first time, a disabled actor working for a public department articulated the need for the integration of accessibility in technical discussions, specifically the formulation of the GOK. At the same time, it was the first time that disability issues encompassed a technical or material aspect. Leventi succeeded in incorporating accessibility by enrolling the Minister of Zoning, Settlement and Environment and the initial group working with the GOK. From my perspective, this was the first step towards establishing accessibility in the built environment as part of the public administrative agenda. Leventi worked with the GOK group for a year and her initial involvement was not translated into concrete results apart from the submission of a short proposal concerning accessibility. According to Leventi, her engagement had been of an experimental nature that faced skepticism from the engineers participating in the various working groups.\textsuperscript{379}

However, from 1981 to 1985, Leventi also exercised her role as a member of the Greek Paraplegics Association. Leventi notes that her identity as an architect, employee of the Ministry of Public Works, and member of a disability association gave rise to an idea: the creation of a department that would work with accessibility issues and develop disability standards for configuring an accessible built environment.\textsuperscript{380} She argued for the importance of creating a department within the ministry that would work with accessibility issues in the built environment, and her efforts translated into the emergence of the new department. Why did Leventi succeed and what factors enabled the launch of the department? Three important factors can be identified. First, Leventi had a firm position within the public administration and had worked there for some years, which provided her with an organizational legitimacy. By this I mean that Leventi had accumulated experience from working in the public administration and her position in the administration enabled her to build contacts with key actors from the public administration who could politically support her efforts to establish the department.

Second, Leventi had strong personal and professional links to the new Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works (who was appointed in June 1985) Evangelos Kouloubis,\textsuperscript{381} which allowed her not only to state her claims and ideas directly to the minister but also to influence him considerably. The interests and engagement of outsiders such as the political leadership of the ministry toward the issue of accessibility were not given but rather the result of Leventi’s work in enrolling them in her own project.\textsuperscript{382} Thus, she promoted her idea through extensive

\textsuperscript{378} Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
\textsuperscript{379} Argiro Leventi, personal communication February 23, 2006.
\textsuperscript{380} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{381} The former Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Evangelos Kouloubis, is not to be confused with the former chairman of ESAEA and researcher Panayiotis Kouroublis.
\textsuperscript{382} Latour, 1983: 143. “Give Me a Laboratory and I will Raise the World”.
discussions with the minister and the special secretary of the ministry Alekos Voulgaris. Leventi recalls her relationship to the minister:

I went to Kouloubis, whom I knew very well since his service as chairman of the Technical Chamber of Greece, and explained my idea about the Department. He accepted it immediately. In June 1985, with the agreement of Kouloubis and the help of the special consultant of the ministry Voulgaris, this office was established. We baptized it. We put a sign on the door: Department for Research on People with Special Needs (laughs).383

A third significant factor that contributed to the establishment of the department was the political change that the PASOK government brought starting in 1981. As already discussed in chapter 3, the socialist government encouraged and enacted participatory processes in the public administration. Kioukias notes that the new social order that PASOK attempted to establish included delegating particular roles in policy implementation to interest groups.384 The establishment of the department beffited PASOK’s programmatic aims and rhetoric and this reinforced Leventi’s effort with political legitimacy and power.

Leventi became the director of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs in June 1985. A letter from the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works in 1987 indicates that the purpose of the department was to coordinate all technical institutions and to enact measures against existing architectural and urban planning barriers to unobstructed mobility.385 According to a publication from the department issued in 1998, the aims of the department were retrospectively constructed as follows:

- Reform the general design principles of the General Building Code in order for a “Design for All” principle to be achieved
- Devise and enact specific measures for equal access of people with special needs into society
- Coordinate all technical departments that work with issues concerning housing, public buildings, public infrastructures, special buildings, free spaces, and transport.386

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383 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005.

111
The Department’s first concrete action was to submit a proposal for a clause that would be included in the revised GOK in December 1985. Together with the able-bodied architect Kostas Kyrgiakopoulos, employee of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works and later member of the department’s staff, Leventi prepared and submitted to the minister a proposal for a specific new clause to be included in the GOK. This clause proposed specific measures for improving lateral and vertical movement for disabled people in both public and private buildings. Specifically, the proposal made technical specifications for minimum dimensions of elevators and specified the minimum size of free spaces.

The proposed new clause, however, triggered many strong reactions. According to three of my informants, two groups of actors who were representatives of various public technical services and who participated in the various working groups reacted vehemently to the proposal. Specifically, representatives of the National Technical Chamber and the contractors who participated in the construction of public works argued against the inclusion of the department’s proposal. Leventi recalls these reactions:

The clause caused severe reactions not only from the Technical Chamber, but also from architects, civil engineers and mechanical engineers who did not want to include it in the new Building Code. They did not allow us to go into issues like the pavements, pedestrian areas, and especially elevators. There was a huge fight with the engineers down in the entrance of the ministry. I told them: “Guys, if someone dies, do they have to carry him/her upright? (Laughs) Do not worry, in a short time the constructors will adjust to the new dimensions”.

The proposed changes in the GOK also led to extensive disagreements on specific issues. One objection concerned the dimensions of elevators. The engineers and architects who participated in the various working groups argued that adjusting elevators to the proposed dimensions implied bigger cabins, since the elevators that existed in Greece until then could only accommodate up to four people. The proposal for the new elevator implied cabins with space for seven passengers, but elevators of this size were not manufactured in Greece yet and would have had to be imported. Moreover, builders and engineers reacted to the fact that the proposed dimensions for the new elevators were to occupy larger spaces in the buildings and, as a result, would reduce private space in the apartments.

387 This is based on a reference on the 1985 events included in a letter sent by the department to different technical authorities in 1987. Letters of this kind were reportedly sent by the department earlier as well, but I was not able to trace the original letter from 1985. Thus I employ the letter from 1987 instead: Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, 1987:1. “Establishment of working groups for the study of standards concerning independent mobility of people with special needs. Letter to the Technical Service of the Greek Post Office”.
389 Interviews with Leventi March 16, 2005; Hristofi March 9, 2005; and Tsioubos November 18, 2003.
390 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
391 Argiro Leventi, personal communication February 23, 2006.
However, not all the actors were opposed to the proposed new clause. There were also strong allies for the new department. Specifically, the department utilized its relation to the National Confederation of People with Disabilities (ESAEA) and other disability organizations. Leventi explains that whenever there was trouble or opposition to the department’s initiatives, she contacted the Greek Paraplegics Association, which in turn intervened and pressured the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works. The department became in effect, despite the fact it belonged to this ministry, the operational arm of disability organizations, while paradoxically ESAEA and other disability associations that constituted interest groups became the political division. A former member of the department highlights this relation:

There was an excellent cooperation between the department and ESAEA. I mean that when we wanted to promote some issues, people with disabilities themselves applied some pressure, that is, they protested with their wheelchairs outside the minister’s office. This is not exactly a welcome sight for any politician; it has political cost. ESAEA composed resolutions that were sent to the department. We processed their demands technically and promoted them to the minister…

Another important actor who was committed to and advocated for adopting the department’s proposal in the GOK was the Minister of Zoning, Settlement and Environment, Tritsis (1981-1985). Political scientist Sotiropoulos indicates that when there are strong ministers who are politically aware and who have competent advisors, the Greek bureaucracy does not constitute a hindrance for implementing their political plans. The enrollment of the minister by Leventi and the pressure imposed by disability organizations aimed to reinforce accessibility awareness progressively in the public administration’s agenda. Leventi notes on the contribution of the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works to success in implementing the department’s proposal regarding the new GOK:

The minister himself took the responsibility and said, “You will include the proposal in the new (building) code as it is”. This was a political decision.

The new GOK was enacted in December 1985 as Law 1577/85. It explicitly reflected the proposals of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, despite the objections and conflicts that had taken place. The second clause of the law (article 29) specified technical standards concerning the configuration of elevators and the adjustment of pavements, corridors, free spaces and doors to accessibility dimensions in the public built environment. More precisely, Law 1577/85 specified that elevators were to be obligatory and designed according to accessibility standards and that free spaces were to be designed with consideration for people with special needs.

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393 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005.
394 Marili Hristofi, March 9, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
396 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005.
397 Ibid.

113
5a In public buildings, both old and new with more than one floor, the existence of elevators is obligatory. In the aforementioned buildings and houses, where the construction of an elevator is obligatory, the level of the pavement and the level of the elevator must be connected in order to be accessible by people with special needs. At least one of the elevators in the aforementioned buildings must have minimum internal dimensions of width, length, and door clearances of 1,10m, 1,40m and 0,80m, respectively. The space between the elevator door and the opposite wall must be at least 1,50m in width.

b. People with special needs must be taken into consideration in the configuration of communal/free spaces and the communal use of open-air spaces of buildings. The aforementioned spaces must contain corridors with a plane floor made of concrete, dry material, with 1,30 m. width and maximum 6% grade.\textsuperscript{399}

This specification meant that the installation of elevators and the configuration of free spaces had to be compatible with the dimensions of wheelchairs. The new law thus contained specifications for exactly how the public buildings were to be designed in order to accommodate people with disabilities. Notably, however, despite heterogeneity of disabilities, these initial measures mainly accommodated unobstructed wheelchair mobility. The fact that Leventi was a wheelchair user constitutes an explanatory factor.

According to Leventi, controversies continued, however, even after the enactment of Law 1577/85. Leventi argues that most of the architects ignored the new code and kept on designing without including provisions and dimensions friendly to people with disabilities, without taking into account the dimensions stipulated by the law:

> Despite the fact that the new Building Code concretely defined the size of the elevators, most of the architects did not construct by the rules. The door of an elevator should be positioned on the narrow side in order for a wheelchair, accompanied by an assistant, to access the elevator, but they placed it in the wide side, where it was impossible for a wheelchair to fit in, since the length of the elevator (1,10m) was not enough.\textsuperscript{400}

This means that even if the code had become a law of the Greek state, there was a lack of institutional means for enforcing the law. In addition, there was no “disability awareness component” integrated in the education of planners, architects, and construction engineers.\textsuperscript{401} In the first two years of the department’s existence, Leventi was the only employee. During that time and apart from the GOK project, Leventi worked mostly with collecting international literature on disability and accessibility standards and translating them into Greek. The goal was that this material would be the basis for creating future disability norms that corresponded to the Greek standards. During the same period, Leventi began to prepare and design initiatives that the department was to launch in the second half of the 1980s, especially the accessibility awareness project.\textsuperscript{402}

\textsuperscript{399} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{400} Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
\textsuperscript{402} Argiro Leventi, personal communication February 23, 2006.
The accessibility awareness project: creating accessibility working groups within the public administration

The reactions against the accessibility clause in the GOK did not intimidate Leventi. Quite the opposite, she continued identifying shortcomings in the legislative framework and the existing technical directives for implementing accessibility provisions in the public built environment. In 1986, Leventi launched a collective project that aimed to promote accessibility awareness in the public sector. The initiation of the project implied a significant increase in the workload of the department. Leventi could not cope with the amount of work by herself and she utilized her personal contact with the minister and requested additional members of staff. In the same year, the department employed two architects who assisted Leventi in the preparation of the accessibility awareness project. What was the purpose of this project?

The aim of the project was to spread disability awareness within the public administration and to develop concrete technical specifications for the accommodation of disabled people in public spaces. The first objective of the project was to select representatives from different technical authorities from the wider Greek public sector who could participate in various working groups that were to develop standards and strengthen their expertise concerning accessibility and unobstructed mobility in public spaces. The department sent out letters to different public agencies and asked for representatives, engineers, architects, and sociologists. Leventi notes on the goals and composition of the working groups:

We asked for representatives from each technical service of the public sector with the following philosophy: to promote understanding among individuals who were not familiar with the concept of accessibility, as I had not been before my accident. None of these people were disabled. They were all architects, topographers, engineers etc. We formed teams and sub-groups. Around forty people participated who really engaged themselves in the process. Afterwards, when they returned to their posts, they tried to promote this mentality.

Specifically, the department formed working groups consisting of representatives of public authorities that in various ways were linked to the configuration of the public built environment. Representatives of the following technical authorities of the public sector participated in the groups: the National Tourism Organization, Olympic Airways, the police force, the special Directorate that supervised the metro project EYDE METRO, Hellenic Railways Organization, Athens Urban Transport Organization, the Workers’ Housing Organization, the Technical University of Athens, and the Greek Postal Service. Representatives of disability organizations such as ESAEA also participated in the work. These groups had different specializations and interests on issues regarding accessibility and the configuration of the built environment. Thus the representatives of the aforementioned organizations cooperated in order to collect international literature concerning disability and worked collectively for the development of accessibility.

Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005.
Argiro Leventi, personal communication February 23, 2006.
Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005.
Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005.
Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
standards. Engineers, architects, and consultants were to sit at the same round-table with representatives of disability organizations as well as disabled engineers or architects in order to collaborate on technical aspects regarding the issue of accessibility.  

In the course of the work, working groups were to specify the idea of producing a Greek handbook with good practices and design principles for the construction of accessible buildings and the configuration of public spaces to accessibility standards. According to a letter sent by the department to the technical service of the Greek Postal Service in 1987, the representatives were required to speak foreign languages because these groups were expected to analyze international standards. The working groups were to meet every week for an estimated period of six months. The letter explicitly stated that the goal of the working groups was to develop a handbook as a guide for implementing accessibility standards that corresponded to international standards:

Our intention is to compose and publish a handbook that takes into consideration international standards and that the handbook will become a guide for engineers when conducting studies for the construction of special buildings or houses […] An additional objective of the groups is the selection of standards from other countries, corresponding to the organization the members represent; therefore we request a certain amount of preparation from the representatives’ side.

This effort was not, however, free of clashes, skepticism or reluctance on the part of the various technical authorities. In the beginning, many of the actors reportedly perceived the whole endeavor as drudgery. A former member of the department and member of the working groups, able-bodied topographer Marili Hristofi notes that at the beginning of the project nobody had a clear idea about what accessibility was and what it implied:

Nobody was familiar with the concept of accessibility, thus it was rather difficult to find people interested in dealing with the accessibility working groups. In 1987, my department received the invitation (to participate in the working groups, authors note) and it began the procedure for deciding whom they would send. My supervisors saw it as some kind of drudgery. I was new at the department, so the decision was rather easy: ‘we will send the newbie!’ This is how I ended up at the department for Research on People with Special Needs in 1987. Accidentally!

For some of the representatives, however, the involvement with accessibility issues turned into a personal commitment. Apart from the fact that they dealt with an issue that was an orphan until then, they passionately put their knowledge and skills at the disposal of disability politics. This kind of engagement provided them with a sense of social contribution that went beyond their professional ambitions. Hristofi again explains:

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408 Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003.
409 Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, 1987: 2. “Establishment of working groups for the study of standards concerning independent mobility of people with special needs”. Letter to the technical service of the Greek Post office”.
410 Ibid.
411 Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
We began as just forty people. However, very soon this job turned into a passion. We realized that this was not just professional agony of working with something different. We began from ground zero. All kinds of technical legislation that now exists in Greece came from us. At the same time, we had the feeling of making a contribution, that we did something for a great deal of people. On the other hand, the difficulty of the job, to promote the right messages to society, was a challenge and gave us a great sense of satisfaction.412

The work to formulate accessibility standards also signified the initial traces of involvement of people with disabilities in the configuration of the built environment. It was the first time that disabled people, such as Leventi, entered into discussions with representatives from other parts of the public administration regarding technical and architectural issues. This reinforced the participation of disabled people and challenged the exclusion of disability groups in technical discussions. Some of these actors had overlapping roles as architects, experts, and disabled people, and utilized their positions for promoting disability issues. Hristofi accentuates the role of those actors in the working groups:

There were always people with disabilities participating in the working groups. First, it was Leventi, the director, another engineer from the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, Makis Polis, and of course the representatives of ESAEA, whose number depended on the issue we discussed. Everything worked in flexible and wooly structures. We were not so organized. However, the participation of people with disabilities in such forums signified great progress for the Greek standards, taking into consideration how over-protective Greek society is and the low rates of education that disabled people had.413

People with disabilities, a concerned group, could actually participate and join forces with public administration experts, such as architects, town planners, and government officials from different technical, social, and political organizations. Significant here was the role and participation of ESAEA that was closely engaged with the activities and work of the department and the working groups. Hristofi explains that ESAEA developed proposals and sent them to the department, while the working groups translated them into technical and architectural terms. Simultaneously, ESAEA provided political support to the department in terms of intervening with demonstrations and protests in cases when the department faced opposition by the ministry.414 The Department for Research on People with Special Needs thus engaged different categories of actors and interests. These actors worked jointly to stabilize the concepts of accessibility and design for all in the Greek society through working groups. Nevertheless, how did these groups work in practice?

**Working groups in action**

The way that the working groups operated was unique for Greek standards. The groups used innovative methods such as seminars, analysis of international material on accessibility standards, study visits, and international conferences for promoting the accessibility agenda. In their seminars, for example, the members of the working

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412 Ibid.
413 Ibid.
414 Ibid.
groups invited state officials from different public organizations such as ministries, municipalities and prefectures. The seminars had a learning character and sought to spread awareness among public authorities about the importance of implementing accessible infrastructures, as well as to generate concrete technical ideas and specific proposals regarding measures to increase the accessibility of the built environment.\textsuperscript{415} Leventi describes the innovative methods that were used to instill empathy:

\begin{quote}
The seminars lasted for almost fifteen days. We advertised them on the bulletin of the Technical Chamber and everyone who was interested in them could participate. I used to put the participants in a wheelchair or I blindfolded them and told them “go now”, to gain the experience of being disabled.\textsuperscript{416}
\end{quote}

The working groups also explicitly aimed to explore international experience. Three informants note that the groups studied and attempted to adjust international literature, such as technical standards and manuals concerning accessibility in the built environment, to the Greek context.\textsuperscript{417} According to Hristofi, there was a big gap between Greece and other countries regarding disability issues and the implementation of accessibility measures:

\begin{quote}
We tried to collect all available information that existed abroad, like the American Disability Act and French, English, and Belgian standards, and to adjust them to our legislation. At that time, apart from some Scandinavian countries and the US, most of the countries were on the same level concerning accessibility issues. We were investigating each other. However, in Greece the taboos that wanted people with disabilities locked in their houses constituted a great disadvantage. That is why the issue of accessibility fell behind.\textsuperscript{418}
\end{quote}

Several members of the department also participated in European action programs for the exchange of experts and knowledge, such as the HELIOS I (1988-1992) and HELIOS II (1993-1996) programs.\textsuperscript{419} These programs were initiated by the European Union for the transfer of technological knowledge concerning accessibility provisions among the member states and the demonstration of good practices.\textsuperscript{420} According to European Parliament Fact Sheets, “the main contribution of these action programs has been the exchange of information and experience of measures at national levels, between the Member States and with non-governmental organizations”.\textsuperscript{421} Leventi comments on the context of the HELIOS programs and their influence on the participants in the working groups, who perceived accessibility developments in Greece as inferior compared to other countries:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{415} Interviews with Argiro Leventi March 16, 2005; Marili Hristofi March 9, 2005.
\textsuperscript{416} Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
\textsuperscript{417} Interviews with Leventi March 16, 2005; Hristofi March 9, 2005; and Tsioubos November 18, 2003.
\textsuperscript{418} Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
\textsuperscript{419} Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005.
\textsuperscript{420} Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005.
Due to HELIOS I and HELIOS II, we traveled around Europe and not only once. We did not only visit the capital cities. We went to minor cities, as well, and we observed different kinds of applications. Greece, of course, was always behind.\footnote{Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).}

Some members of the working groups, such as Leventi, Poluhroniou and Katsiotis thus observed good practices in various EU countries. These educational trips became the source for technical expertise regarding accessibility provisions in Greece.\footnote{Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005.} Leventi made at least three study visits to European cities through the HELIOS program; particularly, she visited Brussels in 1988 and 1989, and Brighton, England in 1991, and she participated in three HELIOS conferences in Greece (in 1989 and 1990). These conferences also had significant local material results. Leventi notes that when the cities were assigned with the task to organize such a conference, the municipalities made efforts to install ramps and roadbeds and to adjust the cities’ environment to accessibility provisions in general:

We organized some meetings and conferences in the Greek countryside through the HELIOS program. HELIOS did not fund such meetings; it concerned only the exchange of experts. We, as representatives of Greece, organized these conferences in Thessalonica and Rhodes with the intention of contributing to the construction of accessible infrastructure in these areas. As a result, both Rhodes and Thessalonica had the most ramps in Greece at that particular time. Within the framework of these meetings, we promoted the seminars and presented our work.\footnote{Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).}

One could claim that the conferences expressed a specific form of materiality: the organization of such endeavors provided simultaneously the host cities with an opportunity and an incentive to upgrade the built environment. Therefore, in addition to promoting awareness and the exchange of knowledge, the conferences also entailed a material significance, in terms of actively stimulating the host cities to implement accessibility provisions. Further, the international experience was very important for boosting the knowledge of the participants in the project. During the interviews I conducted with them, some members of the working groups referred many times to these study trips and conferences. Sociologist Georgios Tsioubos, who was a member of the department and former consultant of the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, recalls:

We started an effort that lasted more than six years. More than forty technicians, civil engineers, architects and representatives of disabled associations worked under the supervision of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs […] We traveled around Europe and observed applied policies, we saw good practices, as well as great, erroneous, and dangerous constructions, because sometimes under pressure badly designed things can emerge.\footnote{Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).}

The transfer of expertise on disability provisions initiated interactions among all actors engaged with the working groups and the accessibility issue: contractors, car manufacturers, mechanical engineers, and employees of municipalities.\footnote{Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005.} The work
conducted in the groups proved to be an extremely important mechanism for specifying measures and, in particular for developing a specific Greek handbook with good practices and design principles for the implementation of accessibility provisions. As I will show in the next section, this handbook outlined specific design principles for accessible infrastructures and thereby initiated the systematic materialization of accessibility in the public built environment.

**Mobilizing accessibility: design principles for facilities and spaces in the built environment**

For four years (1986-1990) the working groups, under Leventi’s supervision, studied and revised international standards to adapt them to the Greek public built environment. One of the participants recalls the perceived revolutionary nature of this work:

> We all worked for the principles. We went into technical details, even when it came to handgrips on the doors. Nothing like that had been attempted in Greece before.\(^{427}\)

The most significant accomplishment of the department and the working groups’ project was a new handbook entitled *Design for all – Design Principles for Unobstructed Mobility and Living of People with Special Needs* that was published in 1990 (see figure 13).\(^{428}\)

Tsioubos, who participated in the writing of the handbook, describes the target groups and the significance of the handbook:

> We tried to cover comprehensively and correctly the need for safe access for all: the elderly, disabled, pregnant women, etc. This publication became a very successful tool. Municipalities, prefectures, and educational institutions requested it and began to implement it.\(^{429}\)

Specifically, the handbook contained sixteen design principles for buildings, structures and spaces in the built environment as follows:\(^{430}\)

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\(^{427}\) Ibid.

\(^{428}\) According to Leventi the name ‘Design for all’ was inspired by the UN publication Design with Care.

\(^{429}\) Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).

\(^{430}\) I was not able to obtain the original version of the handbook from 1990. Instead I present the second edition issued in 1998. This version was the outcome of an effort that was initiated by the department in 1996. The department enrolled a new working group, consisting of three former members of the initial groups, in order to reform the principles, provide the handbook with a
1. General principles - human-metric elements
2. Configuration of outside spaces used by pedestrians
3. Pedestrian and vehicle ramps
4. Electrical/mechanical infrastructure
5. Public WCs
6. Disability signs
7. Slopes
8. Casings
9. Floors – doorways
10. Lounges, dining rooms, kitchens, bedrooms
11. Sport and entertainment halls
12. Tourist infrastructure
13. Arenas – theatres, cinemas
14. Office buildings and public services
15. Pavements
16. Traffic signs

The goal of these design principles was twofold: to eliminate architectural obstacles and to create an accessible and safe built environment for all categories of users. Particularly, the principles contained specific recommendations for technical standards that should be adopted by different authorities, especially those responsible for carrying out large infrastructural works in Greece. The handbook provided architects and engineers with specific examples of good practices and accessible constructions for dimensions, grades, and signs on pavements, ramps and stairs, as well as elevators, building entrances, water closets, and public buildings. In other words, the design principles provided technical recommendations for the configuration of urban areas to accessibility standards. For example, the handbook specified the required space for unobstructed mobility of wheelchairs on pavements, in different kinds of urban spaces, and in elevators. It also defined the appropriate inclination and slipperiness of different spaces as a basic requirement for unobstructed mobility.

The handbook provided specifications regarding the dimensions of entry and exit points of urban spaces, since these points determine the accessibility of an area. The more accessible these points are, the easier it is for people with mobility problems to enter and move about within these areas. In addition, the handbook recommended that various mechanisms for leveling out height differences be installed in cases where the original design or the antique character of a building or an area does not allow for other interventions. Finally, the handbook specified different visual and audio aids for accommodating people with visual impairments and people with hearing difficulties in urban and public spaces.

To formulate these design principles, the working groups had collected information on international norms on accessibility measures and undertaken the task of consistent form and update it with new data. This effort resulted in the publication of a new volume (Design for all – Design Principles), which included ten of the aforementioned principles.

432 Ibid. 1.
433 Ibid. 4-6.
selecting technical recommendations that were most relevant for the Greek built environment. The handbook also proposed Greek standards for assistive technologies, such as the dimensions of wheelchairs in Greece. Members of the working groups attempted to investigate what were the most suitable standards for Greece, since there was no consistent international standard. Hristofi provides examples of some of the difficulties that were encountered as the working groups processed international literature on disability standards and attempted to translate them into the Greek built environment:

Take for example the case of doors’ dimensions. Some manuals recommended that the width of doors should be one meter. Manuals from other countries suggested 90cm and other handbooks proposed 80cm. We had to understand why manuals from different countries recommended different sizes and different standards. Countries with high levels of technological development recommended doors of 80cm width. The more sophisticated technologies that exist in a country, the smaller wheelchairs are. These wheelchairs are made of lighter materials and have a more ergonomic design. On the other hand, countries with lower technological status produced larger wheelchairs, for example one meter, and recommended the construction of wider doors [...] The average size of the doors suggested in all these manuals was 90cm. This size did not accommodate special cases though, like racing wheelchairs. We had to identify and understand all these differences in order to produce our own regulations.  

Significantly, the handbook gave important definitions about what were disabilities, who were people with disabilities, what kind of problems people with disabilities faced, and what accessibility and unobstructed mobility implied. Specifically, the handbook identified four main categories of disabilities: people with mobility problems, people with visual impairments, people with hearing difficulties, and people with mental disorders. The handbook suggested appropriate disability solutions in terms of designs, materials and mechanisms. While the handbook had a consultative character it did not provide detailed descriptions of the motives for every design principle. As a concrete example of the handbook’s specific recommendations for configuring the built environment to accessibility standards, let us now look closely at one of its sections.

**Configuration of outside spaces used by pedestrians**

In the handbook’s section about the *configuration of outside spaces used by pedestrians*, the handbook provides an overview of good practices concerning urban planning. It gives specific recommendations concerning, for example, the dimensions of pavements, the installation of signs and provisions for zebra crossings. Moreover, this section of the handbook gives important definitions about concepts related to pedestrians’ movement, such as unobstructed mobility zones and mobility obstacles. In the following, I will discuss four examples of the concrete recommendations that the handbook proposed as guidelines for designing accessible outside spaces for pedestrians, namely concerning pavements, urban equipment, signs, and zebra crossings.
1. Pavements
The goal with accessible pavements is continuous, safe, and unobstructed mobility for all pedestrians with or without disabilities. According to the handbook, this goal will be accomplished if the minimum width of a pavement is 2.05 m, which is based on the minimum space required for the following objects, equipment and spaces (see figure 14):

- Space for specific architectural extensions of buildings (such as benches, litter bins, letter boxes, phone booths, kiosks, WCs) 0.2 m
- Space for guiding lines for the blind, 0.30-0.40 m
- Space for so-called unobstructed mobility zones (see below) 1.50 m
- Space required for signs, protection fences and road curb 0.35 m.\(^{437}\)

The notebook notes that an unobstructed mobility zone is the width of the pavement surface that is required for the continuous, safe and unhindered mobility of all categories of users. The handbook goes on to provide recommendations for specific measures to aid visually impaired people, such as guiding lines on the pavement. The section is also includes the height and inclination of pavements.

2. Urban Equipment Zones
In this section, the handbook defines as urban equipment all permanent or temporary structures on the pavement that are intended for public use, for example litterbins, mailboxes, phone booths, benches, signs, WCs, public transportation stations, and roadbeds in all crossings (see figure 15). The handbook also lists and specifies artifacts placed on pavements and pedestrian zones and recommends effective

\(^{437}\) Ibid. 11.
patterns of installation, emphasizing that it is important that the arrangement of these artifacts on the pavement does not block mobility. Also, the design of the urban equipment zone should include rest areas for wheelchair users every 100 meters in central urban areas and every 200 meters in outer areas.

![Urban Equipment Diagram](image)

**Figure 15. Urban Equipments**
*Source: Design for All – Design Principles*

3. Signs in public spaces

This section provides an overview of all the signs that there are or that there should be in public spaces. The manual specifies as a sign the means that give instructions concerning safety and other information for all individuals that move on a pavement. Specifically, there are four kinds of signs:

- **Ground signs on the pavement.** These are necessary for people with visual impairments, who are trained to recognize alterations on the surface of the pavement.

- **Signboards.** If signboards are installed on a post or on special bases, they must be located outside the unobstructed mobility zone. If they are installed on walls and provide information about e.g. road names, address numbers or public authorities, they must be installed 1,40-1,60m from the ground and in the Braille system.

- **Visual and audio beacons.** The beacons should transmit simultaneously both visual and audio messages and they should be installed where temporary or permanent obstacles exist.

- **Shape and color of urban equipment as signs.** The shape and color of urban equipment should be indicated in outside spaces and should always have the same color and shape.

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438 Ibid. 14
439 Ibid. 16.
440 Ibid. 16.
The handbook specifies that every sign must be readily visible to all citizens, including people with disabilities (see figure 16). Information concerning a specific category of people with disabilities should be provided clearly and in a continuous way, without disturbing other users. The overuse of signs should be avoided.

![Figure 16. Signs](source: Design for All – Design Principles)

4. Zebra Crossings – Street (traffic) Islands
In this section the handbook suggests that zebra crossings should be constructed on public roads every hundred meters. The minimum width of each crossing should be 2.50 m. Signs on the road that indicate pedestrians’ right of way should also indicate the existence of zebra crossings (see figure 17). Wherever there are traffic lights, it is recommended that audio beacons accompany them. Before crossings, roadbeds of 1.50 m width should link the level of the pavement and the level of the road. The margins of the roadbeds should be equipped with guiding lines that warn people with visual impairments.

At the same time, in order to ease the crossing of a road, the handbook suggests that when the width of a road is more than 12 m or the intensity of traffic demands it, road (traffic) islands should be installed. The width of the islands should be at least 1.50 m. When the construction of such islands is not possible, then the construction of underground crossings or bridges is recommended. The margins of every island should be made of materials detectable by white canes in order to alert people with visual impairments. In cases where the margins of the traffic islands are broader than 3 m, then roadbeds can be installed to accommodate wheelchair users.

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441 White canes constitute a mobility aid for blind people.
Materializing the principles after the publication of the handbook
The next step in the collective effort of the working groups involved the creation and enrollment of allies who would adopt the design principles and spread accessibility awareness into all parts of the public administration. The ambition of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs was that the principles would be exposed to criticism and would be open to reciprocal information and revisions by researchers, supervisors, constructors, and users. Notably, however, although the manual specified good practices, it was not obligatory. Instead, the government and the interested ministries promoted and implemented the principles on a voluntary basis, at least in the initial phase.

Importantly for our story and as I will show later, the Greek government ultimately imposed the design principles on the metro project. Meanwhile, let us go back to the story of the metro and how it intersected with the work conducted by the Department for Research on People with Special Needs. In the following, I will describe the developments concerning the metro project after the establishment of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs and the special directorate for supervising the metro project EYDE METRO in 1985.

Procurement for the Athens metro
As discussed in chapter 4, the second half of 1980s signified the official start of the metro project. In 1985, the PASOK government had established EYDE METRO at the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works which was to coordinate the process of procuring for the metro. On August 11, 1986, EYDE METRO enlisted a consultant firm for preparing the procurement process, specifically through a planning manual that would be used by the tenderers. The selected consultant firm was a consortium of Greek and international firms.

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supervised by London Transport International, an affiliated company of the London metro. In late 1986, the Planning Manual was completed and published in English (in contrast to the handbook of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, which was published in Greek).\footnote{Ibid.}

According to Attiko Metro’s architect Athos Dallas, the Planning Manual identified technical and financial requirements that the Greek government specified for the procurement for the metro.\footnote{Athos Dallas, interview March 15, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).} Specifically, the purpose of the manual was:

To present clearly the requirements which satisfy the project’s main objectives in all aspects, in a way that the tenderer can use them. These requirements are primarily related to quality parameters that through proper planning can be satisfied without undue increases of the cost of the project…\footnote{EYDE METRO, 1986: 1. “Planning Manual”. Special Service of Public Works – METRO.}

The Planning Manual provided a technical description of the scope of the metro project. For example, it specified technical aspects of the project regarding transport forecasts, tracks, station planning, surface structures and landscaping, architectural materials, station signs, repair installations and rolling stock, etc.\footnote{Ibid.} The manual also described specifications for design, installation and maintenance of the tracks, as well as general requirements for station planning in terms of functional principles, architectural elements, and special facilities for each of the metro stations. Finally, the manual specified the location of the depot\footnote{EYDE METRO, 1986. “Planning Manual”.} All these technical specifications were based on the preliminary SOFRETU study.\footnote{In 1977 the Greek government had ordered a study for the construction of two metro lines by the French-Greek research consortium SOFRETU (see also chapter 4).}

Notably, the manual also included a special section (section 4.2.3) that stipulated Provisions for the Handicapped. This section listed a number of accessibility provisions for ambulant persons and wheelchair users. The manual defined as:

- **Ambulant**, those persons who walk but with impaired faculties, to include elderly and infirm requiring the aid of sticks or crutches; the visually handicapped, to include the partly sighted or blind and the deaf and dumb (category A)
- **Wheelchair users**, either self-propelled, or accompanied, being totally dependent on others (category B).\footnote{Ibid. 15.}

The manual explicitly listed a number of provisions for both ambulant persons and wheelchair users. However, the manual states, these provisions should not hinder the normal operation of the metro. By this is meant that the indicated special provisions should not slow down the velocity of the trains or extend the waiting time in the stations. Therefore the manual encouraged the tenderers to consider restrictions in the use of the metro by disabled people, such as no admittance during peak hours and compulsory accompaniment by an able-bodied person.\footnote{Ibid.}
The accessibility provisions that the planning manual for the metro project specified were:

A. Provisions for ambulant persons
- Floor finishes should incorporate textured or studded strips to identify critical points at platform edges, stairs and escalators. In addition, circulation routes may be identified in a similar manner
- Stair handrails should incorporate embossed or stamped arrows at their ends to indicate whether the stairs are going up or down
- Plaques with street names in Braille should be fixed to all exits
- Audible indicators should be supplied for the blind
- Variations in lighting levels and colors should be chosen with consideration for the partly sighted
- Seats with backrests should be provided in suitable locations on main circulation routes
- Doors, especially lavatory doors, should be fitted with embossed signs by the handles

B. Provisions for wheelchair users
- In addition to their basic proposal, the tenderers should study and submit separate proposals for incorporating facilities for wheelchair users, accompanied by a supplementary cost estimate
- These facilities should include the access and handling of wheelchair users and the necessary safety requirements inside the stations or the trains, particularly in cases of emergency (emergency evacuation of trains, fire, etc).

The *Planning Manual* thus constituted another document that associated disability with material accessibility provisions and was allied to the ongoing efforts of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs. Why did the manual include provisions for people with disabilities and what was the impact of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs on this process? Before turning to these questions I will first discuss political responses to the manual and parallel events in the unfolding metro project.

Representatives of New Democracy expressed objections about what they viewed as the inefficiency of the Planning Manual and lack of transparency in the unfolding procurement process. New Democracy members of Parliament noted that the manual was characterized by ambiguity in its standards and technical specifications. According to Katsigiannis, who was a New Democracy member of Parliament and former Deputy Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, the specifications described in the manual resembled a prayer book with its insubstantial and vague recommendations, rather than explicit or unambiguous technical specifications. Did the procurement for the metro project become another site for political conflicts between the two major Greek parties? A discussion of the procurement process will provide us with an answer.

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453 Ibid. 16-17.
The procurement for the metro project was based on two international contests. The first contest concerned the procurement for a small part of the work, the Sepolia-Attiki tunnel. In autumn 1986 at the same time the Planning Manual was being developed, EYDE METRO contracted a consortium\footnote{The consortium consisted of the following companies: Wayss & Freytag AG, E. d. Zublin AG, K. I. Sarantopoulos SA, and Iris SA.} for constructing a test line, namely the Sepolia-Attiki tunnel.\footnote{Batsos, 1993: 18.} This work began in 1987 and was completed in 1989. Also in autumn 1986, the political determination for launching the project peaked when the PASOK government announced an invitation for the second international competition regarding the procurement for the entire metro project. Particularly, the bidders were given the opportunity to select the construction method, as well as some flexibility to revise the technical characteristics of the Planning Manual within preset limits.\footnote{Ibid.} The procurement procedures followed Law 1418/84, which stipulates regulations and methodology to be used in the procurement for public works in Greece. According to this law, there are three ways of procuring for a public work:

a. Open auction. All interested parties that fulfill the legal requirements declare their interest and submit proposals. This is the main selection process.

b. Auction with pre-selection. Initially the interested parties declare their interest, which followed by selection and invitation to participate in the main auction. This process is practiced during the procurement for works of great importance or of great specialization.

c. Direct procurement or competition between a limited number of potential contractors. This constitutes a special process that is applied in very special cases (such as severe weather phenomena, works of a special nature, development of new technologies).\footnote{Official Government Gazette (FEK), 1984: 160. Law 1418. “Public works and regulation of relevant issues”.}

The Greek government chose the auction with pre-selection procedure (b above). In February 1987, bidders were asked to submit their proposals for constructing the overall center section of the network as a turnkey project.\footnote{Turnkey contracts imply that one entity takes total responsibility for the design and execution of the engineering part of the project. Under the usual arrangements for this type of contract, the entity carries out all the engineering, procurement and construction: providing a fully equipped facility, ready for operation, at the “turn of the key”. International Federation of Consulting Engineers, 1999: 2, \textit{Conditions of Contract for EPC/Turnkey Projects}.} Nine consortiums initially submitted their tenders but only three succeeded in reaching the second selection process.\footnote{Batsos, 1993: 18.} According to New Democracy members of Parliament, this was a result of inconsistencies in the Planning Manual, which prevented an efficient and profitable (for the Greek state) procurement process.\footnote{This is grounded on the historical account of the metro project made by the Deputy Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Hristos Katsigiannis (New Democracy) during the parliamentary debate on the first metro contract in 1991. Greek Parliament 1992: 167. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.}
After the pre-selection, three consortiums remained in the metro competition, namely Olympiako Metro, Eurometro, and DIKMA. These three consortiums submitted their final technical and economic proposals in March 1988. The Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works formed a special committee to facilitate the selection process and to prepare the ground for the international tender for the procurement for the project. It took almost a year for the committee to reach a decision. Finally, the committee chose the tender submitted by the Olympiako Metro Consortium (primarily consisting of German and French interests) in February 1989. The Olympiako Metro Consortium was viewed as having the most favorable bid in terms of costs and the time frame: in other words, it had the most economical and least time-consuming proposal.

Despite the fact that the consortium was now selected, two significant factors stemming from political conditions in Greece during that period contributed to further suspension of the project. First, the complex nature of the project and the long-lasting processes regarding the procurement for the work triggered extreme political conflicts between the governing party PASOK and the opposition party New Democracy. This political conflict had already occurred several months before the elections of July 1989, when the political climate was already extremely infected by specific accusations against the ruling party PASOK. The PASOK administration faced allegations regarding its involvement of with the controversial businessman Georgios Koskotas. Koskotas, who had made his appearance in Greek business circles in 1987 as a newcomer from the US, brought the Papandreou administration to its knees by causing one of the country’s worst scandals of the past few decades. He had accumulated economic power by buying political help and exploiting the assets of a bank that he had purchased. Several PASOK members would be implicated in dubious business activities with Koskotas.

The Koskotas case generated a nexus of accusations against all the political initiatives taken by the PASOK administration. Notably, New Democracy also accused the PASOK administration of lack of transparency during the procurement

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462 This is based on the assertion of the former PASOK Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works (1988-1989), Vasilis Kedikoglou, who, during the parliamentary debate on the first metro contract, in 1991, pointed out that the initial procurement phase of the metro was characterized by completely transparent procedures. Greek Parliament 1992: 169. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.


464 Ibid.

465 This is based on the assertions of Katsigiannis (New Democracy Deputy Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works) and Kedikoglou (PASOK former Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works) during the debate in Parliament concerning the first metro contract in 1991. Both recognized that Olympiako Metro’ bid was the most economical for the Greek government. Greek Parliament 1992: 167 and 170. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.


process of the metro project. At the same time, a series of articles published in newspapers\(^{468}\) that were well disposed towards New Democracy endorsed the conflict during the period February-March 1989.\(^{469}\) Architect Dimitrios Batsos, who was an employee of EYDE METRO (1987-1992) and participated in the development of the metro procurement process, comments on the political climate and its impact on the metro project:

> Everything was ready for the signing and ratification of the contract by the Parliament in early 1989, when the following unpleasant event for the progress of the project took place at the last moment. The leader of the opposition stated in Parliament that he would not recognize the contract when he takes over the government of the country. Unfortunately, the project was affected by scandal rhetoric. Subsequently, three New Democracy party members of Parliament submitted an interpellation before the Parliament and presented the matter to the public prosecutor. This procedure lasted until the election day in summer 1989. New Democracy won the elections and the issue was immediately closed (the accusations were withdrawn, authors note), without any reproach against any of the engineers of the EYDE METRO.\(^{470}\)

As a result of the serious accusations by the representatives of New Democracy and the pressure imposed by the Greek press, PASOK’s Prime Minister Papandreou did not allow the activation of the agreement between the Greek government and the selected consortium.\(^{471}\)

The second factor that contributed to the suspension of the metro project was political instability in a period that constituted one of the most complex and turbulent eras of the Greek modern state. Although PASOK and Papandreou lost the 1989 elections, New Democracy and its leader Mitsotakis did not achieve a sufficient parliamentary majority.\(^{472}\) Repeated elections and political instability

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\(^{468}\) During the parliamentary debate on the first metro contract, Kedikoglou (PASOK) referred to the infected climate of that period and the polemic stance of the New Democracy-friendly press against the PASOK government, by listing all the relevant headlines. Examples of headlines were: “300 billion drachmas for Dimitra’s (Papandreou’s wife, author’s note) gang”, “The National Technical Chamber (TEE), which is the consultant of the Greek state on technical issues, considers the metro procurement illegal”, “Fuss over the Metro scandal”, “A specific consortium has already been chosen as the contractor, before the completion of the procurement process”, “They insist on giving the Metro to the Ekali (northern suburb of Athens where Andreas Papandreou had his residence, author’s note) gang, despite hue and cry”, “The TEE together with the representative of the consortium in the governmental committee reveal the scandal that favors Andrea’s (Papandreou) friends”. Greek Parliament 1992: 306. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.


\(^{470}\) Batsos, 1993: 19.


\(^{472}\) Bantimaroudis, 2003: 118.
caused further delay to the project, and the metro project was once more suspended until the political climate could be stabilized.\footnote{In fact, elections took place three times within ten months (July 1989, November 1989, and April 1990).} In April 1990, the new conservative government repeated the procurement process. Later in the same year, it submitted to the Greek Parliament the first metro contract.

After presenting the metro’s procurement procedures, I will discuss how was the Department for Research on People with Special Needs involved with the procurement process.

**Metro procurement and the Department for Research on People with Special Needs**

As noted earlier, at the same time that the metro was in the process of being procured, the Department for Research on People with Special Needs was working for spreading accessibility awareness in the public administration and providing the design and construction of large infrastructure projects with technical guidance. Significantly, during the initial phase of the metro project (1985-1991), an employee of EYDE METRO that supervised the metro project, Dimitrios Batsos, also participated in the Department’s working groups for the issue of accessibility. How was this link established?

Before he was transferred to EYDE METRO, Batsos had worked in another part of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, namely the Directorate of Public Works for Underground Parking Areas (1983-1987). There he conducted architectural studies for designing parking areas and surrounding spaces.\footnote{Dimitrios Batsos, personal communication March 15, 2006.} As already discussed, in 1986 the Department for Research on People with Special Needs had sent letters to different technical authorities within the public administration for the appointment of representatives who would participate in the accessibility working groups. One of these authorities was the directorate that Batsos worked for, which assigned Batsos with the task to represent it in the accessibility working groups.\footnote{Ibid.}

In 1987, Batsos was transferred to EYDE METRO. Since he was already a regular member of the Department’s working groups, EYDE METRO also appointed him as its representative in the accessibility groups. When I asked him why he was engaged with these kinds of issues since he was not disabled himself, Batsos responded:

> It was an old wish of mine. I used to work with these kinds of questions in the past. [...] In 1986, I met Argyro Leventi and the people working with the Department for Research on People with Special Needs. They wanted me to work with them. It was a very progressive project. I was fascinated by the eagerness of these people and how open-minded they were. We proposed improvements to the General Building Code, since the time had come for these kinds of interventions. The groups were very open. Even university students came, people from abroad, young people with fresh ideas who had experienced other kind of practices and they wanted to contribute to the updating of the Greek legislation and status of the built environment …\footnote{Dimitrios Batsos, interview May 17, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).}
The involvement of Batsos with the working groups signified the launch of specific and long-term interactions between the Department for Research on People with Special Needs and EYDE METRO. Batsos formed a team of architects in EYDE METRO who argued for the inclusion of accessibility provisions in the metro project. His team developed designs and proposals for the construction of stations with accessibility provisions. In addition, Batsos participated in different conferences, both international and national, where he presented papers on accessibility issues in the metro project and the impact of the work in shaping the city of Athens. According to Leventi, Batsos became a significant ally in issues concerning accessibility and the unobstructed mobility of people with disabilities in the metro project:

Batsos was one of the first who joined our groups and rapidly became a very helpful co-operator. When we made presentations about different projects, Batsos always informed us about the development of the metro project. The best thing with the working groups was that we managed to staff all kind of authorities with people of our own who we kept in touch with. These partners revealed to us conflicts, secret agreements, and potential obstacles to the application of accessibility awareness or provisions for large projects, including the metro.

In my view, the work of Batsos significantly contributed to the diffusion of accessibility awareness in the metro project. Particularly, Batsos participated in the formulation of the *Planning Manual* that was used in the international contest for the contract for constructing the metro. Batsos became an accessibility advocate who insisted on including disability facilities in the metro project, despite strong opposition and disapproval from other architects, engineers, and consultants of EYDE METRO. This work led to the inclusion in 1986 of a special section (4.2.3 *Provisions for Handicapped*) in chapter four of the *Planning Manual* that was specifically dedicated to accessibility provisions.

Another important factor that contributed to the inclusion of this special section was the fact that London Transport International, which supervised the preparation of the *Planning Manual*, made concrete proposals regarding the accessibility of the metro network that were integrated in the manual.

Batsos and the group of architects that he supervised viewed the metro project as a chance to reform and redesign the whole city of Athens - an opportunity, though, that entailed conflicts:

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479 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
480 Dimitrios Batsos, interview May 17, 2005.
481 EYDE METRO, 1986: 15.
482 Dimitrios Batsos, personal communication March 15, 2006.
We saw the metro as the backbone of the city and our philosophy implied that the metro could reorganize the city planning. That was our chance to rebuild Athens. I had lived abroad and I had seen how people there design and build. They have standards and criteria. Similarly, we thought that since Athens is a popular tourist Mecca, we should redesign it and make it more functional. The metro provided the opportunity to build toilets for people with disabilities, elevators, ramps, etc. and diffuse these facilities to the rest of the city. All these triggered conflicts and disagreements. Huge conflicts…

It is not clear exactly which actors were involved with these conflicts. What is clear, however, is the fact that these conflicts and disagreements, as well as the delays in ratification of the first metro contract, suspended the interactions between the Department for Research on People with Special Needs and the metro project. As I will show in the following chapter, the special section 4.2.3 Provisions for the Handicapped was ultimately omitted from the first metro contract in 1991. The section was replaced by a clause in the contract that was not obligatory.

These alterations emerged as a result of political difficulties. In 1990, following a prolonged period of political instability and recurrent elections, New Democracy returned to office. Political scientist Kioukias notes that New Democracy’s neo-liberal agenda implied that the new political order had to be made less state-dependent and less participatory. To achieve this, New Democracy drew upon a number of measures: deregulation of state responsibilities in deference to market forces, a strong privatization in the economic and social sectors, an emphasis on law and order, and non-protectionist legislation for interest groups of the popular sector.

According to the critical view of Kouroublis, this turn in Greek politics signified a considerable change in state policies regarding disability issues that was characterized by a neo-liberal approach to social issues. The progress in accessibility issues that had gained momentum during the late 1980s appeared to decelerate. In particular, the initiation of large infrastructural projects such as the metro - lacking facilities for people with disabilities - indicated a return to the

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483 Ibid.
484 My source denied information on that.
485 Mossialos & Davaki explain that after the serious corruption allegations, PASOK lost the 1989 elections. However, the winning party, New Democracy, did not receive a parliamentary majority and together with Synaspismos (a coalition of left parties) formed a coalition government in July 1989. This government lasted for three months. New elections in November did not alter the complicated political riddle and a new coalition government, this time including PASOK, emerged. The lifetime of this government was six months. Mossialos & Davaki 2002: 10. The Greek electorate, tired of recurrent elections and political instability, provided New Democracy with a parliamentary majority in April 1990. Loulis, 2001: 167. Τα είκοσι χρόνια που άλλαξαν την Ελλάδα (Twenty years that changed Greece).
487 In addition to being important representative of the Greek disability movement, Kouroublis was also a member of PASOK.
previous medical model approach to disability in Greek public policy at the start of the 1990s.

Summary and conclusions
The establishment of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs in the mid-1980s took place in a period during which disability organizations had begun to claim active participation in the Greek political scene and to revise their political agenda, which up until then had been restricted to claims for economic benefits. The work of the department encouraged the interaction of disabled people with the material world. The building up of the accessibility question was based on a series of alliances among relevant entities. Often these alliances cut across the boundaries between human beings and artifacts: in a sense, material artifacts became allies of disabled people in their struggle to raise their voices and improve their lives. The department contributed significantly to enabling interactions between disabled people, engineers, architects, public administrators, manuals, elevators, ramps, and signs. These interactions became the means that were to promote and problematize the translation of independent mobility for people with disabilities into specific design principles and configurations in the built environment. As a result, demands for accessibility provisions, issues that had been totally absent before, started gaining more attention.

The establishment of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs was not, however, a product of a conscious governmental policy. It was rather a result of initiatives by some progressive public administrators who successfully attempted to enroll certain politicians. These politicians were aware of the political consequences of beginning to promote people with disabilities and their right to independent mobility in urban environments. Within this context, actors with overlapping roles, such as architect Leventi enrolled political and personal allies, such as the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works Kouloubis, and translated her ideas concerning accessibility into a department within the public administration. In my view, this was the first step towards problematizing the issue of accessibility in the built environment as part of the institutional agenda.

Moreover, the political climate of that period was also a significant factor that contributed to the translation of accessibility issues. The socialist government’s rhetoric on participatory processes encouraged the inclusion of concerned groups in the political scene and in public administration. Latour argues that the easiest way to enroll people who will immediately accept and contribute to the realization of an idea is to tailor the argument/idea in such a way that it corresponds to these people’s explicit interests. One could claim that Leventi’s actions were tailored to the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works’ political objectives and that the establishment of the Department befitted the government’s programmatic strategy. The Department worked as a kind of a Trojan horse within the public administration: it directly cooperated and interacted with concerned groups (specifically through disability organizations) and initiated projects for integrating technical issues concerning accessibility into the public administration.

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490 Ibid. 108.
agenda. It worked systematically to spread disability awareness and concretely problematized the issue of accessibility in the built environment.

Specifically, members of the department identified relevant actors, both able-bodied and disabled, such as public administrators, representatives of disability organizations and technical authorities. It launched working groups that were the first *hybrid forums* within the public administration that worked to promote accessibility awareness in the built environment. By hybrid forums I refer to institutional mechanisms where concerned groups that carry out research in the wild negotiate with scientists, engineers and other experts who conduct confined research on technoscientific issues.

These efforts also successively infiltrated the design and construction of the Athens metro. Specifically, in the end of the 1980s, actors involved with procurement for the metro such as Batsos participated in the department’s working groups and actively contributed to the adjustment of the metro network to accessibility standards. The consultant company that supervised the procurement for the metro also recommended the inclusion of accessibility provisions in the metro project. Thus several entities were allies in standardizing accessibility in the scope of the metro work and addressing transport disability. On the other hand, other actors expressed their objections and suspicions toward the accessibility issue, while political conflicts and governmental upheaval in 1991 disrupted the interactions between the department and the metro project, as well as significantly altering the view of public administration on disability issues.

I would like to make some theoretical points here regarding the enactment of disability, the process of enrolling entities in the accessibility project, and the transformation of disabled people as a concerned group. The most valuable gain for the Greek disability organizations during the latter half of the 1980s was the launch of a debate within the public sector that treated disability issues from a new perspective and re-enacted the concept of disability. This new approach, which closely resembled the social model of disability, was to detach disability approaches from the previous medical model that had implied various methods of institutionalization. By this is meant that for the first time the focus shifted from the individual and her bodily status to the surrounding environment and its accessibility, which could constitute an enabling or a disabling factor. Disability theorists Johnson and Moxon note that in the context of the social model of disability, what matters is not so much a person’s inability to move, see, or hear as the fact that most buildings and transport systems are inaccessible.⁴⁹¹

Three significant projects contributed to and reflected the establishment of the new approach: the new General Building Code (GOK), the handbook with design principles, and the planning manual of the metro. All these documents provided a new ordering of disability. How was disability translated and enacted in these projects? First, the new GOK detached disability and disability policies from the traditional medical model and turned the focus on the configuration of accessible public buildings and free spaces. Nevertheless, it was unobstructed mobility explicitly for wheelchair users that dominated the GOK clauses, disregarding other

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136
major disability groups such as the blind, deaf, and others. The clauses did not leave space for the inclusion of an extended set of accessibility provisions that referred to different kind of impairments. This possibly is because a wheelchair user (namely Leventi) formulated the GOK clauses regarding accessibility. At the same time, the idea of including accessibility measures in the new GOK faced objections by engineers and architects. The advocates of the accessibility issue were not yet powerful enough to enroll a considerable hybrid collective of entities and alliances that would spread and mobilize accessibility awareness in the whole of the public administration.

The second means by which disability was translated and enacted was the handbook developed by the working groups of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs. The handbook specified a set of design principles for accommodating different kind of disabilities in public spaces. Urban equipment and architectural designs that hindered unobstructed mobility enacted disability in this context. In that sense, disability was performed by three interacting components as defined by Latour: sociality, materiality, and textuality.\textsuperscript{492} By that is meant that disability is an emergent effect created by the interactions of the heterogeneous entities that comprise it.\textsuperscript{493} What were the heterogeneous entities in the handbook? I would suggest three kinds:

1. Human actors, both disabled and able-bodied, who participated in the working groups and contributed to the development of the design principles that were included in the handbook,
2. Material artifacts, for example pavements, ramps, stairs, elevators, WCs, benches, signs, public buildings, and roads,
3. Texts that integrated interactions between humans and material artifacts and articulated recommendations for the configuration of accessible urban spaces.

Thus, in the framework of the handbook, disability issues were \textit{co-produced} together with materiality and textuality. The aim of this co-production was to standardize accessibility provisions in public spaces and to confront disability issues with material means.

In my view, the interactions of humans, material artifacts, and texts gave disability and disabled people a new vocabulary and a new content in line with the social model of disability. Disability was enacted as a consequence of the hostile and inaccessible environment of the Greek cities rather than as a result of a physical or mental handicap that prevented people with disabilities from moving independently. In other words, the handbook attempted to liberate disability from the medical model that restricts disability to the individual impaired body and to materialize it within the framework of the social model, which treats disability in terms of disabling barriers, mostly physical, structural or institutional.\textsuperscript{494} The design principles became the means for canceling the medical approach to disability.

Although the handbook developed by the department and its working groups was small in comparison with the scale of the problem of unobstructed mobility in

\textsuperscript{493} Callon & Law, 1995: 485. “Agency and the Hybrid Collective”.
\textsuperscript{494} Priestley, 1998: 80. “Constructions and Creations: idealism, materialism and disability theory”.

137
Greece, its translation of the accessibility issue contributed to the alteration of the disability agenda in the public administration. Suddenly, there was a shift in power between the medical and the social model of disability. The proponents of the social model gained a rather powerful ally that did not only revise the definition and representation of disability, but also provided concrete technical recommendations for the configuration of an accessible built environment. Within this context, the significance of the handbook is significant.

Finally, the third project by which disability was translated and enacted in the late 1980s was the Planning Manual for the procurement for the metro. The manual introduced accessibility in the transport sector and provided a list of technical provisions for reducing transport disability. Disability was translated here as the ability of individuals to move within stations and trains, where the provision of specific measures can cancel disability. Both the handbook and the manual identify different kinds of disabilities and specify different kinds of measures corresponding to each disability. Thus (transport) disability is reduced to the existence or not of specific material artifacts that enable or disable individuals with different impairments. The material world, the built environment, and the way it is configured are viewed as catalysts for the ability of individuals to move in urban spaces. An accessible environment reduces impairments and transport disability.

Disabled organizations did not constitute an orphan group any longer, since they had progressively begun to participate in the debate regarding the configuration of the built environment. Considerable reforms were to be included in the public administrative agenda. This does not, however, imply that all of a sudden the Greek built environment became fully accessible, but rather that disability groups began to intervene in the development of legislation (specifically the GOK) and the production of accessibility standards (specifically the design principles and the planning manual), despite the fact that they did not yet possess significant political power. This involvement signified their transformation into a hurt group, that is, a group that is excluded from the configuration of technoscientific processes. Hurt groups seek to intervene in the process of producing and applying knowledge and as a result, they develop new practices and invent alternative forms of work (such as the working groups of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs).

These groups conduct research in the wild, by which is meant the accumulation of experiences, recommendations and practices of disability organizations and their members. For example, the seminars conducted by members of the department became forums for the diffusion of accessibility awareness and for research in the wild. After identifying a common problem, disabled people attempted to develop standards that were to accomplish their goal. The issue of accessibility began to be assimilated into obligatory passage points, that is, both working groups and rules, regulations, and specific design principles that were essential for the materialization of accessibility provisions.

495 Callon, 2003: 56.

The train took off and both Nikos and I felt like we were riding the metro for the first time for me. It was actually a kind of a first time. This journey towards the center of Athens was more than just a usual ride. It symbolized the launch of my fieldwork, the entrance to my empirical inquiry, and the feeling of experiencing mobility in the city of Athens through the eyes of my disabled friend. Nikos, on the other hand, had the chance to share his feelings and understandings of the metro with me. He was able to show me that, in the tunnels of the metro, his wheelchair was just another artifact totally integrated with the surrounding material world.

I feel extremely comfortable and safe in the metro, as if I was home. When I hang around the city and I enter a station, I feel a relief. I enter a familiar and accommodating place.⁴⁹⁶

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⁴⁹⁶ Nikos Perdikaris, interview November 20, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
This chapter deals with the initial phase of the Athens metro, that is the procurement for and the initiation of construction work. Within this context, I will describe the co-production of the metro and disability issues during the period between 1991 and 1993. The discussion will focus on the efforts of disability organizations to intervene in the initial construction works of the metro project. The chapter starts with an account of factors that contributed to reinforcing disability organizations and their claims in the early 1990s.

The start of the 1990s also brought with it the emergence of large technical works (of which the Athens metro is a prominent example) that were funded by the European Union through two Community Support Frameworks in 1989 and 1995. I will discuss why and how the design and implementation of these works influenced the Greek bureaucracy and different interest groups, such as disability organizations, in relation to the metro project. In June 1991, the newly elected New Democracy government and the Olympic Metro Consortium signed the first contract for the construction of the metro. This first metro contract was part of a bill that New Democracy presented to the Greek Parliament for ratification. The chapter will describe and analyze different arguments, proposals, and disagreements in the parliamentary debate between the government and opposition parties concerning, among other things, the question of accessibility in the first metro contract. In addition, I will show how the parliamentary debate and the first metro contract initiated a backlash in the Greek government in relation to disability organizations. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an account of how accessibility became part of the metro agenda.

Because there is a significant lack of literature on the evolution of disability organizations and the perception of disability in Greece during this specific period, the empirical material employed in this part of the study draws heavily upon the experiences, understandings, and views on disability issues expressed by disability actors and their advocates, as articulated in a number of interviews that I conducted with them. As a consequence of these limitations, I will attempt to contextualize the developments of Greek disablement using an empirical body of work (specifically peer-reviewed articles) dealing with interest groups and their involvement in the configuration of major structural changes in the Greek sociopolitical scene and the infrastructural capacity of this specific period.

Disability issues in the early 1990s: gains, institutionalization and expectations

The Athens metro has ultimately been constructed as accessible for people with disabilities, but the process that led to this configuration was long and fraught with difficulties. As discussed in chapters 3 and 5, the Greek disability organizations went through a long period of identifying a common agenda during the 1980s. Specific legislation was enacted that served to support their effort to limit social biases by establishing new routes to self-activity for people with disabilities. This legislation consisted of laws and regulations that aimed to promote disabled people’s

497 Kouroublis’ work *The Right to be Different: the Effect of Social Biases and Institutional Interventions in the Life of People with Special Needs – Interdisciplinary Analysis with a Historical Approach* constitutes a valuable exception.

participation in the public administration, such as the institutional guarantees for the employment of persons with special needs (Law 1320/82 in 1982), the ratification of specific clauses that included accessibility standards (General Building Code, Law 1577/85 in 1985), and the endorsement of mechanisms for special education for people with various kinds of impairments (Law 1143/81 in 1981 and Law 1566/85 in 1985), where articles 32-36 refer to the obligation of the Greek state to develop special education for people with disabilities.\footnote{Ibid. 379-386.}

At the same time, and as also discussed in chapter 5, during the second half of the 1980s and the start of the 1990s, public administrators in the Department for Research on People with Special Needs gained knowledge about accessibility issues by traveling around Europe and accumulating information and technical know-how as a basis for compiling a Greek handbook of accessibility and good practices for the built environment. The increasing engagement of public administrators with international practices on disability and their emergent relations with international disability organizations created expectations among members of the Greek disability movement. These expectations concerned policies that aimed toward the active inclusion of disabled people in the configuration of the built environment, rather than just the provision of disability benefits. These developments reflected changes in actors’ views of how issues related to disability should be confronted.

Also, as a full member of the United Nations since 1941 and the European Union since 1981, Greece was increasingly exposed to international resolutions, measures, recommendations and treaties that specifically addressed disability issues. These include the EU’s Social Charter (1989); the Social Protocol of the Maastricht Treaty, which strengthened the social dimension within the EU (1990); the EU Green Paper of European Social Policy, which touched on improvements for people with disabilities (1993); and the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993). While these measures and resolutions were important, they were not obligatory. However, they provided an international institutional perspective and set of regulations that people with disabilities, their organizations, and their advocates could lean on and extract ideas from.\footnote{Interviews with Tsioubos November, 18 2003 and December 23, 2004; Leventi March, 16, 2005; and Hristofi March 9, 2005.} ESAEA reinforced its position in Greece by becoming a charter member of the European Disability Forum (EDF) in 1993, which provided an opportunity for disability organizations across the European Union to work closely together across national borders and cooperate with different groups in the disability movement. According to EDF’s website, its mission is to promote equal opportunities for disabled people and to ensure disabled citizens’ full access to fundamental and human rights through active involvement in policy development and implementation in the European Union.\footnote{European Disability Forum, 2004. Available at: \url{http://www.edf-feph.org/}}

As a result, one could claim that Greek disability organizations began to articulate demands regarding the translation of urban landscapes into accessible areas without architectural obstacles that accentuated disability and isolated people with physical impairments. Tsioubos also argues that the combination of international measures and the intensified advocacy for disability issues in the public administration,
through the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, enabled both disability organizations and state officials to shift their claims and their focus from strictly financial issues and the institutionalization of disability into a new perspective. Tsioubos attempts to reconstruct the promising and enthusiastic climate in the Greek disability movement in the early 1990s:

A new point of view that supported the demands of the disability movement was developed in the start of the 1990s: instead of spending huge amounts on disability benefits, the government could invest in accessible infrastructures that would be of value, both socially and economically, for everybody […] This constituted another approach to disability not by medical criteria, and configured the social model of disability […] 502

This new perspective implied that disabled people should be included in public decision-making processes and that urban environments should be adjusted to accessibility standards. Similarly, disability sociologist Debbie Jolly argues that on an international level, the new strategies and conditions represented a historical break from the promises of the twentieth century post-war welfare system in which many disabled people were considered merely as a deserving group for social support. 503

Three factors contributed to the integration of disability issues into the public administration agenda and the transformation of disability claims from the medical to the social approach of disability in Greece. First, the increasing access of disabled individuals to employment and public administrative positions starting in the 1980s raised disability awareness among state officials. The PASOK government, in power between 1981 and 1989, was in theory committed to decentralization, devolution of power, and encouragement of civic participation in the policy-making process. 504 In 1982, the socialist government enacted Law 1320/82, which stipulated that disabled people should hold 5% of all job positions in the public administration. 505 These positions were located within many different institutions that played a significant role in developing Greek welfare policies, such as the Ministry of Welfare, the Greek Manpower Employment Organization, the General Secretariat of Sports, and the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works.

Second, the lack of accessible transport networks made the integration of accessibility issues into the public administration’s agenda acute. The configuration of the built environment and especially the transport networks in the metropolitan area of Athens were exclusionary for disabled people in the early 1990s. For example, a survey from March 1992, regarding the configuration of the Kifissia-Piraeus railway, showed that only two of the twenty-three stations (namely Kifissia and Piraeus) were fully accessible to people with disabilities and one station (KAT) was accessible from only one side. 506 As noted in chapter 5, another survey conducted by the Athens Spastics Society 507 on the accessibility in Athens had

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502 Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
506 Ibid. 192-193.
507 Recently renamed from Cerebral Palsy Greece.
provided an indication of the growing awareness and interest in accessibility issues within the disability movement. This study emerged from the perceived increasing need of the Greek disabled people to evaluate and monitor the difficulties that people with disabilities faced in the urban environment.\(^{508}\)

The third factor that contributed to disability issues being integrated into public administration was the fact that the European Union granted Greece financial support through two Community Support Frameworks (CSF, 1989 and 1995). This support generated potentials and claims for the substantial institutional participation of disabled people in the management of new public infrastructural investments and the implementation of the projects.\(^{509}\) The new institutional framework that the European Union attempted to promote among member states was based on the principles of participatory democracy, i.e. decentralization of power, extensive institution building and experimentation with new forms of civic participation in the policy process, especially in Greece.\(^{510}\) Part of the two CSF was to sponsor public works in Greece.\(^{511}\) The first CSF (1989-1994) focused on the construction of basic infrastructure, while the second (1995-1999) aimed at mobilizing national and local development schemes and contributing to the uplifting of infrastructure by promoting the investment and procurement for large infrastructure projects in Greece.\(^{512}\) Works like the Via Egnatia in northern Greece, the Patras-Athens-Thessalonica motorway, Athens new Airport and the Athens metro were partly funded by European subsidies and constituted a period of substantial technological change and development that was unique in Greece.\(^{513}\)

Paraskevopoulos acknowledges that there was a widespread feeling among politicians and economists that the impact of the funds of the first CSF\(^{514}\) on the Greek economy and society was rather modest.\(^{515}\) The second CSF constituted, however, a substantial initiating of large infrastructural projects. While the share of total expenditure of the first CSF for such projects was 23.8%, expenditures for infrastructure in the second CSF reached 46% of the total support.\(^{516}\) Tsioubos notes the contrasting significance of the two CSFs for infrastructural investments in Greece:

\(^{509}\) The Community Support Frameworks constituted part of the structural funds and were the principal means through which the Community expressed solidarity with its weaker regions and those member states in need of particular assistance. Commission of the European Communities, 1993: 3. *The Future of Community Initiatives under the Structural Funds*. Green Paper. COM (93) 282 Final. Brussels 16 June 1993.
\(^{510}\) Paraskevopoulos 2005: 450.
\(^{513}\) Paraskevopoulos, 2005: 454-459.
\(^{514}\) […] having been dispersed on the several small-scale, regional projects across the country, Paraskevopoulos, 2005: 451.
\(^{515}\) Paraskevopoulos, 2005: 450.
\(^{516}\) Ibid. 451
The first CSF was spread into minor works, with insufficient results. The public administration did not have the experience or the knowledge to cope with the exploitation of the financial resources, to develop a methodology and studies… Many insisted that the first CSF was wasted, but it is not exactly like this. It just paid off less than one would expect. The second CSF, though, was characterized by a different philosophy and perception. Large investment areas would be chosen for developing new infrastructure and covering big needs, something that Brussels also demanded.

The second CSF signified an entry into a period of conception and design of the big works. This was the first generation of large and modern infrastructures. These created new approaches and new policies in order for the existing infrastructures to be complemented.517

According to Vardakastanis, who is the current chairman of ESSEA, people with disabilities and their organizations sought participation in the design and implementation of the emergent public infrastructural projects funded by the second CSF.518 Former ESSEA chairman Kouroublis argues that the stabilization of disabled people’s intervention in the public administration contributed to their emancipation.519 The initiation of large technical projects such as the Athens metro generated novel sociotechnical networks, new claims, and new potentials for disabled people.

Moving forward by going backwards: return to the philanthropic approach and destabilization of the accessibility network

There are indications that the increasing involvement of people with disabilities in public planning processes during the 1980s declined at the start of the 1990s.520 Kouroublis argues that the New Democracy government attempted on the one hand to reduce the influence of disability organizations and their advocates, and on the other hand to accentuate the philanthropic role of the state and charity organizations.521 An example of how the new government downplayed the participation of disabled people in the public administration is the case of the disabled architect Gerasimos Polis.

Polis, who was a former member of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs’ working groups, was hired by ministerial decision522 in the Ministry of Transport and Communications in March 1990 at the recommendation of Argiro Leventi. According to Polis, his mission was to establish a new department at the ministry that would work with transport disability issues and alleviate Leventi and her small staff by dividing the huge burden of work between two departments. While the Department for Research on People with Special Needs would continue working with the configuration of the built environment in general, the new department with Polis in charge was to develop accessibility specifications in the

517 Interview with Georgios Tsioubos, December 23, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
518 Yannis Vardakastanis, personal communication October 6, 2005.
520 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005.
The goal of the new department was to integrate and enhance accessibility issues in all the initiatives and jurisdictions of the ministry. Particularly, the new department would formulate proposals concerning disability and accessibility in transportation and would represent the ministry on international committees and boards. For example, Polis was given the task to represent the Ministry of Transport at the regular European Conference of Ministers of Transport. Polis comments on his placement, mission, and ultimate dismissal from the Ministry of Transport:

The political will and efforts for my employment began during PASOK’s government (Minister Tsohatzopoulos), but for circumstantial reasons I was not formally placed until 1990, during the governing of the coalition government […] However, the day after the elections of 1991, when New Democracy won, the new Transport Minister Gelestantis fired me by making me understand that I was not useful anymore. It happened on Good Friday 1991…

The dismissal of Polis and the dissolving of the new department indicated a break in the involvement of disabled people in public administration due to political changes in the Greek government. Political scientist Sotirooulos explains that democracy in Greece has been associated with a clientelistic domination of the public administration, which means that political changes in the government are directly linked to ensuing administrative changes in the public sector. This reflects the prevalence of a clientelistic system since the nineteenth century which allowed the “succession of parties in power to be accompanied by an extensive ebb and flow of administrative personnel and structures”. The clientelistic character of the public administration had a significant impact on the continuity of disability and other social policies in the early 1990s.

The new government suspended the institutionalized cooperation between disability organizations and the central administration that the former government had established. One of these disruptions concerned the cooperation between the Greek government and ESAEA. According to Kouroublis, the new government ignored ESAEA and returned to the old charity and ‘social tragedy’ model in its interaction with ESAEA. Kouroublis, who as noted earlier was also a member of PASOK, argues:

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523 Gerasimos Polis, personal communication April 14, 2005.
524 Ibid.
526 Diamandouros indicates that due to the fact that the Greek economy after the liberation from the Ottoman Empire was impoverished, the new Greek state played an interventionist role. This had two crucial consequences. First, the state always has an employer role and second, this fact gave birth to clientelistic relations. The latter made it possible for families to manipulate financial resources through access to the state, something that created feelings of mistrust and hostility towards the state authorities. Diamandouros, 1994 “Cultural Dualism and Political Change in Post-Authoritarian Greece”, cited in Mossialos & Davaki, 2002: 2 Health care developments in Greece: Looking back to see forward?
In order to secure political support from the sensitive disability movement, the neo-liberal government mobilized all charity organizations, and the management of the conservative party New Democracy frequently employed the example of the disabled wife of the Prime Minister, for obvious reasons. The government tended to treat the disability movement as a social hostage. Social claims became increasingly weaker under the period of the neo-liberals’ governing and a significant effort was made to give charity organizations attention and an important role. These choices brought the government to a condition of severe conflict with the disability movement…

Kouroublis also asserts that the New Democracy government attempted to depoliticize and steer disability issues towards the charity approach through an extensive social and political control of disability organizations. Similarly, sociologist Mouzelis and political theorist Pagoulatos argue that in the start of the 1990s when social and non-governmental organizations claimed participation in the wider political scene of Greece, political parties continued to be keen on “pursuing colonization of such non-governmental, civic organizations”.

There are also indications that the government attempted to implement methods of institutionalization. Specifically, the conservative government intended to create a large center for disabled people which would embrace people with all kinds of disabilities in the same place. Tsioubos explains that the intentions of the government were opposed to the dynamics and expectations of the disability movement:

Even if there were good intentions behind this idea, the objection lies in the philosophy. The measures that the conservative government designed and never implemented focused on confinement and institutionalization. They aimed to provide people with disabilities with all the necessary conditions of survival, support, and help but outside the social framework.

Did disability still constitute abnormality or a sin that had to be cured or ‘exorcised’ by those who were responsible for the design of state policies? Actually, Argiro Leventi argues that disability became a problem to be solved by means of charity, institutionalization, and charitable contributions from the upper class:

When the party New Democracy returned to office with Konstantinos Mitsotakis as the Prime Minister, Mrs. Mitsotakis gathered all of us together with upper class ladies. All of a sudden we found ourselves in a totally different world. She told us then that she would stand between the disability movement and the Greek government. We only had to confirm that Mrs. Mitsotakis was engaged. She was on TV several times, claiming that she was taking disabled people out of the closet! New Democracy’s management invested a lot in her, but she did not do a thing. The only thing they did was a lot of charity events, where blond women from high society, wearing furs and tons of jewels, believing that they contributed to volunteerism, invited a disabled


Ibid.


This center was given, sarcastically, the name “Marikeio” by the Greek press after the first name of the Prime Minister’s wife, Marika Mitsotakis who is a disabled person herself.

Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
Unfortunately, I did not succeed in gaining access to representatives of the New Democracy government from that period. However, an employee of New Democracy provided me with a speech held by the party’s secretary for issues regarding quality of life at that time during a conference organized by New Democracy for people with special needs on November 30, 1995. The secretary presented New Democracy’s proposals for the accommodation of disabled people. As claimed by the employee who provided me with this document, these proposals were essentially identical to the disability policies that New Democracy had presented in previous election campaigns and during the period 1990-1993. The secretary outlined the aims of New Democracy’s disability policy:

New Democracy focuses on three topics concerning people with special needs: First, on the prevention of disabilities by early diagnosis and direct intervention. This will be achieved by extending pre-birth control in the whole of the country, but we will also intervene for the reduction of traffic accidents that increase the number of people with disabilities every year and we will create centers for immediate rehabilitation.

Second, we will provide people with special needs with all the necessary medical, educational, social, labor and economic means for their equal and decent integration in society. This implies everyday provision of solutions by the government, such as accessible pavements or the creation of electronic houses, where people with special needs can live.

The third point concerns people with special needs who must be institutionalized. Our commitment is to provide humane conditions in these institutions.

This speech indicates that the conservative party treated disability as a disease that could be prevented by pre-birth control, and it viewed people with disabilities as patients that could be accommodated at rehabilitation centers, with accessible pavements or the creation of electronic houses. In my view, the speech indicates that New Democracy’s program in 1995 mainly focused on measures inspired by the medical model of disability, despite the inclusion of references to the configuration of the built environment. There are no indications that New Democracy had previously formulated disability policies that promoted the inclusion of disabled people in sociotechnical processes or put forth concrete proposals for the implementation of accessibility measures in the built environment. On the contrary, as we saw in the case of the special department for accessibility issues at the Ministry of Transport, the conservative government dismantled the Polis effort and downplayed the role of disabled people in configuring transport networks.

Another example is the weakening of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs during the same period. Leventi notes that when the new government

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534 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
535 Personal communication with New Democracy’s employee, November 10, 2005.
536 New Democracy, 1995: 3. “Speech by secretary for Quality of Life Fani Palli-Petralia during New Democracy’s conference on people with special needs”. November 30, 1995 (in Greek, my translation).
came to power in 1991, the new General Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works tried to destabilize the department:

Before New Democracy won the elections, the department had three rooms on this floor of the ministry. After the elections I ended up in the hospital for twenty days. During this period, the new General Secretary decided that we did not need three rooms and he moved the department into this tiny room. At the same time, my colleague in the department, Kyrgiakopoulos, was transferred to the island of Corfu, while my secretary was fired.537

Two documents issued by the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration, and Decentralization in October 1992 and March 1993, respectively, illustrate how the public administration viewed disability issues. Both documents, which were signed by minister Kouvelas and forwarded to all other ministries and public authorities, included measures for the accommodation of people with special needs in their interactions with the public administration. Particularly, the documents specified that all information and certificates that people with special needs required from public authorities must be submitted immediately, without people with disabilities waiting in queues or moving independently within a building; instead employees of each authority should help them.538 These measures also reflect a medical model perspective, since they imply that disabled people should remain passive receivers of help and sympathy. There was a considerable lack of other governmental initiatives concerning accessibility provisions in public buildings.

However, the way that disability issues were incorporated into New Democracy’s political programs raised many objections from disability organizations and their advocates, who maintained that charity initiatives and policies based on protecting rather integrating people with disabilities were not appropriate.539 In my view, this is a focal point because for the first time in the Greek context (with a delay of some decades compared to the international movements), disability organizations imposed a distinct claim: disablement itself is not a problem, but rather the problem is how society and the state confront disablement.540 This demand can be viewed as a re-enactment of roles concerning disability from the medical to the social model. Notably, this shift on the enactment of disability took place only in disability organizations, since neither PASOK nor New Democracy had integrated the issue of accessibility into their programs.

The launch of significant infrastructure projects such as the Athens metro provided an excellent opportunity for disability organizations to apply their views on disability. Let us now turn to political developments concerning the Athens metro project.

537 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
540 Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
The first metro contract in June 1991: parliamentary debate on ratification

In January 1991 the New Democracy government launched a new procurement process for the metro project. The major actors involved in the implementation of Athens metro settled on a political consensus for extending the existing small underground railway network into a modern and bigger metro network. On June 11, 1991 the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works Stefanos Manos submitted Bill 1955/91 to the Greek Parliament for ratification to establish a company with the name Attiko Metro SA. The company was to take over the supervision of the construction process because EYDE METRO (the special directorate assigned with the task to supervise the metro project) was a small entity that did not have the organizational capacity to supervise the large metro project. Eight days later, Manos announced to the Parliament that the ministry had signed a contract with the Olympic Metro Consortium as contractor for constructing the metro. The ministry also presented this contract to Parliament as part of the bill.

According to Greek legislation regarding the construction of public works, the technical specifications as well as the terms and conditions of the procurement process that the contractor has accepted form the basis for the public construction contract. The agreement (“turnkey” contract) between the Greek government and Olympic Metro consortium specified that the contractor was to construct and take into operation lines 2 and 3 of the Athens metro within six years. As noted in chapter 4, these lines extended from Piraeus to Gerakas (line 1) and from Peristeri to Glyfada (line 2). Bill 1955/91 concerned the proposed ratification of the turnkey contract. It specified that a legal entity under the name Attiko Metro S.A. be established to supervise the design, construction, organization, administration, initial operation, exploitation and development of the metro network in the Attica Prefecture, that is Athens’ greater metropolitan area. The Greek state would be the sole shareholder of Attiko Metro, but up to 49% of the shares could be transferable and could be introduced on the Athens Stock Exchange. The Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works would supervise the work, at least initially. One of the main objectives of this ministry is to plan and implement urban infrastructural systems. It constitutes the main institution that is responsible

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541 Balourdos, Mouriki, Sakellaropoulos, Theodoropoulos, & Tsakiris, 2001: 10. “Political sociology of the car system - Athens case study A: The Underground Extension Project”.


545 Balourdos, Mouriki, Sakellaropoulos, Theodoropoulos, & Tsakiris, 2001: 9.

546 Attiko Metro SA, 2004. “Enabling Legislation, Law 1955/91”. Available at: http://www.ametro.gr. Attiko Metro is a state owned company but it was established as a legal entity in the form of a "societe anonyme". By this is meant that even though the Greek government owns and supervises AM, the firm operates as a profit-making company and does not constitute part of the Greek public administration.
for the construction of public buildings and infrastructure related to public transport, such as motorways, railways, ports, and bridges.\(^{547}\) During the construction of the metro, the ministry was to supervise Attiko Metro by providing instructions, including necessary building permits, as well as by assisting the project with relevant construction regulations, for example regulations for facilities for people with disabilities. Upon completion of the project, the Ministry of Transport and Communications was to undertake responsibility for supervision of the metro. Attiko Metro was to be responsible for the operation of the system under the consultancy of Bechtel International Inc. until December 31, 2002.\(^{548}\)

The parliamentary debate about ratification of Bill 1955/91, including the approval of the first metro contract, constitutes an important source of empirical information concerning the historical development of the metro project since the 1960s as viewed by the various actors.\(^{549}\) All participants in the debate, specifically, members of the four political parties that were represented in the Greek Parliament, began their speeches by giving their interpretations of historical accounts on the evolution of the idea of the metro and its translation into concrete policy initiatives, agreements, and works. In my view, these accounts were to a large extent influenced by the speakers’ political background. Particularly, representatives from New Democracy were well disposed towards the implementation of the project and the submitted bill. In contrast, the opposition parties PASOK, the Greek Communists (KKE-orthodox communists), and Synaspismos (euro-communists) agreed with the concept of implementing a new metro network but expressed concerns about the implementation process that the government promoted.

The main objections of the opposition parties concentrated on specific articles of the Bill that pertained to the perceived lack of transparent management of funds, the environmental impact, the inadequate anticipation of soil problems, the selection of technology, the disturbance of residents during the construction and the major traffic disruption that the construction would cause. Notably, one objection concerned the prejudicial terms of the contract for the public interests (for example lack of obligatory clauses regarding accessibility provisions and air-conditioning in the stations).\(^{550}\) The parliamentary debate focused on the relevant articles of the submitted bill, which became the source of conflicts between the government and the opposition. The arguments against the first metro contract and the submitted bill can be summarized in three key points:

1. Conflicts over establishing Attiko Metro S.A. as a state limited company (article 1 in the contract)
2. Conflicts over lack of a basic study
3. Conflicts over absence of ‘social participation’ in the project: who gets represented on the Attiko Metro board?


\(^{550}\) Balourdos, Mouriki, Sakellaropoulos, Theodoropoulos, & Tsakiris, 2001: 10.
Conflicts over establishing Attiko Metro S.A. as a limited state company

The first concern that the opposition expressed against New Democracy’s bill for the construction of the metro was related to the terms and conditions for the establishment of Attiko Metro S.A, which, as noted earlier, would take over the supervision of the project from EYDE METRO. All opposition parties and their representatives expressed doubts throughout the discussion concerning the status of the new company, the authoritative power of its board over the project, and the potential loss of technological know-how in parts of the public administration such as the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works.  

Particularly, PASOK opposed the fact that the metro contract implied that the supervision of the project was to be transferred to the board of Attiko Metro. During the parliamentary debate, Vasilis Kedikoglou (PASOK), who was former Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, indicated that when the board would take over, the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works would lose its authoritative power over the project. The main concern of Kedikoglou was that members of such boards were usually chosen on a clientelistic basis, while the metro project was to survive several governmental changes of different political colors. This could hinder the cooperation between the government and the board of Attiko Metro. In a similar vein, the representative of the Synaspismos party Andreas Lentakis stated that some articles of the proposed bill concerning the organization and personnel of the new company insured only limited transparency. Specifically, the submitted bill suggested that members of the board could transfer their rights and powers to third parties. This meant that the board members could authorize others to carry out their work on the board. However, and as Lentakis notes, such procedures were extremely vulnerable to corruption in terms of clientelistic employment and relations.

PASOK’s Kedikoglou argued that the establishment of Attiko Metro conflicted with Law 1418/84, which stipulated that only institutions of the public administration were entitled to develop public works in Greece. Kedikoglou viewed Attiko Metro as a private company due to the fact that Attiko Metro was to operate as a profit-making company and would not constitute part of the Greek public administration. As he put it, the way public works are conducted is a deeply political and ideological issue. New Democracy aimed at a flexible institutional structure for the metro project, disconnected from the bureaucracy of the public administration.

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553 This is based on the speech of Andreas Lentakis during the parliamentary debate, when he characterized the power of the members of Attiko Metro’s board, as described by the proposed Bill, to transfer their participation on the board to third parties as a “unique organizational paradox”. Greek Parliament 1992: 173. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.

administration, while PASOK and the left-wing parties argued for stronger state intervention in the supervision and course of the project.

Another crucial point was the loss of technical know-how by the public administration. The opposition claimed that the Greek state constituted the only legitimate owner and receiver of the technological know-how generated by the project. Thus the massive technological knowledge that the construction of the metro would create should become the possession of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works. Another issue related to the possession of technological know-how was the question of what would happen to the employees of EYDE METRO after the establishment of Attiko Metro. The representative of Synaspismos Andreas Lentakis raised this question during the parliamentary debate, noting that these employees had accumulated considerable knowledge and experience of the project and that they should staff the new company. A representative of PASOK, Dimitrios Beis, put forth this argument during the debate as well. Andreas Lentakis (Synaspismos, euro-communists) and Dimitrios Beis (PASOK) pointed out that it would not only be fair, but be of great benefit for the project if the executives of EYDE METRO were placed in the new company.

The establishment of Attiko Metro and the question of whether or not employees from EYDE METRO would be transferred to the new company could be expected to have a significant impact on the issue of accessibility in the metro. As already discussed, employees of EYDE METRO had well-established contacts with the Department for Research on People with Special Needs. The work of architect Batsos and a team of EYDE METRO architects who had participated in the development of the Planning Manual for the procurement for the metro had led to the inclusion of a specific section in the manual (4.2.3 Provisions for the Handicapped) regarding accessibility provisions. The first metro contract and the bill to ratify it did not specify if these employees would be transferred to the new company. At the same time, Manos stated during the parliamentary debate that EYDE METRO and its employees did not have the competence to carry out the metro project:

I believe strongly that the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works does not have the capacity to supervise the construction of the project and to administer the metro. We need employees, systems and processes of high quality for the accomplishment of such a huge task. The ministry does not fulfill any of these requirements.

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557 EYDE METRO was the directorate that had supervised the metro project until that time.


Nevertheless, there were a number of EYDE METRO employees who had been engaged with the metro project since 1985 and had accumulated significant knowledge on the project but they were not transferred to Attiko Metro. According to Batsos, only some of EYDE METRO employees\textsuperscript{561}, specifically those who were well disposed towards the governing party New Democracy, were relocated to Attiko Metro:

A long-lasting investment on manpower and experience was wasted. These were great mistakes. However, it was clearly a political decision. Half of the employees were well disposed toward the governing party […] They tried to eliminate us and they spread us here and there.\textsuperscript{562}

Conflicts over lack of basic study
The second significant source of conflicts in the parliamentary debate was the fact that the contract did not consist of an actual basic study for the realization of the project. The negotiations and the contract were based on previous preliminary studies such as the SOFRETU study. During his speech in the debate, Manolis Drettakis\textsuperscript{563} from PASOK pointed out that a detailed study for the project had not yet been conducted. There was a preliminary study, which was to be integrated in the final study that the contractor would submit and that was to be approved. However, a new study might include new demands, which could possibly invalidate the existing economic calculations.\textsuperscript{564} Minister Manos’ response confirmed Drettakis’ concerns:

We ordered a turnkey project, which means: I will give you a certain amount of money and you will give me back an operating metro. The SOFRETU preliminary study describes what kind of metro we want. This was an excellent study, but just a preliminary study. A preliminary study, by definition, does not sort out all the issues. It sorts out 50% or 25% or 60%. It sorts out part of the problems […] The finalization of the study implies that we, the Greek side, the master of the project, will approve a new study. From now on, we are entering a dance of potential disputes. We will say that X was in the initial avowal, while the contractor will argue that X was not in the initial offer and the fixed price. Consequently, it is very likely that, due to the fact that the definite description of the project is unclear, problems may be created from now on. This is a part of the system that we chose…\textsuperscript{565}

What both Manos and Drettakis were concerned about was the fact that due to the lack of an actual basic study for the metro project, the contract was vulnerable to

\textsuperscript{561} Batsos was not included in this group. In 1992, he was transferred to the directorate of road construction within the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works. He worked there until 1994, when he moved to Attiko Metro.

\textsuperscript{562} Dimitrios Batsos, interview May 17, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).

\textsuperscript{563} Drettakis is a former PASOK Minister of National Economy and former vice-president of the Greek Parliament.


conflicting interpretations, misunderstandings and miscalculations. Manos asserted that the first year after the enactment of the contract was the most crucial for the whole project: within the first year, the contractor was to complete the final study. This study would determine whether or not the metro project would cost as much as the government had calculated. Thus the parliamentary debate and the enactment of Bill 1955/91 left the question of the content of the basic study unanswered, and the gaps in the preliminary study and the lack of a finalized study left a space for new economic demands from the contractor. This means that the consortium that was assigned to construct the metro could increase their financial claims for specific work, which was not specified by the preliminary study and was not included in the first contract. Reading through the first metro contract, one would realize that an important example of specific work that the contract did not specify as obligatory was the implementation of accessibility provisions.

Conflicts over absence of “social participation” in the project: who gets represented on Attiko Metro’s board?

Some of the speakers in the debate, specifically during the discussion of article six of Bill 1955/91 concerning Attiko Metro’s board, expressed their concerns about the lack of social representation in the construction of the metro and on the board of Attiko Metro. The bill did not stipulate the participation of the municipality of Athens, other local governments or social organizations. Anastasios Peponis and Dimitrios Beis, both PASOK members of Parliament, proposed that various organizations such as Attica’s municipalities or the Technical Chamber of Greece should be represented on Attiko Metro’s board. According to them, the emergence of the metro was a significant institution for the daily life not only of the city of Athens and Piraeus but also for the greater Attica region. Thus, it would be a shortsighted decision to assign the Greek state and the Attiko Metro shareholders with the exclusive privilege to decide on the structure and membership of the board. However, the government was not keen on encouraging or including specific social groups, such as trade unions, disability organizations, or Attica’s municipalities, in the development of the project. The Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works argued against this kind of participation in the course of the work:

I am against the prospect of the participation of representatives of different organizations in the board of Attiko Metro. We have had bad experiences wherever we have had representatives. I think it is important that the people who designate the board, in this case the assembly of the shareholders and the minister, should be completely responsible for their choices. Moreover, the people that participate in the

board should feel that the only responsibility they bear is towards the company and not towards the interests of those they represent.\footnote{Answer by Manos to Peponis’ and Beis’ proposal on social participation in the metro during the debate in June 1991. Greek Parliament 1992: 247. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.}

One could argue that the government aimed for a confined organizational structure of Attiko Metro that would focus on the development of the project rather than the satisfaction of the interests of public organizations and special interest groups. The concern of the Greek government implied that these groups would slow the development of the metro due to their “carelessness”, as New Democracy floor leader Dimitrios Sioufas argued in his speech in Parliament during the debate:

> Our experience has shown that when the lawmaker attempted to provide social groups and public organizations with the opportunity to participate in different bodies, like Attiko Metro, they have been very careless. Careless in the sense that their participation developed into a meaningless membership, that is social representatives agree with the opinion of the majority, or the opinion of the general secretary, or the chairman of the organization, without significant contribution to the process […] Thus, in such a large organization like Attiko Metro it would be very useful if we did not have this kind of participation.\footnote{Dimitrios Sioufas’ (New Democracy) speech in the debate in June 1991. Greek Parliament 1992: 247. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.}

New Democracy politicians thus argued against public participation in the work by referring to earlier lack of contribution of such social groups in large organizations.\footnote{Political scientist Kioukias explains that the coming of New Democracy to power was followed by a new political order that implied less participation of social groups in the design of policies.\footnote{Kioukias notes for example that in the case of the celebrated “councils of social control” the PASOK government introduced in a number of public corporations during the period 1981-1985. Worker participation turned out to be only nominal since, among other things, union members were underrepresented, the councils’ opinions were often ignored, and their rights were further restricted by law. Kioukias, 1997: 311. “Interest Representation and Modernization Policies in Greece: Lessons Learned from the Study of Labor and Farmers.”} PASOK’s floor leader Giannis Pottakis reacted to these explanations. His rhetoric focused on the differences between the two major Greek parties and on PASOK’s intense interest in direct participatory democracy, pluralism in thoughts and ideas, exchange of opinions, and the cross-reference of different interests.\footnote{Kioukias, 1997: 314.}

The vocabulary used by the PASOK floor leader was strongly influenced by the party’s program and previous governmental agenda regarding the inclusion of different social groups in numerous policymaking state organs. During 1981-1985, the PASOK government had supported special interest representation by granting recognition to particularly important associations such as ESAEA, designating them...
as the sole groups with whom the government would talk and establishing their authority over a hierarchical organizational structure for which the government supplied financial and organizational resources.\textsuperscript{574}

To summarize, the parliamentary debate on the metro contract became a forum where PASOK and New Democracy tested their ideological standpoints against each other on how the metro should be procured for, constructed and administered. The establishment of Attiko Metro, the refusal of the government to include public organizations and interest groups in the metro project, and the oppositional tactics of PASOK reflected a rather intense political antagonism between the two major parties. New Democracy’s governmental program was influenced by a neoliberal agenda that was characterized by substitution of state responsibilities with market forces and privatization in the economic and social sectors.\textsuperscript{575} On the other hand, PASOK’s rhetoric on the inclusion of public institutions and social organizations in the metro project constituted an attempt to recapture political sympathy among Greek voters but also reflected the party’s ideological background, which encouraged participatory processes.

Finally, after two weeks of parliamentary debate, the Greek Parliament ratified the first metro contract on June 25, 1991 in the form of Law 1955/91.\textsuperscript{576} The first metro contract was a \textit{lump-sum turnkey contract}. This type of contract stipulates that one entity takes total responsibility for the design and execution of the engineering part of the project from start to finish. In other words, the entity carries out all the engineering, procurement and construction, providing a fully equipped facility ready for operation at the “turn of the key”.\textsuperscript{577}

The official beginning of the project (specifically, construction work for lines 2 and 3) was scheduled for November 1991. However, it took almost a month until the government approved the funding plan and almost four months after the November date until the European Investment Bank secured the project with a long-term loan.\textsuperscript{578} In November 1991, the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works transferred, however, all its competencies regarding the project to the newly established Attiko Metro. Actual construction work began in November 1992. After the completion of the construction phase, the responsibility for supervision would be transferred from Attiko Metro to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, which was charged with transport planning.\textsuperscript{579}

**Procurement, parliamentary debate and after: destabilizing accessibility?**

In this section I will discuss how the procurement for the metro, the parliamentary debate and the first metro contract constructed the issue of metro accessibility. As

\textsuperscript{574} Kioukias, 1997: 310.
\textsuperscript{575} Ibid. 314.
\textsuperscript{577} International Federation of Consulting Engineers, 1999: 2, \textit{Conditions of Contract for EPC/Turnkey Projects}.
\textsuperscript{578} Balourdos, Mouriki, Sakellaropoulos, Theodoropoulos, & Tsakiris, 2001: 9.
\textsuperscript{579} Ibid. 9-10.
discussed in chapter 5, the Planning Manual that had been published in 1986 by EYDE METRO in collaboration with London Transport International had included a special section on accessibility provisions (section 4.2.3)\(^\text{580}\) that specified technical recommendations for the accommodation of disabled people in the metro network. According to the Attiko Metro architect Athos Dallas, this section was omitted from the final procurement process in 1991.\(^\text{581}\) Why did the government exclude the special section from the negotiations with the contractor? 

One of the main reasons behind this decision was the issue of cost. Several experts, consultants, and managers at EYDE METRO were rather hostile to the idea of adjusting the metro to accessibility standards, since accessibility provisions could raise the cost dramatically and cause aesthetic disharmonies.\(^\text{582}\) Batsos describes the stance of these employees:

> The cost, the cost, the cost! They kept insisting on raising this argument. I do not understand what they were afraid of. The cost was not dramatically high, compared to what we paid afterwards. We, the architects, tried to impose accessibility provisions on the project, but the consultants opposed it. They always wanted to be agreeable to the political leadership and the administration, their employer. They were afraid that the cost of the project would explode. They told us all of the time, ‘let’s start now with the basics, and we will see what will happen later’.\(^\text{583}\)

According to Tsioubos, the reason that the Greek government did not include section 4.2.3 of the manual in the final procurement was that people with disabilities did not constitute a significant number of potential users of the metro and thus it was regarded as very costly to include accessibility features.\(^\text{584}\) To build a system with ramps and elevators was much more complex and expensive than a minimal network accessible only for the able-bodied “majority” of the population. Thus the Greek government and the Attiko Metro experts and managers did not prioritize the allocation of extra funds for making the metro accessible.\(^\text{585}\) A former member of ESAEA’s board asserts:

> When the procurement for the construction of the metro began in 1991, the government had decided not to include accessibility for people with disabilities because it incurred an extra cost. Accessibility would cause a rise of 10% above the initial estimation.\(^\text{586}\)

As claimed by Attiko Metro architects Athos Dallas and Dimitrios Batsos, the Greek government attempted to decrease the cost of the project by excluding technical “luxuries” such as accessibility provisions or air-conditioning in order to present a competitive plan compared to other EU funded projects.\(^\text{587}\) Leventi confirms that the


\(^{581}\) Athos Dallas, interview March 15, 2005.

\(^{582}\) Interviews with Batsos May 17, 2005; and Tsioubos November 18, 2003.

\(^{583}\) Dimitrios Batsos, interview May 17, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).

\(^{584}\) Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003.

\(^{585}\) Arigio Leventi, interview March 16, 2005.

\(^{586}\) Dionysios Maurokefalos, interview September 9, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).

\(^{587}\) Interviews with Dimitrios Batsos, March 15, 2005; and Athos Dallas, March 15, 2005.
government wanted to construct the metro at the lowest possible cost.\textsuperscript{588} Even the \textit{Planning Manual} acknowledged that the tenderers must not include provisions for disabled people that would increase the total cost of the proposal on which their tender would be based.\textsuperscript{589} Since the government aimed for a low budget metro, certain abridgements of expenses would occur. Polis is critical to the initial metro design:

The example of the initial design of the metro in 1991, where there was no prospect of accommodating people with disabilities, is a characteristic case of a disoriented political decision and a design that is racist. This is called racism and we should not have a problem with using this word. Moreover, the later contract was extremely expensive. I am talking about an unbelievable default… There was a political gap. There was an extremely cheap definition of what is economic and what is practical …\textsuperscript{589}

This \textit{political gap} between the design of the metro and the needs of disabled people that Polis refers to was grounded in the neo-liberal political agenda of the government. PASOK’s Anastasios Mantelis, who was former Deputy Minister of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization and former Minister of Transport and Communications, claims in relation to New Democracy’s approach towards disability issues in the start of the 1990s:

New Democracy did not show any significant interest in disability issues, during the period of 1991-1993. Perhaps they did not have the time or these issues were not part of their design and policy. They did not consider them as urgent problems. Of course, every party has different political priorities and disability was not a priority for New Democracy. It was not a part of their policy […] The procurement for the metro and the lack of accessibility provisions were small details, evidence of the way they perceived social issues […] In different aspects of social life, people with disabilities were excluded and we should not accuse only the government of New Democracy, but the whole of Greek society.\textsuperscript{591}

The lack of accessibility awareness, which Mantelis indicates also reflected values of Greek society at the time, was also imprinted in the parliamentary debate about the first metro contract. The \textit{debate did not include any distinct suggestions to implement accessible technical features}. When reading through the records of the debate it is clear that the issue of accessibility was not part of the political agenda. There were only two references to the issue of access during the debate. First, Kedikoglou from PASOK claimed in general terms that the metro stations should be accessible to the public, although he did not argue specifically for the inclusion of accessibility or the accommodation of people with disabilities.\textsuperscript{592} Second, the representative of the green party Radical Ecologists, Anastasia Andreadaki, referred

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{588} Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{590} Gerasimos Polis, interview September 8, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
\item \textsuperscript{591} Anastasios Mantelis, interview March 7, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
\item \textsuperscript{592} Based on the statement of Kedikoglou during the parliamentary debate on the first metro contract, where he indicated that there should be travelers who reach and leave the metro easily and safely. Greek Parliament 1992: 171. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”.
\end{itemize}

\textit{In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.}
specifically to people with disabilities and accessibility, but in a controversial way. In her speech during the debate she stated that her party was against the construction of the metro, since “stairs are very restrictive for people with disabilities and therefore a significant part of the population would not be able to use it.” None of the representatives of the parties that participated in the debate made, however, an explicit comment on the need or necessity for integrating accessibility provisions in the project. Why was accessibility not part of the debate?

I maintain that three factors contributed to the absence of references to disability and accessibility issues in the parliamentary debate on the first metro contract. First, there was a considerable lack of technical knowledge regarding accessibility provisions. Despite the work of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, there were no other public institutions that dealt with research on disability and accessibility standards. Second, disability organizations were still relatively powerless and their issues were not treated as legitimate and urgent political questions. Finally, the issue of accessibility was not included in the debate because of the perceived increased cost of the project, the political turbulence among the major Greek parties and the political posturing that the metro initiated. All these constituted distinct evidence that accessibility questions were still not of significance for politicians involved with the ratification of the metro contract.

The accessibility clause in the metro project: a triumph of disability organizations or a weak clause?

Despite the lack of parliamentary discussion about accessibility, the finalized turnkey contract for the metro in fact contained a clause in article 31 (31.2.3.5) that referred to the Accommodation of People with Special Needs. The clause specified:

The main objective of the work includes the obligation on the part of the contractor to submit, after the signing of the contract, proposals (accompanied with the equivalent extra costs) for the construction of accommodation in the stations for people with special needs. The ministry agency will announce to the contractor, within reasonable time before the completion of the finalized studies, its decision about the realization or not of these proposals (emphasis in original text).

The clause thus stipulated that the contractor Olympic Metro Consortium must submit proposals concerning accessibility and accompanying cost calculations, but it did not obligate the owner of the project to adopt them. Although it is not clear why this clause was included, a number of factors could have contributed to this surprising development. First, as noted earlier the Planning Manual for the metro had included a special section (section 4.2.3) concerning accessibility provisions,

593 Andreadaki was the sole representative of Radical Ecologists in the Greek Parliament. The Radical Ecologists were opposed to the construction of the metro. One of the reasons was that the metro could constitute another architectural obstacle for people with disabilities. This is what Andreadaki stated in her speech during the parliamentary debate on the metro contract, in June 1991. Greek Parliament 1992: 184. “Parliament’s records, Division of summer holidays 1991 and Plenum”. In Volume 10, Sessions June 4 – July 18, 1991.

594 Although the department was not powerful enough yet in order to influence the course of the metro project.


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and while this section had not been integrated in the metro contract, it nevertheless raised the awareness of accessibility issues. Moreover, the pressure that disability organizations increasingly exerted, together with the positive stance of the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works Manos, also contributed to the stipulation of the special clause for the accommodation of people with special needs. In addition, as we saw in the beginning of this chapter, the increasing interest of the European Community in disability issues constituted a pressure mechanism that aimed to entice member states to adapt their infrastructural projects to accessibility friendly provisions, despite the fact that there were no binding Community directives. It can be argued that accessibility was almost imposed as a requirement from the Community, especially to projects funded by European subsidies such as the Athens metro, but it did not constitute a binding demand yet.

The clause 31.2.3.5 in the metro contract was, however, weak in two respects: 1) it did not specify concrete technical recommendations for the accommodation of people with disabilities in the metro or allocate funds for conducting relevant studies and 2) it did not secure the inclusion of accessibility provisions in the scope of the work. The fact that the clause did not stipulate obligatory and concrete technical accessibility proposals requires further attention. The abstract character of the clause can be viewed as part of the general lack of concern about disability issues by the government and the political parties. As shown in the previous sections, in the beginning of the 1990s the engagement of most political parties in accessibility was still weak, despite the progress of disability organizations and the work of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs. According to Georgios Tsioubos:

> The logic that characterized state policies and political leadership, at that moment, was that people with disabilities should not go out! We should solve their problems by creating institutions that can accommodate them. We can lock them in…

A concrete example of this stance towards disability questions was the fact that the parliamentary debate had not included any explicit references to the issue of accessibility. However, this kind of controversy had an explosive character due to the fact that there was a great schism between the expectations of disabled people and the perceptions of the Greek government and the Greek parties. As already discussed, while disability organizations sought social, economic and political inclusion, as well as participation in the configuration of the material world, the government in 1991-1993 reduced their demands to protectionist policies and restricted solutions on disability issues to charity initiatives. Leventi notes that when she pointed out the importance of accessibility for Attiko Metro’s first chairman Rafail Moussis (1991-1994), he responded that it was preferable to provide every disabled person in Greece with a Jaguar luxury car than make the metro accessible. As we will see in the following, this kind of mismatch between the disability movement and the Greek government would be reflected in a series of backlashes.

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597 Ibid.
598 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005.
**Backlash**

The developing dynamics of the disability movement and the approach of the New Democracy government led to a conflict that lasted throughout the 1991-1993 period. Disability groups, hurt from the new configuration that did not integrate their claims, organized and applied methods of reacting. Kouroublis attempts to anecdotally convey the political climate of the period by describing a visit to the school for blind in Kalithea (an area in Athens) by PASOK’s leader Andreas Papandreou in 1990. Papandreou reportedly had the following dialogue with the paraplegic vice-chairman of ESAEA:

**Vice-chairman (ESAEA):** Mr. President. Disabled people face a serious problem of getting access to different places.

**Papandreou (PASOK):** The greatest problem you face is that of getting access to political power.\(^{599}\)

Returning to the metro story, disability organizations and their major representative ESAEA protested strongly against the prospect of constructing a cheap and inaccessible metro, as well as against the increasing marginalization of disability issues.\(^{600}\) Most of these protests were of an informal nature and, as discussed in chapter 2, it was impossible to trace information on when they took place or their exact content, given the unsystematic archives of ESAEA and the Department for Research on People with Special Needs.

There are indications, however, that despite their progress, disability organizations were still too politically weak in the beginning of the 1990s to effectively mobilize their demands and make claims on complex political processes and infrastructure projects such as the Athens metro. This weakness was reflected in the interactions of the disability movement with Attiko Metro in the start of 1990s. A former director of Attiko Metro, Vasileiadis, indicates why disability organizations were excluded from the design of the metro:

> We had a number of contacts with some disability organizations in the early 1990s when the construction work had already begun. However, the Greek disability organizations did not have the background or the capacity for working with such a process. They were not organized enough and they could not play a significant role. In contrast, the contractors, mainly French and German, had formed a working group in Paris where the metro project was designed which exploited the experience of French and German disability organizations and the standards that are applied in these countries concerning accessibility.\(^{601}\)

According to Attiko Metro employees, disability organizations were thus not influential enough to intervene in the course of the metro project and also lacked sufficient knowledge for contributing to the technologically complex project.\(^{602}\)

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599 Kouroublis, 2000: 391 (in Greek, my translation).
601 Konstantinos Vasileiadis, interview November 12, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
602 Interviews with Vasileiadis November 12, 2003; Dallas, Sotiropoulos, and other Attiko Metro employees March 15, 2005.
Disability organizations viewed the procurement for the metro without obligatory stipulations for accessibility facilities as an insignificant step towards the configuration of an accessible built environment. Consequently, they began exerting pressure on the government. A former member of ESAEA’s board notes on the ensuing protests:

I remember that the whole Greek disability movement cut in. ESAEA, the associations of mobility impairments, the Greek Paraplegics Association pressurized the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works to create and grant the necessary expenditure.\(^603\)

On December 2, 1991, the contractor for the metro project, Olympic Metro Consortium, submitted a number of suggestions and a study entitled *Facilities for Disabled Persons* to the supervisor of the project, Attiko Metro, as defined by the first metro contract.\(^604\) This document did not, however, include cost estimations. Nevertheless, a series of protests, complaints, and presentations organized by disability organizations which were made public to the Greek press attempted to cancel the metro contract and to pressure the government into immediately including accessibility in the metro project.\(^605\) Some months before the construction work began, the first concrete incident occurred. On December 22, 1991, Batsos sent a letter of complaint to the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works with the heading *Reference to issues concerning the accommodation of people with special needs in the new Athens metro*.\(^606\) Batsos, who was then formally displaced from the metro project, as noted earlier, pointed out the importance and necessity of adjusting the developing system to accessibility provisions. He noted that during the procurement and signing of the metro contract, the special clause (31.2.3.5) in the contract specified provisions for people with disabilities. However, as Batsos indicated, this reference was vague and abstract. In the letter, Batsos argues about the nature of the clause:

> The clause had a benedictional character and it only defined the obligation of the candidate contractors to submit an individual study and a cost estimation for the extra work. Then the owner of the project would decide on the realization or not of this obligation. Unfortunately, the candidate contractors did not fulfill the requirements of the contract. I would like to point out the erroneous rationale and method that the consultant of Attiko Metro applied here. Every potential improvement of the system, after the signing of the contract and the completion of the study, will cost much more and this will cause problems that will be visible later on.\(^607\)

Batsos’ letter to the minister expressed his agony concerning the construction of an enormously important work, which signified the new era, the new millennium, “the

\(^{603}\) Dionysios Maurokefalos, interview September 9, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).

\(^{604}\) The first metro contract obliged the contractor of the project to submit proposals concerning the accommodation of people with special needs. Official Government Gazette (FEK), 1991: 1600. Law 1955, Vol.112. “Establishment of Company with the name ATTIKO METRO SA”.

\(^{605}\) Panayiotis Kouroublis, interview December 22, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).


\(^{607}\) Ibid. 1.
metro of 2000” as he called it, without provisions for disabled people. He condemned foreign consultants working for the project who were not familiar with the Greek reality and who were opposed to accessibility of the metro due to risks for the health of people with disabilities. He referred to directives of the European Community\textsuperscript{608} and laws of the Greek Constitution\textsuperscript{609} in order to make clear that Greece ought to adjust to European standards by developing infrastructures and conditions for future generations.\textsuperscript{610} Finally, Batsos recognized that while the expenses for such provisions were high, since they were not included in the initial contract they were necessary:

It would constitute the greatest mistake of our days, if the metro of 2000 lacked these provisions for people with disabilities, which would make it fully accessible to them like other modern metros in the world.\textsuperscript{611}

Meanwhile, it is important to mention that Attiko Metro began to develop a kind of awareness regarding the issue of accessibility, due at least in part to the pressure ensuing from the directives of the European Community which Batsos also referred to in his letter. In a memorandum to Attiko Metro’s managing director and director of planning in May 1992, Attiko Metro’s attorney A. Christopoulou revealed the concerns of the company regarding the issue of accessibility, even if there were “no legally binding regulations on constructional standards regarding accessibility of public buildings for disabled people”.\textsuperscript{612} Christopoulou notes that in February 1991, the European Commission had developed and published a proposal for a council directive on the minimum requirements for improving the mobility and the safe transport to places of work of workers with reduced mobility.\textsuperscript{613} The European Council had not yet adopted the proposal, which focused mainly on “workers with reduced mobility”, and its action was limited to their “working environment”. The proposal could thus only be used as a reference and not as a standing law. However, the Commission encouraged activities and projects supported by its structural funds to consider the suggestions of the proposal directive.\textsuperscript{614} Christopoulou’s memorandum also pointed out that the European Commission was very interested in and sensitive about the issue of accessibility and mobility. As a result, a \textit{European Manual for an Accessible Built Environment} had been developed that could, according to Christopoulou, constitute a basis of suggestions for good practices.\textsuperscript{615} The memorandum showed that Attiko Metro began to be more aware regarding European proposals and standards concerning accessibility.

\textsuperscript{608} Directive Proposal [com (90) 588 final] “on minimum standards for the improvement of mobility and safe transport of workers with reduced mobility to and from their working place, based on the social map of the member states, in 1989 EC’s Social Charter, 1989.
\textsuperscript{610} Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, 1992: 1-2. Register number 91. “Reference to issues concerning the accommodation of people with special needs in the new Athens Metro”. Dimitrios Batsos (in Greek, my translation).
\textsuperscript{611} Ibid. 2.
\textsuperscript{613} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{614} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{615} Ibid.
As the construction of the metro project began to accelerate, disability organizations also exerted additional pressure regarding the issue of accessibility. In January 1993, ESAEA’s chairman Kouroublis invited journalists, members of the government, all political parties, social unions and syndicalists to attend a special press conference at the Journalists’ Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers. One of the subjects to be discussed was that of “accessibility issues in the construction of the metro, which revealed the government’s great deception”. ESAEA accused the Greek government of canceling its pre-election promises regarding disability issues. Former ESAEA chairman Kouroublis recalls the ESAEA’s protest, including a symbolic march, and its limited success:

We launched an open debate between journalists and politicians from all political parties at the Journalists’ Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers. This initiative was concluded with a march toward the Presidential mansion. Of course, we did not meet the President of the Greek Republic K. Karamanlis himself, but instead the general director of his office, Mr. Paulopoulos. We continued this great effort by emphasizing the problem and its parameters and consequently the government was forced to discuss the issue of accessibility with us. However, there was no change in the (metro) contract before the governmental change of 1993.

As Kouroublis mentioned in an interview I conducted with him, the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works did not accept ESAEA’s invitation for a dialogue on accessibility in the metro. This constituted a serious break in the established interaction between disability organizations and the government. Ten days after the press conference and the symbolic march to the Presidential mansion, ESAEA published a press release entitled *An Age of Social Destabilization*. The press release described current problems for people with disabilities, such as the lack of accessibility in public spaces, the institutionalization of disability through creating a center for accommodating of disabled people, and general issues regarding public welfare policies. The first paragraph of this press release criticized the fact that the Greek government did not include any obligatory specifications for accessibility provisions in the existing metro contract:

“a. The pompous pre-election and post-election declarations about the present government's professed sensitivity have been proven to be a most weak and dubious argument when the organizations of disabled people, and the whole of society, are shocked to learn that in the project ushering us into the third millennium, the Athens metro, which should reflect the social features of our society, *no provision has been made for access of non-ambulatory persons*. This fact demonstrates the extent of social degeneration and the violation of elementary social rights of human dignity [...]” (emphasis in original text)

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617 Panayiotis Kouroublis, interview December 22, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
618 Ibid.
620 Ibid.
I have to refer here to an interesting observation: I obtained ESAEA’s press release from Attiko Metro, translated into English, since many of the managers and consultants working for the company were not Greek citizens and did not speak Greek. On the copy I acquired, there was a handwritten comment in English beside the above paragraph that referred to the lack of provisions for access of non-ambulatory persons, saying that this assertion “is not true”.\(^{621}\) Even if we assume that the person who made this note was accurate, there was clearly a considerable lack of communication and information from Attiko Metro to disability organizations.

**Imposing accessibility in the metro – a confined process**

On February 10, 1993, a PASOK member of Parliament, E. Konstandinidis, denounced the lack of obligatory specifications for including accessibility provisions in the metro by submitting an interpellation to the government and particularly to the Ministries of Environment, Physical Planning, and Public Works; Health and Welfare; Labor; and the Ministry for the Prime Minister.\(^{622}\) Konstandinidis referred to ESAEA’s press conference and submitted ESAEA’s press release. On February 16, the president of the Parliament forwarded ESAEA’s press release to the aforementioned ministries and Attiko Metro.\(^{623}\) The government, reacting to the political pressure of an issue that was beginning to intensify and gain publicity and/or due to political opportunism, immediately mobilized the relevant public authorities. On February 2, 1993, the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works\(^{624}\) sent a letter to Attiko Metro and required it “to carefully examine the document attached (ESAEA’s press release, author’s note) and proceed with required action and respond by memo within 3 days”.\(^{625}\)

Interestingly enough, the response was immediate. On the same day and on behalf of the Greek government, Attiko Metro initiated the process described by clause 31.2.3.5 in the first metro contract. Although the clause had been included in the contract it would not be obligatory unless Attiko Metro activated it by an instruction. The so-called Instruction 13 was the means to enforce clause 31.2.3.5. Specifically, Attiko Metro activated Instruction 13, which meant that the contractor Olympic Metro Consortium was now *obliged* to “undertake a program to design, construct and effect modifications to the stations and vehicles in order to facilitate access to and use of the project by persons with special needs”.\(^{626}\) The enforcement of Instruction 13 implied that the contractor was ordered to conduct a study of modifications that would be based on the suggestions in Instruction 13 (specifically

\(^{621}\) A copy of this document is available in the author’s archive.


\(^{623}\) Ibid.

\(^{624}\) Specifically, the General Secretariat of Public Works, Bureau of Parliamentary Control of the Ministry was responsible for contacting Attiko Metro.


in its Exhibit A) and thoroughly described in, but not limited to, the previous study on facilities for disabled persons.\(^{627}\) As previously noted, Olympic Metro had already prepared this study and submitted it to Attiko Metro in December 1991 as a first submittal in response to clause 31.2.3.5 of the metro contract.\(^{628}\)

Specifically, Exhibit A included a list of modifications and recommendations for disability provisions in the metro project. The list is divided into two categories. The first category contains all items that were to be included in the scope of the work, that is, all work included in the lump sum price of the project. The second category contains recommendations outside the scope of the work, namely, those provisions and work that required the calculation of a new budget. All the recommendations are of a technical nature and refer to specific suggestions concerning the design of the stations and the cars. Particularly, Instruction 13 included the following proposed modifications:

**Basis for Modifications**

A. Recommendations of Olympic Metro Consortium **included** in the scope of work
   1. First and last riser strips at stairs
   2. Extended handrail details at stairs
   3. Escalator direction indicators and panic stop buttons
   4. Additional warning stripes at platform edges
   5. Improved legibility for signs and graphics
   6. Signs to indicate facilities for persons with special needs
   7. Textured floor finish as a directional path
   8. Improvements in lighting levels and arrangements
   9. Accessible seats and platforms
   10. Elevators and associated equipment at all stations
   11. Height adjustments for the platform
   12. Ramps or other access for level changes less than 3m
   13. Accessible WC facilities for wheelchair users
   14. Accessible telephones for wheelchair users
   15. Improvements in the car

B. Recommendations of Olympic Metro Consortium **excluded** from the scope of work
   1. Automatic start/stop operation buttons on escalators
   2. Recommendations to reduce the stair slope from 30 to 27 degrees

**Figure 19.** Exhibit A to Instruction 13  

In addition, the instruction described that these additional modifications (those included in Exhibit A) were to be funded in accordance with Law 1418/84\(^{629}\) that enacted the construction and payment of the metro and was included in the 1991 contract. Finally, the scope of the work also included:

\(^{627}\) Ibid. 2.  
\(^{628}\) Ibid.  

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1. To establish European Community or other applicable codes as references for accessibility requirements
2. To develop standards for facilities for persons with special needs
3. To realize design services for all elements of the modifications program
4. To develop a standard design, site specific designs and details for these facilities
5. To implement the modifications through constructing and manufacturing all agreed facilities.\(^{630}\)

Attiko Metro’s imposition of instruction 13 constituted a significant milestone for the development of the metro work and its adjustment to accessibility provisions. It is not clear if this development was already planned by Attiko Metro or if it was the direct result of the increasing reaction by disability organizations or both, since none of my interviewees could confirm or refute either the first or the second interpretation. However, there was a long way still to go to the desired outcome of full accessibility. None of the documents included cost estimations or indicated when these modifications would be funded. Significantly, because the instruction was not incorporated into the initial contract, an amendment of the contract was needed in order for the aforementioned additional work to be included in the scope and cost of the metro project.\(^{631}\)

As I will show in the next chapter, Instruction 13 triggered extended negotiations between the metro supervisor Attiko Metro and the contractor Olympic Metro Consortium.\(^{632}\) Nevertheless, these interactions were still restricted to the internal contacts between the cooperating companies and only between those engineers involved with the construction of the metro. Attiko Metro architect and its responsible person for accessibility issues, Athos Dallas notes:

> After the imposition of Instruction 13, a great discussion/correspondence began about technical details. We are going to do this but not that etc. Only engineers participated in these negotiations […]\(^{633}\)

The challenge of accessibility became an issue for experts and managers who worked with the metro project. There was, however, also a certain amount of mistrust that hindered interactions between disability organizations and Attiko Metro employees, who expressed their doubts concerning cooperation with disability organizations. According to one Attiko Metro architect, architects working with the metro perceived representatives of the disability organizations not as potential users of the metro system, but as “incompetent syndicalists with unreal claims and poor technical backgrounds. The architectural culture and knowledge of Attiko Metro’s employees were enough for an effective analysis of data and application of a functional structure."\(^{634}\)

Accessibility came from internal processes within Attiko Metro. It was not the result of negotiations with disabled users or accessibility committees, but the product of a

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\(^{631}\) Athos Dallas, interview March 15, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).

\(^{632}\) Unfortunately, Attiko Metro SA refused access to its archive concerning information on the content of these meetings - see section about methodology.

\(^{633}\) Athos Dallas, interview March 15, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).

\(^{634}\) Attiko Metro architect who wishes to remain anonymous, interview March 18, 2005.
company with the common sense and the necessary experience for understanding how an individual with disabilities moves. We do not need them to tell us what kind of problems they have. There is an architectural education that has taught us precisely how to analyze data and to apply a functional diagram of the requirements that the project has posed, in the best possible way. And who are the users really? Are they the disability associations? The occasional syndicalist who got elected, is he the user? I do not think that this is the user […]\(^{635}\)

The confined nature of this process between Attiko Metro and Olympic Metro Consortium made it invisible to disability organizations and their allies, which raised additional reactions and warnings. In June 1993, architect Batsos utilized his participation in a conference entitled “Major Projects and Arrangements in Attica” organized by the Technical Chamber of Greece to call for the need for designing an accessible transport network. In his presentation, Batsos discussed the necessity of removing obstacles in the man-made environment and the obligation of implementing an accessible metro.\(^{636}\) He expressed his concerns that the new metro system, “the project of the year 2000” as he pointed out, faced the risk of developing into the only new infrastructure in Europe that is not fully accessible to citizens with disabilities. He characterized this fact as a disgrace and referred to the European Community directives that require the construction of transport projects compatible with disability standards.\(^{637}\) Batsos’ presentation constituted a clear reaction against the prospect of constructing an inaccessible metro.

This omission was to trigger more conflicts and protests. These conflicts expressed the demands of disability advocates for a revision of the design and construction of the metro. There would be no new accessibility provisions until an amendment to the contract was adopted that specifically included Instruction 13. However, and as we will see in the following chapter, the first metro contract would not be renegotiated to encompass accessibility provisions until the socialists returned to office in October 1993.

**Summary and conclusions**

The metro project was finally launched in 1991. Nonetheless, this fact did not signify the end of problems or controversies. Instead, the metro project was an endless source of disagreements and a fertile site for backlashes between the Greek government and disability organizations. The Greek government postponed the issue of accessibility provisions in the metro project, allegedly due to high costs. Disability organizations with their contentious relationship to the New Democracy government had little political power and did not represent a large group of voters. One important factor was that disability measures taken by the New Democracy government during the 1991-1993 period implied methods of institutionalization, isolation, and protectionism inspired by the medical model of disability. At the same time, there was a certain misapprehension about what accessibility is. Disability theorist Robert Drake notes that in a society that is dominated by a medical model of disability, the focus will lie on trying to change individuals, typically through care,

\(^{635}\) Ibid.


\(^{637}\) Ibid. 8.
therapy and treatment. Accordingly, the question of creating an accessible environment was not yet in effect and the Greek government did not prioritize the construction of accessible infrastructures.

Nevertheless, in the early 1990s the Greek disability organizations continued struggling for participation and involvement in the social, economic, technological and political configurations that were taking place in Greek society. They did so by exploiting the positions they had established within the public administration during the 1980s, specifically through the establishment of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs and the founding of ESAEA. The emergence of disability organizations in Greece and their evolution from the early 1980’s had played a significant role for changing the approach towards disability, spreading awareness about accessibility issues, and raising questions about social inclusion and the involvement of marginalized groups in technological development. Nevertheless, organized disability associations were rather politically weak during the start of the 1990s and they constituted a frustrated “hurt group” that was not able to influence sociotechnical processes. Increasingly, they began to intervene in political processes and demand the configuration of an accessible built environment. The construction of the metro constituted a potential intermediary for reducing transport disability in the inaccessible city of Athens and a field where they could apply their political influence.

The design and construction of the new infrastructures had significant consequences for the identity and role of disability organizations as concerned groups. Callon and Rabeharisoa note that such groups that are concerned about particular technoscientific developments are offered opportunities to express themselves and to progressively become stakeholders. The emergence of the metro offered spaces for problematizing accessibility and re-configuring the built environment. It provided disabled people and their organizations with a chance to problematize and advance their claims by enrolling politicians, engineers, the EU, and intervening in the design and construction of new infrastructures. The European Community, for example, acted as an entity that was enrolled as an ally and contributed to the establishment of accessibility as part of the public administrative agenda. The implementation of accessibility provisions in the metro project needed the help of others, apart from disability organizations, in order to be translated into a matter of fact.

The omission of accessibility provisions from the metro was far from irreversible. The actions of disability organizations, the international experience and the work of heterogeneous groups of experts and concerned individuals, both disabled and able-bodied, as well as the authoritative role of the European Community progressively weakened political objections to the construction of an accessible metro network. These combined processes contributed to the translation of accessibility into the metro project, which in turn would allow for the reduction of transport disability.

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639 Callon & Rabeharisoa, 2003: 194. “Research ‘in the wild’ and the shaping of new social identities”.
The initial contract for the metro in June 1991 also reflected, however, the weak political power of disability organizations at the time. While there was a distinct need for deep reconfigurations in the formation of policies and the construction of public works, the emerging concerned groups had an uncertain and fragile political role and failed to influence the New Democracy government to take their views into account. Ultimately, the government yielded to the pressure that disability organizations and their advocates exerted but this was certainly not an unconditional capitulation. The imposition of Instruction 13, which implied that the contractor for the metro project must develop and submit a study for the provision of accessible facilities, could be considered a direct or indirect success of the Greek disability organizations and their alliances. However, the process that would be followed for the integration of these modifications did not entail the participation of disability organizations and the instruction did not guarantee the implementation of accessibility provisions.

A group consisting of engineers, architects and consultants of Attiko Metro and the Olympic Metro Consortium were to negotiate the necessity and functionality of accessibility facilities and decide whether or not these technical details should be implemented in the construction. The work and research conducted was confined to these organizations and excluded disability organizations from the configuration of the metro. Following Callon, there was an obvious conflict between confined research (that is, research that is conducted by experts, such as scientists and engineers, in milieus that are not part of the public sphere such as laboratories, architectural offices, scientific committees) and research in the wild (that is, accumulated knowledge and everyday experiences of people with disabilities, emerging from their interactions with each other and with the material world). Managers and engineers involved in the metro project considered disability organizations as politically weak and incompetent concerning technical knowledge and did not engage disability organizations in the process. They accentuated the value of scientific knowledge and expertise. If a concerned group is perceived as socially or politically powerless, then it has no chance of influencing confined research. This kind of segregation of experts from the impure world of concerned groups allows for technical debates free from the prattle of concerned groups.

Actors supporting the accessibility idea attempted, however, to counterbalance the powerful configuration of managers, engineers and politicians who blocked the implementation of accessibility facilities in the project. This would allow the gaining of negotiability and promoting pragmatically the demands of disability organizations. Research in the wild constituted their starting point, and their participation in the process signified the new configuration. One could claim that by the end of 1993, disability organizations and their advocates had succeeded in opening the black box of accessibility in the metro project.

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641 Attiko Metro architects, interview March 18, 2005.
643 Ibid. 36.
The train headed out towards the heart of the city. Both Nikos and I silently observed other passengers. It was a fifteen-minute ride but it felt like we sat in the car for ages. I noticed that his wheelchair moved back and forward when the train braked and accelerated. How did he feel? What did the metro provide him with? How is it to be disabled and ride the metro? Nikos suddenly interrupted my thoughts and the prevailing silence between us:

I usually travel alone, because I want to, but above all because I can. When I steer my wheelchair on the different levels of the stations with the help of the elevators, I get the feeling that people stare at me and understand that I do not need their help. Some of them try to push my wheelchair but they do not insist since they immediately understand that I am quite familiar with the stations. The only time that I feel powerless is when I realize that some of the new cars do not have ramps for wheelchair users. I ask at the information desk and they kindly answer me that there was a mistake in the procurement for the new cars, but all new trains have disability stickers on their windows, since there are designated spaces with special safety belts for wheelchair users in the cars. Then I angrily wonder: What the hell do I need the stickers and the safety belts for, if I cannot enter the train?644

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644 Nikos Perdikaris, interview November 20, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
This chapter begins with an important development for the metro project: the return of PASOK to government in October 1993. The electorate’s dissatisfaction with neo-liberal policies implemented by the New Democracy government brought PASOK back to power.\textsuperscript{645} The return of the socialists entailed significant changes for the configuration of disability issues in the Greek public administration. This chapter will discuss the process behind the formation of the first disability committee, which in 1996 initiated cooperation between representatives of disability organizations and the public administration. The chapter will also focus on the negotiations of the Panhellenic Association of the Blind with Attiko Metro and how these interactions affected the course of the design work for the configuration of the metro stations. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an account of the negotiations, interactions, and decisions between Attiko Metro and the contractor of the project, Olympic Metro Consortium, regarding to what extent and how disability provisions were to be applied in the metro network.

A number of theoretical tools will be employed to analyze the empirical material (see also chapter 1). Specifically, I will argue that initially the process of adjusting the metro to disability provisions was a \textit{confined} process consisting of interactions among employees of Attiko Metro and Olympic Metro Consortium. As described in chapter 1, the confinement of research and design processes implies that engineers and architects carry out their work relatively isolated from the rest of society, without engaging with other groups or the public.\textsuperscript{646} Concerned groups such as disability organizations and their advocates may attempt to intervene and establish their participation in the design process as an \textit{obligatory passage point} (OPP). By this is meant that concerned groups succeed in enacting their roles and their experiences in such a way as to establish themselves as important actors for achieving the goals of their research effort, in this case to institutionally establish and mobilize their participation in the configuration of the metro and the implementation of accessibility provisions in the project.

I will also argue that the process of establishing the involvement of disability actors as an OPP involved active research efforts on the part of disability organizations. This research, which is an example of \textit{research in the wild}, consisted of accumulating knowledge and everyday experiences of people with disabilities that have emerged from their interactions with each other and with the material world. The aim of concerned groups was to standardize their participation in the research process. This was to be achieved by the collaboration between research in the wild and confined research in cooperative research efforts. Specifically, the emergence of \textit{hybrid forums} such as the first disability committee as well as the interaction between Attiko Metro and the Association of the Blind indicated such cooperative efforts.

The empirical material for this chapter consists of documents (such as correspondence and directives, laws, manuals, and meeting records) collected during my fieldwork among various organizations and public institutions. This part of the story will also be supported by interviews that I conducted with members of the two

\textsuperscript{645} Mossialos & Davaki 2002: 11. \textit{Health care developments in Greece: Looking back to see forward?}

disability committees who were participants in the process of adjusting the metro to accessibility standards. These actors represent a wide category of informants with different political and professional standpoints.

**Legitimating accessibility in the metro**

The issue of accessibility began to gain significant attention among actors engaged with the metro in the mid-1990s, but it still lacked an institutional and legislative endorsement in the sense that there was no binding legislative act that stipulated accessibility standards in the contract of the metro project. As we saw in chapter 6, the imposition of Instruction 13, which stipulated that the contractor was obliged to submit a study of provisions for persons with special needs, had concretely raised the issue of adjusting the metro system to accessibility facilities. These very first negotiations took place between engineers working for the contractor Olympic Metro Consortium and Attiko Metro. The process was confined in the sense that people with disabilities and their organizations were excluded from opportunities to influence the configuring of the metro. This gap between the disability agenda and the metro project was to be filled by the signing of an amended metro contract.

**PASOK’s return to power and the need for revising the first metro contract**

In October 1993, the re-election of PASOK signified a shift in the party’s ideological rhetoric. By which is meant that the socialist-populist discourse that dominated PASOK’s rhetoric in the 1980’s came to be replaced by a managerial and technocratic agenda aimed at modernizing and Europeanizing Greek society. Tsioubos asserts that starting in 1993 PASOK attempted to bring models of Western European-type democracy into public administration:

> PASOK tried to introduce new ways of governing, new policies, and new instruments for implementing them. This concerned mostly the relationship between public administration and society. At the same time, the EU awarded Greece the second Structural Framework Fund (1995-1999, *authors note*), which focused on the initiation of large infrastructural works. Athens metro was the first major project, which apart from technical adequacy and modern technology signified social dialog and a partnership between society and the government. I am not talking only about an infrastructural modernization, but also about a modernization of the political and social praxis.

Tsioubos’ rather optimistic description of PASOK’s second period in office referred to the challenge that the socialist party faced to modernize and open up the political process for previously excluded groups. This attempt was even more complicated if we take into consideration that PASOK had to challenge well-established state structures that did not favor transparent and participatory governing processes. After its first nine years in government (1981-1989), PASOK also played a role in establishing populist discourses and clientelistic relations with Greek society. According to political scientist Lyrintzis, during the 1980s PASOK attracted and satisfied broad social masses by populist strategies, which secured a stable electoral clientele.

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648 Georgios Tsioubos, interview December 23, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).

649 Lyrintzis, 2005: 244.
As many of my informants pointed out, PASOK’s return to power also signified important changes for the enactment of disability issues within both the public administration and disability organizations. Hristofí argues that the PASOK administration tried to include people with disabilities and their demands in the mainstream political scene. A concrete example of the latter was when PASOK leader Andreas Papandreou immediately after the election appointed Panayiotis Kouroublis, former chairman of ESAEA and one of the most active members of the Greek disability movement, to the position of general secretary of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Kouroublis took over the ministry’s welfare agenda and attempted to enforce the concept of the welfare state by implementing policies in the areas of child protection, care of the elderly, disability policies, provisions for vulnerable social groups, and new social infrastructures.\textsuperscript{650}

Also, increasing interactions of people with disabilities with the central government could be observed in various parts of public administration. Specifically, Leventi describes her relationship to the new leaders in the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works:

> I contacted the minister regularly with small notes (that is why I do not have an archive of our communication). I knew that when the notes reached him, he would read them [...] there was good contact between Laliotis (the new minister) and me. But even the General Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works was interested in our issues. He asked and listened. He took my experiences into consideration. He came to Rhodes during a conference. He just took a military airplane from Athens, stayed for an hour and then left. These were the socialists […]\textsuperscript{651}

The approach of the new PASOK administration also influenced the course of the metro project. There were increasing concerns regarding the effectiveness of the first metro contract (Law 1955/91) and the quality of the work, which led the socialist government to initiate extensive re-negotiations with Olympic Metro Consortium. In September 1993, the two sides started negotiating in the framework of a process that was called a “friendly settlement.” One of the main conflicts between the Greek government and Olympic Metro Consortium concerned the increasing problems in defining the scope of the first contract, an issue that PASOK and the other opposition parties had pointed out during the parliamentary debate on the first metro contract in 1991 (see chapter 6). Because the government and the contractor interpreted the scope of the contract in different ways, several points and stipulations became objects of dispute. The two parties could not agree on which clauses of the contract were included in the estimated cost and which stipulations needed the payment of extra funds by the Greek state. During an interview I conducted with Gerasimos Polis, who as noted earlier was a disabled architect in the Ministry of Health and Welfare, he describes the diffuse character of the first metro contract concerning disability provisions and its implications:

\textsuperscript{650} Kouroublis, 2000: 392-393.

\textsuperscript{651} Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
The first metro contract and the omission of binding clauses concerning accessibility standards is a typical example of erroneous policy and design. Additional tasks imply huge extra costs. This is exactly what the contractor is waiting for. This is the Greek reality. The contractors wait until you add new tasks in order to claim that the existing price concerned the initial agreement. If you demand new things, you have to pay more. It is an issue for negotiations.652

According to the daily newspaper Eleutherotypia, one of the disputed clauses concerned the provisions of accessibility standards.653 Due to these misinterpretations and disagreements Olympic Metro Consortium initiated an international technical investigation, as it was specified in the first contract, regarding the disputed clauses of the first metro contract. The consortium had also submitted more than a hundred objections and appeals to Greek courts concerning the scope of the first metro contract. Tsertikidis estimated the delays in the course of the work to almost 14 months by October 1993, while the estimations of the contractor were 18 months.654

Thus while the first contract was to be re-negotiated and new clauses (including accessibility provisions) were to be integrated in a new agreement, the process that centered on the design and implementation of accessibility standards was still partly confined to a limited number of actors, namely engineers of Attiko Metro and Olympic Metro Consortium. This kind of confinement was, however, to face strong pressure.

**Involvement of concerned disability groups: the blind break the confinement?**

Meanwhile, disability organizations began to challenge the confinement of the process not only by protesting, but also by submitting proposals concerning specific technical aspects of the metro project. The first concrete example of such action took place on April 6, 1994, when the Panhellenic Association of the Blind655 (also member of ESAEA) established the first direct channel of communication between Greek disability organizations and Attiko Metro. The Association submitted a document entitled *Accommodation of Blind Passengers in the Metro* that contained eight concrete suggestions for the improvement of the metro network.656 The letter accompanying the suggestions argued for the necessity of carrying out studies and measures to accommodate people with visual impairments in mass transportation, given the particularities and difficulties that the members of the Association continually face. Specifically, the Association made the following concrete recommendations concerning such features as guiding lines, access to information, installations of signs and gap warnings:

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652 Gerasimos Polis, interview April 14, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
655 See also chapter 3 for a discussion on the emergence and the history of the Panhellenic Association of the Blind.
1. It would be helpful if there were guiding lines along the margins of the entrance of every station, (i.e. some square meters of different surface from the rest of the pavement which indicate to the individual with vision impairments that there is an entrance to the metro there).

2. As has been proved abroad, particularly in England and France, the existence of a computer that provides passengers with relevant information about which platforms serve particular routes, as well as the itinerary of the train and the stations, is useful for all passengers. It would be of considerable importance if these computers had voice services that made them accessible to blind people.

3. The complexity of the spaces and routes of the underground stations makes the mobility of our members difficult and complicated. For this reason we propose the installation of guiding lines on the floors of the stations which will lead from the entrance to different platforms. A computer could provide information in the entrance of every station about the route to each platform. Regardless of whether there will be a computer or not, we suggest installation of the following:
   a. Installation of relief maps in the entrances of the stations and on every platform showing details of the metro
   b. Establishment of an information office in a particular spot in every station

4. Launch of audio announcements of the arrival of each train, destinations and final stops.

5. There should be a 1.5m-colored stripe, made of different material from the rest of the floor, which indicates for the blind, people with restricted vision and the elderly the existence of a gap between the platform and the train.

6. Audio announcement of each station.

7. Installation of signs with large characters on lower levels that are visible to people with restricted vision.

8. For safety reasons, there should not be a big gap between the platform and the train.

In any case, there should be verbal warnings during the opening of the doors.\textsuperscript{657} (author’s emphasis)

The Panhellenic Association of the Blind’s letter did not, however, contain any suggestions about how the various measures could be adapted to the Greek standards. On the other hand, it pointed out that all these measures had been applied abroad with satisfactory results, providing the argument of the “international ideal”.\textsuperscript{658} The letter to Attiko Metro treated these international provisions for the accommodation of blind people in a metro system as optimal solutions for the local issue of accessibility on the new Athens metro. In other words, referring to an international or European ideal legitimized the proposals of the Association.\textsuperscript{659}

Interestingly, the letter did not refer to the handbook that had been written by the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, \textit{Design Principles for Independent Mobility and Living of People with Special Needs}. As discussed in chapter 5, the handbook of the Department had mainly focused on the accommodation of disabilities related to physical mobility. Representatives of the

\textsuperscript{657} Ibid. 1-2.
\textsuperscript{658} Ibid. 2.
\textsuperscript{659} According to the document, the main source of inspiration for these suggestions was an English organization specialized in the production of maps for people with visual impairments (National Register of Maps for the visually handicapped – Royal Geographic Society) and a special unit of the London underground - Unit for disabled passengers. Panhellenic Association of the Blind, 1994: 2-3.
Association had not participated in the writing of the design principles. Furthermore, the Association did not compose and submit their proposal in cooperation with ESSEA. Instead, the Association initiated this communication between the disability movement and Attiko Metro on its own.

What was the response of Attiko Metro to the Association’s concrete suggestions? Attiko Metro replied to the suggestions of the Association two months later, on July 11, through a letter signed by the chairman of the company Leonidas Kikyras. The letter responded to each of the eight proposals that the Association had submitted, describing in detail the actions and technical solutions that Attiko Metro intended to apply and even proposing extra provisions that were not included in the recommendations by the blind. In some cases, Attiko Metro requested the assistance of the Association and proposed that meetings between representatives of the two organizations be initiated in order to investigate the possibilities for further cooperation to facilitate the needs of passengers with visual impairments. Specifically, Attiko Metro explained that the existence of guiding lines on the ground at the entrance of each station was already included in the existing design, since such lines were useful for the safety of all passengers. As indicated in the letter, the method that was tested at that time involved the installation of slates with curves at the top and bottom of each staircase, including those at the entrance of each station. Moreover, this method could be applied to other sites such as the access points for the escalators and elevators. Attiko Metro noted that it considered the help of the Association of the Blind very useful.

The second point of Attiko Metro’s letter referred to the installation of computers that would provide passengers with information. Attiko Metro replied that such facilities were not included in the existing plans. However, the project stipulated the development of an appropriate sign system that would help passengers to identify in which area of the metro they were located and how they could move about in a station. Attiko Metro had not only ordered special signs that were readable by people with visual constraints, the project would also incorporate the Braille system. Attiko Metro indicated that the study and installation of the sign system had just begun, which was why there were no data available at that particular time. Again, Attiko Metro invoked the assistance and contribution of the Association during the process of developing the sign system and checking the proposals of the contractor.

The third point that Attiko Metro commented on in its response to the Association of the Blind was the issue of installing guiding lines on the floor of the stations that would lead from the entrance to different platforms. According to Attiko Metro, while such a system had previously been applied to different transport systems, it was not clear if Athens metro would adopt this type of system. There were concerns

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662 Ibid. 6.
663 Ibid. 1.
664 Ibid.
665 Ibid.
666 Ibid.
that a complicated network of lines could hinder the mobility of blind people rather than assist it. Attiko Metro had already ordered Olympic Metro Consortium to prepare a plan that would show the arrangement of guiding lines on the floor of a typical station and which would help in making the decision about whether or not such a network of guiding lines should be installed. The Association of the Blind was encouraged to submit suggestions.

Similarly, Attiko Metro also treated the question concerning whether or not relief maps should be installed at the entrances of the stations and on every platform as part of the study that Olympic Metro Consortium would conduct regarding the sign system. However, the consortium was not responsible for the procurement of relief maps and thus the implementation of this provision implied an extra cost. Similarly, the existing plan for the metro did not include information offices in every station. Attiko Metro pointed out that an appropriate sign system and the assistance of the conductors, who would constantly be at the ticket offices, could coordinate the flow of passengers and supervise the elevators for use by people with disabilities.

One of the most common problems in the construction of a metro system is the gap between the platforms and the trains. According to Attiko Metro, the suggestion of the Association of the Blind to install a colored line made of different material from the rest of the floor had already been integrated into the design of the system. The line would be one meter wide, consisting of two strongly contrasting colors and made of different material from the rest of the floor. However, Attiko Metro explained that the proposed 1.5m width was very broad and the length of the platforms was only 4m which meant that one third of the platform surface would be covered by the warning line. Moreover, the engineers at Attiko Metro explained that the gap between the platforms and the trains is necessary for the safety of the passengers and the accommodation of people with disabilities. Thus, the size of the gap constituted a very important aspect for the construction of this system. Attiko Metro’s aim was that the gap would not be bigger than 10cm. At the time that the letter was written, this aim was realistic only in stations with rectilinear platforms (that is stations that did not form a curve), while many of the metro stations formed a curve. These stations needed a different kind of approach and Attiko Metro intended to find a solution.

The gap between two cars also constituted a problem, since it was not easily distinguishable by people with visual impairments. However, this kind of gap was unavoidable, argued Attiko Metro, because it was necessary for a train to be able to move on a curve without two cars touching each other. The size of the gap depended on the narrowest curve of the metro network and the coupling mechanism of each car. Attiko Metro recognized that the question posed by the Association regarding the gap between the cars was a very serious issue and the company would study all the possible alternatives, such as springs or screens, which could be adjusted to the

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667 Ibid. 2.
668 Ibid.
669 Ibid. 3.
670 Ibid. 4.
corners of the adjacent cars.\textsuperscript{671} Comments and recommendation were again most welcome.

An issue related to the gap was audio announcements of doors opening on the train as requested by the Association. Attiko Metro argued that audio announcements as each station was approached should be enough. The doors would not open until the train stopped. Both the station announcement and the stopping of the train, as well as a special audio signal (buzz) before the closing of the doors, were sufficient to notify blind passengers.\textsuperscript{672} The recommendation concerning audio announcements of approaching stations inside the cars was an idea already integrated in the objectives of the project, according to Attiko Metro. Similarly, the proposal on implementing signs with large characters on lower levels was also part of the existing agenda as one of the main tools for accommodating the needs of people with disabilities. No data were available yet, but Attiko Metro aimed to cooperate with and assist the Association on this issue.\textsuperscript{673} The Association’s recommendation for audio announcements of the arrival of each train (as well as their destinations and final stops) constituted an exception for Attiko Metro: such a provision would be applied only to stations where trains from different routes and with different destinations passed through, or in cases of delays and emergencies. Otherwise, Attiko Metro considered the sound made by the approaching trains adequate to notify passengers with visual problems.\textsuperscript{674}

Finally, Attiko Metro indicated that it was not yet decided if doors with different colors from the rest of the car would be incorporated in the scope of the work. The existing design specified that the type of doors to be installed were distinguishable by visually impaired passengers because they were made of different material from the rest of the car. However, Attiko Metro proposed that the issue of colored doors should be part of the agenda to be discussed with the Association.\textsuperscript{675}

Notably, Attiko Metro’s letter was not restricted to responding to the specific demands of the disability organization. The company also suggested a number of measures and provisions that had not been brought up by the Association. Specifically, Attiko Metro’s letter suggested four additional provisions to accommodate the visually impaired:

1. The escalators will be equipped with \textit{audio warning signals} that can be activated by pressing the emergency button. Immediately, the stationmaster will receive a signal in his/her office.
2. The elevators will be equipped with \textit{audio messages} that will announce the levels at every station, systems for internal communication between the elevator and the conductor’s office, and an announcement speaker. The control panel in the elevators will include the \textit{Braille system}.
3. The \textit{handrails} will be one meter in length.
4. From the control room, the stationmaster will operate a \textit{surveillance system} for automated ticket purchases. This will help in the detection of passengers who need specific help (author's emphasis).\textsuperscript{676}

\textsuperscript{671} Ibid. 5
\textsuperscript{672} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{673} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{674} Ibid. 3.
\textsuperscript{675} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{676} Ibid. 6.
Generally, Attiko Metro thus responded very positively to the Association of the Blind’s concrete proposals. Moreover, Attiko Metro stated that it aimed to establish a broader cooperation with the Association, proposing that meetings between the two organizations should be initiated and assigning the coordinator of the metro work, Hristos Vogiazoglou, as the link between Attiko Metro and the Association. Attiko Metro’s letter made clear that the ideas, suggestions, and involvement of the blind in the course of the project were valuable.\footnote{Ibid.}

One important question is why this new form of communication was established between Attiko Metro and the Association of the Blind. The Panhellenic Association of the Blind constituted one of the most dynamic and organized concerned groups among disability organizations. As discussed in chapter 3, the blind were the first who established a disability organization (in 1932) and they were the first to claim economic and educational demands from the Greek government during the 1950s. The Association of the Blind also contributed significantly to the politicization of disability organizations by reacting against charity institutions and the control of the Greek Orthodox Church in the 1970s. The blind were the first to be represented in local municipalities and institutions of the Greek public administration during the 1980s.\footnote{See also Kouroublis, 2000: 325-355.} Finally, the first and the current chairman of ESAEA are both blind.

The increasing political influence of the Panhellenic Association of the Blind played a significant role in explaining why the blind were the first to concretely express their demands vis-à-vis the metro project and why Attiko Metro was receptive to their claims. The leading role of the blind among disability organizations also helps to explain why the Association did not seek the institutional role of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs or ESAEA during its interactions with Attiko Metro. Through their letter to Attiko Metro, the Association did not only attempt to intervene in the course of the metro work and to introduce new forms of communication among concerned disability groups and the central administration, they also intended to influence the configuration of technical details.

At the same time, accessibility standards were to be additionally standardized by a binding legislative act, namely the bill accompanying the second metro contract.

**Parliamentary debate on the second metro contract: enacting accessibility**

Meanwhile, the “friendly settlement” of September 1993 between the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Attiko Metro, and Olympic Metro Consortium had finally been translated into a revised contract on October 18, 1994. The three parties agreed on specific technical and contractual matters and settled on an additional amount of 54.6 billion drachmas (approximately 1.6 million euros) for the extra work and the delays that it implied.\footnote{Introductory speech by Pantelis Tsertikidis (PASOK), during the parliamentary debate concerning the validation of the second metro contract. Greek Parliament, 1995: 1777. “Parliament’s records, Plenum”. In Volume 3, Sessions December 1 – 21, 1994.} This contract is referred to as “the second metro contract” and included an additional allocation of funds for specific extra work that included accessibility provisions. The new contract also
provided a new timetable for the project, which defined October 30, 1998 as the date of completion.\textsuperscript{680}

On December 15, 1994, the new Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Kostas Laliotis, submitted a bill (Bill 2274/94) for debate in the Greek Parliament concerning ratification of the new contract.\textsuperscript{681} Before discussing the contents of this contract with regard to accessibility, and specifically how and why accessibility was included in this contract, I will first review the background to the contract and some of its general provisions.

The rationale behind the second metro contract as stipulated in Bill 2274/94 had emerged from specific conflicts between the owner of the project (that is the Greek state represented by Attiko Metro) and the contractor (that is Olympic Metro Consortium) concerning the first metro contract.\textsuperscript{682} The foreword of the new contract explained that, following negotiations, the two parties had decided to amend the initial contract:

> Since the contracting parties wished to resolve in a friendly manner their disagreements, they decided to start negotiations that would reach mutually agreeable solutions. The realization of these solutions required amendments, corrections, and explanations of the initial contract. This would contribute to an improved implementation and accommodation of both the owner's and the contractor's interests.\textsuperscript{683}

The parliamentary debate that began on December 15, 1994 concerning ratification of the second metro contract resembled the debate on the first metro contract in 1991. However, the two main parties had switched roles. Now it was the PASOK government that submitted the bill for debate and it was New Democracy that led the opposition in Parliament. The debate was divided into two parts. The first part, which is the most important for our story and will be presented in the following, focused on the significance and appropriateness of the second contract. Specifically, PASOK members of Parliament, together with members of the government, argued for the importance of drawing up a new metro contract that would resolve all kinds of misinterpretations caused by the first contract and speed up the construction process. On the other hand, members of New Democracy argued against the second contract, partly due to cost reasons and suspicions of corruption. The parliamentary debate on the second metro contract became an arena for conflict between representatives of PASOK and New Democracy.

The debate was started by the introducer of the bill, PASOK member of Parliament Pantelis Tsertikidis. Tsertikidis gave an overview of the development of the metro


\textsuperscript{681} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{683} Ibid.
project, the problems that had arisen and the solutions that the new contract would provide. Specifically, he listed a number of conditions in the first metro contract that were unfavorable for the Greek state but that were not included in the procurement volumes. These conditions referred primarily to various financial stipulations:

1. The interest-free advance payment, 15% of the total cost, that the first contract obliged the Greek government to pay to the contractor
2. The method of international mediation for resolving potential differences between the contracting parties
3. The first contract specified interest in arrears consistent with the inter-bank rate of 34%, instead of 6% that the procurement volumes stipulated
4. The first metro contract required that 6% of the budget was to be reserved for compensation of the contractor in case of geotechnical alterations, as well as compensation of the contractor in cases of delays longer than those that Law 1418/84 (law that regulates the procurement and construction of public works in Greece) specified.
5. The initial contract did not include the installation of air-conditioning in the stations, and it downgraded the insulation system of the underground constructions of the network.\textsuperscript{684}

According to Tsertikidis, the new PASOK government, fearful that the negotiations between the Olympic Metro Consortium and Attiko Metro which were initiated in September 1993 would be long-lasting and might lead to repeated controversies in the future, had decided to initiate negotiations with these companies that would lead to the signing of a new contract.\textsuperscript{685} The ambition of the government was that the new contract would resolve uncertainties, specify the objectives and the responsibilities of the contractor, and rectify the omissions of the first contract.

As already mentioned, the new contract also included extra work that had been vaguely described by the first contract and which implied considerable extra cost. Apart from strictly traffic issues, the proposed amendments focused on population settlement due to disturbance or expropriations, natural barriers, soil substance, existence of archaeological sites or findings, and most notably for this story improvement of the project regarding accessibility provisions.\textsuperscript{686} These amendments would enhance the quality of the project but at a significant extra cost.\textsuperscript{687} The contractor’s estimate of the cost of the extra work amounted to a gigantic 190 billion drachmas (approximately 557.5 million euros). Tsioubos recalls the importance of the extra cost and the negotiated outcome that was finally reached:

The initial estimation of this cost by the construction companies caused immediate reaction by the Greek government and, particularly, by the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works. The contractor saw the extra work as the golden

\textsuperscript{685} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{687} Balourdos, Mouriki, Sakellaropoulos, Theodoropoulos, & Tsakiris, 2001: 10. “Political sociology of the car system - Athens case study A: The Underground Extension Project”.

182
chance to make big money. After hard negotiations between the Ministry, Attiko Metro and the contractor, the negotiating parties reached an agreement, integrating into the contract the updated standards compatible with the potential of the Greek economy.\textsuperscript{688}

Importantly for this story, during the parliamentary debate PASOK’s Tsertikidis referred to the importance of providing the metro with the means of accommodating people with special needs. This was the first concrete reference to such provisions during any of the parliamentary debates on the metro contracts. It was also the first time that the question of accessibility and disability standards was linked by a Greek official to a kind of modernization. Tsertikidis argued:

The new contract configures a complete technical and functional objective that will be constructed according to modern standards and improvements, functional and qualitative, as for example, the provisions for people with special needs […]\textsuperscript{689}

The proposed amended contract for the metro project in Bill 2274/94 specified the implementation of accessibility provisions in two articles. First, Article 1 stipulated that the new lump sum price for the project included Instruction 13 as extra work.\textsuperscript{690}

As noted in chapter 6, Instruction 13 referred to the clause in the original contract that obliged the contractor to conduct and submit a study on provisions for people with disabilities in the metro project.\textsuperscript{691} Second, another article of the new contract specified that the studies and constructions, as described in Clause 31.2.3.5 of the original contract, would be included in the new lump sum price.\textsuperscript{692} These two articles meant that accessibility provisions became part of the scope of the work and part of the total price. Once and for all, provisions for the disabled were institutionalized and the funds required for their realization were allocated.

The proposed second metro contract raised significant criticism during the parliamentary debate. The opposition parties with New Democracy in the lead, expressed concerns and objections concerning the new contract. New Democracy spokesman Vasilis Korkopoulos pointed out that the new contract was disadvantageous for the Greek state since it included unnecessary extra costs to the benefit of the contractor that were not resolved by the new lump sum price.\textsuperscript{693} In addition to this, he considered the amount of extra costs to be overestimated.

\textsuperscript{688} Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
specifically using the example of provisions for people with special needs as a typical case of overcharging from the side of the contractor. While the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works estimated the extra cost for this work to be 3 billion drachmas (approximately 8.8 million euros), the contractor claimed 6.5 billions (approximately 19 million euros).\textsuperscript{694} The lack of obligatory stipulations in the first metro contract with regard to accessibility provisions was successfully utilized by the contractor, who imposed extraordinary financial claims during the negotiations for the second metro contract. Tsioubos also noted that the contractor requested a huge amount of money for integrating accessibility in the work. Following tough negotiations between Attiko Metro and the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, the extra cost concerning accessibility provisions decreased considerably.\textsuperscript{695}

The Greek Parliament ratified the new contract on December 29, 1994 by passing Law 2274/94.\textsuperscript{696} This was not a result of a consensus between the political parties but rather the outcome of the power relations between parties as a consequence of the election, where PASOK members represented the majority and voted for the ratification of the new contract.\textsuperscript{697} The issue of accessibility in the metro had finally been translated into a legislative act. The relevant articles of the second metro contract articulated the needs of people with disabilities with regard to the developing metro.

But how and why did accessibility become part of the official political agenda and how and why did the second contract stipulate the implementation of disability provisions? There were a number of factors that played a significant role in these developments. As I will show in the following, combinations of entities in specific interactions and alliances contributed to the adoption of the accessibility provisions. First, specific politicians linked to the socialist government showed strong interest in disability issues and actively promoted these issues. Particularly, Tsioubos explains that starting in 1993 PASOK’s ideological orientation aimed at improving the existing infrastructure and constructing new works adjusted to international standards of accessibility, rather than accommodating disabled people by allowance policies only.\textsuperscript{698} Leventi argues that she enrolled Kostas Laliotis, who was PASOK’s new Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, and was adamant that the metro project should be accessible:

I talked to Laliotis persistently for a long period. I was trying to convince him that it would be unacceptable if the new metro did not include accessibility provisions, when

\textsuperscript{694} This is based on the data that Korkopoulos (New Democracy) submitted to the Parliament during the debate on the second metro contract. Greek Parliament, 1995: 1780. “Parliament’s records, Plenum”. In Volume 3, Sessions December 1 – 21, 1994.

\textsuperscript{695} Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003.


\textsuperscript{698} Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003.
really old metro systems all over the world were renovated and adjusted to disability standards [...] 699

The new minister was finally convinced of the significance of such investments and agreed to allocate extra funds for provisions to accommodate people with disabilities in the second metro contract. The current chairman of ESAAE, Yannis Vardakastanis, commented that Laliotis believed in the idea of accessibility; he was extremely sensitive to these issues. 700 Laliotis’ consultant Georgios Tsioubos claims with regard to the stance of PASOK politicians:

When the new PASOK government was formed in 1993, new politicians took over ministerial places. These new ministers realized that they could not procure for or create novel infrastructures without taking into consideration the existing disability issues, which they had assisted and promoted through their political stance. They realized that by ignoring these questions they would first lose a great deal of their election clientele, and second the new infrastructures that they procured for would create negative associations with their names. Otherwise his opponents and voters would say: “Yes, congratulations Mr. Laliotis that you made a great new metro, but it was you who talked about social policies, welfare state etc and now you totally ignored disabled people”. 701

The second factor that contributed to the inclusion of provisions for accessibility in the second contract was that disability organizations continued to exercise political pressure in many directions in order to problematize their claims. It was not only the receptivity of Laliotis that allowed for the translation of the accessibility argument into a concrete governmental decision. Hristofi explains that the second metro contract and the integration of disability standards were not only a result of Laliotis’ goodwill, but also an outcome of the increasing political pressure that both disability organizations and their advocates in public administration exerted on political officials. 702 According to architect Katsiotis, disability organizations succeeded in imposing their claims through an ambitious and goal-directed effort:

These people have applied pressure in every direction: ministries, committees, etc. They have made impressive achievements. Their ideas and proposals are extremely valuable. If you are not disabled yourself, you cannot design a system that includes facilities for the disabled. Their presence during the decision-making is absolutely necessary. 703

Nevertheless, the fact that the project was still in its initial phase of tunnel boring and other subsoil work made the issue of the adjustment of the stations to disability provisions somewhat premature. The work of configuring the stations in detail had hardly begun. The lack of significant events or written material indicates that there was an administrative truce between Attiko Metro and disability organizations from 1994 (when the second contract was ratified by the Greek Parliament) until 1996. This did not imply that Attiko Metro stopped the internal processes of configuring the metro work. However, in 1996 the Greek social and political life was again to

699 Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
701 Georgios Tsioubos, interview December 23, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
702 Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005.
703 Markos Katsiotis, interview November 14, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
experience turbulence. The health of PASOK’s leader, Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou, deteriorated and after an internal party election, Konstantinos Simitis took over the Greek government in January 1996. This implied significant changes to the ideological and political profile of PASOK.

**Disability issues under modernization: institutionalizing obligatory passage points and the creation of new hybrid forums**

The new PASOK Government made the slogans of modernization of Greek society and stabilization of the Greek economy the main tasks of its programmatic goals. Starting in 1993 under the leadership of Papandreou and with considerable emphasis from 1996 onwards under the leadership of Simitis, the objective of becoming included in the European Monetary Union became a major factor that influenced the ideological, programmatic and social profile of PASOK. The modernization project inspired by Simitis contested not only the old populist methods that PASOK had employed during the 1980s but also the conservative ideological and operational framework represented by New Democracy. The governing style shifted to being managerial and technocratic. The context of Simitis’ modernization lay close to the notion of Europeanisation. Urban political scientists Getimis and Grigoriadou identify three major outcomes of the Europeanisation process on actors, institutions, and policies in the Greek political context:

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705 Lyrintzis, 2005: 246.

706 Modernization in this context implied the package of economic, social, and political reforms defined by their liberalizing character, as advocated by the governments of Konstantinos Simitis, from 1996 to 2004, Featherstone, 2005: 224. However, PASOK’s modernization project also faced strong criticism. Lyrintzis explains that the term was never really explained or theoretically developed by its introducers. Modernization was not translated into concrete strategies in major sectors of the public sector, such as education or healthcare, where partial measures were implemented, Lyrintzis, 2005: 247 “The Changing Party System: Stable Democracy, Contested ‘Modernization’”.


709 Featherstone, 2005: 225.

710 Referring to Diamandouros 1994, “Cultural Dualism and Political Change in Post-Authoritarian Greece”, Featherstone explains that the equation between modernization and Europeanisation in the Greek context had been a part of a long Greek cultural tradition, Featherstone, 2005: 227. Dyson & Goetz 2003 define Europeanisation as a ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ sociopolitical interactive process in which domestic polities, politics and public policies are shaped by European integration and in which domestic actors use European integration to shape the domestic arena [...], Dyson & Goetz 2003: 20, “Living with Europe: Power, Constraint and Contestation”. Elsewhere, the concept of Europeanisation is described as the processes through which the EU political, social and economic dynamics became part of the logic of domestic discourses, identities, political structures and public policies, Radaelli, 2000, “Whither Europeanization? Concept stretching and substantive change”, cited in Getimis & Grigoriadou, 2004: 6. “The Europeanisation of Urban Governance in Greece: A Dynamic and Contradictory Process”.

186
One of the key aspects of Europeanisation that the new government tried to apply to different areas of public life and the public decision-making sphere was opening up for increased involvement of interest groups. Especially after the EU granted the second Community Support Framework (1995-1999), the Greek government attempted to integrate relevant social groups into the policy-making process. This program, through its provision of financial resources and new organizational principles, was to constitute the main vehicle of Europeanisation. In the following, I will discuss how modernization/Europeanisation also affected the relationship of the Greek government to disability organizations. The first important development occurred in the summer of 1996.

**ESAEA becomes “Social Partner”: the institutionalization of an obligatory passage point**

On July 10, 1996, the enactment of Law 2430/96 officially appointed ESAEA as the “Social Partner” of the Greek government for issues concerning disability. By social partner was meant that ESAEA became the official representative of the disability movement in all negotiations with the Greek state with regard to disability policies and accessibility provisions. According to this law, “ESAEA submits every year to the President of the Greek Parliament a report on the overall confrontation of human and social rights of people with disabilities”. Moreover, the law stipulated December 3 as the annual national day for people with disabilities. As an ESAEA employee, Anthi Hatzipetrou, notes:

> Since 1996 and the adoption of Law 2430/96, ESAEA is represented on various committees, among state officials, representatives of the private sector, and other non-governmental organizations.

The fact that ESAEA was given this privileged position raised several objections among other disability organizations. Many representatives and individuals with disabilities reacted against such an authoritative and monopolistic power position for ESAEA. Polis argues that this position also had certain negative consequences for ESAEA:

> The adoption of Law 2430/96 created a political mess. This political mess has to do with the fact that in the last five to ten years ESAEA has played an administrative role, with tragic consequences. Such a role does not allow ESAEA to be assertive and

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712 Ibid. 21.
714 Greek National Confederation of Disabled People, ESAEA 1999: 3. “Report on the accessibility of people with special needs in the built environment, public transport means, communication and information” (in Greek, my translation).
716 Anthi Hatzipetrou, interview November 11, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
argumentative towards the central government. But there was a huge downside with this scenario: ESAEA does not take responsibility for its actions [...] This development, in relation to the fact that the leadership of every federation that comprised ESAEA was part of interpersonal games with the current government, led to half optimal solutions and negotiations full of compromises [...] 717

Polis’ objection reveals one of the conflicts regarding the role of concerned groups in influencing political power. Had all the years of isolation and oppression hindered equal participation in social processes? Had disability organizations become objects of manipulation by ambitious politicians or state officials who sought desperately for allies because of the enduring lack of effective disability policies? The chairman of the Panhellenic Union of Paraplegic and Physically Challenged, Spyros Staurianopoulos notes:

If you want me to answer this question politically, I would say that the political parties want disabled people to be isolated. They need them only for their votes and not as productive human beings. They consider disabled people as patients who should stay inactive taking medicines. Perhaps they could provide them with a benefit so they would not get into the way. 718

Political economists Mouzelis and Pagoulatos indicate that during the late 1980s political parties in Greece had competed for the control of organized interest groups. 719 By the mid-1990s, disability organizations had been upgraded into a co-administrator of power. But did they have the background and the competence to assume such a role? Critical voices claimed that the government manipulated the disability movement and that non-complacent actors were cut off through “democratic processes” as Staurianopoulos explains:

Do not think that they have Kalashnikov firearms. No! They managed to manipulate the movement through controlled elections. This is how the disability movement is built. The government, in order to control associations, has its own mechanisms [...] 720

The present chairman of ESAEA argues that despite downsides and problems, the Greek disability movement nevertheless had moved forward by the mid-1990s:

The disability movement was, is, and will be real, comprehensive, alive, and close to the citizens. It intervenes and supports. It has the voice and the power of every individual with disability, his/her own collective social home. This is what the disability movement has stood for. The disability movement that in the convention of ESAEA in 1993 had 203 participants and in 2003 had 1,350 - all elected from the ground level of the movement. That means that the organized power of this field has multiplied six-fold and more. Isn’t this the way we all are judged? Today ESAEA exists in Athens, in Thessalonica, in Patras. Do we have problems? Too many! But we confront them in a democratic process. We are creating 14 regional federations in order to democratically decentralize our movement [...] 721

717 Gerasimos Polis, interview September 8, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
718 Spyros Staurianopoulos, interview November 12, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
720 Spyros Staurianopoulos, interview November 12, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
721 Yannis Vardakastanis, interview July 6, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
The role of ESAEA and other disability organizations in representing and asserting the interests of people with disabilities, carrying out a reflective discussion of their identity and claims, and participating in political processes with the government as a partner was very crucial to the development of the metro toward increased accessibility. An important part of the agenda was to create public spaces where public administrators, scientists, experts, representatives from ESAEA or other disability representatives and politicians could negotiate with each other.

The emergence of the first disability committee: a hybrid forum

The formation of Simitis’ government in 1996 was accompanied by the promotion to governmental posts of those PASOK members who were bearers of the modernization/Europeanisation project. Tsioubos notes that several politicians who ascribed to the modernization project began to realize that the concepts of unobstructed mobility and easy access to the built environment were questions that concerned many specific groups such as people with disabilities:

Politicians recognized that both disability and accessibility affected large social groups. It was not only people with physical or mental impairments, but also temporarily injured, elderly, mothers with perambulators or pregnant women, etc who sought easy access to the built environment. At the same time, the initiation of new infrastructural projects financed by EU funds implied the broad social demand for the consideration of the notion of accessibility as the cornerstone of social and political inclusion for people with disabilities [...].

One of the “modernizers” that recognized the importance of opening up the central administration for people with disabilities and problematizing disability claims was PASOK member of Parliament Anastasios Mantelis. In September 1996, Mantelis was appointed to the position of Deputy Minister of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, where he undertook responsibility for its Division for Public Administration. One of the main tasks of the division focused on state-citizen relations. A special directorate entitled “State-Citizen” was assigned to deal with these questions. This directorate was responsible for configuring, designing and supervising information campaigns and limiting bureaucracy between...
the public administration and citizens. According to Mary Kotronia, who was director of the directorate, Mantelis was very supportive of this work:

I worked with questions concerning state-citizen relations. I initiated projects like the implementation of phone applications from public administration, the map of citizens’ rights, and the Greek Ombudsman, which constituted new orientations for the central administration towards the citizen. Mantelis was a zealous supporter of my ideas. This is how we cooperated.726

Kotronia, who had gained significant experience in disability issues through her previous participation in international institutions such as the EU and OECD, began to provide the minister with proposals and ideas concerning the accessibility of people with disabilities in public administration. Kotronia notes that one of the most important parts of her work was promoting the accessibility of people with disabilities in the public arena, both physically and in an administrative way.727 Hristofi also observes that Mantelis was very open to disability issues and was willing to support relevant initiatives.728 One of the ideas that Mantelis translated into a concrete measure was the formation in October 1996 of a cross-ministerial committee729 between three ministries: the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization; the Ministry of Health and Welfare; and the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works. The focus of this committee would be specifically disability and accessibility issues in public administration and the public built environment.730 How was this idea problematized and the committee mobilized?

Disability theorists Campbell and Oliver note that no account of the disability movement and its achievements would be complete without recognition of the individuals involved.731 In the process that led to the forming of the cross-ministerial committee, individuals with disabilities played significant roles. One crucial actor was the disabled architect Gerasimos Polis (see also chapter 6). Sociologist and committee member Stratis Hatziharalabous points out that the idea for founding the committee emerged to a great extent from the problems that Polis, who at that time worked for the Directorate for the Elderly and People with Special Needs of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, faced at his workplace.732 Polis realized that the (physical) building that housed the Ministry of Health and Welfare and other ministries was not accessible to individuals whose mobility depended on

726 Mary Kotronia, interview April 14, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
727 Ibid.
728 Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005.
729 Unfortunately, as many of my informants pointed out (specifically interviews with Tsioubos, Kotronia, Hristofi, Hatziharalampous) it proved impossible to find archived records and documents that could reveal and substantiate the context of the discussions. Thus this section is based on interviews that I conducted with members of the committee and directives that the committee sent to different public authorities.
wheelchairs. With the support of the general secretary of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Kouroublis, Polis contacted different public administrators who had experience in dealing with accessibility in public buildings. Polis managed to enroll important actors, primarily public administrators at the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization. Polis notes that this effort had a snowball effect.\textsuperscript{733}

Specifically, Polis wrote a letter to Euagellia Vasileiou, then head of the Directorate for the Simplification of Processes and Productivity of the General Secretary of Public Administration. In his letter, Polis explained the difficulties that he faced in public buildings. Vasileiou forwarded Polis’ letter to the head of the General Directorate of Administrative Organization and Processes of the General Secretary of Public Administration, Aliki Koutsoumari.\textsuperscript{734} Vasileiou and Koutsoumari decided to form a cross-ministerial committee concerning disability and accessibility issues in the public administration and buildings. With the approval and support of Minister Mantelis, they began searching for representatives from different public authorities and ministries who could participate in the committee.\textsuperscript{735} They also contacted an architect with experience of accessibility provisions from the Division of Technical Services of Athens Technical University (EMP) and two individuals with disabilities.\textsuperscript{736} These actors formed a group that would deal with disability issues, namely the “first disability committee” that consisted of the following influential actors from various parts of the public administration.

\textbf{Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization}

- \textit{Aliki Koutsoumari}, Head of the General Directorate of Administrative Organization and Processes of the General Secretary of Public Administration (chairman of the committee).
- \textit{Euagellia Vasileiou}, Head of the Directorate for the Simplification of Processes and Productivity of the General Secretary of Public Administration.
- \textit{Panayiotis Karkatsoulis}, Employee of the special scientific staff of the General Secretary of Public Administration.
- \textit{Stella Kivelou – Hiotini}, Employee of the special scientific staff of the General Secretary of Public Administration.

\textbf{Ministry of Health and Welfare}


\textbf{Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works}

- \textit{Georgios Tsinabos}, sociologist – special scientific associate at the office of the Minister of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works.
- Adjunct: \textit{Stamatina Verdesi}, architect, employee of the ministry.

\textbf{Athens Technical University (EMP)}

- \textit{Markos Katsiotis}, architect employee at the Division of Technical Services.\textsuperscript{737}

\textsuperscript{733} Gerasimos Polis, personal communication October 24, 2005.
\textsuperscript{734} These directorates were departments within the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization.
\textsuperscript{735} Markos Katsiotis, interview November 14, 2003.
\textsuperscript{736} Stratis Hatziharalabous, interview March 10, 2003.

191
The overall aim of this committee was to adjust the public administrative and built environment to disability standards. Minister Mantelis gives an account of his motivation to initiate the first committee:

People with disabilities constitute an important part of our society, almost 10 to 15%. If you add to that percentage everyone with temporary difficulties, pregnant women, the elderly etc, you will realize that a great deal of the population is excluded from moving and traveling. This is why I started this committee, which would try to design and produce actions and mobilizations for the accommodation of accessibility problems in the public sector.\footnote{Anastasios Mantelis, interview March 7, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).}

According to Maurokefalos, who was a member of the committee, the purpose of the committee was to design policies, institutions, laws, and rules to include accessibility issues as well as to raise disability awareness in governmental policy-making:

The committee at the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization had an institution-making role. They created laws, directives, and regulations that they promoted through directives to public services concerning the accessibility and free mobility of people with disabilities, not only on mass transportation, but also in public buildings.\footnote{Dionysios Maurokefalos, interview September 9, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).}

The Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization formally defined the role of the committee:

The objective of the committee is the investigation of the general unhindered access and accommodation of people with special needs in public services, both central and regional, in the short- and the long run. The committee will thoroughly investigate and study this issue, and submit proposals to the authorities.\footnote{Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, 1996: 2. “Decision for the initiation of a cross-ministerial committee and the appointment of members” (in Greek, my translation).}

Besides being committee members with disabilities, both Polis and Hatziharalabous were also members of disability organizations.\footnote{Hatziharalabous is the chairman of the Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients, while Polis belongs to the Greek Paraplegics Association.} After a short time, two new members began to participate in the committee, namely Zei (who was a member of the Greek organization for people with multiple sclerosis) and Koufalis (who also was disabled). Hatziharalabous explains that the committee in various ways enrolled almost twenty people.\footnote{Stratis Hatziharalabous, interview March 10, 2003.} Thus disability organizations and their representatives did not only contribute with their knowledge and experience on disability issues, but they also began to get involved in the design of concrete strategies for promoting and applying disability standards, public buildings and public spaces.
According to Hatziharalabous, the committee initially worked in an exploratory way by tracing major problems related to accessibility in public spaces. At the same time, members of the committee attempted to utilize the work conducted by the working groups at the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, in which both Katsiotis and Tsioubos, members of the new committee, had previously participated. Katsiotis explains that the 16 design principles that Leventi’s group had published were to be promoted in the whole public administration, that is, in all ministries and public authorities. The committee was there to supervise their implementation.

One could argue that the initiation of this committee marked the institutional participation of people with disabilities in hybrid decision-making forums in the public and private sector. By this I mean forums that consisted of public administrators, experts on disabilities, and representatives from the disability organizations that negotiated on technical issues concerning accessibility. At the same time, it signified the establishment of the issue of accessibility as an explicit task of public administration. People with disabilities and their organizations became part of processes that were to lead to the re-configuration of public administration facilities and the built environment. All of my informants who participated in the committee pointed out that the way that the committee worked was effective in overcoming bureaucratic obstacles to implementing decisions and proposals concerning accessibility issues. Mantelis explains how the committee tackled bureaucracy:

> We received the suggestions of the committee and we tried to formulate concrete proposals concerning the implementation of practical solutions. Our philosophy was that nobody should be excluded from public services. I personally supervised the implementation and promotion of different actions. I did not let bureaucracy affect the efficiency of the committee. These ideas came directly to my office and I promoted them without delay. We wanted to improve things, to withdraw both physical and administrative barriers.

Among other things, the committee attempted to identify and categorize different kinds of disability issues. The procedure was that the committee formulated the directives which were later issued and promoted by the ministry to several public authorities, questioning the condition of public buildings and problematizing accessibility awareness. Two examples of directives issued by the committee will illustrate its work within both the built and administrative environments and how the committee co-produced disability issues together with laws or regulations and an accessible built environment.

**Directive 1: accessibility in the built environment and public buildings**

In December 1996, the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization sent a directive to all ministries, signed personally by Deputy

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743 Ibid.
744 “Design Principles for Independent Mobility and Living of People with Special Needs”, see chapter 5.
745 Markos Katsiotis, interview October 24, 2005.
746 Anastasios Mantelis, interview March 7, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
Minister Mantelis.\textsuperscript{747} I will refer to this directive as “the first directive” of the committee. The directive provided technical solutions for eliminating architectural barriers to accessibility during the design, construction or renovation of public buildings.\textsuperscript{748} These solutions had been suggestions put forward by the first disability committee. The first directive began by defining the concepts of dysfunctional planning of space, problematic designs of buildings and the built environment as architectural barriers to accessibility and even who disabled people are.\textsuperscript{749} The directive implicitly adopted a social model perspective on disability and explained that people with disabilities faced daily problems and exclusions that marginalized them and made them dependent due to inaccessible and “hostile” public buildings. Specific provisions that reflected accessibility awareness in the design of buildings and increased accessibility were a prerequisite for achieving independence for people with disabilities.\textsuperscript{750}

The directive acknowledged that existing buildings that housed public offices did not take into consideration accessibility provisions for all citizens. Through its first directive, the committee sought to provide equality in mobility and accommodate all citizens. Specifically, the committee stated when designing new public buildings or evaluating existing constructions, the following building codes must be abided by:

1. The General Building Code – GOK (Law 1577/85, Official Government Gazette 210/A’/18-12-85, article 29. clause 5a and 5b)
2. Building Structure Code (Decision 3046/304/1989, Official Government Gazette 59/D’/3-2-89, article 13, 14, 16 and 24).\textsuperscript{751}

These codes were already in place since they constituted previously enacted laws that provided architects and engineers with technical accessibility standards.\textsuperscript{752} However, the document recognized that the existing clauses were not enough to ensure the construction of accessible buildings, and that additional or supplementary stipulations should be considered. Therefore, the committee listed a number of extra obligatory stipulations. These were inspired by the 16 design principles that had been formulated in the handbook written by the Department for Research on People with Special Needs in 1990.

\textsuperscript{747} Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, 1996. “Assurance of access and accommodation of disabled individuals in public authorities: Directives related to the elimination of architectural barriers in the design of new public buildings or renovation of existing constructions”. Register number DIADP/26534.
\textsuperscript{748} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{749} For reasons of accuracy I have to mention here that the document specifically refers to people disabled by architectural or social barriers, rather than disabled people. The direct translation from Greek to English would be ‘blocked people’. As defined by the letter, blocked people are considered those individuals with physical or mental disabilities, as well as those who face mobility difficulties: the elderly, pregnant women, youngsters and individuals with disproportional bodily features.
\textsuperscript{750} Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, 1996: 1.
\textsuperscript{751} Ibid. 2.
\textsuperscript{752} For an extended discussion on these rules see chapter 5.
Specifically, the directive recommended that parking areas in public buildings be designed for disabled car users, in accordance with the 16 design principles.\textsuperscript{753} Similarly, access from parking areas to the main entrances or to the interior areas of a building on the same level as the main entrance should be unblocked, safe and easy to access with the assistance of ramps, elevators or other lifting mechanisms, also as described by the design principles.\textsuperscript{754} Furthermore, the directive specified that the main entrances of public buildings should be constructed in accordance with the design principle of “Building Entrances” in the 16 design principles. Moreover, in the entrances of public buildings, waiting rooms or other easily accessed spaces, public telephones of a certain height, should be installed. At the same time, in every main entrance there should be relief maps in the Braille system of all the spaces in the building.\textsuperscript{755} Finally, the directive required that all public spaces in public buildings should be accessible to all users.

For the construction of accessible outdoor public spaces, the directive recommended using the following specific measures in the sixteen design principles: disability signs, public WC, level scales, equalization of height differences, ramps for people and vehicles, office buildings and public services. The directive indicated that these requirements should be taken into consideration and be abided by whenever designing public buildings or renovating existing ones. In addition, the ministries that received the directive were expected to promote these stipulations to all corporate firms they supervised.\textsuperscript{756}

**Directive 2: central administration and disability**

Two months later in February 1997, the ministry issued its second directive that contained obligatory measures regarding the role of the central administration for accommodating disability issues.\textsuperscript{757} Notably, these measures did not primarily focus on physical barriers but rather on *administrative obstacles* that hindered disabled people’s access to the public administration, such as bureaucratic delays, financial costs, discrimination, and inaccessibility to resources etc.\textsuperscript{758} Again, the document was signed by the Deputy Minister of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization and was distributed to all ministries, public authorities, and prefectures in Greece. The directive began by defining the objectives of public administration:


\textsuperscript{754} Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, 1996: 3. “Assurance of access and accommodation of disabled individuals in public authorities: Directives related to the elimination of architectural barriers in the design of new public buildings or renovation of existing constructions”.

\textsuperscript{755} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{756} Ibid. 4.

\textsuperscript{757} Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, 1997. “Accommodation of People with Special Needs from Public Services and Institutions of the Public Sector”. Register number DIADP/G2g/4391.

\textsuperscript{758} Ibid.
The systematic aim of public administration is the rapid, effective, and complete accommodation of citizens in a framework of actions free of complicated processes that afflict citizens with delays, financial costs, and create negative impressions and crises of trust toward the state and its institutions.\textsuperscript{759}

Within this context, the directive acknowledged that the accommodation of people with disabilities by the public administration had a distinctive significance, since it was very important for the Greek state that people with disabilities are not marginalized.\textsuperscript{760} Therefore, the ministry and the first disability committee aimed to promote a number of initiatives to improve the accommodation of disabled people by the public administration.\textsuperscript{761}

The directive is divided into two sections: general and special measures. The first section, which concerned the implementation of general measures, stipulated that the accommodation of people with disabilities should be administratively prioritized, that is disabled people should not wait in queues for accomplishing their transactions with public authorities. In order to avoid misunderstandings with other citizens, every public authority should put up signs indicating the “people with special needs have priority”.\textsuperscript{762} When people with disabilities need to move within a public space, to carry out their affairs (for example purchasing stamps), employees of the authority should undertake these tasks. At the same time, the delivery of all applications, certificates etc, should be distributed immediately without the authority requiring individuals with disabilities to return to the building. The directive indicated that the authorities should utilize the possibility of sending documents via the post service or telephone applications.\textsuperscript{763} Finally, the general section of the directive proposed the establishment of information divisions in all ministries, public corporate bodies, and statutory companies on central and regional levels (i.e. hospitals, the Public Power Corporation, Greek Post Office etc). Employees who are competent and aware of disability issues should staff these divisions. Also, all parts of the public administration “should inform disability organizations and their representatives about general issues concerning disablement, such as employment, welfare policies, allowances etc”.\textsuperscript{764}

The second section of the committee’s directive stipulated special measures that the public administration should adopt to accommodate disabled people. Particularly, the committee proposed that special telephones (text-phones) should be installed at public authorities such as the police, fire brigade, hospitals etc. Moreover, through this directive, the committee made its first intervention in the status of \textit{public means of transportation in relation to disability}. The directive required that special signs indicating disability awareness should be installed in all means of public transportation. In addition, relevant timetables of all destinations and stations (for people with hearing impairments) and audio announcement of the stations (for the

\begin{thebibliography}{7}

\bibitem{759} Ibid. 2.
\bibitem{760} This was also stipulated by the Greek Constitution (Articles 4 and 21).
\bibitem{761} Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, 1997: 2. “Accommodation of People with Special Needs by Public Services and Institutions of the Public Sector”. Register number DIA	extsc{d}P/G2g/4391.
\bibitem{762} Ibid. 3.
\bibitem{763} Ibid. 4.
\bibitem{764} Ibid. 4.
\end{thebibliography}

196
blind) should be located in urban transportation means, as had also been proposed by the Panhellenic Association of the Blind to Attiko Metro in 1994. Further, the committee required that special subtitling should be implemented in the Greek public television channels and broadcasts of news bulletins in ways that corresponded to different kinds of disabilities (i.e. deafness). Lastly, the directive indicated that public administration leaflets, brochures and certificates should be printed in appropriate formats that are readable for people with visual impairments. The committee concluded the directive by announcing that members of the committee planned to make visits to all public authorities to discuss and ensure the effectiveness and application of these directives. Meanwhile, in parallel with the emergence and work of the first disability committee, the metro project continued to evolve.

**Athens metro – the final countdown**

The coming of the “modernizers” in the PASOK government in 1996 occurred at the same time as the last period of construction of the metro project began. Olympic Metro Consortium had four years to complete the new metro, as defined by the second metro contract. Simultaneously, the design and adjustment of the network to accessibility standards continued to be developed as a rather confined process between engineers, architects and managers at Attiko Metro and Olympic Metro Consortium, despite sporadic efforts by disability organizations to intervene.

The emergence and work of the first disability committee opened, however, a new channel of communication between Greek disability organizations and the engineers, architects, and managers of the metro project. The directives of the committee were to substantially influence the course of the metro work. In January 1997, soon after the first disability committee had issued its first directive but before its second directive, the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works (who notably was also the supervisor of the metro project) issued a new directive to Attiko Metro. This directive included the disability committee’s first directive from early December 1996 concerning the implementation of measures and accommodation of people with special needs in public buildings and spaces. The new directive from the ministry to Attiko Metro required that the disability committee’s directives should be taken into consideration and abided by meticulously in the ongoing work of configuring the metro. The directive thus constituted an important and concrete action towards the implementation of disability facilities in the metro project.

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765 Ibid. 5.
766 Ibid.
767 Unfortunately the confinement or secrecy around the process of adjusting accessibility in the system restricted the collection of material for this thesis. Attiko Metro denied access to its archives and the provision of several documents relevant to this study.
768 Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, 1996. “Assurance of access and accommodation of disabled individuals in public authorities: Directives related to the elimination of architectural barriers in the design of new public buildings or renovation of existing constructions”.
Nevertheless, the process of adjusting Athens metro to disability criteria was still restricted and confined to the work conducted by engineers, architects, and managers of Attiko Metro and the contractor. As a result of these interactions, in April 1997 the contractor issued a report that described the modifications that were necessary in order to facilitate accessibility for people with special needs as indicated by Instruction 13 in the metro contract. \textsuperscript{770}  The report, entitled \textit{Instruction 13: Design Criteria for Facilities for People with Special Needs} (PSN), included nineteen specific provisions resulting from preliminary studies, discussions and meetings between Attiko Metro and Olympic Metro Consortium. Each provision was described in practical details in terms of design, materials, and dimensions. The purpose of this report was:

> To present clearly the requirements for the modification of the stations and vehicles of the metro system in order to facilitate access by PSN. PSN include two categories of people:
> 1. Ambulant persons with impaired faculties, such as partly sighted or blind, deaf, dumb and also old people, etc.
> 2. Wheelchair users, either self-propelled or accompanied. \textsuperscript{771}

The report also raised the issue of the lack of disability standards on both EU and Greek levels. However, as the report points out, the General Directorate for Transport and the General Directorate for Works and Social Matters of the Commission of the European Community had prepared some directives concerning three concrete topics: lifts, railways and accessibility for handicapped workers. \textsuperscript{772}  There was an ongoing process concerning the development of directives among the member states and it was not yet clear when the final outcome would be forthcoming. According to the contractor’s report, on a Greek level directives were used only as guidelines and there was no specific information on public transport. \textsuperscript{773}  Olympic Metro explained that because there were no distinct standards concerning accessibility in the transport sector in Greece and in order to avoid mixing standards from different countries, they chose to employ the French standards, which were similar to the German. \textsuperscript{774}  Specifically, the design criteria for people with special needs would be based on the following publications: \textsuperscript{775}

- “Building constructions. Physically handicapped Persons” (NFP 01-201)
- “Accessibility to public transport for physically handicapped people” (P 91-202)
- “Ways. Admission of disabled persons. Urban pedestrian ways. Design and equipping conditions for ways” (P 98-350). \textsuperscript{776}

The specific improvements and modifications that the engineers at Olympic Metro Consortium recommended in its report to Attiko Metro are the following:

\textsuperscript{771} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{772} Ibid. 3.
\textsuperscript{773} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{774} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{775} Unfortunately, I could not find further information related to these publications.
\textsuperscript{776} Olympic Metro Consortium. 1997: 3.
1. Installation of first and last riser strips at stairs
2. Installation of extended handrail details at stairs
3. Installation of escalator direction indicators and buttons for panic stop
4. Installation of additional warning stripes at platform edges
5. Improvement in the legibility for signs and graphics
6. Installation of signs to indicate facilities for PSN
7. Improvements in lighting levels
8. Installation of accessible seats on platforms
9. Installation of elevators and associated equipment at all stations
10. Decrease in vertical and horizontal distance in the gap between the train and the platform
11. Installation of ramps or other access for level changes less than three meters
12. Installation of accessible WC facilities for wheelchair users
13. Installation of accessible telephones for wheelchair users
14. Improvements in the car
15. Installation of additional TVCs for PSN lift
16. Installation of additional handrail in bi-directional stairs
17. Installation of CCTV cameras for PSN lifts
18. Installation of additional luminous signs for escalator direction
19. Improvements in accessibility of administrative area in Sepolia Depot.  

On the one hand the Olympic Metro Consortium’s report was comprehensive. On the other hand, the consortium did not include the expressed priorities of disability organizations since they did not consult them. Thus the consortium’s report seemed to adopt a “colonial” approach by disregarding the contribution of the Greek public administration in defining, adapting, and applying accessibility in public buildings and spaces. Greece lacked a full institutional framework of binding norms and standards regarding accessibility, but as we have already seen, institutions of the Greek public administration (such as the Department for Research on People with Special Needs and the first disability committee) and specific disability organizations (such as the Panhellenic Association of the Blind) had provided extensive technical directives and recommendations to promote accessibility measures and facilities.

The report to a great extent emerged because of ongoing interactions between Olympic Metro Consortium and Attiko Metro. Both companies had made recommendations and amendments on existing proposals, which went back and forth between the two organizations. Furthermore, two Attiko Metro architects engaged with disability questions (who wish to remain anonymous) confirmed in interviews that accessibility on the metro was not a product of negotiations between Attiko Metro and the disability committee or disability organizations, but rather the result of internal processes. Attiko Metro employees perceived their own work on accessibility as the only pertinent process for applying accessibility to technical features of the system. According to my sources, these employees had sufficient knowledge and cognitive capacity to represent and project onto the system the claims of people with disabilities, while also being free of the sensitivity that usually characterizes interest organizations and concerned groups.  

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777 Ibid. 1.
778 Attiko Metro architects who wish to remain anonymous, interview March 18, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
The Panhellenic Association of the Blind had, however, also established a channel of communication with Attiko Metro through correspondence and by submitting proposals concerning how the metro system should be adjusted to standards for people with visual impairments. The resemblance between some of the proposals submitted by the Association to Attiko Metro and some of the items included in the Olympic Metro report indicate that Attiko Metro closely followed the recommendations of the blind and conveyed these recommendations to the contractor.

Attiko Metro and the Association also subsequently began to meet and cooperate on the issue of accommodating the blind in the metro network. Indeed, Attiko Metro responded positively to the Association and proposed that meetings between the two organizations should be initiated. Two architects at Attiko Metro confirmed the contact of the company with the general secretary of the Association, Ioannis Leotsakos, and a teacher for the blind, Katerina Poulia.\footnote{Interviews with Athos Dallas and Manolis Sotiropoulos, November 18, 2003.} A report to the board of the Association also indicated meetings between Attiko Metro and the Association.\footnote{This report was entitled “Meeting with the design committee of Attiko Metro”.} Particularly, the report specified that in June 1997, Leotsakos and Poulia met with the design and implementation group of Attiko Metro, consisting of the deputy director of works, the deputy director of the architectural division, the director of exploitation, the director of the architectural division, the public relations officer, and an architect.\footnote{Panhellenic Association of the Blind, 1997: 2. “Meeting with the design committee of Attiko Metro”. Register number missing. Department for Mobility and Orientation. Report to the board.} The report explained that in 1994 the Association had submitted proposals for the safe and independent mobility of blind people in the metro system. Attiko Metro had responded to this initiative and invited members of the Association to participate in a meeting with employees of Attiko Metro who supervised the construction of the project. According to the report, the meeting had very positive results regarding the Association’s proposals, which had already been integrated in the realization designs of the metro.\footnote{Ibid.}

According to the report, Attiko Metro’s implementation group had presented designs for station entrances, platforms, stairs, elevators, cars, and all facilities that the metro was to accommodate for the safe and unobstructed mobility of blind and visually impaired passengers. Attiko Metro had proposed meetings and cooperation must continue in the future in order for people with visual impairments to become familiar with the topography of the stations and other facilities (such as fire alarms). Finally, the representatives of the Association had suggested that all stationmasters should be specially educated so as to be capable of assisting people with visual problems in the stations.\footnote{Ibid.}

Two additional significant events intensified the efforts to integrate people with disabilities in the decision-making processes for designing the metro. First, in early September 1997 the Greek Prime Minister Simitis transferred Anastasios Mantelis, who had been Deputy Minister of the Interior, Public Administration and
Decentralization, to the Ministry of Transport and Communications.\textsuperscript{784} This meant that Mantelis was to continue his work on accessibility from a new position. As I will show in the next chapter, Mantelis initiated a new disability committee, the “second disability committee”, which specifically focused on transport issues. Second, in September 1997 the city of Athens was appointed as host city for the 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

**Summary and conclusions**

The return of the socialist party to power in October 1993 was accompanied by significant developments in disability issues and the materialization of specific accessibility provisions in Athens metro. In December 1994, the PASOK government integrated accessibility provisions in the scope of the metro project by passing Law 2274/94. In 1996 the ratification of Law 2430/96 established ESAEA as the social partner of the Greek government regarding disability questions. In the same year, the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization launched the first disability committee. Soon after, Olympic Metro Consortium issued a report with various modifications for adjusting the metro project to accessibility facilities. The report was a result of the ongoing interactions between Attiko Metro and Olympic Metro Consortium. The process of adjusting the metro to accessibility standards was still rather confined, that is, only architects, engineers, and managers from Attiko Metro and Olympic Metro Consortium were engaged in developing technical accessibility provisions, despite significant attempts by people with disabilities and their organizations to intervene.

Meanwhile, disability organizations such as the Panhellenic Association of the Blind began to establish direct communication channels with Attiko Metro and to claim participation in the configuration of the metro project. Specifically, the Association sent a letter to Attiko Metro in 1994 with concrete technical recommendations for accommodating people with visual impairments in the metro network. This letter was to disrupt the internal processes that until that time had been adopted by Attiko Metro and Olympic Metro Consortium. It was the first time that research in the wild, defined as the inclusion of experiences and recommendations of disability organizations and their members, reached the confined research of engineers, architects, and managers within the metro project. The interactions and negotiations between Attiko Metro and the Association constituted evidence that cooperative research between disability organizations and Attiko Metro had gained more attention, despite reservations and resistance. Research in the wild becomes increasingly unavoidable when concerned groups multiply and form alliances (for example Greek politicians and public administration) and make themselves heard.\textsuperscript{785}

Moreover, the Association’s letter constituted a sign that disability organizations had begun to integrate the issue of accessibility into their political and social program as an important condition for their emancipation and integration into society on equal terms. The materialization of specific technical provisions became a significant process for reinforcing and re-enacting the political and social roles of disabled people. This revealed that the disability organizations’ agenda had a social model

\textsuperscript{784} This transfer followed the resignation of the Minister of Transport and Communications, Haris Kastanidis.

\textsuperscript{785} Callon, 2003: 54.
perspective, namely detaching disability policies from protectionist initiatives and focusing on the configuration of an accessible built environment.

Nevertheless, the leading role of the blind resulted in the stipulation of provisions mainly for people with visual difficulties. Thus within the context of the metro project, disability was primarily enacted concerning visual impairments. While during the 1980s the problematization of disability issues had concerned mobility disabilities, in the mid-1990s specific measures for visually impaired people dominated the negotiations.

Another significant factor that contributed to the spread of disability awareness in public administration was the formation of the first disability committee. This committee constituted the first *hybrid forum* where heterogeneous actors who represented different organizations and cooperated for spreading accessibility in the public administration and its infrastructures discussed technical choices and stipulated accessibility policies. These policies were also to influence the course of the metro work. The committee produced stipulations and regulations for the integration of disability provisions in the public administration and the configuration of public infrastructures. Several of these stipulations were distributed in the form of directives to Attiko Metro. The work of the committee and specifically the release of directives reflected alliances among different entities and groups that contributed to spreading disability awareness.

It was evident that there were a number of individuals, citizens, public administrators, and politicians who - disabled or not - were willing to *problematize* questions concerning disability and transport disability. Most of these actors had considerable experience in the field of disability provisions since they had already participated in groups dealing with such issues. These actors were spread throughout the Greek public administration and, due to the support and *enrollment* of their ministers began to constitute an influential group. What was the result of their influence on the translation of accessibility awareness into concrete technical provisions and stipulations? The committee became an *obligatory passage point* for problem-solving concerning accessibility, by which is meant that actors related to these institutions established their work as a necessary control station for carrying out and stipulating accessibility provisions. Specifically, the first disability committee became one obligatory point of reference for disability awareness and accessibility issues within the government and other public institutions interested in these questions.

It was also clear, however, that the work of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs in the 1980s had provided the first disability committee with a basic framework for its recommendations concerning building codes, instructions, design principles, and other concrete means to promote accessibility in the built environment. The committee developed new directives based on an existing collective of entities, which was expanded in the course of its work. The hybrid collective accessibility-public administration assimilated different settings, where humans, texts, and technical provisions such as urban equipment moved, interacted and standardize the inscription of disability awareness in the way public administration was to be operated and how public infrastructure was to be configured.
At the same time, the directives and recommendations by the committee contributed to constructing new understandings of disability in the Greek public administration. By this I mean that the level of accessibility in public buildings or spaces and the capacity of public administration to address transport disability enacted disability in a different way. Disability issues were co-produced with ramps, parking areas, elevators, adjusted entrances, disability signs, and patterns of administrative behavior, instead of being treated on the basis of bodily impairments and handicaps. The work of the committee was to transfer the enactment of disability from a medical model perspective, where disability policies focused on protection and institutionalization, to the context of the social model that focused on the configuration of an accessible built and administrative environment.

There are indications, however, that some of these directives still contained some elements of the medical model of disability. Proposals such as installing signs for prioritizing disabled people in public queues or recommendations to public administrators to accommodate disabled people by assisting them in undertaking their tasks in a public authority constituted measures inspired by the politics of the medical model. These politics are embedded in labels such as handicapped access and special treatment.\textsuperscript{786} In other words, some of the recommendations tended to reflect a view of disabled people as substandard rather than as fully included in social life. Within this context, disabled people were constituted in contrast to the norm and were implicitly performed as the Other who needs to be prioritized in a queue or specially treated in a public authority.\textsuperscript{787}

In summary, the issue of accessibility traveled and was transformed through different settings as it was translated from a vague demand, a problem only vaguely articulated and related to some needs at the start of the 1990s, to a binding contract clause in early 1994 that required new investments, additional commitments, and further negotiations for configuring an accessible metro.\textsuperscript{788} The involvement of the blind with the metro and the emergence of the first disability committee indicated that the circle of entities participating in the problematization of accessibility in the metro was broadened spectacularly during this period. In particular, the Panhellenic Association of the Blind and the first disability committee started a form of direct intervention in the metro project.

People with disabilities and their organizations thus contributed significantly to the enrollment of other entities who became allies and endorsed the translation of accessibility into an explicit part of the metro agenda and contract. However, the concept of translation of needs or ideas into objects, and then into actions, then into ideas again is just a simplification.\textsuperscript{789} The substantial involvement of people with disabilities in the metro work and the translation of disability claims into specific accessibility provisions constituted a long process with several episodes.

\textsuperscript{786} Star, 1991: 36. “Distributions of power. Power, technology and the phenomenology of conventions: on being allergic to onions”.
\textsuperscript{787} Moser, 2000: 210. “AGAINST NORMALIZATION: Subverting Norms of Ability and Disability”.
\textsuperscript{789} Ibid. 40.
The voice from the speakers announced our arrival at Syntagma station. The city center, we were finally there. We waited patiently until the passengers in a hurry left the car and then we headed toward the elevators. An employee of Attiko Metro followed us discretely, after he asked us kindly if we needed help. He kept on talking on his walkie-talkie, informing the control room that everything was ok with us. Nikos was even more excited. I could bet that he did not want to leave the metro. It is very strange how a network of concrete, cables, and thousands of other materials had such a tremendous impact on the mood of a human being. Nikos immediately explained his enthusiasm:

The metro constitutes a miniature of society. A crossroad of different characters and cultures. All of us compose this polyphony. The metro has its own communication codes mainly consisting of glances that people exchange, cars, elevators, etc. Even when I want to reprove somebody for using the elevator without a reason, I get the chance to communicate and to make myself visible, as a user of a wheelchair who represents all wheelchair users. I gain confidence by learning the destinations. I feel as if I am the master of the metro. I love to give instructions to other users. Then I become useful and my wheelchair disappears.\textsuperscript{790}

\textsuperscript{790} Nikos Perdikaris, interview November 20, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
This chapter constitutes the last empirical part of this study and focuses on the events, processes, and decisions that led to the integration of accessibility in the metro project’s agenda during the period 1997-2003. The structure of the chapter is organized as follows. In 1997, Athens was designated as the host city for the 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The chapter will show how the organization of the Games required a number of modifications to adjust Athens’ urban environment to accessibility standards. Furthermore, I will discuss the initiative of the Greek government to establish new hybrid forums such as the second disability committee at the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The second disability committee was to supervise the implementation of accessibility provisions in different transport infrastructures, including the metro, and worked in parallel with the first disability committee at the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization.

The chapter will also discuss how the opening of the metro reflected the interventions that took place regarding accessibility provisions after the completion of the main construction work. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an account of the decisions and interventions primarily made by the second disability committee until 2003. I will also argue that, although the project integrated several accessibility provisions, certain disability groups did not succeed in imposing their claims in the metro.

Athens, an Olympic city

The city which will have the honor and responsibility to host the Olympic Games of 2004 is… Athens.  

791 Juan Antonio Samaranch, former president of the International Olympic Committee, announcement at "Palais de Beaulieu" Lausanne, Switzerland September 5, 1997.

In September 1997, Athens was designated as the city that would host the summer Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2004. The taking on of the Olympic Games was immediately perceived as the motivation and the means to re-construct and renovate the city. Since 1960, it has become increasingly common for the Olympics to be used as a trigger for large-scale urban improvement and consequently the Games have had a much wider and more substantial impact on the respective host city’s built environment. Similarly, in Greece the accomplishment of an organization as huge as the Olympic Games was envisioned from the beginning as another challenge to improve the infrastructure and living conditions in the Athens area. At the same time, disability and the adjustment of the host city’s built environment to accessible provisions were not issues that were isolated from the organization of the Olympic Games. The issue of accessibility in the Olympic Games had been discussed in November 1996 during an international symposium on Olympic Villages organized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Barcelona. Members of the symposium suggested that there is a distinct need for Olympic Villages to be an example of accessibility for people with disabilities:
That's why we propose that organizing committees establish planning and design goals early in the process to ensure that all facilities are designed and built to be fully accessible to persons with disabilities.\footnote{International Olympic Committee, 1997: 3. “Conclusions and recommendations”. International Symposium on Olympic Villages: Hundred Years of Urban Planning and Shared Experiences. Joint Symposium IOC Olympic Studies Center, Olympic Studies Center (Autonomous University of Barcelona).}

The \textit{Manual for Candidate Cities for the Games of the XXVIII Olympiad 2004}, edited by the IOC, stipulated that the Organizing Committee for the Athens Olympic Games was responsible for fulfilling the requirements of the users of the Olympic Village and providing transport services of the quality required by the various categories of people concerned and their tasks.\footnote{International Olympic Committee, 1995: 78 and 85. Manual for Candidate Cities for the Games of the XXVIII Olympiad 2004. Lausanne: CIO.} These obligations, including responsibility for implementing international and national accessibility standards, were included in the Host City Contract, which was signed by the Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games Athens 2004, the IOC and the International Paralympic Committee, on April 5, 2001.

As economist Darcy notes on the organization of the Paralympic Games in Sydney, “the conventional wisdom was that the Games delivered to the host city community of people with disabilities a lasting legacy of accessible infrastructure, a raised level of disability awareness and an improved position in society”.\footnote{Darcy, S. 2003: 753. “The Politics of Disability and Access: the Sydney 2000 Games experience”.} The Organizing Committee for Athens Olympic Games also linked the installation of accessibility facilities to the Games to the improvement of the Athenian built environment:

> [...] It is more than clear that accessible infrastructure, which must be provided for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, will be the best "legacy" for the independent, unobstructed and safe circulation of people with disabilities. It will also result in a higher level of quality of everyday life for the majority of the Athens citizens and visitors. In addition to organizing the Paralympic Games, ATHENS 2004 works closely with all relevant Greek ministries and agencies, and has laid out a set of guidelines to ensure that both Olympic and Paralympic venues will be accessible to people with disabilities. The main target is that all adjustments made to ensure accessibility will be kept in place after the end of the Games, leaving an important legacy to all citizens and visitors for years to come [...]\footnote{ATHENS 2004, Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games. “The ATHENS 2004 Paralympic Games: equality in practice”. Available at: http://www.athens2004.com/en/Accessibility.}

The adjustment to accessibility standards of all infrastructures related to the Games thus became one of the main objectives for the Greek government and the Organizing Committee. According to the chairman of ESAEA, Yannis Vardakastanis, the organization of the 2004 Olympic Games had a significant effect on issues concerning accessibility; it made the need for the implementation of accessibility provisions more visible.\footnote{Yannis Vardakastanis, interview July 6, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).} Hristofi explains that the intention of the Organizing Committee was to immediately promote accessibility awareness in the design of arenas, transport networks and minor constructions in the city of Athens.
such as public toilets and accessible seats in stadiums. One of the key factors for an equal, independent and safe participation of people with disabilities, both as spectators and athletes, in the 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games was the inclusion of accessible design facilities for Olympic venues and other related infrastructure.

The Organizing Committee recognized that one of the most critical aspects for the success of the Games was that of well-functioning transportation. The organization of such a major event implied the daily transfer of thousands of athletes, journalists, spectators and members of the Olympic community. Thus the configuration of an accessible Athens transport system gained increased attention and became one of the main issues for the organizers. The web site of the Organizing Committee indicates the expectations and requirements for a functional transport system during the course of the Games:

Radical restructuring of the transport system throughout the greater Attica region, underway for several years, will provide the necessary infrastructure by Games-time to set in motion the ATHENS 2004 Olympic Transport Strategic Plan […] Major infrastructure changes will transform the city of Athens, improving the flow of traffic as well as the travel of commuters and visitors for years to come.

The basic principles for implementing accessibility in the Olympic transport system aimed at the following target groups of disabled people:

- Wheelchair users, who represent the most demanding case in terms of dimensions and space requirements
- People with vision or hearing impairments.

Thus the Olympic Games emerged as an entity that also contributed to the implementation of accessibility in the metro project. As I will discuss, both disabled and able-bodied public administrators engaged with disability issues participated in the Olympic preparations and actively contributed to the design of accessible infrastructures. The organization of the Games by Athens created new responsibilities for the Greek government and added a new level of significance to the issue of accessibility. As a result, the planning and administration of specific parts of the public administration, including those parts working with public transportation, entailed restructuring and adjusting to the requirements of the Olympic Games. The Ministry of Transport and Communications was of critical importance in this work.

799 Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005.
The second disability committee: a hybrid forum for accessibility in transportation

The promotion of Anastasios Mantelis to the position of Minister of Transport and Communications in September 1997 was accompanied by significant developments related to accessibility issues in the transport sector. Mantelis, who was formerly Deputy Minister of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, was pleased with the initiatives and actions of the first disability committee and decided to initiate a similar working group at the Ministry of Transport and Communications. Mantelis recalls:

The development of actions and mobilizations by the first disability committee inspired me to implement the same kind of concept at the Ministry of Transport and Communications. This ministry was a sensitive institution, since transportation and all this nexus of activities has to do with mobility. It constituted a focal point for changing the mentality - the government’s and the public administration’s mentality towards the issue of accessibility. As a result, we tried to avoid ingenious plans that were unrealistic and inapplicable. We focused on the transport means and systems, since these were the sectors that were important for people with disabilities. At the same time, we realized that the participation of disabled people in generating policies was essential.803

The new disability committee would work as the link between the ministry and various transport companies and public organizations within its jurisdiction such as the Athens Urban Transport Organization, Thermal Buses SA, Athens-Piraeus Electric Railways SA, Athens-Piraeus Area Trolley Buses, Attiko Metro SA, Hellenic Railways Organization, Olympic Airways, etc. Mary Kotronia, who was a consultant for the ministry, proposed that in order for the leadership of the ministry to effectively supervise the implementation of accessibility awareness within these companies, a committee of concerned actors should be formed.804 The new committee was to consist of representatives from various transport companies and organizations, as well as representatives for disability organizations.

On November 20, 1997, the Ministry of Transport and Communications sent a directive signed by Mantelis to all companies and organizations supervised by the ministry.805 With this directive, the minister announced the initiation of a project for the accommodation of disabled people in the transport services that were the responsibility of the ministry. The directive began by explaining the importance of creating an accessible transport environment and delineating the potential risks for the marginalization and exclusion of disabled people due to defective design. In this context, disabled people were those individuals with permanent or temporary disabilities, that is people with restricted mobility, visual, mental and hearing impairments, as well as the elderly, pregnant women, child attendants (such as parents with baby carriages), individuals with special bodily features (such as overweight), etc.806 The directive acknowledged the increasing social

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803 Anastasios Mantelis, interview March 7, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
804 Mary Kotronia, interview, April 14, 2005.
806 Ibid. 1.
marginalization of disabled people due to the lack of means that could contribute to abolishing social, physical, and administrative obstacles.

In order to eliminate such obstacles, the Ministry of Transport and Communications initiated a program consisting of special measures that must be adopted and implemented by all organizations within its jurisdiction. Particularly, these measures stipulated the following:

- Prioritization of people with special needs in public services
- Installation of signs indicating the above measure
- Installation of ramps for accommodating wheelchair users
- Construction of parking areas for people with special needs
- Installation of wheelchair-friendly elevators
- Placement of benches and seats for the elderly in waiting rooms
- Installation of low phone booths that are accessible to wheelchair users
- Observance of the regulations for the design and renovation of buildings where public authorities are housed (General Building Code and Building Structure Code).

The measures imposed by the second committee resembled the proposals of the first disability committee (see chapter 7), indicating that the context of the new endeavor constituted translations of the existing work into specific measures within the transport area. Further, the directive announced that the second disability committee would supervise the application of these measures on a regular basis and would facilitate the submission of new proposals concerning additional accessibility measures. According to the directive, in addition to employees of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, representatives of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, and other public organizations would be appointed to the committee. As a result, all organizations cooperating with or under the supervision of the Ministry of Transport and Communications were asked to appoint representatives who would participate in the committee. Hristofi notes on the members of the committee:

The ministry sent a document to all organizations that it supervised and asked for the appointment of representatives […] As a result, a group of people, experienced in accessibility questions or not, began to work together. Some of us had already worked with the working groups of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs.

Indeed, several participants in the second disability committee had already dealt with disability questions in the framework of the disability working groups at the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works and the first disability committee at the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization. In addition, Dionysios Maurokefalos, member of ESAEA’s board, was to regularly represent the confederation of disabled people in the new

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807 Ibid. 2.
808 Ibid. 3.
809 Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
810 Gerasimos Polis architect with disabilities, Markos Katsiotis architect, Argiro Leventi architect with disabilities, Hristofi Marili topographer, and Mary Kotronia consultant of the Minister of Transport, belonged to this group.
committee. The committee consisted of twenty-three members: public administrators, city planners, architects, traffic engineers and consultants to the minister, representatives from disability organizations and representatives from various transport companies and organizations (see Appendix III).

This broad combination of individuals with different backgrounds, interests, and experience regarding the issue of accessibility harbored a risk for conflicts among the participants. Hristofi, who was a member of the committee, claims that able-bodied public administrators who were not familiar with disability issues sometimes confronted disability from a medical or charity perspective and focused on allowance policies, ticket discounts, etc, rather than on the need for implementing accessible infrastructure. According to Hristofi, it was easier for the committee members to stipulate disability allowances than restructure the existing infrastructures or raise the cost of ongoing constructions due to the inclusion of accessibility standards. But the development of disability policies consisting only of allowances and discounts was not the focus of the second disability committee.811

One of the initial objectives of the committee was, however, to cultivate a social perspective on disability rather than a medical perspective among its members, that is to develop a focus on the configuration of accessible infrastructures as an alternative to benefit strategies. Maurokefalos, who represented ESAEA on the new committee, explains the objective of the second disability committee:

The committee dealt with transport systems and focused mostly on technical issues rather than institutional questions. We supervised different worksites where transport systems were being developed, such as the metro, as well as the purchase of new means of transportation, such as trains, buses etc. We supervised the construction of Athens new airport, made several on-site inspections and attempted to intervene wherever we considered there was a need for corrections and improvements on accessibility.812

With the help of the minister’s consultant Kotronia, who constituted the link between the committee and the minister, the committee began to develop suggestions and interventions to improve accessibility in various transport projects. At the same time, due to the substantial support of the Minister of Transport and Communications, the committee gained political weight, which accelerated the emergence of considerable outcomes.813

The second disability committee in action

One of the first significant outcomes of the committee was the preparation and implementation of a project entitled Citizen first: a more comfortable transportation, easier access in October 1998. The project constituted a hybrid forum that aimed at establishing communication channels between the committee and disabled citizens, documenting problems and deficiencies in the transport sector, and planning new accessible infrastructures. The operationalization of Citizen first was based on a series of initiatives that the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the second disability committee were subsequently to take. Particularly, the committee sent out directives for spreading accessibility awareness among transport organizations, made on-site inspections to different transport

811 Marili Hristofi, interview with March 9, 2005.
812 Dionysios Maurokefalos, interview September 9, 2004 (in Greek, my translation).
813 Marili Hristofi, interview with March 9, 2005.
projects, and organized numerous meetings and seminars with disability organizations. Various committee members also participated in European Union conferences concerning disability and transportation in Paris and Liverpool in 1998. In this way, the second disability committee attempted to create new forms of intervention in the development of transport policies and the configuration of transport networks.

What is important here is the fact that the disability committee at the Ministry of Transport and Communications initiated concrete cooperative efforts within the field of transportation by bringing together designers, users, and producers of transport systems. The developing metro project also was at the focus of these interactions. However, the construction of the metro was under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works and only upon completion of the metro project would the Ministry of Transport and Communications take over. This meant that the involvement of the second disability committee with the metro project was suspended until the opening of the metro.

With the emergence of the two disability committees, defining, planning and implementing accessibility standards in the transport area became an obligatory passage point for constructing public works. By that is meant that people with disabilities had not only succeeded in stabilizing their claims and allies within the public administration agenda, but also in establishing hybrid forums where disability issues were translated into concrete accessibility measures.

**Mobilizing accessibility allies: an enacted effort and/or subject to political manipulation?**

Parallel to the work of the committees, the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, under Argiro Leventi, continued to produce disability standards and spread accessibility awareness in the broader public sector. In January 1998, the Department for Research on People with Special Needs issued the report *Access-Transportation of People with Special Needs: State of the Art in Greece*. The report summarized the existing regulations and standards concerning accessible public and private buildings, public spaces, and means of transportation such as buses, railways, airports, boats, and automobiles. In the section regarding public means of transportation, the report gave an account of Athens new metro. As specified in the report, the goal was that the metro’s twenty-one new stations were to be designed to be fully accessible. The report listed all the accessibility provisions that the project had implemented. The report concluded with the acknowledgement that the contribution of engineers and the public had played a significant role in raising awareness and legitimizing accessibility. In response to this acknowledgment, the Department for Research on People with Special Needs was to start a campaign and organize seminars aiming to further enroll engineers and

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817 Ibid. 5.
scientists with different specializations who were involved with design issues in various public works throughout Greece.\textsuperscript{818}

Later in the same year, the Department updated its handbook \textit{Design Principles for Independent Mobility and Living of People with Special Needs} from 1990 (see chapter 5) and modified the principles. This effort resulted in the publication of a new version: \textit{Design for All – Design Principles}.

The new handbook immediately became an additional instrument for promoting transport accessibility. The updated handbook was also forwarded to the metro project. The Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works issued a directive to the board of Attiko Metro concerning the new Design for All Principles. The directive informed Attiko Metro that the design principles included in the handbook were to be utilized as compulsory standards by public authorities, which were required to integrate the principles due to their significance for people with disabilities.\textsuperscript{820}

Meanwhile, the second disability committee continued taking initiatives for spreading accessibility awareness and intervening in the configuration of the transport landscape. In March 1999, the committee organized with the support of the Ministry of Transport and Communications a one-day conference concerning the actions that the ministry had taken for improving the mobility of disabled people. The aim of the conference was to present the measures suggested by the second disability committee and implemented by the ministry concerning the improvement of accessibility within the organizations and companies supervised by the ministry.\textsuperscript{821}

Particularly, the managing director of the Athens Urban Transport Organization and committee member Eustratios Papadimitriou gave an account of all the actions and initiatives taken in urban transportation. He presented specific measures implemented or to be implemented by four transport organizations, namely Athens Urban Transport Organization, Thermal Buses SA, Athens-Piraeus Electric Railways SA, and Athens-Piraeus Area Trolley Buses. For example, Athens-Piraeus Electric Railways SA had procured the adjustment of 36 lines to accessibility standards and created a special line for the blind at the Kallithea station where the school of the blind is located. In another example, the Thermal Buses SA had already started using 503 buses that were equipped with special ramps and had ordered 750 new accessible buses. The ambition was that by 2001, 80% of the company’s fleet would be accessible. The Athens-Piraeus Area Trolley Buses had procured 192 new trolley buses with ramps and renovated all existing train buses and adjusted them to accessibility provisions; nine of the existing stations were already accessible and the rest of them would be renovated by 1999. Finally, Attiko

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\textsuperscript{818} Ibid. 10.
\textsuperscript{821} Ministry of Transport and Communications, 1999: 4. “Actions of the Ministry of Transport and the supervised authorities”. In \textit{Citizen first: a more comfortable transportation, easier access} program. Conference on the disabled and people with special needs.
\end{flushleft}
Metro reported that the Athens metro had been designed to be accessible for people with all kind of disabilities.  

At the March 1999 conference, architect Katsiotis and topographer Hristofi gave an account of the interventions of the second disability committee regarding the public buildings and infrastructures under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transport and Communications. In my view, the introduction of their presentation constituted an ideological manifesto that enacted disability through the principles of the social model. They noted that the way in which buildings and urban spaces were constructed referred to an imaginary, ideal representation of humans as able-bodied adult males. However, only a small percentage of the population corresponded to this ideal. Katsiotis and Hristofi adopted the social model of disability by asserting that the condition of the built environment rather than bodily characteristics/inabilities, determine whether an individual is disabled or not. Katsiotis and Hristofi argued that this was the philosophy that had also inspired the program Citizen first: a more comfortable transportation, easier access and had progressively steered the committee’s operational framework.

The second disability committee had initiated a campaign for spreading accessibility awareness in the transport sector. At the same time, it had imposed concrete measures for the implementation of disability standards in every division supervised by the ministry. The committee’s measures had been translated into concrete results (such as the construction of a new fully accessible building that would accommodate the Ministry of Transport and Communications), the installation of accessibility provisions (such as special elevators, ramps, disability parking, special signs, low public telephones) in different buildings of the Hellenic Telecommunications Organization, the Hellenic Railways Organization, the Greek Postal Service, and the Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority. As both Hristofi and Katsiotis note, the work of the committee was a continuous effort.

Similarly to its predecessor, the second disability committee constituted a hybrid forum consisting of heterogeneous actors who represented different organizations and cooperated for problematizing accessibility issues in the public administration and its infrastructures. The committees, together with the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, became obligatory passage points for the mobilization of accessibility standards. By that is meant that the committees aimed to become the authoritative institutional spaces where disability issues were discussed and solutions/measures were stipulated. They had considerable political weight and became passage points for other institutions, ministries and disability organizations, as well as recruited the interests of influential alliances through the enrollment of politicians or events such as the Olympic Games that promoted disability issues. Disabled sociologist and member of both disability committees Hatziharalabous explains that the committees developed exemplars for other actors engaged in disability issues:

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822 Ibid. 6-7.
823 Ibid. 9.
824 Ibid. 10.
825 Ibid. 12-24.
826 Ibid. 11.
827 Marili Hristofi, interview with March 9, 2005.
The role and competences of the committees were, however, a topic of criticism. Disabled engineer Staurianopoulos, chairman of the Panhellenic Union of the Paraplegic and Physically Challenged, claims that despite the fact that there were plenty of well-intentioned people working for the committees, their role was weak and vague. Polis admits that several of the disabled members of the committees did not have the competence and capacity to fulfill the role of negotiating with engineers and participating in the design of technical standards. Disabled people with poor qualifications participated in the committees. Could these weaknesses and ambiguities lead to the transformation of the committees into targets of political opportunism? Both Hatziharalabous and Staurianopoulos indicated that specific politicians and ministers in some cases used the committees and initiatives concerning disability questions for their own benefit or even for creating political sympathies. Hatziharalabous comments on how some members of the committees experienced and reacted in ways that reflected petty politics:

[...] For me there were a lot of political games around the committees. When we saw that our activities had become subject to political manipulation, we withdrew. We did not want to be just a firework.

In my interpretation, the engagement of certain politicians in disability issues led to certain overflowing, such as manipulation of the work of the disability committees for attracting the sympathy of voters. On the other hand, most of the members of the committees recognized the contribution of these hybrid forums for establishing accessibility awareness in creating infrastructures and organizing public administration.

An example of such a mutual enrollment was a press release issued by the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works on December 2, 1999. In the press release, Minister Laliotis explained the importance of disability issues and the need for safe and equal participation of people with disabilities in the social web. He noted that 9.3% of the population (according to the European Statistical Service, EUROSTAT) had some form of disability and thus the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works ought to provide substantial and radical

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828 Stratis Hatziharalabous, interview March 10, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
831 Interviews with Stratis Hatziharalabous March 10, 2003; and Spyros Staurianopoulos November 12, 2003.
832 Stratis Hatziharalabous, interview March 10, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
solutions for the accommodation of this considerable part of society. One of the most significant sources of problems for these citizens was inaccessibility of the built environment. Laliotis estimated that almost one of two citizens was disabled by problematic design in open spaces, within buildings, in collective means of transportation, in education, in sports infrastructure, etc. As a result, the ministry confronted this kind of exclusions by adopting principles such as safe access in housing, buildings, free spaces and means of transportation. Laliotis also noted that the new metro, which would be inaugurated in January 2000, would be fully accessible and that its twenty-one new stations would be equipped with ramps, special elevators, and audio/visual provisions for the blind and deaf. Other major transport infrastructures such as the Athens-Piraeus railway, the new Athens airport and the new Thessalonica metro, would also be adjusted to accessibility standards.

It could be argued, however, that Laliotis’ press release was ambiguous. On the one hand, the minister underscored the importance of disability awareness and provided concrete examples of the contribution of his ministry to accessible configuration of the built environment. On the other hand, the press release could be interpreted as a political initiative aiming to recruit the interest of voters engaged with disability issues. Similarly, Greek disability organizations attempted to highlight and exploit the initiatives taken by the disability committees and the Department for Research on People with Special Needs.

However, it was no longer easy to distinguish who “owned” an initiative related to disability issues and its political impact. The involvement of different actors and interests thus made it difficult to distinguish who was enrolled and who was enrolling, who was going out of her way and who was not. As Latour notes, how can we decide who did the job, or indeed, how can the fact-builders determine if the facts that are eventually built are their own? The enrollment of different actors for the translation of a claim into a matter of fact involves a mutual engagement from both sides. Arguably, the easiest way for disabled people to enroll politicians in the spreading of accessibility was to let themselves be enrolled by them.

The annual report issued by ESAEA in 1999 with reference to the national day for people with disabilities constituted an example of exchange and displacement of interests between institutions of the public administration and disability organizations. The report was based on a survey made by ESAEA, assisted by the

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835 Ibid. 1.
836 Ibid.
837 Ibid. 3-4.
840 ESAEA annually submitted to the President of the Greek Parliament a report on the overall situation of disabled people’s human and social rights in Greece on December 3rd, the national day for people with disabilities (see also chapter 7). 1999’s report concerned the accessibility of people with disabilities in the built environment, the means of transportation, communication, and information.
Department for Research on People with Special Needs, regarding the condition of the built environment, public collective means of transportation, and access of disabled people to communication and information. Specfically, the report referred to the establishment of the department, the start of the Design for All project, and the stipulation of technical regulations regarding accessibility for large infrastructural projects such as the Athens metro as important examples for improving the life of disabled citizens. Furthermore, the report presented in detail a number of the design principles that had been issued by the department. Finally, ESAEA’s report referred to the Citizen first project that had been initiated and supervised by the Ministry of Transport and Communications through the second disability committee.

In other words, the report constituted roughly a summary of previous initiatives taken by the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works and the Ministry of Transport and Communications concerning the configuration of an accessible built and transport environment. Unintentionally (or not), ESAEA provided the leadership of these ministries with political support. By summarizing these initiatives, ESAEA promoted and made public the actions of specific ministries and ministers, which could be viewed as an expression of favoritism towards specific political actors. In order to add another level of complexity into the discussion, I have to note that members of disability organizations also had overlapping roles, by which is meant that apart from their engagement with disability issues they also belonged to various political parties. This fact triggered conflicts within and between the organizations.

For example, Staurianopoulos, chairman of the Panhellenic Union of the Paraplegic and Physically Challenged and party member of New Democracy, claimed that the PASOK government controlled disability organizations to the same extent that it controlled all large organizations in Greece. Meanwhile, Polis who was positively disposed toward PASOK, commented that the disability movement, especially ESAEA, participated in the management of administration and power. Polis main concern was that ESAEA had become an ally to powerful entities and as a result lost its mechanisms for reflection, which could allow for a solid problematization of disability interests unaffected by party politics. Other informants commented that members of disability organizations, as is the case with all other political or social organizations, had political preferences that created conflicts, disagreements, and personal differences between them and other members.

During an interview that I conducted with him, the chairman of ESAEA, Vardakastanis, responded to these comments by arguing that ESAEA was constituted by people who belonged to both New Democracy (conservatives), PASOK (socialists) and the Greek Communist Party (KKE), which meant that it was

842 Ibid. 7.
843 Ibid. 12-38.
844 Many of my informants were positively disposed towards PASOK but there were also New Democracy sympathizers.
not just one party that dominated the representation of the disabled, but that instead there was one common understanding: disability issues have political but not party-political implications. As Tsioubos also noted, these differences did not hinder the disability movement from imposing its claims accurately or in unison:

There are always opposing voices within a movement. This does not imply that the disability movement is not united concerning its claims and demands. There are disagreements on personal or party politics levels, influenced by different ideological streams, but disabled people’s main goal is to represent their rights and, believe me, they do that independently of which party controls the government. Do not think that they have been gentle towards PASOK [...]

My interviews with involved actors showed different views and standpoints regarding the interaction between disability issues and public administration. Even some of the interviews I conducted with members of the disability movement turned into arenas of accusations and criticism. They attempted to capture my research for expressing their political and personal complaints against other members of disability organizations. As one of my informants noted, at some point I was caught in gossip and exchanges of fire between opposing disability actors. Their standpoints reflected not only ideological differences but also struggles over who would control disability organizations and who would gain power over disability allies.

According to disability researchers Campbell and Oliver, collective action taken by disabled people has sometimes faced strong skepticism due to “divide and rule” tactics by the government or often because disabled people and organizations could not agree among themselves on common goals, strategies and priorities. In my interpretation, disability organizations in Greece gained considerable power and negotiability. On the other hand, several members of disability organizations articulated objections concerning the way this power was utilized and who was benefited. Were the needs and rights of people with disabilities appropriately represented? Were disability spokesmen sufficiently representative? The chairman of the Greek Paraplegics Association, Viglas, argued in an interview that many problems remained unsolved, and that, despite improvements, there were numerous issues that affected the quality of life of disabled people, which still needed to be addressed.

One could view the implementation of the new metro system as an important intermediary for improving the living standards of people with disabilities. By the end of 1999 and despite the fact that several reports had assured and several ministers declared that the system would fulfill accessibility criteria, there were still technical details unsettled. As a result, the Minister of Transport and Communications, Mantelis, sent a letter to the chairman of Attiko Metro’s board in 1999. Mantelis’ letter had twofold significance. First, the minister informed the chairman about the existence of the second disability committee at the Ministry of

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849 Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
Transport and Communications and second, Mantelis personally forwarded a specific proposal from the committee for printing metro’s destination maps in Braille. Mantelis also recommended continued cooperation between Attiko Metro and the Panhellenic Association of the Blind.

Mantelis’ letter and recommendations signaled the start of a new form of interaction between Attiko Metro and the second disability committee, which began to intervene in the development of the project and submit concrete suggestions to strengthen the adjustment of the system to accessibility standards. This interaction was enabled, encouraged and supervised by the Minister of Transport and Communications, Mantelis. As I will show in the following section, this new form of cooperation in making the metro accessible would continue after the inauguration of the system.

Year 2000: the metro comes to town

The official opening of the metro system was planned for January 28, 2000. Three days prior to this date, the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works and Attiko Metro organized a joint event where Minister Laliotis and the chairman of Attiko Metro Kikyras presented the metro’s accessibility provisions for disability organizations and other actors involved in disability issues (such as the blind PASOK member of Parliament Panayiotis Kouroublis). According to Tsioubos, there were 60-70 guests and reporters on hand. The ministry and Attiko Metro wanted to inform the public about the new system and all its accommodations.

Tsioubos notes that the event signified not only the beginning of the metro but also the emergence of new problems that Greek disability organizations could not foresee. The process for adjusting the metro to disability standards became a task that would not be finished upon the opening of the network. The presentation of the disability provisions worked as a symbol for the contribution of disability organizations to the development of the metro, as well as the starting point for a new period of cooperation between disability actors and the representatives for Attiko Metro. The start of the metro was a historic day for the city of Athens and was heralded in the Greek press as a major advance for Athens transportation (see figure 22). The Prime Minister Simitis and the President of the Republic Stefanopoulos inaugurated the metro. The inauguration was accompanied by 48 hours of free-of-charge viewing and traveling for the Athenian public. Almost 2 million Athenians visited the metro, tested the new lines, and looked at the antiquities found during the excavations as exhibited in showcases on the stations (see figure 23). Although the metro started its operation, there were several technical details that were still

854 Ibid.
856 Georgios Tsioubos, interview November 18, 2003.
unsettled such as the lack of handgrips in the cars, the lack of access to the toilets, absence of public telephones, etc.\textsuperscript{859} Leventi recalls:

The ministry organized an event for people with disabilities at the central metro station in Syntagma Square. When I attempted to enter one of the cars with my wheelchair, I realized that the front wheel would get stuck in the gap between the platform and the train. Immediately, I felt somebody raising the front part of the wheelchair, in order to hide this potential problem. The next wheelchair user, though, got stuck.\textsuperscript{860}

As discussed earlier, representatives of the Panhellenic Association of the Blind had pointed out the specific problem of the gap between the cars and the platform in 1994. It was clear that continued improvements and amendments would have to be implemented during the ongoing operation of the metro.

\textbf{Figure 22.} First page of Athens’ daily newspaper \textit{TA NEA (The News)}, January 28, 2000

“METRO-POLIS: changes in transportation and traffic”

\textit{Source: http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr}

\textsuperscript{859} \textit{TA NEA}, “The city that entered a car” January 31, 2000.

\textsuperscript{860} Argiro Leventi, interview March 16, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
Both Attiko Metro and representatives of the Greek disability organizations were to submit suggestions and apply amendments to improve metro accessibility. On March 14, 2000, Attiko Metro’s architect Dallas submitted the floor plans of the stations to the Panhellenic Association of the Blind, asking the Association to study and comment on the layout of the stations and propose possible modifications (such as installing seats and benches). This kind of correspondence indicated that cooperative efforts were in progress and that people with visual impairments continued to be involved in the configuration and planning of the stations. On the other hand, the start of the metro also signified the substantial involvement of the second disability committee with the project. Since the Ministry of Transport and Communications had taken over the supervision of the system, an additional form of intervention emerged: members of the second disability committee were to examine the metro and submit their proposals for the improvement of accessibility.

**The second disability committee and the metro: proposals for the improvement of accessibility and the reaction of Attiko Metro**

On January 13, 2000, the second disability committee decided to appoint a delegation of seven of its members to visit the metro and evaluate how accessible it was for disabled people. The committee announced this decision to Attiko Metro by letter and asked for the setting of a date. Attiko Metro failed to respond to this letter, however, despite repeated phone calls by members of the committee. During a new meeting on February 2, the committee presented its action plan for the year 2000. The first action on the list was the improvement of accessibility in the metro, that is, to visit and examine the stations, indicate problems, and develop proposals, especially for people with visual impairments.

As already discussed, the second disability committee had the political and personal support of the Minister of Transport and Communications Mantelis. Mantelis intervened in the work of the committee especially when bureaucratic or other problems occurred. On March 22, 2000, Mantelis sent a letter to the chairman of

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862 Ibid. 1.
864 Ibid.
Attiko Metro’s board in order to inform the board about the work of the second disability committee and its demand for continued accessibility improvements to the metro.\textsuperscript{866} The letter specified the members of the committee who were assigned to visit the metro and explained that these members would visit the stations with the aim of examining the accessibility of the stations and compiling a report on its findings. Mantelis indicated that after the committee had submitted its proposals, Attiko Metro must acknowledge and implement them in the system. Therefore it was important that Attiko Metro specified the engineers and technicians who would collaborate with the members of the committee.\textsuperscript{867}

Despite the fact that Attiko Metro did not specify a representative who would work together with them, the members of the committee visited the system and submitted a report to the appointed committee. The report indicated the absence of a considerable number of provisions for the safe and unobstructed mobility of people with visual impairments, as well as identifying a series of measures that needed to be taken in order to ensure better accommodation of people with disabilities in general.\textsuperscript{868} On June 29, 2000, the second disability committee discussed the evaluation and decided to demand that Attiko Metro address the following 17 concrete problems and recommendations (see figure 24).

\textsuperscript{867} Ibid.
1. *Guiding lines* should be installed for the blind on the pavements at the entrance to the stations and the elevator. *Warning stripes* that indicate the existence of an entrance or elevator should be installed.

2. The existing signs on the pavements in the Metro have a T form, which is not detectable by a blind person using a cane. *Horizontal bars* should be installed between the posts on a low level (10-20 cm from the floor) in order to be easily detectable and avoid accidents.

3. Inside the stations, *guiding lines* should be constructed for people with visual impairments; these lines should lead from the entrance to the ticket office, the stairs, the elevators, the platforms, and the exit.

4. *Warning stripes divided by touch and color* should be installed at the start and end points of the staircases, the half-landings, and the edges of the platforms. On the existing staircases there are no differentiations on the floor, while the end of a platform is not fully detectable by the blind.

5. Existing handgrips and walls are made of materials of the same color; as a result the handgrips are not detectable by people with visual impairments. The *marking of the handgrips* is necessary in order to avoid accidents.

6. The signboards of the stations are not readable by people with visual impairments. The *letters must be changed to capitals and the signs must be constructed opaque and illuminated*.

7. There is a rather big gap between the cars. As a result, people with visual impairments consider the gap as a door. In order to avoid serious accidents, a *clear indication of the edges of the cars* is vital.

8. The existing *gap between the platforms and the cars* is also large, which makes it a source of danger for children, the elderly, and especially wheelchair users, since the front wheels cannot ride over the gap.

9. The *volume of the audio announcements* must be raised, since it is very difficult for the elderly and people with hearing problems to understand these announcements in crowded cars.

10. The existing elevators lack *audio announcements* concerning floor levels and destinations.

11. The existing elevator cabins, despite the fact that they are insulated, lack *air-conditioning* and in the event of a power failure, the elderly face the risk of heatstroke.

12. The *photocells of the elevator doors* should be adjusted and prolonged to the time needed for a wheelchair user to enter the elevator.

13. The *speed of the escalators* should be adjusted to that of the handgrips, in order to avoid the creation of the feeling of an ‘earthquake’, which might be a great risk for the elderly.

14. Several stations do not have *escalators for level changing*.

15. The cars should be equipped with *safety belts for wheelchairs* and *special areas* should be designated for wheelchair users.

16. Special signs should mark WCs. Since Attiko Metro prohibits the use of WCs for safety reasons, *special guards should supervise the toilets*.

17. The *lack of a unified system of elevators* in some stations causes problems for people with disabilities. (author’s emphasis)

**Figure 24.** Concrete accessibility problems in the metro and recommendations to Attiko Metro as identified by the second disability committee, June 2000

*Source:* Transport Disability Committee, Ministry of Transport and Communications.
As the list indicates, many of the committee’s suggestions concerned various measures for accommodating people with visual impairments (such as installation of guiding lines on the pavements, installation of indicators for signs and warning stripes on the staircases, half-landings and edges of the platforms, installation of detectable handgrips, installation of indicators addressing the gap between cars, installation of readable signboards, launch of audio announcements in the elevators). Other proposals concerned measures for accommodating wheelchair users (adjustment of elevator photocells to wheelchair users’ pace, installation of elevators for level changing, installation of safety belts in the cars, coordination of a unified system of elevators), users with hearing difficulties and the elderly (adjustment of the volume of audio announcements in the cars, installation of air-conditioning system in elevator cabins, adjustment of the speed of escalators to handgrips). One point in the list does not specify measures but identifies a persistent problem, namely the gap between platforms and cars. In the context of these proposals, disability is enacted not only as reduced mobility or blindness, but also as age and deafness.

On November 1, 2000, Minister Mantelis wrote a new letter to Attiko Metro’s board chairman, Kikyras, presenting the results of the committee’s visit.869 Almost four months later in February 2001, Kikyras responded to the committee’s suggestions in a letter that summarized the conclusions of the committee concerning the metro and accessibility and addressed all the points. According to Kikyras, Attiko Metro had taken the suggestions of the committee into consideration and worked for the best possible accommodation of all users of the system.870 Among the 17 points that the members of the committee had identified, 9 proposals concerned people with visual impairments. Kikyras explained that Attiko Metro had analyzed these points with representatives for the Panhellenic Association of the Blind at length on several occasions.871 The most important outcome of these interactions, according to Kikyras, was the shared assessment that individuals who are completely blind are not able to move in unknown areas of the stations without a companion. These individuals are entitled to be trained for the use of the stations and Attiko Metro agreed on paying the amount of 17 million drachmas to produce guiding lines and information material.872

Kikyras’ letter also included a detailed index containing Attiko Metro’s responses to each of the committee’s 17 proposals. Because the context of the letter has central importance for interpreting the interactions among concerned groups (disability representatives) and confined research (architects and managers of Attiko Metro), I choose to present it in full here rather than reproducing it as an appendix.

871 Ibid.
872 Ibid
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposals of the second disability committee</th>
<th>Concerned group</th>
<th>Attiko Metro’s reply</th>
<th>Conclusions from discussion with the second disability committee on February 1, 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Guiding lines for the blind on the pavements</td>
<td>Blind</td>
<td>Municipalities are responsible for pavements.</td>
<td>AM will not intervene in the configuration of pavements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Metro signs with Π format</td>
<td>Blind</td>
<td>The signs have been amended. AM has added a horizontal bar between the legs of the signs in order to be detectable by the blind</td>
<td>AM has already changed the format of the signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Guiding lines for the blind on the station floors</td>
<td>Blind</td>
<td>AM is not certain about where the guiding lines should lead. Even if AM were to install guiding lines for the main routes in the stations (from the entrance to the elevator, escalators, etc), a complicated network will be formed that is difficult to comprehend</td>
<td>AM will not install guiding lines inside the stations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Warning stripes on the half-landings, level changes, and edges of the platforms</td>
<td>People with visual impairments</td>
<td>AM has installed warning stripes, both divided by touch and color, at the start and end of every level and at the edges of the platforms</td>
<td>In new stations, AM will include indications or warning stripes on half-landings as well, and will intensify the color difference of the stripes. Moreover, AM will examine how the existing warning can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Indication of handgrips</td>
<td>People with visual impairments</td>
<td>Omonia is the only station facing this problem. AM will examine this issue in planning the station</td>
<td>The work will be concluded within two years’ time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Capital letters on the signs. Opaque signs</td>
<td>People with visual impairments</td>
<td>Small letters accentuate the Greek alphabet. The signs contain larger letters than the internationally accepted standards. AM will consider the complaints and will install new signs</td>
<td>AM cannot change the signs at present. New signs will be installed within 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Indication of the car edges</td>
<td>People with visual impairments</td>
<td>AM will examine the possibility of signaling the edges</td>
<td>The result of this effort will be completed within a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Gap between platform and car</td>
<td>Reduced mobility - wheelchairs</td>
<td>The stations are constructed according to international standards. The resulting gaps are much smaller than those in other international constructions</td>
<td>AM cannot intervene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Amplification of audio announcements</td>
<td>Blind</td>
<td>After special modifications, the trains now produce less noise, thus the audio announcements have become more audible</td>
<td>No further measures are needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Audio announcement in the elevators</td>
<td>Blind</td>
<td>All the cabins are equipped with automatic announcements</td>
<td>No further measures are needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Risk of heatstroke in the elevators</td>
<td>Elderly and children</td>
<td>The risk for heatstroke is null, since: a) all stations have mechanical ventilation, b) the cabins are located within the stations and they are not exposed to the sun, c) the staircases are ventilated constantly d) all the stationmasters are trained in giving first aid</td>
<td>There is no risk for heatstroke. AM will not make any amendments to the elevators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The doors of elevators staying open for a longer period of time</td>
<td>Reduced mobility - wheelchairs</td>
<td>The door mechanisms can be modified to stay open for a longer time. AM will examine the optimum duration</td>
<td>The committee will inform AM about the optimum duration. AM will modify the doors. The modifications will be completed within three months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Coordination of escalators</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>The maintenance services will gain experience in decreasing the vibrations of the escalators</td>
<td>AM will continue maintaining the escalators as prescribed by their constructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Escalators on all levels of the stations</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>AM has left the possibility for installing extra escalators open</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Designation of wheelchair places and installation of safety belts for wheelchair users in the cars</td>
<td>Reduced mobility - wheelchairs</td>
<td>The distances between the stations and the acceleration or deceleration of the trains do not give cause for installing safety belts</td>
<td>AM will examine the possibility of installing extra handgrips in the first and the last car. The committee noted that the safety belts are not practical since the users do not have time to unlock them while the train is not moving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Marking of WCs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>The main goal of AM is the transportation of passengers with safety. Due to the fact that the free use of WCs can cause a number of problems, the policy of AM is not to encourage the use of WCs</td>
<td>AM will not install WC signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Unified system of elevators</td>
<td>Reduced mobility - wheelchairs</td>
<td>Since the platforms of many stations are located under roads, the connection of different areas within a station is possible only by a network of complicated routes. This obstructs safety in the stations. The installation of unified elevators would imply that at least two elevators at each station would have their entrances on the surface. This is extremely difficult in a city like Athens</td>
<td>AM cannot move the elevators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 25.** Attiko Metro’s reaction to the second disability committee’s proposals, February 2001
*Source: Attiko Metro, 2001: 4-8. “Athens Metro: Proposed measures for the improvement of the stations by the transport disability committee”.*
The second disability committee succeeded in recruiting the interest of Attiko Metro by submitting its suggestions regarding the improvement of accessibility provisions in the project. A number of these proposals were translated into technical solutions and amendments to the system (change in the format of the signs, installation of warning stripes, installation of indicators for handgrips, installation of indicators for car edges, amplification of audio announcements, audio announcements in the elevators, coordination of escalators), while others became subject to further problematization between the committee and Attiko Metro (installation of new signs with capital letters, installation of extra escalators, installation of extra handgrips). On the other hand, there were also several points that Attiko Metro could not act or improve upon due to economic, technical or design limitations (guiding lines on the pavements, guiding lines on the station floors, reducing the gap between platform and car, installation of safety belts, installation of WC signs, installation of extra elevators). The second disability committee was an active source of problematization for accessibility measures, acting with the explicit support of the Minister of Transport and Communications, in the configuration of accessibility in the metro project. The committee’s knowledge, perspectives, and concrete recommendations were transferred and integrated into the process followed by Attiko Metro’s proposed concrete solutions. This kind of interaction between the committee and Attiko Metro was to continue on several occasions.

On March 15, 2001, after collaborating with a representative of Attiko Metro and representatives of the Panhellenic Association of the Blind, the second disability committee again proposed the construction of guiding lines at the new stations (points 1 and 3 above) and recommended that so-called “hazard indicators” that had been designed by the Department for Research on People with Special Needs be utilized. The committee also proposed that the gap between the cars (a point raised already in the first report for the metro, almost nine months earlier) should be clearly indicated by installing phosphorescent tape on the edges of the cars. Further, the committee suggested that a special ramp should be installed which would come out automatically from the first car of each train in order to eliminate the gap. Finally, the committee announced the plans for another visit of its members to the metro site. The second disability committee thus actively and on an on-going basis problematized the implementation of accessibility solutions in the metro.

Ultimately, all of these demands were integrated into the Attiko Metro planning agenda.

**Accessibility and the Olympic/Paralympic Games: implications for the metro**
As already mentioned, the Olympic and Paralympic Games had become a significant entity that contributed to configuring the city of Athens and its infrastructure to accessibility standards. There is evidence that by the end of 2001, preparations for the summer Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2004 had become an increasingly important priority for the Greek government. This commitment was translated into concrete actions and measures taken by organizations engaged in the Olympic preparations. On October 4, 2001, the second disability committee submitted an action plan regarding the preparation of the Paralympic Games to all organizations.

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874 Ibid. 2-3.
875 Another similar case constitutes the construction of Athens new airport.
cooperating with the Ministry of Transport and Communications. This action plan, which was signed by the new Minister of Transport and Communications, Christos Verelis, underlined the significance of the Paralympic Games for improving the city’s infrastructure. It also announced the initiation of a committee entitled the Accessibility Committee Athens 2004.

The new committee was to serve as the technical consultant to a cross-ministerial committee that supervised the whole of the Olympic preparations in issues concerning accessibility. Importantly, members of the second disability committee were to participate in the new committee and its work with areas related to transport. The minister noted that it was of great significance for implementing accessibility in the transport sector that members of the second disability committee would cooperate with all entities under the supervision of the ministry. One of these entities was Attiko Metro. Hristofi, who was member of both the second disability committee and the Accessibility Committee Athens 2004, explains the mission of the latter and its interaction with the other disability committees:

Our (Accessibility Committee Athens 2004) mission was to promote issues concerning accessibility in relation to the Games. We did not intend to solve the problem of accessibility in Greece in general, but to accommodate the Olympic Games. Members of the second disability committee participated in the Accessibility Committee Athens 2004 and we had an excellent cooperation. We developed a strategic plan and we cooperated with other groups engaged with disability issues, such as the working groups at the Department for Research on People with Special Needs and the first disability committee at the Ministry of the Interior […] It was actually the same people, but this time there was a central coordination, the Organizing Committee Athens 2004, and a different aim, to make the Olympic and Paralympic Games accessible. Of course, everybody was interested in creating accessible infrastructures that would stay in Athens, and after the Games, as an infrastructural legacy.

One of the main projects that the second disability committee and Accessibility Committee Athens 2004 worked jointly on was establishing door-to-door accessibility within the municipalities of Athens. By this is meant the creation of accessible transport networks that link houses, public buildings, sport arenas, and other public areas. Within this context, the committees decided that one task of great significance was to adjust all bus stops and metro entrances to accessibility standards. Concretely, the committees specified that accessibility provisions must be installed at bus stops, at the stations of the metro, and stations of the Athens-Piraeus railway, as part of the accessibility plans that each municipality in Athens Greater

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877 Ibid. 5 and ESAEA, 2001: 14. “December 3, National Day of People with Disabilities: Paralympic Games in Greece, 2004 – A chance for social change, for people with disabilities, which must not be wasted”.
879 Marili Hristofi, interview March 9, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).
Area had developed. The committees made explicit that imposing accessibility in Athens’ built environment was not an abstract issue but instead involved concrete technical proposals that were actively supported by disability organizations. For example, in its annual report on disability issues in 2001, ESAEA affirmed that the organization of the Paralympic Games and the technical improvements that were to take place in Athens provided a unique opportunity for:

- The transformation of Attica’s basin and the city of Athens into an accessible built environment, with transport networks, roads and pavements, free spaces, authorities and sights accessible by people with disabilities
- The construction of accessible sport arenas and tourist infrastructure appropriate for the accommodation of people with disabilities
- The creation of sports infrastructures that can effectively accommodate the needs of athletes and spectators with disabilities.

On the other hand, ESAEA noted that due to extensive delays within the Organizing Committee and the government in preparing for the Paralympic Games, Greece faced the risk of receiving warnings from the International Paralympic Committee. Therefore ESAEA proposed that the Greek government should plan and implement a number of measures that would accelerate preparations for the Paralympic Games. These measures should also guarantee that the accessibility interventions that were to take place in Athens would remain as part of a long-term architectural, cultural, environmental, and social heritage for Greece. In other words, the Paralympic Games provided the opportunity for further problematization of the accessibility issue by disability organizations and improvements on the infrastructure and the transport network of the Greek capital.

The second disability committee continued to produce concrete proposals as well as methods for testing accessibility on different modes of transport. Specifically, in December 2001 Hristofi, who as noted earlier was a member of both the second disability committee and the Accessibility Committee Athens 2004, was assigned to make a questionnaire in order to monitor the level of accessibility in organizations supervised by the Ministry of Transport and Communications, such as Attiko Metro. The questionnaire was to include questions concerning the configuration of parking spaces, embarkation and disembarkation areas, pavements, ramps, entrances, toilets, ticket counters, and public telephones etc.

Apart from its initiatives to promote technical applications of accessibility, the work of the second disability committee also involved constructing a new vocabulary regarding the definition of disability and disability targets in the transport sector. Concretely, on February 28, 2002 the committee compiled a new plan that specified

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881 Ibid.
883 Ibid. 14.
884 Ibid. 21.
886 Ibid. 2-6.
distinct measures aimed at sensitizing and training certain employees in the transport sector regarding the issue of accessibility and the unobstructed mobility of disabled citizens in all transport networks. These measures had to be implemented within a specific time (March 2002 – September 2004) by all organizations within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The rationale behind this new plan was two forthcoming events, namely the European year of disabled citizens 2003 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2004. The plan included definitions in relation to who are disabled citizens, what the relevant transport systems were, and what were the categories of employees to be trained.

One of the most important viewpoints articulated in the plan was the definition of disabled people. Although throughout this study I have been equating the term people with disabilities and the term disabled people, the two concepts are not identical. As disability research Oliver recognizes, the use of the term disabled people involves a political strategy; it constitutes a signifier of the disabling nature of society that produces disabled people. The plan of the second disability committee referred to disabled people rather than people with disabilities/impairments/handicap. According to the second disability committee, disabled people were:

- Individuals with any kind of disabilities (sensory and mobility disabilities, individuals with bodily and organic disabilities, individuals with blood diseases, diabetics, etc)
- Elderly people
- Mothers with baby carriages
- Pregnant women
- Injured individuals
- Individuals with unusual or special bodily features (unusually long, short, overweight, thin)
- People with temporary comprehension and attention problems or individuals who move in unfamiliar or complicated spaces (individuals under the influence of alcohol or drugs; individuals suffering from panic, anger, confusion, and phobia crises; residents of other areas, etc)
- Children under the age of 12 without the supervision of their parents
- Individuals carrying sizeable objects

This ordering constituted a construction of disabled people that had significant implications not only for the understanding of disability within the public administration but also for the way in which public authorities enacted disabled individuals and the agenda within which they materialized disability policies. In that sense, the second disability committee contributed to an important transition in the

“Development of action plan for informing-sensitizing education for accessibility issues concerning disabled people and the mass means of transportation”. Record number 66.
888 Ibid. 2-7.
890 A similar discussion took place in chapter 7. The first disability committee issued a directive with reference to the built environment and the condition of public buildings. The directive referred also to disabled people, rather than people with disabilities. However, the direct translation from Greek to English would be blocked people.
“Development of action plan for informing-sensitizing-training for accessibility issues concerning disabled people and public transportation”. Record number 66 (in Greek, my translation).
enactment of disability in Greece by demedicalizing the terminology of the public administration and substituting it with a terminology that referred to the disabling character of the built environment and/or disabling cultures within public administration. Moreover, it broadened the term *disabled people* by including categories of citizens with temporary injuries or mobility difficulties. The new ordering of disabled people suggested that disability should be understood not only as a permanent bodily handicap but also as a temporary state for a great deal of the population, emerging through confrontations with disabling design and administrative obstacles in the built environment.

In a directive on March 14, 2002, the second disability committee forwarded the action plan to all organizations and entities supervised by the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The directive stipulated that all transport organizations, including Attiko Metro, should take all necessary actions that were required to realize the goal of enrolling and training public administrators regarding disability. This also involved the allocation of funds for financing such projects. Specifically, Attiko Metro was to contribute financially to the publication of written material such as reading matter for drivers, conductors, and station masters; information brochures for the public and special categories of disabled people; posters, stickers and special signs. This directive played a significant role in mobilizing transport organizations not only in adapting the transport environment to accessibility standards, but also in spreading accessibility awareness.

**Further interventions in the metro project and a debate concerning accessibility**

As already mentioned, problematizing accessibility in the metro was an ongoing process that continued even after the metro was inaugurated. Three months after the second disability committee’s plan was issued, the Ministry of Transport and Communications sent a directive to Attiko Metro. The directive specified that regularly using the same materials in the configuration of public spaces was important for the ability of people with visual impairments to orient themselves in public spaces. Since the platforms of all metro stations are considered public spaces designated for pedestrians, applying these measures in ongoing studies and

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893 Ibid. 1.
894 See for example Ministry of Transport and Communications, Transport Disability Committee 2002. “Notes: Action Plan informing-sensitizing-training for accessibility issues concerning disabled people and public transportation”.
897 This directive was originally issued by the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Decision 52488/16-11-2001, B’ 18/15-01-2002.
progressively adjusting the existing stations is obligatory and should be fulfilled by June 20, 2003, the ministry notes.\textsuperscript{898}

Almost a year later, in May 2003, Katsiotis, who had been a member of both disability committees, presented a report on the accessibility of public transport and the actions of the Ministry of Transport and Communications.\textsuperscript{899} This report was presented at a conference, organized by the Aristoteleio University of Thessalonica and the Technical Chamber of Greece. The report described and summarized the conditions in all organizations supervised by the Ministry of Transport and Communications regarding accessibility. Specifically for the metro, Katsiotis argued that all stations were now fully accessible to people with reduced mobility through the implementation of the following measures: ramps in exterior spaces, elevators that linked all the levels of the stations, and escalators or special mechanisms for leveling out height differences. Moreover, all stations had specially configured WCs for people with disabilities and the elevators were equipped with low-level handgrips for use by wheelchair users.\textsuperscript{900} Measures such as audio announcements and vividly colored buttons provided aids for users with visual impairments, and warning stripes of different colors and surface textures that were located on platforms edges alerted blind or inattentive users.\textsuperscript{901}

Warning stripes had also been installed on the first and last steps of staircases and the handgrips of the staircases were prolonged to accommodate users with visual impairments. On the edges of each car, yellow stripes had been installed with the aim of warning users with partial visual impairments about the gap between the car. All cars were accessible since car levels were the same as platforms levels. Finally, on the first and last door of each train an extension had been installed in order to reduce the gap between the train and the platform and to secure the safe movement of wheelchair users.\textsuperscript{902} Katsiotis’ report showed that Attiko Metro had integrated and implemented extensive measures that had constituted important parts of the accessibility agenda. It confirmed that Attiko Metro had been very responsive and implemented the suggestions of disability organizations such as the Panhellenic Association of the Blind as well as a number of the proposals submitted by the second disability committee.

This significant progress, however, did not imply that accessibility in the metro project could not be improved or that all claims presented by disability organizations had been integrated in the design of accessibility provisions. The Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients constitutes an example of a disability group that was not included in the work of configuring the metro. On May 25, 2003, the chairman of the

\textsuperscript{898} Ministry of Transport and Communications, 2002: 1. “Special measures for the accommodation of people with disabilities in public spaces designated for pedestrians”. Register number 2028.


\textsuperscript{900} Ibid. 11.

\textsuperscript{901} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{902} Ibid. 12.
Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients, who had also been a member of both disability committees, wrote a letter to Attiko Metro that made it evident that there were less privileged disability actors in the configuration of the metro. He claimed that Attiko Metro had not informed the association about which measures it intended to apply to accommodate retina patients, and he argued that the metro did not contain provisions that addressed the needs of people with retina impairments. The letter explained that the lack of special provisions in the metro caused severe difficulties for retina patients in terms of stress, confusion, delays in transport, mistakes in the use of different modes of transport and spaces, and even the risk for serious accidents.

To correct this omission, the Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients submitted a number of proposals to Attiko Metro that were based on its international experience, basic principles for the mobility of blind and visually impaired individuals, as well as the personal and experiential knowledge of its members. These proposals focused on improving accessibility for retina patients. In an interview I conducted with him, the chairman of the union complained about the fact that Attiko Metro did not reply to these proposals:

The associations and disability organizations, such as ours, sent letters to Attiko Metro. The problem is that they did not respond. I sent this letter and they have not answered me yet. I even submitted the letter to the second disability committee in order to get institutional support, but they have not responded. Now, I try to lobby with a blind colleague in order to find out where the letter disappeared. It is very difficult for us […]

The perspective of the Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients was thus that the metro was not a stabilized or standardized network for everyone. This was also reflected in a debate that took place in the Greek daily newspaper TA NEA (The News) in October 2003. On October 29, TA NEA dedicated its front page to the issue of disability with the headline Disabled metro, airport, and buses: Problematic accommodation of people with disabilities (see figure 26). The paper contained three articles concerning disability and accessibility. In the following I will discuss, as an example of the remaining controversies regarding the accessibility of the metro, the first of these articles.

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903 This category of disability includes individuals with hereditary diseases of the retina, blind spots, and damage to the optical nerve. The people who suffer from these diseases have peculiar eyesight. Particularly, they have temporary blindness, depending on the lighting situation etc. Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients, 2003: 1-2.
906 Ibid.
907 For a detailed presentation of these proposals see Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients, 2003. "Accessibility measures for individuals with partial visual impairments on Attiko Metro". Register number 14/42. Athens May 22, 2003.
908 Stratis Hatziharalabous, interview March 10, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).
909 Star, 1991: 44.
The first article concerned accessibility in new public transportation networks such as the metro, Athens new airport and public buses. The article was based on an interview conducted with Spyros Staurianopoulos, chairman of the Panhellenic Union of Paraplegic and Physically Challenged and also chairman of the Greek Paralympics Committee 2004. He argued that the spaces around the metro stations were not accessible since parked automobiles blocked most of the ramps. According to Staurianopoulos, the most important problem for people with mobility disabilities and wheelchair users was still, however, the infamous gap between the cars and the platform. Staurianopoulos explained that the gap was actually 12-16 cm in width, while it should not exceed 6 cm according to international accessibility standards. As a result, the front wheels of wheelchairs got stuck or fell into the gap (see figure 27).

Attiko Metro immediately responded to the complaints made by Staurianopoulos by sending a letter to the newspaper which was published the next day. The letter noted that the metro had been built according to special standards in order to ensure free access to people with disabilities in all sections of the network. Attiko Metro observed that since the inauguration of the system, the metro had been considered and remains the most “user friendly” means of transportation for people with mobility disabilities. The letter specified:

During the first three years and in cooperation with the second disability committee at the Ministry of Transport and Communications, significant improvements took place for the unhindered accommodation of citizens with mobility difficulties. Within this framework, we extended the floor of the cars by 6 cm at the first and last door of each train and as a result we reduced the gap between the train and the platform to 4-6 cm. At the same time, we installed special signs on the doors of these cars in order to inform not only wheelchair users but also passengers with baby carriages. Finally, we installed special signs in each car indicating four seats assigned for the explicit use of people who need them. Concerning the issue of inaccessible spaces around the metro stations, Attiko Metro would like to explain that the supervision of these spaces is not part of our responsibilities. The Greek traffic police are responsible and we have informed them about the problem.

911 TA NEA, “There is no way for them: Virtual accessibility in public spaces for mobility disabilities” October 29, 2003.
912 Ibid.
913 Ibid.
915 Ibid.
Attiko Metro thus explained that the metro had integrated high standards of accessibility provisions that are considerably innovative in comparison with parts of the city of Athens that are still inaccessible and exclusionary. Attiko Metro architect Athos Dallas asked me during an interview I conducted with him: “Why should Athens metro be perfect while the surrounding built environment is extremely problematic? Is the city of Athens accessible?” The articles in *TA NEA* in late October 2003 indicated not only that accessibility remained a controversial issue but also that it constituted an ongoing project as new extensions of the metro network were procured for and under construction.

**Summary and conclusions**

During the final construction phase of the metro project, the issue of accessibility actively became an integral part of the agenda and interactions were established between disability entities and Attiko Metro. This development was made even more urgent by a significant event: the hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games by the city of Athens in 1997, which made the accessibility issue an important goal/project for the government. Fields such as the public administration, public modes of transportation, and the built environment were to be adjusted to the needs and requirements of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Immediately, this recruited a number of entities such as public services, ministries, and politicians to form new hybrid forums for actively accommodating and promoting cooperation between disability organizations, public administrators, and engineers responsible for the configuration of the administrative and built environment. The ongoing work of parts of public administration, such as the Department for Research on People

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*Athos Dallas, interview March 15, 2005 (in Greek, my translation).*
with Special Needs and the first disability committee, was to support and enhance the formation of new accessibility forums.

The establishment of the second disability committee at the Ministry of Transport and Communications was to link the configuration of transport networks to the issues of transport disability and accessibility. The second disability committee was a hybrid forum in which concerned disability groups and their representatives negotiated with accessibility experts, politicians and engineers about technical choices and other issues concerning accessibility in transportation. The interaction between disability entities and public administrators in the committee constituted cooperation between research in the wild, namely interventions based on the experiences and proposals of disabled people, and confined research, as represented by the professional work of engineers and managers in developing transport networks.

The committee explicitly focused on the improvement of transport systems and was characterized as the “translation of inarticulate shrieks into technical reports”, as Polis and Maurokefalos described it.\(^917\) Members of the second disability committee, among them disabled people, conducted on-site inspections for ongoing transportation projects such as the metro and submitted proposals for the improvement of accessibility where it was needed. These proposals were conveyed to Attiko Metro with the support of the Minister of Transport and Communications. In this way, disability organizations became a voicey concerned group, that is, active participants in the process of configuring the metro, whose demands implied political weight and were integrated in the technoscientific process of applying accessibility to the metro. Members of the second disability committee did not only identify and provide solutions concerning disability and accessibility issues but also succeeded in showing that the interests of all entities involved with accessibility in transportation were linked to the work and initiatives of the committee. All organizations under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transport and Communications as well as representatives of the Olympic Games somehow cooperated with the second disability committee. In that sense, the second disability committee had become an obligatory passage point, namely a crucial reference point for producing and ensuring accessibility provisions in public modes of transportation.

The second disability committee also developed a new ordering of people with disabilities. This ordering referred to a broad category of disabled people such as people with impairments, elderly people, pregnant women, passengers with baby carriages, injured people, individuals with special bodily features, etc. The term disabled people focuses on the disabling culture of public administration and the built environment and has obvious connotations to the social model of disability. Disability researcher Priestley argues that disability definitions that underline the construction of disability in cultural terms help to stimulate research and solutions that concentrate on disabling attitudes and representations, rather than bodily impairments.\(^918\) Thus the work of the committee and the new definitions motivated interventions regarding the configuration of an accessible built environment, rather

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\(^{917}\) Interview with Gerasimos Polis September 8, 2004; and Dionysios Maurokefalos September 9, 2004.

\(^{918}\) Priestley, 1998: 76. “Constructions and Creations: idealism, materialism and disability”.

236
than policies that aimed at institutionalizing disability and protecting people with impairments.

The problematization of disability and accessibility issues within the organizations and toward the central administration was, however, not free of political antagonisms. In the metro project, the mobilization of accessibility as part of the metro’s construction process involved backlashes, the formation of alliances (i.e. between disability organization and politicians), the initiation of hybrid forums (i.e. the disability committees), the appointment of representatives (i.e. members of the heterogeneous disability groups), interactions with construction companies, and several political compromises or concessions. As Callon argues, the translation of demands into an established or legitimized political agenda implies several displacements of interests.\(^{919}\) In other words, in order to accomplish their goals, disability organizations needed the actions and practices of others by displacing or recreating their interests. During this process, however, the disability organizations and their demands also became subject to political manipulation and antagonisms. The translation process implies that all involved entities are exposed to enrollments and mobilizations.

Finally, although ESAEA, the Department for Research on People with Special Needs, the second disability committee, and other disability organizations had succeeded in intervening in the configuration of accessibility in the metro, a number of entities found themselves still excluded for various reasons. For example, the demands of the Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients were not integrated in the metro agenda. Despite significant progress in integrating disability organizations’ claims in the project, the metro still constructed several contradictory roles: influential and invisible users, members and non-members, voicy and hurt groups. As sociologist of technology Star notes, a stabilized technological system is only stable for some, namely those who are members or participants in the process that configured it.\(^{920}\) Retina patients were not an influential group yet and did not participate in the configuration of the metro. Thus the metro-accessibility hybrid collective was not stabilized for all, while the on-going procurement and construction of new metro lines and stations turned accessibility into work in progress.

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237
9. Summary and final discussion: hybridity and the co-production of technology and disability

I always wonder: is the Athens metro accessible? Then I answer myself: Yes and No! This paradox emerges from the lived experience of contradictions. You do not need to be university professor in order to understand that. From all perspectives, the Athens metro seems like an elegant, pendulous planet that for the time being remains disconnected from the rest of the city’s universe. All this would be charming if it only was a detail in a fairytale. Unfortunately, however, this is a very important detail that people with disabilities experience every day in Greece.\footnote{Nikos Perdikaris, interview November 20, 2003 (in Greek, my translation).}

Figure 28. Fairytales
\textit{Photo: Vasilis Galis}
In this final chapter I will review the empirical results of my study in relation to the theoretical framework that I have discussed. In the study, I have reconstructed the history of the Athens metro, describing how and from which positions disability organizations intervened in the design of the project and contributed to the materialization of accessibility provisions. Following selected approaches in science and technology studies (S&TS), I have attempted to describe the processes behind the construction of the metro and to develop a conceptual framework that would increase my understanding of the interactions, negotiations and conflicts that contributed to the realization of an accessible metro. I have also tried to describe how these processes affected the emerging role of disability organizations and have contributed to the enactment of disability and transport disability. The interplay between the empirical data collected for this study and my theoretical discussion generated new concepts and new understandings related to the co-production of disability, the Athens metro and disability organizations in the process of configuring the metro.

Conducting this study implied that I deconstructed, criticized and analyzed processes, interactions, and negotiations between different entities and organizations in configuring a transport network. The study did not treat the metro as a black box; following Latour, Athens metro did not constitute a matter of fact but rather a matter of concern. However, is it really the only task of the social sciences to deconstruct and criticize? The answer of this study is No. Critique is only one component in the list of the modes of mattering regarding how S&TS might contribute. The aim of critique and deconstruction in this study is not to debunk and demolish, but to apply conceptual tools to empirical materials as a basis from which the reader can gain a further understanding of disability and the formation of participatory processes around sociotechnical configurations.

As the reader will recall, the initial scope of the metro project did not include obligatory specifications for the implementation of accessibility facilities in the project. The Greek government did not stipulate accessibility provisions in the first contract for the metro. Applying accessibility was viewed as having specific material, economic, political and social consequences. While the issue of accessibility standards in the metro would make a significant difference to disabled people, it would also raise the cost, change the design of the work, and call for complicated political negotiations. The materialization of accessibility provisions for the metro was, however, successively viewed as part of a broad modernization process that Greek society went through during the 1990s, not least in anticipation of the forthcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games. The subsequent translation of accessibility standards in the metro project required different modes of intervention and new negotiative forums.

So what is it that matters here and what is the contribution of this study? How can we explain, contextualize and link the case of making an accessible metro to a wider discussion regarding the materialization of disability and transport disability as well as the participation of concerned groups in configuring the built environment?

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This study has shown how the process of planning and constructing the metro developed and how different entities (particularly disability organizations, politicians, engineers, managers, material artifacts and texts) interacted and contributed to the realization of an accessible metro. Political negotiations, technological development and the process of modernizing Greek society configured and reconfigured the hybrid collective Athens metro-accessibility. As Moser argues, it is fruitful to speak of a continual process by which hybrid collectives are shifted and reconfigured. In that sense, disability is continually translated in dynamic processes that constantly create new hybrid collectives and reconfigure the existing ones.

**Enacting (transport) disability in Greece**

Throughout this study, the notion of disability traveled between different standpoints and realities. Who was to enact or order disability? This leads the analysis to a discussion of the relations between different hybrid collectives and how they materialized disability and accessibility: how did they relate, how did they interact and what were the effects of those interactions?

In the framework of this study, several entities contributed to enacting disability in various contexts and with different definitions: the Greek government and its numerous institutions by producing policies, measures, and classifications; the Greek Orthodox Church, engineers and managers of the metro project, the condition of the built environment, and specific artifacts that contributed to increasing accessibility in urban spaces.

Until the 1980s, a mixture of neglect and religious/charity concern with long cultural roots had characterized disability in Greece. Disability was enacted as a disease that should be cured or institutionalized. Within this context, disability was associated with the medical model. From such a position, disability is ordered as a personal tragedy expressed by the biophysical condition of the individual. The unit of analysis is the impaired body and the restrictions it imposes on the individual. Linkages between disability and the built environment were totally absent. Disability is solely described as a bodily impairment, while the issue of transport disability is hardly addressed.

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924 Reading through this study one could accurately claim that the process of adjusting the new Athens metro to accessibility provisions reflected three broad processes: first, technology development for the design and application of specific accessibility mechanisms or architectural interventions (technological or architectural determinism). Second, political developments and processes through which the accessibility question was problematized and forwarded to the construction of the metro (political determinism). Third, a broad modernization process expressed through design principles, norms and proposals developed, provided and imposed by the European Union, Greek organizations engaged with the accessibility question, and the International Olympic Committee. These developments were also endorsed by specific governmental or regime changes that favored disability and accessibility issues.

925 Moser argues that this process refers to a continual decomposition and recomposition of hybrid collectives, rather than a singular trajectory of the collective, Moser, 2003: 46.

926 Ibid. 286.


241
For most of the twentieth century, disabled people and their organizations were politically weak and unable to impose their demands. The dominant role of the Orthodox Church and its charity organizations downplayed the role of disability organizations, and disabled people were treated as charity objects. There are indications that during this period many able-bodied people experienced disability as a sin or a disease. State policies and measures focused on methods of institutionalization and treatment. The beginning of the 1980s signified, however, political changes in Greece that were to have significant implications for disability issues. The coming to power of the socialist party PASOK increasingly influenced the enactment of disability. For the first time, disabled people participated in the election ballots and were assigned public administration positions. Simultaneously, the PASOK government ratified a number of financial measures for the accommodation of people with disabilities and their integration into society.

The new view on disability focused on economic and participatory aspects. The PASOK government attempted to include the impaired individual into labor, politics, and public administration by providing her or him with economic benefits, access to employment, and positions in the public administration. These were also the demands and claims of disability organizations. The issue of configuring the built environment was, however, not in force yet. From this perspective, disability was enacted by socio-economic terms and the ability of the individual to perform a “normal” way of life. During this period, disability issues were settled in an indeterminate state between the medical and the social model of disability.

In the mid-1980s, the establishment in the public administration of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs marked an important turn in the materialization of disability. The Department problematized and stipulated measures regarding the translation of accessibility in urban spaces. This was the first time that disability was associated with the urban environment. Initially, this approach emerged from a limited number of individual actors, namely disabled employees of the Department. Disability organizations were not engaged in the process. Concrete measures that e.g. specified calculations for the accommodation of wheelchair users in public buildings were integrated into the revised General Building Code (GOK) in 1985. Despite the fact that the notion of disability was restricted to wheelchair users, the GOK was the first law of the Greek state that related disability to the accessibility of the built environment.

In 1986, the Department issued a handbook with specific suggestions for the configuration of urban spaces to accessibility standards. These very first initiatives enriched disability as a hybrid collective in the sense that it was not only biophysical aspects of the individual or socio-economic factors that determined the disabled identity, but also a set of relations between the body and urban spaces. Disability was enacted as an effect or a result of the relations between the impaired body and disabling public spaces. Thus the work of the Department indicated traces of the

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928 Within this new context, disability was to transform from what Moser describes as a philanthropic-normative construction to an orthopedic-rational one, that is, disabled people were to be made able and useful to society and the state. Moser, 2000: 207-208. “AGAINST NORMALIZATION: Subverting Norms of Ability and Disability”. For a further discussion on the so-called “normalization principle” see Chappell, 1997. “From Normalization to Where?”

The translation of disability issues by the Greek public administration into accessibility provisions. From this focal point, the materialization of disability began to spread progressively.

This change in the view of disability was also adopted by disability organizations in the early 1990s. With the support and encouragement of the European Union and other international organizations, these organizations began to integrate accessibility issues regarding the configuration of the built environment into their agendas and to problematize demands regarding the translation of transport networks into areas without architectural obstacles that accentuated disability and isolated people with physical impairments. Thus one could claim that there was a significant change in the demands of disability organizations: from claims concerning economic benefits, access to employment, and positions in the public administration to interventions for the configuration of accessible urban milieus and the reduction of transport disability. At the same time, the initiation of infrastructural projects such as the Athens metro created potentials for disability organizations to claim participation in the design and implementation of urban transport networks. The construction of the new Athens metro provided a chance for people with disabilities to apply the social model of disability and to materialize accessibility.

However, the return of the conservative party New Democracy to power in 1990 suspended the spreading of this kind of accessibility awareness in the public administration. The new government returned to a medical approach of disability and ratified measures that focused on institutionalizing and rehabilitating bodily impairments, stipulating allowance policies, and reinforcing charity organizations. Disability again became a medical and an economic issue. This was also reflected in the metro project, which did not address transport disability. The first metro contract, which was signed by the conservative government and the constructing consortium, did not include obligatory stipulations regarding accessibility provisions in the metro.

In 1993, the return of the socialists to office re-established the sociomaterial approach to disability issues in the public administration. The ratification of the second metro contract that included accessibility provisions and the initiation of two disability committees contributed to further materialization of (transport) disability. The work of the committees focused on the ratification of obligatory measures against physical and institutional barriers. Within this context, disability was enacted as disabling patterns of administrative behavior or architectural obstructions in the built environment.

Additionally, the participation of disability organizations in the committees contributed to the development of disability policies and the enactment of new modes of disability. The committees produced broad definitions of disabilities that had a unique value for the ordering of disability since they did not focus only on people with impairments, but also on the elderly, pregnant women, children, temporarily injured etc. Thus the notions of disability and transport disability referred to a large part of the population and this increased the demand for the construction of accessible infrastructures.

The process of applying accessibility in the metro constitutes a hybrid collective where one can observe the co-production between disability and materiality. Figure
29 summarizes the developments and interactions between Greek disability organizations and the metro project during different chronological periods.\textsuperscript{930}

Several individual actors (such as Leventi, Batsos, and Polis) also played important roles in the translation of the disability issues into material terms. Their participation in different organizations, such as Attiko Metro, various ministries, and disability committees produced concrete actions that translated accessibility provisions into technical interventions in the metro project. It was not only the fact that these actors had a social model approach but that their negotiations, interventions, and interpretations of rules and regulations standardized accessibility. This kind of

\textsuperscript{930} This figure is inspired by the valuable comments of Claes-Fredrik Helgesson.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure29.png}
\caption{Figure 29. Historical overview of interactions between disability organizations and the metro project}
\end{figure}
materialization configured disability and transport disability as a dynamic processes. What do I mean by that?

This study claims that disability is a multidimensional concept that reflects relations/associations/interactions between economic, cultural, political, material, social, and bodily entities. According to Priestley, disability is a notion that is characterized by ontological pluralism. This kind of pluralism implies that while realities may conflict at some points, elsewhere the various enactments of an object may collaborate and even depend on one another. By this I mean that disability cannot be detached from the material and semiotic entities that constitute it.

Throughout this study, disability was progressively described by several entities reflecting different social, economic, political, and technological processes in Greek society. Investigating the construction process of the Athens metro enabled me to translate the development of disability in a sociotechnical context and to study the entities that contributed to its materialization. In other words, the hybrid collective metro-accessibility constitutes one of the many sociotechnical settings that enact (transport) disability.

**Concerned groups in the configuration of the built environment**

This study also focused on the involvement of disability organizations as concerned groups in the configuration of the Athens metro. To describe their participation I employed a concept inspired by Michel Callon, *hybrid forums*, in which concerned groups interact and negotiate with experts and politicians on different levels and within different contexts concerning technoscientific facts and artifacts. What kinds of hybrid forums were discussed in the context of this study? For example, members of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs initially interacted with employees of the special public administration directorate (EYDE METRO) that worked with the metro question. Later on, disability organizations negotiated directly with the company that supervised the construction of the metro, Attiko Metro. In addition, representatives of disability organizations participated in cross-ministerial disability committees. In other words, disability organizations intervened in technical issues and participated in cooperative research activities. What are the consequences of employing hybrid forums in the analysis and what does that concept contribute to the study of sociotechnical processes?

This study has showed that the contribution of disability organizations in the configuration of the metro was not limited only to their participation in various working groups and committees, but disability associations actively addressed transport disability and developed specific proposals and recommendations regarding the realization of accessibility. They conducted their own research, *research in the wild*. One important component of *research in the wild* was the personal experience of disabled people on disability issues. Disability theorist Morris notes that disabled people increasingly argue that they are the experts on disability and if they could participate in decision-making processes, they would develop very different policies from the ones that currently dominate their lives.

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931 Priestley, 1998: 82.
932 Mol, 1999: 83.
In the metro case, I showed how disability organizations problematized the accessibility issue, created alliances, mobilized concrete designs for the application of accessibility provisions and presented these proposals in hybrid forums.

This study has described a journey for disability organizations. Initially, these organizations constituted orphan groups, that is, outsiders in Greek society who were unable to influence socio-political configurations, while the government and the church treated them as charity objects or patients. Without profound reconfigurations their interests and demands would not be included in technoscientific processes. By formulating a common political agenda and in combination with the reforms that the socialist government launched in the early 1980s, disability organizations progressively succeeded in problematizing their claims and making their voices heard. The initiation of the metro project gave them the opportunity to advocate for their involvement in the configuration of the built environment. The first metro contract and the disability organizations’ conflicts with the New Democracy government in the start of the 1990s transformed disability organizations into a hurt group. By this is meant that despite the increasing involvement of disability organizations in political processes, the lack of obligatory stipulations in the metro contract for applying accessibility provisions symbolized not only their exclusion from design processes, but also new exclusions which would be the result of constructing the metro in an inaccessible way.

The work of the Department for Research on People with Special Needs and the initiation of two disability committees in the second half of the 1990s encouraged, however, negotiations between disability organizations and Attiko Metro. The emergence of these forums transformed disability organizations from a marginalized group to a voicy group and transformed disability from a personal and bodily handicap (as viewed by the medical model of disability) to a collective material question (as viewed by the social model).

**Hybrid forums as obligatory passage points for problematizing accessibility**

This study has viewed hybrid forums as public spaces where disability organizations interacted with the Greek public administration and the metro construction and supervision company, actively participating in the design and development of accessibility provisions and disability policies. Hybrid forums involve patterns of cooperative research, that is, interactions between researchers in the wild and technicians, politicians, and public administrators. In other words, hybrid forums imply a new distribution of authority and power, refuting the monopolistic supremacy of experts in the design and production of technology, the configuration of the built environment, and the enactment of what is disabled and what is impaired. Nevertheless, is it only the power of experts that is refuted by hybrid forums? Do hybrid forums constitute a panacea?

In order to answer the latter question one should ask: who participated in the configuration of disability and who was excluded from these forums? The work of the committees was strongly influenced by the participation of representatives from specific disability organizations but not all kinds of disabilities were represented effectively. For example, organizations such as the Panhellenic Union of Retina Patients did not succeed in imposing their demands on the metro, despite the fact
that one of their representatives participated in both disability committees. A stabilized performance or ordering is not stable for all.934

The previous discussion on the exclusion of certain entities from the configuration of the metro generates additional questions in relation to the establishment of obligatory passage points as defined within actor-network theory. Were the hybrid forums described in this study ultimately established as obligatory passage points for problematizing accessibility in the metro? In that case, who did participate in the establishment of obligatory passage points and who was excluded during the configuration of the metro-accessibility collective?

The materialization of accessibility on the metro went through a process of shifting obligatory passage points. In some cases, these were public administration organizations such as the Department of Research on People with Special Needs and the disability committees, while in some other cases these were interactions between entities such as the initiatives of individual disability organizations and the work of the employees of Attiko Metro. Power was transformed between different entities and contributed to the formation of new obligatory passage points. Obligatory passage points change over time and this is due to complex sociomaterial and political configurations.

I argue that creating new hybrid forums or continually renewing and reforming existing ones is essential for a more democratic and inclusive configuration of the built environment, as well as for the abolishment of orphan and hurt groups. What is proposed then is not that hybrid forums are dismantled but that they are reinvented in order to build and enact new obligatory passage points.935 The way disability is enacted constitutes a political issue. This brings the discussion to the question of intervention. Moser notes that there are many options of acting and intervening in the enactment of disability: influencing everyday environments by being constantly present and forcing the able-bodied community to adjust to accessibility standards, making claims on public space, creating new public spaces on the internet for discussion, and working for the integration of disability politics in established political arenas such as policy networks.936 The last option constitutes one of the arguments of this study.

Hybrid forums: theoretical concept or policy instrument?

The integration of disability politics in political agendas can be accomplished with the support of national or transnational governments by initiating new hybrid forums. As Callon argues, the facilitation and organization of hybrid forums require the intervention of public powers.937 In this study, the Greek government, through different institutional mechanisms and ministries, fostered the creation of hybrid forums regarding the implementation of accessibility provisions in the public built environment. These forums consisted of representatives of disability organizations, Attiko Metro engineers, public administrators and politicians. The loss of hegemonic authority by the experts allows us in general to explore what a good fact is, what an

936 Ibid. 300.
inclusive technological network consists of. How can we then utilize the concept of hybrid forums? Are hybrid forums just another theoretical concept or a concrete policy instrument?

The concept of hybrid forums constituted both a theoretical and an empirical tool for this study. It enabled the sociological study of the Athens metro and accessibility to record and describe interactions between experts and concerned groups in sociotechnical processes. It also represented institutional spaces facilitated and organized by public authorities. As such, hybrid forums constitute theoretical templates for conducting research on the content and configurations of sociotechnical processes. At the same time, they specified examples of participatory processes for public authorities and concerned groups. What lessons for future research do these examples imply?

Callon argues that institutional mechanisms should be devised to facilitate and organize interactions between research in the wild and confined research. These interactions could be achieved if national governments or supranational organizations such as the EU encouraged and organized interactions between the research community, public administration, political parties and different concerned groups. Thus I would like to encourage further research on the formation of hybrid forums between public authorities and concerned groups in different sociotechnical controversies. This kind of research should aim to enhance the public debate on the participation of concerned groups in the configuration of urban environments, as well as stimulate discussions on the enactment of concepts such as disability and accessibility.

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Appendix I. Attiko Metro’s reply to my letter requesting access to its archives

Athens, 07/04/2005

Dear Mr. Galis,

As a response to your email (23.03.05) we would like to inform you that:

Attiko Metro SA annually provides hundreds of students with special information and data regarding different sectors of Athens metro.

During the last two years, from April 2003 when you sent your first claim until now, Attiko Metro SA has provided you with any information you have requested and specific employees have repeatedly devoted many hours in order to collect and send you information that you have requested.

Specifically, until today you have received the following documents:


Moreover, despite the fact that Attiko Metro has never received a certificate from your university regarding your doctoral thesis, employees of our company have answered to several of your questions during personal or telephone contacts with you. Your last request (23.03.05) concerning copies of the formal and informal correspondence of our company with various disability organizations cannot be satisfied.

Finally and for clarity reasons, Attiko Metro’s Department of Communication did never refer to an “abstract principle regarding the secrecy of public documents”, but it explained for you that the company always respond accurately and analytically in every citizen’s request and it mentioned characteristically an example where a student requests the correspondence between ATTIKO METRO SA and the contractor Olympic Metro, which consists of more than 200,000 documents and the reproduction and transfer of which would cost tens of thousands Euros.

At your service for any other information which may contribute to the completion of your study.

Yours truly,

Haris Tsimatzis
Director of Person Relations
Αγαπητέ κύριε Γαλή,

Σε συνέχεια του τελευταίου ηλεκτρονικού σας μηνύματος (23.03.05) σας γνωρίζουμε ότι:

Η ΑΤΤΙΚΟ ΜΕΤΡΟ ΑΕ παρέχει αναλυτικές εξειδικευμένες πληροφορίες και στοιχεία για διάφορους τομείς του Μετρό της Αθήνας σε εκατοντάδες φοιτητές κάθε χρόνο. Τα τελευταία δύο χρόνια, από τον Απρίλιο του 2003 που στείλατε το πρώτο σας αίτημα έως σήμερα, η ΑΤΤΙΚΟ ΜΕΤΡΟ ΑΕ σας έχει δώσει οποιαδήποτε πληροφορία ζητήσατε και στελέχη της εταιρείας μας έχουν επανεπιλεγμένος αφιερώσει αρκετές ώρες προκειμένου να συλλέξουν και να σας αποστείλουν τις πληροφορίες που κάθε φορά μας ζητάτε. Συγκεκριμένα έως σήμερα σας έχει παραδοθεί τα παρακάτω έγγραφα:

- «Προβλέψεις για τα άτομα με ειδικές ανάγκες» ΕΓΧΕΙΡΙΔΙΟ ΣΧΕΔΙΑΣΜΟΥ Ε.Υ.Δ.Ε.Μ.
- «Διευκολύνσεις για ΑΜΕΑ» - ΝΟΜΟΣ Αρθ 1955 ΦΕΚ 112/Α/18-07-1991 «Ιδρυση Εταιρείας με επωνυμία ΑΤΤΙΚΟ ΜΕΤΡΟ Ανώνυμος Εταιρεία και ρύθμιση συναφών θεμάτων»
- Εντολή 13 προς την ανάδοχο κοινοπραξία ΟΛΥΜΠΙΑΚΟ ΜΕΤΡΟ 0G00EN010R902C "INSTRUCTION 13 DESIGN CRITERIA FOR FACILITIES FOR PSN"
- Αριθ. Οικ. 52487 «Ειδικές ρυθμίσεις για εξυπηρέτηση ΑΜΕΑ στις υφιστάμενες κτίτρια» ΦΕΚ 18/Δ/15-01-2002
- Αριθ. Οικ. 52488 Ειδικές ρυθμίσεις για εξυπηρέτηση ΑΜΕΑ σε κοινόχρηστους χώρους ων οικισμών που προορίζονται για την κυκλοφορία πεζών» ΦΕΚ 18/Δ/15-01-2002

Επίσης, παρότι η ΑΤΤΙΚΟ ΜΕΤΡΟ ΑΕ ουδέποτε έχει λάβει έγγραφα του Πανεπιστημίου σχετικά με την διδακτορική σας εργασία, στελέχη της εταιρείας μας είτε τηλεφωνικά είτε και σε πολλαπλές προσωπικές επαφές με σας, σας έχουν δώσει διευκρινίσεις και απαντήσεις σε διάφορα ερωτήματα σας.

Το τελευταίο σας αίτημα (23.03.05) για αντίγραφα της επιστήμης και μη αλληλογραφίας της εταιρείας μας με τους διαφόρους Φορείς των αναπτυξιακών οργανισμών δεν είναι δυνατόν να ικανοποιηθεί.

Τέλος, προς αποκατάσταση της αλήθειας, το Τμήμα Επικοινωνιών της ΑΤΤΙΚΟ ΜΕΤΡΟ ΑΕ ουδέποτε σας ενημέρωσε για «κάποια αόριστη αρχή για το απόρρητο των δημοσίων εγγράφων» αλλά σας εξήγησε αφενός μεν ότι η εταιρεία μας απαντά πάντα έγκυρα και αναλυτικά σε κάθε ερώτηση πολίτη και σας ανέφερε χαρακτηριστικά το παράδειγμα κάποιου φοιτητή να ζητήσει την αλληλογραφία της ΑΤΤΙΚΟ ΜΕΤΡΟ ΑΕ με την ανάδοχο κοινοπραξία ΟΛΥΜΠΙΑΚΟ ΜΕΤΡΟ, η οποία έχει αποκλήσει τα 200,000 έγγραφα, και για την οποία θα χρειαζόντουσαν δεκάδες χιλιάδες ευρώ για την αναπαραγωγή και την μεταφορά τους. Στην διάθεσή σας για οποιοδήποτε άλλο στοιχείο που μπορεί να συμβάλει στην ολοκλήρωση της εργασίας σας.

Με εκτίμηση,
Χάρης Τσιματζής
Προϊστάμενος Δημ.Σχέσεων
Appendix II. List of interviewed informants

1. Representatives of Metro companies

- **Olympic Metro Consortium** (responsible contractor for construction of the metro)

- **ATTIKO METRO S.A.** (state-owned company responsible for supervision design, construction and implementation of the metro)
  - **Haris Tsimatzis**: director of public relations. Telephone communication April 7, 2005.
  - **Manolis Sotiropoulos**: architect, Director of Attiko Metro’s department of architecture. Interviewed November 18, 2003 and March 15, 2005.
  - Two architects who wish to remain anonymous. Interviewed March 18, 2005.

2. Representatives of disability organizations

- **Greek National Confederation of Disabled People (ESAEA)**
  - **Dionysios Maurokefalos**: member of the Greek Paraplegics Association, former member of ESAEA board, and former member of both disability committees. Interviewed September 9, 2004 (telephone interview).
  - **Yannis Vardakastanis**: current Chairman of the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People. Interviewed July 6, 2004 and October 6, 2005 (telephone interview).
• Panhellenic Union of Paraplegic and Physically Challenged

• Greek Paraplegics Association

• Panhellenic Union of Retina patients

• Panhellenic Association of the Blind

3. Representatives of ministries and public administration organizations

• Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works

• Ministry of Transport and Communications

• Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization
  • Mary Kotronia: employee at the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, directorate of ‘State-Citizen relations’, former consultant of the Minister of

- **Ministry of Health and Welfare**
  - **Gerasimos Polis**: disabled architect and public servant at the Ministry of Health and Welfare, member of both disability committees. Interviewed September 8, 2004, April 14, 2005 (e-mail communication) and October 24, 2005 (telephone interview).

- **Ministry of Culture**

- **National Technical University of Athens (EMP)**
  - **Markos Katsiotis**: accessibility expert, employee at the Division of Technical Services of Athens Technical University (EMP), member of the working groups at the Department for Research on People with Special Needs and participant in both disability committees of the ministries of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization and Transportation. Interviewed November 14, 2003 and October 24, 2005 (telephone interview).
Appendix III. Participants in the second disability committee at the Ministry of Transport and Communications

Ministry of Transport and Communications
- Ioannis Bertsimas, head of the directorate for vehicle control (chairman)
- Euthumios Saitis, engineer
- Ilias Negris, engineer
- Eleftherios Marinelis, engineer
- Eleni Fasitsa, employee
- Eugenia Athanasopoulou, employee
- Fotini Papadimitropoulou, employee
- Mary Kotronia, consultant to the minister

Ministry of Health and Welfare
- Gerasimos Polis, architect
- Adjunct: Eustratios Hatziharalabous, sociologist

Centre for driving ability evaluation “Iniohos”
- Mihalis Pitidis

Athens Technical University (EMP)
- Markos Katsiotis, architect

Postal Savings-bank
- Aggelakis Mihalis, engineer

Athens Urban Transport Organization (OASA)
- Aggelos Rouhotas, assistant director of traffic

Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works
- Argiro Leventi, architect

Thermal Buses SA (ETHEL)
- Asterios Aggelidis, engineer

Athens-Piraeus Area Trolley Buses (ILPAP)
- Giorgos Maurogenidis, employee

Athens-Piraeus Electric Railways SA (ISAP)
- Ioannis Adamos, engineer

Hellenic Railways Organization (OSE)
- Giorgos Voulgaris, employee

Olympic Airways
- Alexandra Radou, engineer

Greek Postal Service
- Marili Hristofi, engineer

Greek Telecommunications Organization (OTE)
- Haralabos Barlas, employee

ESAEA
- Dionysios Maurokefalos
- Kyriazopoulou Maria

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The reference list is divided into two parts. The first part entitled “Literature” includes academic references. The second part entitled “Archival Sources and Newspapers” contains heterogeneous empirical data both published documents (i.e. laws of the Greek state, decisions of different ministries, records of parliamentary debates, newspaper articles) and unpublished material, which was not systematically archived (i.e. letters between different organizations, directives circulated within the public administration, meeting records, memorandums). I obtained the unpublished materials during my interviews and I have kept them in my personal archive. The description of interviews is not included in the reference list. I chose to present my interviews in a separate appendix in order to provide the reader with a detailed description of the occupation of the informants, the form of their engagement with the metro project, as well as the dates and forms of communication that I employed for conducting the interviews.

The main body of the empirical material is written in Greek. I translated these documents myself and have indicated their titles in English. In these references I included the register numbers of each document, which make them traceable in their Greek contexts. These documents lack of the name of a known author. In these cases, I registered them according to the organization that published them, for example Attiko Metro, International Olympic Committee, Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, etc.
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257


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