

# Space as a stage set in the negotiation of truth: The urban models of residential space in Greece in the 1950s and '60s as projected by the Greek cinema

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## Abstract

Prompted by the argument that to review the residence only as the product of building work and as a refuge is inadequate, my intention is to develop the model of a theoretical tool for reading 'space in use'.

A central theme in this exploration is the ascription of meaning to and the description of the organisation of the space of the house, not as a totality of building elements or as a museum shell, but as a product of the dynamic co-existence of three variables: the containing casing, the equipment contained, and the people who live and function within this totality.

The basic problem is located in the question of how we can pronounce upon a real historical space, and therefore a relation between man and things, with the lifeless shell and its equipment as the sole given. The answer lies in that research material which also includes for elaboration parameters of the human factor, such as features of movement, action, character and behaviour. For this reason, I have looked for a medium as a methodological tool, which will survey action and thus represent space in use.

The cinema is a suitable means of research because, while it provides no certainty that it is projecting the truth, it nevertheless is a general mirror, perhaps a distorting mirror, but still a general mirror which reliably projects commonly accepted models of ideologies and approaches and is used frequently by large numbers of people.

It goes without saying that since we are discussing a medium which makes use of codes legible and intelligible by chiefly the lower and middle bourgeois strata, for whom film projects are representations of archetypes in accordance with the apprehension of the specific social stratum.

In order to structure the body of the research, cinema films have been selected on the following criteria:

- \* that they are drawn from the Greek repertoire and concern Greece;
- \* that the plot unfolds largely in residential space;
- \* that they deal with human relationships in a socially fluid situation, because in these relationships typical situations which emphasise social gatherings are revealed;

## Keywords

domestic space,  
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\* that their date of production should range between 1950 and approximately 1970, a period in which Greek society had begun to recover from the disastrous effects of the Second World War and to reach a point a little before the military dictatorship, when a new era for the definition of 'rules' began and television made its appearance.

The style of the Greek cinema in the period 1950-70 belonged within the genre of social realism, influenced by trends, which at that period were dominant chiefly in Italy and Britain. Consequently, what it represents is a realistic portrayal of a way of life and its conditions. If it were not, it would not serve as a reliable tool for the representation of real space in use.

To explore in the language of architecture what the cinema projects, two systems of parameters have been used: the Conventions of the Tool of Representation (what does the cinema mean as a medium of expression, what is the role of the director, what is the role of the audience, what is the director's convention with the public?) and the Typology of Space (what does space mean and what is the typology of space?). The space of the residence of the '50s to the '70s is finally described by the superimposition of these two systems.

Thus, on the basic hypothesis that representation is a formulation of models, I have studied cinema films, focusing my attention on a study and description of the manner of structuring and representing the space of the residence as a realised imprint of the actions in which the subjects, by category of social stratum, have been engaged, and how this spatial organisation expresses principles and ways of life. If the expressions in individual instances of representations of spaces by different directors who have concerned themselves with the same type of space, at roughly the same period, prove to be the same or approximately the same, this would serve as confirmation of the fact that they are converging on a true description of reality.

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