Flâneuring and observing the city. The self-ethnographic experience in urban planning

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Abstract. In this article, our intension is to shed light on this thought: the city in all its dimensions, becomes a reception space not only in the base of individual perceptions but also through a “nostalgic” lived dimension for something that may have been irrevocably lost or for something that is desirable. This point of view enables us to approach the city in an emotionally way of seeing, against the irrational, technical and unquestionable manner used by urban specialists. So far, the social and anthropological factor in urban planning has not been the main goal on the projects. Nevertheless, the postmodernity perspective demands new steps forward on urban field thought which are more dialectical and with a strong personal value imprint of the inhabitant’s demand. The study aims to evaluate the (possible) attitudes, representations, conflicts and desires of inhabitants and specialists for specific urban environments (cases) integrating the sense of the imaginary (subjective) perception and the dimensions arising from the reception of architectural structures and forms in the space but also to gain insight of a diper understanding of the idealistic image of the city entities.

1. Introduction
One of the most basic (modern) views on space is that of the geographer David Harvey [1,2]. According to him, space is understood through three theoretical categorizations. These include the "absolute", the "relative" and the "relational space". In particular, the absolute space according to Newtonian and Cartesian logic, is the space in which we record or plan events. It is the space that can be measured, geometrically, geodetically, topographically; it is the space of matter and which can be mapped. The relative space according to Einstein’s theory of relativity (1905), is defined by Euclidean geometry but is mainly determined by the number of geometries expressed within it [3]. The position and frame of reference depend mainly on the observer [4]. It depends on the geodesy of the space but with completely different landmarks and vector sizes each time. Thus, according to D Harvey [2], “we can make completely different maps of relevant locations by differentiating whether distances will be measured in terms of cost, time, separation of means of transport (car, bicycle or skateboard) or we can disrupt spatial continuities by looking networks, topological relations, the ideal route of a postman, etc.” Relational space, although this field has been linked to Leibniz, who rejects the Euclidean logic of geographical space according to Harvey, no point in space can be understood by appealing to it alone. Instead, the point depends on what is going on around it [5]. Thus, relational space cannot be
measured by objective criteria. This makes each space unique, as it is impossible for the heterogeneity and complexity observed in it to be exactly the same at all times. The relational space is never fixed as it is constantly transformed [5]. The dimension and nature of the relational space cannot be analyzed through objective measurements, so another methodological approach is needed. The transformation of space takes place every second, as various flows or the cessation of flows from it, make it completely different in the eyes of the observer at any given time [1,2].

2. Imaginary space
The term "imaginary" [6] first appears (1970) in the psychoanalytic perspective of Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) initially as the concept of the subconscious (mirror stage) which in its evolution will be associated with the three dimensions of its composition identity of human reality, the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real (Figure 1).

![Lacanian dimensions of human reality](http://psychoanalyzadnes.cz/2016/12/12/introduction-to-lacanian-psychoanalysis/)

As “imaginary” we could define: "the properties of meaning attributed to a Being as a result of the sliding of the rational and its shift to the imaginary where already available symbols are invested with different from their normal meanings" [7]. The “what is the flag” of a football team, in addition to the rational response of a signal of recognition and rallying of its fans, with the help of symbols quickly becomes something for which one should and can fight and this causes screams or hymns and drumbeats to his fans when they see her on the pitch and smiles when she exists as a decorative element in a random place of their visit. The deep relationship between the imaginary and the symbolic is understood by the fact that the imaginary must use the symbolic not only to "express" but also “to exist” [8]. Symbolism, on the other hand, presupposes imaginary ability, and this is because it presupposes the ability to think of something as something that is not, to see it differently from what it is. However, to the extent that the imaginary will ultimately mean the primordial power to pose or give to oneself, (in the way of representation), a thing and a relationship that do not exist (that are not given or never given to perception) we will talk about an ultimate or radical fantasy as the root of the real imaginary and the symbolic [7]. The imaginary, on the other hand, is just an ultimate imaginary root, an “absolute” invention that is separated from reality and either takes its place (as a lie) or not (as a novel) [7]. In the first case, there is no tangible evidence other than logical leaps which do not stand up to rational criticism.

Bachelard emphasizes that in the reversal of a dormant myth there is something like a renewal of the mythical function [9]. For example, under the traditional image of the staircase is hidden, the beginning of the transition. If we just adopt the idea of transition, there can be thousands of ways to elevate to another level. This idea of Bachelard found Carlo Scarpa as the main exponent in Architecture [10]. The way he rendered the concept of going from one level to another, stimulates the
imagination and challenges it to work before the body even takes action. The archetypal meaning of
the ladder is grounded as the person is called to cross it as never before. The interaction with the type
of stairs and the ascending process becomes a multifaceted experience, which will surely be reflected
in the memory as a unique experience (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Museo de Castelvecchio.
Source: https://gnixus.wordpress.com/2012/07/12/castelvecchio-museum/.

3. Between theory and practice. The imaginary spatial in the experiences of urban-urban planning
Moving around the city, we gain the experience of time and space. According to our relationship with
the city, our understanding of the city, our history and our psychology, the way of reading these two
parameters is completely different. The space is defined by the intersections of the horizontal and
vertical visual and mental axes and understood by our psychic and psychological sensors. To
understand it through such a process, walkers can be turned into readers and space can be turned into
information [11]. Therefore, as information, space is not static, only material as a whole and empty, as
is often defined in the sciences. It is artificial, as a footprint and social, as a field of action of human
life, [12] built or not, natural or artificial, even imaginary. From any point of view, the space is the one
that gives meaning and content to society, characterizing it as something that is consciously
established as the example of Paul Henri Chombart de Lauwe’s dining room, where in this the dining
space is characterized as the main collective space [13].

4. The importance of human experience in the construction of daily urban reality
Experience is all the knowledge that comes out from our daily action and dealing with situations and
problems in contrast to the theoretical perception [14]. The experience of the space refers to our
sensory contact with it. We therefore come to discuss a lived experience, which refers specifically to
the way in which individuals (actors) respond to these experiences. Experience could define the deep
and immediate approach that one acquires by "living" an important or decisive event [15].

However, the meaning is not so chaotic and disorganized. Instead, it has a very specific order and
organization, that of complexity (intricacy). The term "experience", therefore, usually refers to direct
experience, in the connection between a person and the outer space. People who have really
experienced the environment are fully present in the environment, always alert, sensitive, and able to
perceive the surrounding situation at any time of the year. It is a deeper contact with the world, where
man does not simply exist in it, but 'coexists', 'participates', as it is part of a common world.

5. General objective of the research
The purpose of this research, as mentioned in the introduction, is to investigate a theoretical tool in urban planning in order to examine the contribution of the human factor through individual or collective experience which can lead to preconceptions and useful conclusions about its lived space and problematic issues, possible improvements and suggestions. The individual objectives of the research are:
- Exploring the relationship between (urban) housing and intellect.
- Recording views on the urban experience.
- Examining the multiple forms of relationships between city space and residents.
- The investigation of the diachronic recording of spatial points in the city in the common consciousness that shape images and its urban identity.
- Investigation between urban reality and social reality.

6. Research project selection
The present research was designed as an exploratory qualitative study aiming to effectively cover the conceptualization of the research goal with consistency and coherence in its development. Because of the research problem, both in formulation and in character, is addressed empirically in all its dimensions, the emphasis is on the qualitative dimension of the data with the aim of revealing structures and relationships, correlations and processes that make up the specific aspects of social reality that are examined. The qualitative research was carried out with the aim of systematically collecting data that covers the subjective views and perceptions of the participants and the researcher about the space and its dimensions in the two cities under study. Due to the exceptional health conditions of Covid-19 the methodological protocol of the research was modified two (2) times and adapted to the basis of the new research requirements which immediately imposed a different approach to the qualitative sequence of the methodology, especially in terms of the approach of the participants by canceling face-to-face interviews (according to the original design) interviews.

7. Data collection
The methodological approach was based on the necessary application of a combination of research methodological tools: a) of self-ethnographic observation [16,17] and b) of the use of a qualitative - structured questionnaire of open-quick answers/questions. The purpose of the mixed methodology is proportional to the research topic [18]. It was selected with the aim of systematic data extraction but also to ensure the validity of the research effort so as to avoid one-dimensional approaches to research questions ensuring a satisfactory result for investigative cases.

7.1. Ethnographic observation and quality questionnaires
The researcher worked in the study areas in the morning and afternoon hours of April 2021. The self-ethnographic observation took place in the city of Ptolemaida, following an organized, sectional, systematic observation guide. Participants received the quality questionnaire via e-mail. The questionnaire consists of seven (7) thematic sections. Each section includes a small range of structured open-ended questions with direct references to the relevant topics of the research.

8. Analysis of empirical material
The analysis of empirical data was based on thematic analysis [19], in order to categorize the data and analyze thematic, referring to the experiences, experiences and meanings given by the participants in the sample. Thematic analysis is a flexible and systematic method of analysis, which does not require commitment to a specific theoretical approach, thus giving space and opportunity to the researcher for a synthetic, holistic and multi-level approach. Thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of analysis in the context of qualitative research as it allows the relatively easy identification of data, their
coding based on emerging meanings and the interpretation of meaning patterns or general issues in qualitative data [20].

9. Sampling
The sample was selected based on purposive sampling method. This method is used in qualitative research when the researcher selects the participants (in the research) based on the fulfillment of certain specific characteristics that meet the general goal of the research [21,22]. More specifically, the sample of participants was as follows: nineteen (19) people took part in the survey.

9.1. Socio-demographic footprint of the sample
In the qualitative research, the small sample of participants consisted of people aged 15 to 71 years with an educational level ranging from the level of Lyceum (senior student) to holders of a postgraduate diploma. The sample included people from both reference cities (Kozani, Ptolemaida) and from different sectors of employment: self-employed, private and civil servants, unemployed, retired. Because the research is a qualitative type, the concept of representation would not make sense, as the aim is to in-depth observation and analysis of urban characteristics and phenomena through the experiences and narratives of social subjects.

In particular, the individuals who participated in the research are distinguished by specific socio-cultural peculiarities, which on the one hand are not generalized in the reference population and on the other hand demonstrate the diversity of the socio-demographic footprint of the two study cities. Thus, these individuals were characterized by a completely different body type (tall, short, lean, obese, disabled) with different cultural cultures (Pontians, Thracians, Asia Minor, indigenous) with different hobbies (hunters, musicians, artists, farmers, sailors) but also with different professional careers and activities.

10. Data processing
In order to ensure the reliability of this research, the methodological strategy used to analyze and interpret the data was "triangulation", which ensures a more valid and complete result due to the intersection of different sources and data that have methodologically used to extract information and data [22].

11. Results, discussion, and commentary on the findings of the quality questionnaires

11.1. Level of infrastructures, quality of life and safety
At the level of public spaces, the participants said that there is a big problem of abandonment but also from occupation from the table seats of the bars and coffees stores as a result of which the spaces become inaccessible. Regarding the feeling of security in the majority (90%) the residents of Ptolemaida linked the issue with the lack of policing and delinquency while only 10% referred to the level of security of the premises.

In contrast to Ptolemaida, (in the question of security) the majority of the inhabitants of Kozani referred to the level of logistical infrastructure offered as the small sidewalks, narrow roads and lack of planning do not ensure the feeling of safe wandering and use of public spaces.

11.2. Usability of spaces, level of accessibility
In the city of Ptolemaida, the majority of respondents answered that it is generally an easy-to-use city, mainly due to its flatness and road design.

Regarding the residents of Kozani, the majority agree that the city is difficult to use and with low accessibility infrastructure. In addition, most expressed the desire to maintain the infrastructure but also to ensure accessibility especially for the places that are not recognizable emphasizing the need for smooth and comfortable movement for the elderly or for people with reduced mobility or disability. Also, the majority of respondents answered that the environment at the neighborhood level is friendly
with children playing freely in the streets and having interpersonal relationships.

However, at the level of public spaces, everyone agreed that the situation is not good, with many problems in terms of cleanliness, aesthetics, pollution, and safety (mainly for the city center) to the "quite easy to use" (mainly for the areas on the perimeter of the city that are relatively newly built). However, everyone agrees that perceptions differ depending on the region, while the model of the city is transferred to the scale of the neighborhood.

11.3. Physiognomy of the city

In Ptolemaida, most of the respondents have a very bad opinion about the physiognomy of the city as they judge it as "indifferent", "bad", or "the worst in Greece". The under-18’s answered that they do not have a specific opinion as the meaning of the physiognomy of a city as an urban term is unknown to them. Nevertheless, they consider it to be a purely industrial city without a special cultural background and history, emphasizing in the negative the density and anarchy of construction.

In the city of Kozani there is an important difference of opinion. Older people (> 65) as well as those who live a few years in the city (<10) consider it a good image city while the younger ones (> 30-65) and those who live longer (> 25) consider that it is a bad city focusing on the problem of demolishing old, listed buildings and not promoting them. In addition, they emphasize that new design is required for most public spaces and the need to provide more green places.

11.4. Relationship, place attachment and the feeling of "belonging"

The residents of Ptolemaida stated that they do not feel any connection with the place or the city as they do not feel it as part of "belonging". Younger ages remain neutral while residents with many years of residence do not feel any "bond" with the city except for business or leisure reasons.

In the city of Kozani, the answers are different, while the degrees of the sense of "belonging" and the relationships with the city, are characterized by absolute bonds of love to indifference. The majority, however, answered that they passively use the urban space in order to fulfill their daily needs, treating the city like any other city.

11.5. Symbolic bonds and emotional anchorages

By comparison, we observe in Ptolemaida that the references in the past are more than the references in Kozani city. As a place of residence, Ptolemaida is registered in the collective unconscious through the representations of the past. Remembrance touches on the experiences of the past and not of the present. On the contrary, Kozani represents a city that is experienced through its strong cultural element as a strong symbolic bond with its historical environment.

12. Conclusions

The image of Ptolemaida captures all those antinomies, compositions and contradictions that distinguish most Greek cities of our time. The lack of a distinct identity, in about 70 years of its development, is the most important link in the chain of its problems. The spirit of a local identity was given mainly through the installation of the industrial buildings (factories) which functioned towards the formation of a collective representation, which acted ideologically in the perception of the urban identity and the architecture of the space but mainly in the perception for its modern physiognomy. A very important human-geographical feature is the preservation of its multi-ethnic core (Asia Minor, Pontins, Thracians, etc.), a dimension contrary to the terms of Sennett [23] who speaks of "purified communities" wanting to emphasize the walls erected by some groups to exclude others. This point proves that the multi-ethnicity dimension of Ptolemaida functioned as a socio-spatial dialectic of a collective culture, focusing mainly on the sense of place and especially in all those cultural values that compose it.

In terms of institutional infrastructure, Ptolemaida shows several signs of urban pathology. The problem of lack, modern and safe use of free space throughout the city for many years is a major issue in the aesthetic identity of the city. The impressions are not at all positive, as the level of friendliness
and quality of life it offers, form a low aesthetic value and a negative evaluation of its overall image. In particular, the reduced level of services provided by the local government, the lack of specific business plans, the indifferent attitude of the citizens but also the economic policies are the main factors in the formation of the public image of the city.

But beyond all the above, the experienced treatment of the city, in what happens socially at the level of structures and relationships is, the degree of determination of the individual being in space. In Ptolemaida, this approach is not recognized, or at least occurs but unconsciously. Particularly it seemed that the citizens of Ptolemaida, while in a constant dialectic with its spaces and its different structures, however, do not seem to be dominated by it. Their attention is focused on viewing specific elements and routes that are an established habit as part of the everyday experience and not as a condition of integration in the space that would allow another approach to the perception of the city.

In the city of Kozani, which is 500 years old since its first habitation, the culture that developed, contributed to a coherence of the urban fabric and which is collectively expressed through synchronized decision-making based on the "common" interest. Its geomorphology and the development it received mainly with the establishment of technical university and the University of Western Macedonia, led to a rapid residential development, with the result that the first demand from citizens to be, most parking spaces, the creation of new public spaces, parks and sidewalks. The city of Kozani appears more experienced. It seems that the cultural-traditional element in its architectural physiognomy has a helpful effect in this direction, as the historical element as an ideological body is gradually and effectively related to the experiential abundance of experiences coming from family narratives and stories between communities and consciences.

13. Summarize
At the end of this study and based on above observations we would argue that the idea of articulation, construction and history of cities stands on of a distinct and fixed idea that determine the relationship of the individual to its city and the category of this relationship. The connection points are fluid and are reconstructed or unfolded each time through the different interactions of the individuals. This type of approach through the experiential tour, seeks the most effective interpretation of the possible points of vulnerability that distinguish it and the knowledge of new forms as an object of lived experience.

In conclusion, the qualitative study of the two cities is not limited to above these observations. So far, we have placed ourselves observers on the visible content of the materialistic perception of the inhabitants, trying to see and understand whether these views can be considered as tends of intent for a different view of the city or if it makes sense to invest in specific methods of approach such as self-ethnography proposed.

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