The Olympians

A proposal to transform the derelict Athens 2004 Olympic venues into radical socio-political living spaces.

Οι Ολύμπιοι

Πρόταση για τη μεταμόρφωση των Ολυμπιακών εγκαταστάσεων σε ριζικά κοινωνιο-πολιτικά κέντρα κατοικίας.

I	The Olympic Nightmare	Ο Ολυμπιακός Εφιάλτης
II	Austerity	Λιτότητα
III	The Olympians Proposal	Η Πρόταση Ολύμπιοι
IV	Imagined Societies	Κοινωνιολογικές Φαντασίες

I The Olympic Nightmare
Ο Ολυμπιακός Εφιάλτης

The Athens 2004 summer Olympics have recently become a prime example of how large sports events can drive a weak country into monumental debt. The poor management, corruption, and abundance of enthusiasm drove the organising committee to spend ridiculously over the initial budget, borrowing to cover the costs through public lending. By building permanent venues for sports that are alien to Greeks, the legacy plan became impossible to manage. Today, the cost of operating these stadiums is so high that the facilities have been left to their own demise.

Οι Ολυμπιακοί αγώνες το 2004 αποτελούν παράδειγμα για το πως μεγάλες αθλητικές διοργανώσεις μπορούν να καταστρέψουν την οικονομία μιας χώρας. Η κακή διαχείριση, διαφθορά, καθώς και ο ατέλειωτος ενθουσιασμός έκανε την Ολυμπιακή επιτροπή να ξοδεύσει παραπάνω από τον υπολογισμό, χρειάζοντας να αναλήψει δάνεια. Καθώς χτίζονταν εγκαταστάσεις για άγνωστα προς την Ελλάδα αθλήματα, το μεταολυμπιακό σχέδιο έγινε αδύνατο να τεθεί σε λειτουργία. Σήμερα, το τεράστιο κόστος λειτουργίας των εγκαταστάσεων οδήγησε στην παρακμή των Ολυμπιακών ακινήτων.

26
Olympic Venues
Ολυμπιακές εγκαταστάσεις

€4,500,000,000
Initial budget
Προϋπολογισμός

23
New venues
Νέες εγκαταστάσεις

€13,500,000,000
Final spending
Τελικό κόστος

€112,000,000
Total running cost per annum
Συνολικό κόστος ετήσιας λειτουργίας

II Austerity
Λιτότητα

Ever since the beginning of the economic collapse, Greece has seen unprecedented levels of unemployment, inequality, racism, and political instability. Politicians are treated as felons, exposing their gross acts of corruption that have been hiding under their public image for decades. These conditions have forced people to abandon their homes, starve, protest, even commit suicide in public.

The government isn't the only one to blame for the deterioration of the country. A long history of tax evasion, pay-offs, blackmailing, and dishonesty remains at the core of Greek culture. What's more worrying is that there are no signs of political, social, or ethnic union. Whilst citizens accuse each other of dishonesty, xenophobia rules over Athens, giving power to far-right partys like Golden Dawn.

Τα τελευταία χρόνια της κρίσης, η Ελλάδα έχει περάσει πρωτοφανή επίπεδα ανεργίας, ανισότητας, ρατσισμού και πολιτικής αστάθειας. Η κοινωνία μεταχειρίζεται τους πολιτικούς ως εγκληματίες, εκθέτωντας τη διαφθορά τους την οποία έκρυβαν τόσα χρόνια. Οι συνθήκες αυτές αναγκάζουν τους πολίτες να αφήσουν τα σπίτια τους, να πεινάσουν, να διαδηλώσουν, ακόμα και να αυτοκτονήσουν.

Δεν είναι όμως μόνο η κυβέρνηση που μας έφερε σε αυτή την κατάσταση. Ο ελληνικός τρόπος ζωής κρύβει μέσα του παγαποντιά, λάδωμα, φοροδιαφυγές και ατιμίες. Το πιο τρομαχτικό γεγονός είναι οτι δεν υπάρχει κανένα σημάδι πολιτικής, κοινωνικής ή εθνικής αλληλεγγύης. Καθώς οι Έλληνες κατηγορούν ο ένας τον άλλο για τη σημερινή κατάσταση, η ξενοφοβία χειροτερεύει και δίνει δύναμη σε ακροδεξιά κόμματα όπως τη Χρυσή Αυγή.

25.1%

Unemployment rate
Ανεργία

0.90%

Consumer Price Index

€356,000,000,000

Public debt
Δημόσιο χρέος

27.7%

Population below poverty line
Πληθυσμός κάτω από το όριο της φτώχειας

III The Olympians Proposal
Η Πρόταση Ολύμπιοι

The 2004 Olympics facilities scattered around Athens stand still, reminding Greeks of another era; an era of optimism, patriotism and grandeur. Juxtaposed with the pain of austerity and strife, these monuments of frantic overspending have little use other than reminding us of an illusionary time.

On the 22nd of September, in his speech following the closing ceremony of the 2004 Olympics, Giannis Alavanos said that in order for the facilities to be saved from abandonment, radical social change must happen. Encouraging a starving population to engage in more sports and leisure activities is illusionary. This is precisely why the Olympic legacy needs to be rethought, restructured. This new plan must not scratch the surface of the Olympic estate disuse, but must radically suggest a new way of living, interacting with and rebuilding these venues.

“The Olympians” is a proposal to stimulate social change by opening up the derelict Olympic venues and allowing citizens to create self-organised communities in them. At first glance, this might come across as a dangerous proposition, but if examined more closely, it is the only alternative that can have a large-scale impact.

The Legacy plan states that Olympic venues must be used for leisure and athletic purposes. Opening up the stadiums to the public is something that the Greek government will most likely never instantiate. A more immediate plan of action to set this proposal in action could be to try to find a legal loophole. For instance, communities who move into the spaces might have to still practice the sport of the stadium amongst themselves and open it to public visitors. In a way, the necessity to find a new roof could push them to foster and practise the sport.

The Olympians is not just about giving a free home to a large number of the Athenian population. It is also about finding new, more experimental ways of living. Perhaps each community could unite like-minded individuals under a political, social, or athletic umbrella.

Οι Ολυμπιακές εγκαταστάσεις στην Αττική θυμίζουν στους Έλληνες μια άλλη εποχή. Μια εποχή γεμάτη αισιοδοξία, πατριωτισμό και δόξα. Σε αντίθεση με το σήμερα, οπου η οικονομική κρίση έχει φέρει πολλές οικογένειες σε απόγνωση, τα μνημεία της άκρατης κρατικής δαπάνης μοιάζουν να κινούνται στη σφαίρα της φαντασίας.

Ο Γιάννης Αλαβάνος στον λόγο του μετά τη την τελετή λήξης το 2004, είπε οτι για να σωθούν οι εγκαταστάσεις από την εγκατάληψη πρέπει να γίνουν ριζοσπαστικές κοινωνικές αλλαγές. Το να πείσεις ένα λαό που πεινάει να ασχοληθεί με τον αθλητισμό είναι ουτοπία. Αυτός ακριβώς είναι ο λόγος για τον οποίο το κληροδότημα των Ολυμπιακών αγώνων πρέπει να σχεδιαστεί κα να δομηθεί από την αρχή. Ο καινούργιος αυτός σχεδιασμός δεν θα πρέπει να είναι επιφανειακός. Θα πρέπει να είναι ριζοσπαστικός και να προτείνει ένα καινούργιο τρόπο ζωής, διαδραστικότητας και εναδόμησης των εγκαταστάσεων.

“Οι Ολύμπιοι” είναι μια πρόταση που έχει σαν στόχο να οδηγήσει σε κοινωνική αλλαγή, ανοίγοντας τους Ολυμπιακούς χώρους και επιτρέποντας στους πολίτες να δημιουργήσουν μέσα σε αυτούς κοινότητες. Οι κοινότητες αυτές θα έχουν το χαρακτηριστικό της αυτοοργάνωσης. Σε πρώτο επίπεδο η πρόταση αυτή ακούγεται επικίνδυνη. Εάν όμως την εξετάσουμε προσεκτικά, καταλαβαίνουμε οτι ίσως είναι η μόνη λύση που θα φέρει ένα πραγματικά σημαντικό αποτέλεσμα σε μεγάλη κλίμακα.

Το μεταολυμπιακό σχέδιο προτείνει τη χρήση των Ολυμπιακών εγκαταστάσεων για αθλητικές και ψυχαγωγικές δραστηριότητες. Η Ελληνική κυβέρνηση δεν φαίνεται να έχει σχέδια για το άνοιγμα των σταδίων στο κοινό. Χρειάζεται ένα πιο άμεσο σχέδιο δράσης, ίσως με κάποιο νομικό κόλπο. Για παράδειγμα, κοινονικές ομάδες θα μπορούσαν να μετακομίσουν στους χώρους, χρησιμοποιώντας τις εγκαταστάσεις ως στέγη αλλά και για αθλητισμό. Έτσι, βρίσκοντας μια κοινή στέγη ο αθλητισμός θα μπορούσε να γίνει τρόπος ζωής για τα μέλη της κοινότητας.

Οι Ολύμπιοι είναι ένα ριζοσπαστικό σχέδιο που έχει διτό στόχο. Από τη μία να δώσει στέγη σε έναν μεγάλο αριθμό του πληθυσμού της Αθήνας και από την άλλη να προσφέρει έναν καινούργιο, πειραματικό τρόπο ζωής. Ίσως με τον τρόπο αυτό, άτομα που μοιράζονται τις ίδιες ιδέες και συνήθειες να μπορέσουν να ενωθούν κάτω από την ίδια κοινωνιοπολιτική και αθλητική στέγη.

Olympic Venues around Athens
Ολυμπιακές Εγκαταστάσεις στην Αθήνα

IV Imagined Societies
Κοινωνιολογικές Φαντασίες

This section skips ahead of the realisation of the Olympians proposal and gives examples of the types of societies that could develop over time through this scheme. As previously mentioned, each stadium could foster a different community and a different set of morals and habits.

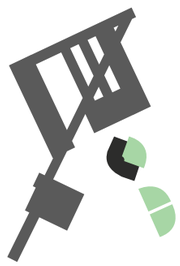
Three stadiums will be analysed in this section. Based on the stadium's physicality, arhitecture and location, a community will be suggested. Even though these fictional communities are investigated with a sense of realism, it is not to say that they should exist. They are merely in this proposal as "food for thought". They provide an example of how the stadiums could offer citizens a chance to start a community from scratch, based on their beliefs, backgrounds and aspirations.

These three imagined societies operating under the ruins of 2004 will be analysed in three parts. Firstly, the community's values will be introduced. These could be political values, ethnographic backgrounds, or collective aims and aspirations. Secondly, the architecture will be compared with those values and some thoughts on how these will fit into the physical space will be presented. This includes models of self-organisation, leisure activities and their general way of life. Thirdly, a rough prediction on how the society will play out shall be illustrated.

Οι Ολυμπιακοί αγώνες το 2004 αποτελούν παράδειγμα για το πως μεγάλες αθλητικές διοργανώσεις μπορούν να καταστρέψουν την οικονομία μιας χώρας. Η κακή διαχείριση, διαφθορά, καθώς και ο ατέλειωτος ενθουσιασμός έκανε την Ολυμπιακή επιτροπή να ξοδεύσει παραπάνω από τον υπολογισμό, χρειάζοντας να αναλήψει δάνεια. Καθώς χτίζονταν εγκαταστάσεις για άγνωστα προς την Ελλάδα αθλήματα, το μεταολυμπιακό σχέδιο έγινε αδύνατο να τεθεί σε λειτουργία. Σήμερα, το τεράστιο κόστος λειτουργίας των εγκαταστάσεων οδήγησε στην παρακμή των Ολυμπιακών ακινήτων.

1 Canoe/Kayak Centre
Κέντρο Κανόε/Καγιάκ

2 Rowing Centre
Κέντρο Κωπηλασίας



3 Baseball Stadium
Στάδιο Μπέισμπολ

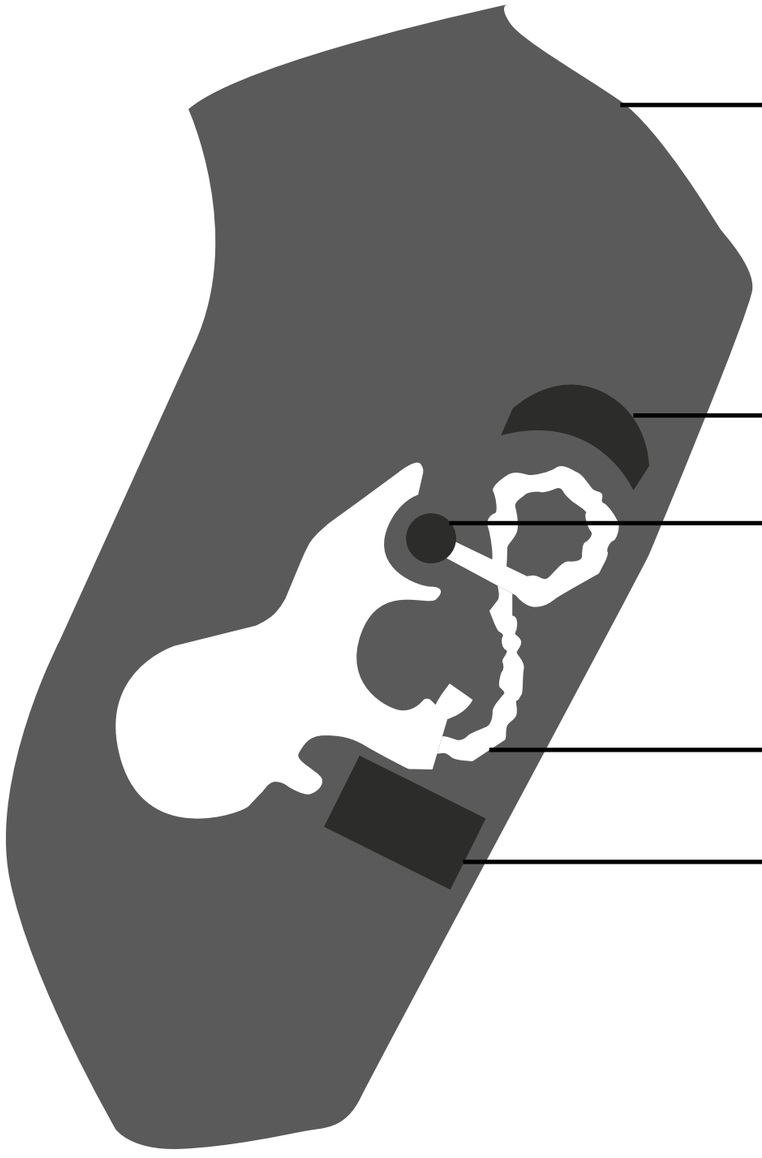
1 Canoe/Kayak Centre
The Archaics

Values

A significantly large number of modern Greeks believe that Ancient Greece was the grandest, most successful civilisation. Enchanted by their ancestors' wisdom, they include ancient vocabulary into everyday conversation and compare our modern beliefs to those practised two and a half thousand years ago.

If individuals with the same fascination for Ancient Greek didactics moved into the Canoe/Kayak stadium, they could build a society around democracy, rhetoric, philosophy, modesty and education.

A society around truth, honesty and philosophy, they turn the dried up Canoe/Kayak stadium into an arena of logic and debate, where each person from the community is required to lecture about a topic worthy of discussion. They educate themselves with classical theatre, literature, philosophy, geometry and mathematics. Their everyday language is Ancient Greek, which distances them from their surrounding location, and makes for a tedious communication between them.



Soapbox

This is the central soapbox, on which the speaker stands. Speeches last for approximately five minutes and the whole community must listen. Children start soapboxing from as little as 12 years old.

Living quarters

The community uses this sheltered stadium for sleeping and retreating to their private quarters. Families live together, each having their own mezzanine. In line with ancient tradition, women sleep at the far end of each family section, in order to protect them.

Grounds

In these grounds, most social gatherings happen. The people who do not stand on the soapbox prefer to listen to the speakers whilst sitting here and discussing and debating amongst themselves.

The elders

The older members of the community sit on the stadium facing the kayak course, listening closely to the younger generation's preachings. Since they are the oldest, they carry the most wisdom and are respected by everyone.

Queue

In order to secure a position on the soapbox, community members stand on the dried up kayak course to form an orderly queue. After they make their statement, be it political, philosophical, scientific, or social, they walk back down the old waterway.

Social interactions

The Archaics have turned rhetoric into a leisure activity in order to occupy the stadium legally. The best speaker and thinker is valued above all other members. They let visitors from outside the community enter, but they are not allowed to speak. They must only observe the discussion. They are not interested in money, but they are hungry for knowledge. Unfortunately, the Archaics live in poor hygienic standards, since they're so preoccupied with their minds.

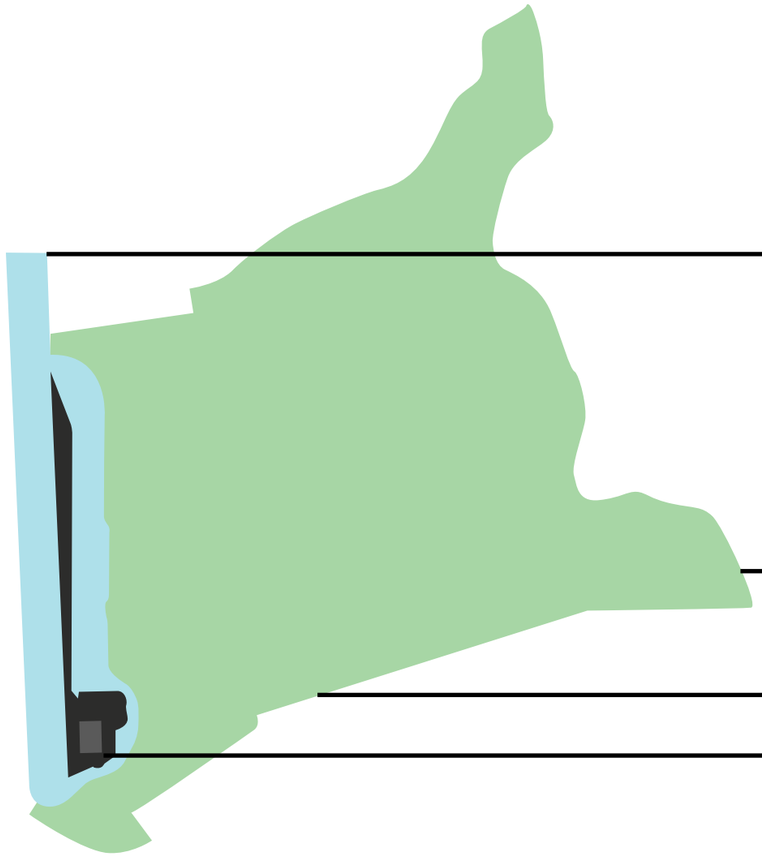
2 Rowing Centre
The Islanders

Values

Athenians have a romantic desire to live in the islands. The picturesque Greek islands are loved by city folk, who fantasize about living there permanently and escaping from the city's stressful buzz. Natives of the islands make money by fishing with small traditional rowing boats that enable them to lay nets around the Aegean sea. They also earn from tourism, using their boats to take tourists to excursions or feeding them with their delicious fish.

If citizens with the same love for the island way of life moved into the Rowing Centre in Schinias, they could construct their own society based on the vintage island romance.

A society obsessed with living the island dream, they move into the Rowing Centre because it is the one closest to the sea. They turn the 2,500m long canal into an imaginary coastline where they sell their daily catch. This includes sea bass, octopus, crab and sea bream. They like to accept visitors into the community so that they can sell their fish and entertain.



The canal

The canal has been transformed into an artificial coastline that is lined with makeshift restaurants and stalls. The natives use this canal to practise their sponge diving skills by using large stones to sink to the bottom and stay down for as long as they can.

The park

This is where members of the society perform maintenance tasks on their boats and nets.

Living quarters

The community uses this sheltered stadium for sleeping and retreating to their private quarters. All windows are left open so that the gentle wind refreshes the quarters. They sleep on traditional thin matresses, which are placed on concrete beds.

The marina

The marina is where the natives have their boats. They most often tie them one next to the other with floaters that lead to anchors. They need to swim to the shore from their boat, yet some of them rudely park their boats right on the shore.

Social interactions

The Islanders like to live in a fantasy world; one in which fishing, drinking, eating and socialising are the most important values. They do not care for politics, unless it has to do with health benefits or fishing regulations. They have a haphazard way of fixing things around the community, but are crafty and adaptive. They welcome visitors and treat them as real islanders treat tourists. Soon enough, their picturesque life will tempt them to allow bars and pubs onto their precious canalside, monetising their land and their way of life. If this happens, the Rowing centre will probably become as ugly a sight as Faliraki in Rhodes, or Zante.

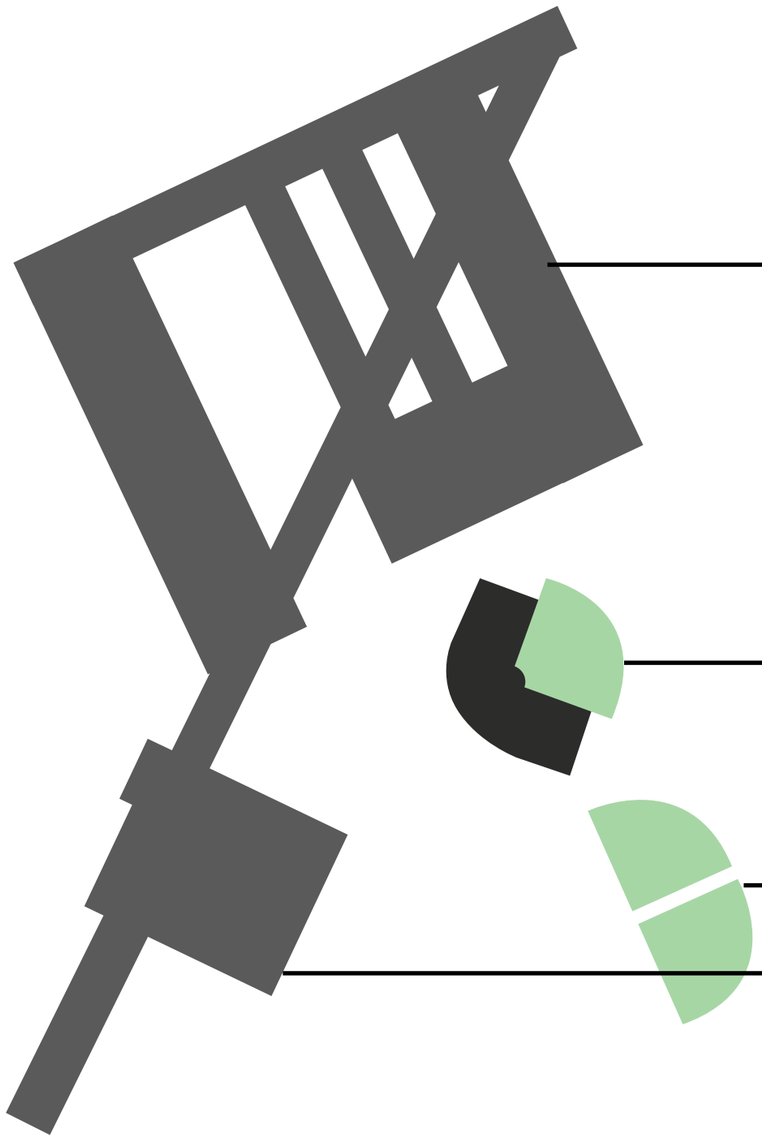
3 Baseball Stadium
The Americans

Values

There is a rather large group of Athenians who are fascinated with American culture. They watch U.S. TV shows, they like hip hop, they read comics, and believe that Greece should have a better relationship with the US. Their only aspiration is to leave Greece behind and move to the U.S. to live the American dream.

Imagine if these like-minded people moved into the abandoned Baseball stadium in the Elliniko Complex. They could build a society that celebrates their fascination with American culture.

The Americans, residing in the Baseball stadium have one collective dream: to move to the U.S. Since they have little money to invest on this dream, they live together celebrating parts of American culture that mean something to them. They practise Baseball and form small teams between them. They also host large parades that are open to the public, where they monetise their passion to make enough money to move to the U.S.



Parade grounds

Parades are held monthly to celebrate American culture. Cheerleaders, bands, and baseball players all parade down the street, as visitors watch. Market stalls selling memorabilia bring more money into the community.

Main stadium

This is where baseball and softball matches are held. Community members don't sit in the stadium as spectators because they want to sell off as many tickets as possible.

Training grounds

Each team is allowed three hours a day to train in these grounds. Women practise softball and men play baseball. There is a total of five teams in the community.

Living quarters

The community sleeps outside in small tents in sleeping bags. They feel it is not necessary to sleep under a roof, as they see this only as an intermediate step to move to the U.S.

Social interactions

The Americans have only one purpose in inhabiting the stadium: to make enough money to move to America. Therefore, they have very little concern about what is happening in the rest of Athens. They are capitalists at their core, monetising every part of their society in order to afford a plane ticket to the U.S. The most successful baseball players get the most money. Therefore, they are usually the first to embark on their new American dream.