

GORDANA BLAGOJEVIĆ

Institute of Ethnography SASA, Belgrade

gordana.blagojevic@ei.sanu.ac.rs

MANOLIS G. VARVOUNIS

Democritus University of Thrace, Komotini

evarvoun@he.duth.gr

Mobility, Identity(/ies) and Various Functions of the Urban Space: Case Studies from Belgrade and Athens

The thematic issue “Mobility, Identity(/ies) and Various Functions of the Urban Space: Case Studies from Belgrade and Athens” contains ten original scientific papers that deal with different aspects of identities and functions of urban space in the two capitals, from the perspective of anthropology, urban folkloristics and ethnomusicology.

This thematic issue represents some of the results of the bilateral scientific project „Different Identities and Functions of Urban Space: A Comparative Study of the Circumstances in Belgrade and Athens“ which the Institute of Ethnography Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts realized in cooperation with the Laboratory for Folklore and Social Anthropology, Department of History and Ethnology, Democritus University of Thrace (Republic of Greece), as the project holder. This four-year project began in June 2019 and ended in June 2023. The project was managed by Prof. Dr Manolis G. Varvounis, dean of the School of Classics and Humanities at the Democritus University of Thrace and director of the Laboratory for Folklore and Social Anthropology on the Greek side, and Dr Gordana Blagojević, Principal Research Fellow of the Institute of Ethnography SASA on the Serbian side.

Mobility is one of the main characteristics of contemporary, especially urban, life. The papers in this thematic issue consider different

types of mobility and the ways they influence identity/identities and the functioning of urban space. Thus, mobility can mean the internal migrations of populations from rural to urban areas. Over the last decades people have continually moved to both the capitals, bringing with them different habits and customs. Mobility can also mean a type of everyday functioning in urban settings, whether it's targeted movement for work or entertainment, or walks taken for leisure, which occur less and less in our hasty times. Mobility has to do with sacred processions, the symbolic sacralization of space, the transformation of profane space into sacred space, as well as vice versa. Mobility enables interspecies communication between different species inhabiting urban spaces. Mobility also plays a role in the music making of street musicians, as well as public transport. Music is also often an important component of city and intercity public transportation. On the other hand, the static nature of street art in certain neighborhoods represents their special flair and the way of life in them, while ideas about city life can be garnered from children's artwork. Mobility also plays a part in urban ghost stories that found their way onto social networks.

The first paper in the thematic issue is Ursula-Helen Kassaveti's paper entitled "Visual Folklore in 1960s Greek Popular Cinema: Athens at the Threshold of Tradition and Modernity" in which a description of post-war Greece in Greek films is given from the perspective of humanistic studies. Beyond the stereotypical representation and standardization of the characters, the article highlights the physiognomy of Greek society, especially the urban center, to which many rural residents flocked. These immigrants preserved many of their customs, which were adapted to the needs of the urban space, while at the same time accepting new customs that were formed in the new conditions. The article succeeds in showing, in a systematic and convincing way, that Greek films as artistic products capture this bi-genius character of the city.

In his paper "Urban Landscape Transformation." Religious Places that also Function as Secular Squares: an Ethnographic Example from Greek Urban Space," Georgios Kouzas deals with different functions of the yards of orthodox churches in urban Greece through a case study of the churchyard of the Church of Saint Anthony, in the Athens municipality of Peristeri. The author focuses on the multilayered functions of these spaces by pointing out that, aside from their religious use, these spaces function as parks and squares, especially in cities, where there's little space and little public green space. A consequence of this is that

churchyards are often used as parks and multipurpose spaces for different social, cultural and recreational activities. Aside from the insight into the multifunctionality of this, previously, sacred space, the author researched how people who visit this space relate to it, and their feelings about the metamorphosis the space goes through at different times of day.

On the other hand, in his paper “New Manifestations and Meanings of Orthodox Lity – Preservation of Identity and Sacralization of Space and Time in the Belgrade’s (and Broader Serbian) Context” Ivica Todorović deals with an opposite process – the sacralization of urban space through the analysis of Orthodox lity and the symbolism of different orienting spots in public spaces. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the author sheds light on different structural and semantic aspects and possibilities of Orthodox lities, both in Belgrade, and in a wider sense, by calling on his previous research of similar topics that was conducted in a much wider area in the previous decades.

Among other things, in his paper “Pedestrians and Pedestrian Streets in Belgrade: An Anthropological Take on Space, Mobility, and Hospitality Industry in the City Center” Srđan Radović deals with issues of mobility in urban settings, by pointing out the transformation of the Belgrade city center over the last decades (through the closure of streets for car traffic) and the establishment of pedestrian zones. Namely, over the last twenty years or so, a larger degree of commercialization of public space in the urban center has been occurring, through the opening of a large number of cafés and restaurants in the open. This paper deals with the issues of priority in the usage of public space, mobility of pedestrians and hospitality culture.

Sonja Žakula’s work titled “The City as Multispecies Space: Dog Walking in Downtown Belgrade During the COVID-19 Lockdown” also deals with issues of mobility in the city center in an original way. In this work, Žakula examines the use of space in the city center, specifically in the Dorćol area, as a multispecies space during the measures that included restrictions on movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study adopts a perspective from the field of human-animal studies, an increasingly relevant field in social and humanistic disciplines over the last few decades. The author uses multispecies autoethnography during her research, actively involving herself with her dogs, which reveals different experiences that the city offers when explored, experienced, and navigated in the company of dogs. This study has not only phenomenological implications but also crucial socio-political implica-

tions. It highlights the development of a city that is becoming less accommodating to the needs of all beings, both human and non-human, that inhabit it.

In John Plemmenos' paper titled "Committed Travelers, Reluctant Listeners: Playing Music and Displaying Authority on Public Transport in Modern-Day Greece," the focus is on the use of music, particularly contemporary *laiko* music – a bouzouki nightclub sub-genre of Greek popular music—by the drivers in modern Greek public transport, especially in intercity buses. The author utilized an autoethnographic method of participant observation during travel, as he has been a regular passenger for several years. The paper approaches the phenomenon of passengers' inappropriate treatment as an excessive exercise of the driver's authority, and the use of music is placed in the broader context of musical entertainment in contemporary Greek everyday life. This paper represents one of the first (if not the only) of its kind in the Greek academic bibliography.

Nina Aksić delves into the subject of music in an urban context in her work titled "The Musical Identity of the Roma People on the Streets of Belgrade." The paper is based on the author's field research and insights gained from existing materials available on various internet platforms. Although the Roma musical practices in Belgrade are diverse, they possess characteristics that give them a unique identity. The paper thoroughly presents and analyzes various elements of Roma musical practices in Belgrade, such as performance styles, types of performing groups, the selection and condition of instruments used in the music, the choice of musical repertoire, the selection of public spaces where the music is performed, and more. Through a detailed examination of these different segments of Roma street music practices in Belgrade, the author provides an overview of its entirety.

In their work "'On the Streets of Diversity'. Urban Space as a Birthplace of Free Expression and Artistic Creation: the Case of Nikolas Asimos in the Exarchia Area of Athens," authors Emmanuel Kyriazakos and George Katsadoros explore the interrelationship between artistic creation, social environment, and the connections artists have with their surroundings, using the case study of Nikolas Asimos. Even three and a half decades after his death, Asimos remains a symbol of Exarchia, a neighborhood in the center of Athens often associated with intense anti-authoritarian activities, where he lived and created much of his work between 1976 and 1988. The authors argue that the urban space of Exarchia significantly contributed to the development of Asi-

mos' creativity, providing suitable conditions for the free expression of his works and ideas.

Bojana Bogdanović, in her paper "Symbolic Functions of the Urban Belgrade Landscape Components - Children's Perspective," examines the urban landscape of Belgrade as a system of signs and symbols. The paper is methodologically based on the results of two field studies conducted by the author involving 70 children aged 7 to 14, who were students at an elementary school in Novi Beograd. The paper discusses the functional aspects of certain components of the city's landscape to which children have attributed the status of symbols. Bogdanović's research contributes to the intersection of two subdisciplines – urban studies and the anthropology of children/childhood.

In the work "Ghosts in the Streets of Athens: Ghostlore and Social Media" by Afroditi-Lydia Nounanaki and Rea Kakampoura, the connection between specific houses and other buildings in Athens and ghost stories is explored in the context of social media. Ghostlore is a subgenre of folklore that focuses on ghost stories found in both pre-industrial and contemporary contexts. Through an analysis of online content uploaded by groups describing their practices as "paranormal" or "occult investigations," the authors point out the connection between ghostlore and public spaces, mainly in Athens. The paper also considers the comments left by internet users who follow these "investigations," leading to the formation of new online groups sharing a common interest in ghost-related matters in the offline world.

Mobility "transforms" the urban space, transforms our here and now. It's all about a constant transformation based on the disconnection of time and space from the "eternal" chiaroscuro that sun casts onto the urban monuments, the old neighborhoods of the towns and the stone paved streets of the historic centers, and consequently the interconnection – intermingling of old and new parts of the city with super networks that form future (urban) life.

Super networks like, for example, powerful telecommunication systems, a complex network of public-private, automatic transfer, the endless flow of tourists – short term inhabitants), all these are transforming the urban space by attributing many aspects to it, inasmuch as someone can see or scroll in everyday basis on a cell phone.

Throughout mobility we find an immense number of micro-worlds: the new coming form of society or just of communication between people, people that more and more identify themselves as identities living on a planet that has undertaken a treacherous process of (re)union.

We venture to say that together all these articles inside this volume tend to grasp a fragmented look of a “Brave New World” that everyday occur in front of our eyes. This “fragmented-overall look” once is grasped can be the new interdisciplinary approach in Anthropology.

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