

Music Performance in Public Space: Changing Perception, Changing Urban Experience?

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Summary

Using creative practices such as art and music have become common ways of revitalising and regenerating dead and under-used public spaces in cities. Our research seeks to examine a specific creative practice – that of music performance – and realize its effect on the perceptions and experiences of public space. In order to achieve our research aim, four main attributes have been examined in greater detail: sense of comfort, sense of community and sociability, accessibility and uses of the public space (1). In order to negotiate these attributes on a theoretical level, approaches related to the construction of experiences (2), based on psychogeography, have been used as the cornerstone of the theoretical framework. Empirical work was conducted in the Navarinou Square in Thessaloniki, Greece. Two sets of interviews were conducted: one with the presence of a music group playing in the square, and one with no music present. By analysing the responses of the two groups of interviewees it was possible to reveal the extent to which music in public space affects the perception people have about those attributes of public space. We noticed little difference between the appreciation of the square among the two groups of respondents, a result which largely contradicts existing literature ((3); (4); (5); (6); (7)). The most important explanation seems to be significant design and maintenance flaws with the square itself, which limits the potential benefits that music could bring to this specific location. Therefore we argue that using music to enhance the quality of public space must come together with attractive and safe public spaces themselves.

Keywords: music, public space, perception, regeneration, Thessaloniki

INTRODUCTION

Modern cities seem to seek for the values of the past in order to bring life back to the realm. Therefore, contemporary urban culture renegotiates the use of public creative expression as a means to achieve that. Urbanists and artists try to find ways of collaboration in order to revitalize the streets; the veins of the city (8). Formal and informal initiatives which seek to construct that new urban reality often refer to public art, street art and guerrilla practices –among others- in order to achieve their goals (9). Music in public space seems to be one of those tools in the urbanists' toolbox that are waiting to be used in order to construct a new urban reality (10).

While significant research focuses on evaluation the effects of these 'tools,' there is a lack of empirical studies which examine the effects of music performances in public spaces. Therefore, the central question of our paper is to what extent a music performance in a public space changes the perception that people –the audience- might have about the quality of that place. Four key themes will be used to evaluate this perception and experience: sense of comfort, community and sociability, accessibility and how space is used. Each one of these values has been identified as of critical importance for the quality of public space (11).

We have based our empirical work on theories rooted in perception, experience and psychogeography. Based on these, our field work consists of interviewing users of a public square in the city centre of Thessaloniki, Greece. Two sets of interviews have been done in order to compare the evaluation of the square: one set with band playing music in the square, the other without any music present. We present the similarities and differences of our findings based on each of the four themes mentioned above. Using the results of the case-study research we will also reflect on the theories used and conclude on the effect that a music performance might have on the way people perceive and experience the quality of a public space and propose some main policy recommendations.

PERCEPTION, EXPERIENCE AND PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY

Perception and experience have been under research and negotiation in the field of spatial sciences since the 70s, when the first sociologists and philosophers began to realize the importance of those mental functions in the urban daily life. Yi-Fu Tuan (6), through his interest in phenomenological approaches of space and place, recognizes space as an object which people perceive and experience because of their ability to move in it and sense its characteristics (6 p. 12). He strongly supports that “it is impossible to discuss experiential space without introducing the objects and places that define space” (6 p. 136). These objects and places within a space are the physical and social values that transform a space into a place. When referring to a public space and the experience of this realm, these values might as well be the attributes that define a public space’s quality; comfort, sociability, accessibility and uses and activities.

Young (12) in her work seeks to relate the production of space, as introduced by Lefebvre (13) with the experience and perception of space, from an artistic perspective. In order to reach her aim, she introduces to her theoretical framework the ideas and approaches of the Situationist Movement (1957-1972) and its founder, Guy Debord (12 p. 6). The Situationists were viewing the urban environment and city life through a philosophical and artistic - avant-garde - prism, which allowed them to have a different focus on the experiences of urban realm. Therefore, their approaches are also tightly related to the way people perceive and engage with the urban realm; an aspect of main interest for this research.

In order to translate their philosophical approaches to empirical results and works of art have, the situationalists developed - among two others- the “methodological tool” of Psychogeography (12 p. 6). Psychogeography is “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment (...) on the emotions and behaviour of individuals” (14 p. 1). Its outcome is a personally developed and freely interpreted cartographical product which represents perceptions, experiences and feelings related to urban environment (15 p. 402). In the present research, a modified interpretation of psychogeography is used as a methodological tool, in order to reveal and record people’s perception about the public space of the case study.

Music Performance and the Perception and Experience of the Quality of Public Space

Very little research into public art focuses on music and performance arts, which are tightly connected with the sense of hearing and the mental process that follows the sense (music cognition). What is more, music performance is a process that has also a significant social aspect as it is synchronized spatially and temporally with the audience by incorporating other senses as well (such as vision) (16 p. 177); (17 p. 25); (5)). The audience, in order to experience music in public space, must be at the same place and at the same time with the musicians that perform. Therefore, the way people perceive and experience this form of art in public space has a striking difference even from its production and creation in contrast to a mural, or a sculpture which are usually permanent (3).

When it comes to the attributes of the quality of public space, as identified in this research, it could be argued that at least on a theoretical level, music performance as described above and as a means of triangulation in the public realm (18 pp. 145-146, 154), does have an effect on the way people perceive and experience those attributes. “Triangulation” is a critical factor for a successful public space, which includes the practices and activities of the public realm that create a linkage between people; “(...) that process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to talk to other strangers as if they knew each other” (18 p. 154). Especially performative arts in public, such as live music, enhance triangulation by bringing people together in proximity (19 p. 72).

In more detail, the first attribute of the quality of public space to be researched is the sense of comfort. Comfort is a quite vast term and therefore difficult to define. However, in the present research sense of comfort is identified and “measured” in the empirical part of the thesis by three further aspects of comfort of public space; attractiveness, pleasure and safety, which incorporate both physical and social-psychological characteristics.

Hall and Smith (20), emphasize the contribution of public art, and accordingly music, in the aesthetical enhancement of urban environment (20 p. 176). What is more, it has been argued that music allows people to identify better their position in - public – space; an ability that seems to affect the sense of comfort (21 pp. 14-15).

Pleasure in public space can be linked not only with physical features of space, but also with experiential ones. Music has the ability to revitalize memories, emotions and perceptions (22); (23); (24)). In her book, “Ground Control,” Anna Minton (25) negotiates safety in public space of new-built and privatized areas of Britain. Within this context, she highlights the importance of the “unexpected” and the pleasure that it creates (25 pp. 53-54). She describes, particularly, a

“magical” experience that she had while visiting the Latvian city of Riga, when during a drifting in the old city she got seduced by a melodic sound:

I was wandering around the old town when I heard a saxophone from around the corner and, following the sound, found the musician playing alone in a snow-covered square. The pleasure of the experience was that it was so unexpected, unlike the feeling that buskers today are placed in strategic spots, which takes away the joy of the moment of discovery. (25 p. 53)

For some listeners, music in public space might create a sense of pleasure and eventually comfort due to the symbolisms and emotions that it carries. Consequently, the presence of music in public space as a practice which produces emotions - positive or negative – and reactions seems to influence the perception of attractiveness and pleasure in the square.

Landry et al. (26) also support that cultural events are inhibiting factors for criminal practices due to their inclusive character (26 p. 16) and thus help to change the perception of safety in the public realm. What is more, music performance in its materialistic form reassures the physical presence of people in the public space. So, even if the musicians are the only people in the square, it is still not empty, and therefore the perception of safety and comfort changes.

The second attribute that is important for the quality of public space is the sense of community and sociability that the public space’s users have. There are three key factors: to what extent the public space is perceived as a meeting place, how people perceive and use the space as a means of socializing and to what extent people feel welcome in public spaces.

Whyte very successfully states: “What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people” (27 p. 105) and since music is performed by “other people” it could be suggested that music in public space is a means of social attraction. It has been argued that one of the most important qualities of music performance in the public realm is that it produces social activity and social space ((21 p. 162); (22 p. 272); (20); (28 p. 19)). This production of social space through music might as well have a healing outcome for urban societies and communities. While planners and policy makers shift their interest towards the experiences and the emotional representations of public space in order to enhance sociability and sense of community, public events such as a musical performance seem to make a difference towards this direction (28).

The extent to which a public space is used as a meeting place signifies the sense of community and social networks of the realm. Physical factors (29 p. 12) as well as practices of cultural and social interest are the ones that enhance the identity of a space as a meeting place (29 pp. 12-13). A meeting place is not only conceived as a space where people physically meet each other, but also a space where social and cultural trajectories are met and interact with each other (28 p. 4).

Accessibility is an attribute of great importance for a public space. The accessibility and openness of a public space, as well as the role of this space in the urban structure are considered the main factors indicating the value of this attribute. This attribute does not only refer to physical and architectural characteristics of the square, but also to emotional and perceptive factors, like the way people are encouraged or not to be in the square.

What is more, music has the ability to produce a sense of identity and belonging with the space that it is performed, and especially when it is a public one (22 p. 273). Even though familiarity of space is attributed basically in the sense of comfort (21 pp. 14-15), it could be argued that it has also a strong connection with accessibility as it allows people to feel safer and therefore more approachable.

Openness of a public realm is highly related to the perception of inclusivity. Tornaghi (30) supports that public art, and thus music performance, is a participatory process which promotes “multiculturalism and citizens’ engagement in social issues” and therefore inclusivity and social integration (30 pp. 5-6). As a result, when people feel welcomed to participate and attend public events, even the “unexpected” ones (25), they perceive public space as an open and accessible one.

Last, but not least, the way people use a public space, as well as the degree to which they use it, is a significant attribute. The extent that a public space is considered an active space and the perceptions that people have on the activities taking place there are two major indicative sub-attributes of the use and quality of the space.

In order to achieve “safe and clean” urban environments, modern cities tend to end up with dead public spaces. Anna Minton (25) negotiates this death of public life for the sake of security and control, and notices that the cause for that is the lack of “real historic and cultural identity” in the planning process (25 p. 52). What is more, the use of a public space is conditioned by citizens’ “perceptions, habits, histories and emotions” (4 p. 109). These perceptions and emotions are subject to change in the presence of music performance, and therefore change the way people perceive the use of space. If we accept that music in public space enhances social interaction and the perception of meeting place, then it could be argued that music performance changes people’s perception of the uses towards more community- and social-related uses.

Accordingly, if music has the ability to enhance the perception of safety, then the perception of uses related to criminality and fear tend to decline.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach chosen for this research is related to qualitative as well as psychogeographical methods and tools applied to a case-study. These are focusing on identifying the perceptions and experiences of the questioned people as well as on reporting the external characteristics, such as the qualities of an urban environment, general discourses and space reputation. The data have been collected through semi-structured interviews, conducted in a small square in the centre of the Greek city of Thessaloniki, where the users of the space have been asked to reflect their perceptions and experiences towards the quality of the public space.

The general research design comprises of two, more specific empirical projects. The first one evaluates the perceptions and experiences of the case-study-area without the presence of the music, while the second one during the performing event. Thus, it is possible to identify the differences on the perceptions and experiences produced with and without music.

For the second part of the strategy, the one with the music performance, a gipsy-swing band, formed for the specific research by professional musicians¹ has been performing live in the square. The event took place during morning and noon hours, during which shops were open and the city centre was at its most lively.

What is more, in order to achieve a deeper depth in the identification of the perceptions and experiences produced, a psychogeographical methodological tool has been applied. All respondents were given a camera and were asked to take two pictures of anything that attracts their attention within the realm of the square. The goal was to capture in two pictures what each person finds stimulating in the square. Thus, it is possible to make a further comparison between the general perception of the square without the music performance and during it.

The public space

The public space under case-study research is a square –Navarinou Square- in the city centre of Thessaloniki, Northern Greece. Navarinou Square is an important historical place of the roman times, in a residential and commercial neighbourhood with a contemporary “tradition” as a place of socializing and public expression. However, throughout the years, and due to severe neglect of the local authorities the square presents social and criminality problems that lead to the decline of the inclusivity and accessibility of the square.

The users of the public space

The qualitative research design with the semi-structured interviews is referred to all users of the square during the morning hours. Each group is briefly described below, based on observations conducted during the field work.

To begin with, there are three main groups of users during the morning hours, more or less of the same quantity. There are many parents (or grandparents) with their (grand-) children during morning and noon. The part of the square that is designed as a playground fills with children and their parents. This group of users tends to be located in the northwest part of the square, where the playground equipment is, as well as at the main part of the square with the benches (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

The second group of users are elderly people. These are mainly residents of the city centre who like to take a walk and sit somewhere where they can enjoy some trees and maybe the company of old friends. They usually use the main part of the square, where the benches and the shades of the trees are (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

The last morning users are the students and young professionals. This group uses mainly the cafeterias and the terraces at the northwest perimeter of the square. Navarinou Square is close to the university, and there are also many offices which attract young professionals.

However, there are also two more groups of users, which have not been mentioned yet. The first one is the group of dogs. There are many stray dogs in the wider area of the square and wander around. The dogs tend to use the green surfaces of

¹ Prato (1984, p. 159) signifies the importance of the musical quality and virtuosity for outdoors musical events in terms of evaluating an aesthetic experience.

addition to the environment, they still think that the place “could have been better” in terms of attractiveness and that for many of them the use of the square is a necessary evil. “I don’t usually spend time in the square. But today that I liked it I thought of sitting for a while... and I sat. And I liked it a lot that there are swing musicians today!” reflects a young male engineer who enthusiastically referred to the music. The pleasure that the music performance adds to the perception and experience of the square is also identified in the psychogeographical data. A high number of respondents captured an image of the musicians as their first picture on the camera. This indicates that this as the first thing that stimulated them in a creative way.

What was also noticed during the field-work is that the paved area of the square, which is in the middle of the space, is a dead public space. It is assumed that the main reason is the very intense sun and the lack of shade. However, after a while children started to gather around the musicians, but not in order to observe them, at least not obviously, but to play football. From time to time, there were some of those children who took some time to turn their heads to see the musicians, or even sit next to the band. “I play the violin too. I like this music a lot!” said a boy who left the football game in order to sit next to the band and observe them. There were many similar incidents of people stopping for a while to observe the band, but because of the intensity of the sun and the lack of shadow nearby they wouldn’t stop for a long time. It seems that even if the musicians did not manage to gather any people around as a proper audience, the music managed to gather at least the children on the paved area. This is what Whyte, calls the quality of “triangulation” (7); (18)); it is the stimulations that are provided to the people in order to bring life to public spaces and provoke social interaction.

Concerning the factor of safety, the data analysis identified that there is no such difference between the perceptions indicated by the responses with music and without music. While all the respondents feel safe during morning hours, the majority of them answered that they feel unsafe and uncomfortable after the sunset. Some of them did not want to specify the reason, but most of them implicated the “other users” of the square; the marginalised people.

The Effect on the Sense of Community and Sociability

Regarding the sense of socializing in the square, some respondents have noticed how important this factor is for the quality of this public space. A young mother signifies the importance of socializing: “(...) I have made friends...with other moms... we have made friendships, my child has made friends, and as a result my day goes on more pleasantly”. Some respondents have evaluated the importance of this function of the square as a space of social activity and interaction and pictured it in their psychogeographical practice (see Psychogeographical Picture 1). With, or without music, people seem to appreciate the importance of a public space in their everyday lives and the significance of socializing in the public realm.



Psychogeographical Picture 1: Company of mothers with children who have come to meet each other in the square and let their children play. Source: author’s photo (photo taken by respondent 9A)

Nevertheless, the function of music performance in public space as a “triangulation” (18) is merely verified in the present case. In the empirical research there was no indication from the responses that music enhances social relations, networks and interaction.

The Effect on the Sense of Accessibility

The perception that people have on the accessibility, openness and importance of the square is generally positive. However, it seems that people under the presence of the music performance evaluate the accessibility and openness of the space slightly more negatively than those without the music. Nevertheless, since this analysis is purely qualitative, it is not possible to proceed to a conclusion that is based on poor quantitative data.

The discourse analysis towards people’s perception of the role of Navarinou Square in Thessaloniki’s structure revealed that there are five main reasons of the importance of the space: its public nature, its position, its uses, its crucial role for socializing and its cultural and historical value. Despite the attempt to make an in-depth analysis of the discourses reflecting the square’s role and highlight any differences among the two interview sets, this was not the case. The only slight difference is that –unexpectedly- the value of the square as a cultural and



Psychogeographical Picture 2: Musicians Performing. Picture captured during the Psychogeographical test by a young girl who was walking her dog. Source: author’s (respondent 13B)

historical place is only reflected in respondents' quotations without music, while it was assumed that people in the presence of a cultural event would have been more prompted to discuss about this role of the square.

The Effect on the Sense of Use of and Activity in Navarinou Square

Even though both groups of interviewees seem to believe that "the square is an active place, but it could have been better", the interviewees with the music stimulation have stated a much bigger amount and greater variety of activities hosted in the square. The use of the square for cultural activities is also more dominant in the interviews with music than without. What is more, people with the music stimulation seemed to express their opinion about this activity, even without being asked. This result might also be related to the fact that the stimulations received during a music performance are more and of richer meaning and therefore are translated into a much bigger amount and variety of uses of the square.

Some respondents said that before the Greek recession there used to be many more people in the square, but due to financial limitations people prefer to stay at home. A young mother with her child states that "Yes, there is life. However, much less than before, but it has life. (...) Back in the days it used to have more people, it used to concentrate more people. Now there is not so much. Nowadays people also have difficulties (financial), so it is reasonable that they don't go out as much as they used to do". The Greek recession seems to be an extraneous factor which was not reflected in the theoretical framework, but seems to have a great effect on people's perceptions on public space and on the degree that music performance affects them.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MUSIC PERFORMANCE ON PERCEPTION AND EXPERIENCE

While the differences in reactions between respondents interviewed with music playing and those without it were smaller than the literature suggests, it is very interesting to note that as soon as the respondents were informed in the third part of the interview² that the music played a role in this research they all became very excited and willing to talk about this topic (for both sets of interviews). Most of them had a positive attitude towards the presence of music in the square and the effect that it might have in their experience. This section will analyse these portions of our interviews, in order to better understand the role that music had, and could potentially have, for the experiences of our respondents.

Another interesting aspect of the interviews is that even if the results that came up from the first part of the interview (the unconscious negotiation of the attributes) do not verify the initial hypothesis that music affects people's perception about their urban public environment, the respondents seem to have noticed the music one way or another. Except for the respondents who did not refer to the music at all or clearly mentioned the musicians, there are also those who referred to the music indirectly. For instance, a female student who was drinking her coffee in one of the square's terraces, referred on her own but in an indirect way to the music activity when asked about the uses of the square: "there should be more activities, a little bit of music". Even though she didn't mention the musicians performing in the square at all up until this point in the interview, she probably got stimulated by their performance, which could have influenced her conception of the space. Therefore, it could be argued that music performance, most of the times, has a direct or indirect effect on people's cognition and therefore perceptions and experiences.

Not only do people's statements reflect the pleasure that music provokes to them, but also their actions. There was an incident of a young mother dancing with her baby girl in her arms all over the square to a waltz song that the musicians were playing (see Picture 2). It was an indication of how much music may affect the audience's mood. Gipsy-swing music has that retro feeling and nostalgic emotion that is apparently transported to the public audience and produces respective cognitive responses. It is a genre that might bring back memories to the elderly, or even make cognitive connections with stories heard, movies watched, and books read etc. by younger people.

Highlighting the importance of the materialistic presence of the musicians in the square, a young girl explains the pleasure that she feels: "I mean, you watch the



Picture 2: A young mother dancing with her baby girl to the sounds of a waltz song. Source; author's

² For the first and second part of the interview people were unaware of the importance of the music to capture the sub-conscious reactions and perceptions.

music, you watch the people sitting and observing... it is nice!” It is a very interesting fact that this respondent refers to the musicians as a visual stimulation. This is related with what Wood et al. (32 p. 869) discuss about the materialistic aspect of music performance, which also includes the physical presence of the musicians and the perceptions that they construct. The materialistic aspect of music and its perception as an object is also very clearly reflected in the response of a middle-aged woman: “(...) music relaxes. You feel that something exists”.

It was also observed that while conducting the interview set without music³, a few of those who were interviewed referred to, on their own accord, the performance which was conducted one week ago as a very pleasant experience, though they did not know that it was an event scheduled for the purposes of this research. A young, female private employee recalls: “few days ago I came across a band that was playing the violin... it was very nice, because we were in the park on the one hand, but on the other, we were also listening to music... and the children were dancing...”. Another male respondent reflects his own experience: “Yes, (music in public space) is something very pleasant, and sometimes in the square there are people who either sing opera songs, or play accordion and generally I believe that these events give a different touch...”. This respondent, even though he does not seem to have been present in the events of this research, has kept a vivid representation of his intimate experience and it seems that he has connected pleasant feelings of being in the square with music performance in the space. As a result, the overall experience remained in his memory. These statements describe not only the representations that music produces, but also the power that music has to create memories and feelings, and link spatial values with experiential ones.

The “music quality” factor was not at first taken into consideration but was emphatically stated by most of the respondents. The extent to which the music in public will capture their attention and appreciation depends on the quality of the musicians performing, the music genre and the originality of the music. “If the musicians are good and they sing nicely, and they play properly they change my mood... we might as well hang out around them with a glass of alcohol etc., but if they are out of tone and their music is bad, then I will leave!” states a 23 year old man interviewed with music, who seemed very excited about the music-related discussion.

Even the physical features and the personality of the musicians seem to count. A young woman walking her dog reflects on the occasion: “(...) if I get attracted by their music and their behaviour, if they smile to the person, if they are sociable, then yes, I would give money. Because I have seen many musicians, who just stand like that, you approach to listen and they just look at you, as if they’re saying ‘why are you listening to me’? And that’s when you go nuts!”

Music and the value of Public Space

When it comes to their attitude towards any potential music events in the square, the majority responded that they would like to attend those events and participate. They also agreed that music events in the square on a regular basis would prompt them to come more often to the square.

In the academic discourse, another quality of music is that of the promotion of creativity and play in the public realm. Children seem to be the ones who get more stimulated by the sounds and rhythms and thus get more easily related to the public realm. Throughout this process, children have the chance to develop social skills as well as emotional intelligence (29). It could be argued that this assumption is verified through the empirical research. Even though the children in Navarinou Square were not interviewed, their physical presence, their actions and sometimes their words gave lots of clues about the way music transforms a public space into a creative and playful space. A 45-year old father reflects on the effect that music in Navarinou Square would have had for his children: “It would have been very nice if it was possible for musicians or other performers to come here from time to time, without being chased by the police. It is certainly better for the children, because they get more stimulation, and they learn more... it is good for the children”.

Accordingly, from her own perspective, a young student relates public performances with the identity of the square as a student’s hot spot: “I believe that if something like this was to be organized here, in the square, it would have been very nice because... Thessaloniki is a student city, and music is something for the young people, thus I would really like it! (...) I would come more often in the square, because I believe that it would have been very nice! Especially in summer, it is much nicer to sit in the square where it is cool, underneath a tree, rather than going to a closed bar or club.” It seems that every type of user of the square identifies oneself and one’s needs with a musical event in the square. Therefore, it could be argued that music performance in the public realm can lead to public space revitalization.

³ This set of interviews without music was conducted one week after the set with music.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, it seems like music in public space does not have a direct effect on people's perceptions regarding the quality of a place. It could be argued that the more intense the problems of a space are and the more deeply rooted the perceptions towards those problems are (like the safety and maintenance issues identified in the empirical research), the less powerful a music event is.

Yi-Fu Tuan (21) also supports that people tend to deny and neglect the reality of their experiences in order to engage in "clichés of public speech" (21 p. 203). It might also be the case that in the empirical research the respondents tend to establish and discuss the general discourse towards the quality of Navarinou Square and deny the intimate experience that it is offered to them with the music performance. Moreover, Tuan's approach (21 p. 143) supports the research outcome concerning the consciousness of the experience; when the respondents were informed about the importance of the music in the research they all immediately began to negotiate the value of the performance in a different way. They realized it and linked it with attributes of public space that they didn't do in the first part of the interview.

A critical factor for the effect of a music performance into peoples' perception about the quality of a public space is the quality of the music. Prato (5 p. 159) has reflected towards this argument, supporting that the musical quality and virtuosity for outdoors musical events is very important in terms of the negotiation of an aesthetic experience. Kämpfe et al (34) give a sufficient explanation for this conclusion; music does not always have the same effect on people's cognitive processes (34 p. 441). This means, that if the same empirical research was to be applied in a different population and a different public space, the results might have possibly been consistent with the theoretical approaches and expectations. Therefore, it could be argued that music cognition is a very delicate process and vulnerable to minimum changes. However, the elasticity of this cognitive process does not mean that each attempt to link it with other factors (such as quality of public space) is a failure. On the contrary, interpretation and embodiment of the cultural background into the analytical process, as Tuan (21) indicates, produces a unique result and conclusion for each culture.

Another argument of great importance is that music has the ability to function as a connecting link between spatial experiences and perceptual experiences, such as memories and feelings. The empirical research has revealed that people tend to connect spatial and temporal points with intimate feelings and thoughts through a creative event such as a music performance. This argument is related to the engagement that music produces with space and time through its symbolisms ((35 p. 444); (22 p. 273); (36 pp. 3, 7-8)) as well as the identity that music provides to a space and time (37).

In the context of our research, there is a critical economic cultural factor – the Greek economic crisis – which has radically changed the cognitive process of the respondents. The on-going economic crisis has translated into a social and psychological one. A variety of scientific and journal articles as well as reports seek to reveal the way Greek people experience their everyday lives. Unfortunately, the so far discussion on the topic reflects a deeply pessimistic position of the average Greek towards subjects of daily life. As a result, it seems reasonable that the responses of the interviewees in the empirical research of this thesis reflect a pessimistic and negative aspect. What is more, the interviews were conducted during the critical pre-election and post-election period of May 2012. Therefore, it could be argued that the economic crisis along with the political instability of the period that the data was collected construct a respective framework around peoples' perceptions and experiences.

However, the value of music performance in public space as a revitalization tool should not be underestimated, regardless the present outcomes. Public art and generally creative and cultural practices in the public realm are often used as catalysts for the revitalization of public spaces (30). Especially, within a context of Creative Placemaking and Culture-Led Regeneration, expressions of creativity in the public space seem to enhance the humanization of planning and therefore the production of successful and qualitative urban realms ((26); (11)).

In the wider context of public space revitalization through cultural and creative practices, music in public space seems to be one of the forms of public art which carries much potential. Based on the qualities of music performance in public space as well as the perceptions and experiences that were reflected through our research, it is possible to propose policy recommendations towards public space revitalization through public music events. When the respondents of the empirical research were asked to reflect their opinion towards public music performance in the square the majority responded that they would like to attend those events and participate. They also agreed that music events in the square on a regular basis would prompt them to come more often to the square. As a result, the empirical data seem to verify the approaches of revitalization through cultural and creative activities.

The fact that the quality of music seems to play a huge role in the way people experience this event highlights the importance of this value. Taking into consideration quality factors such as the music genre and the virtuosity of the musicians in the development of a relevant policy is strongly recommended. The symbolisms of the music and the emotions that it provokes could be associated with the identity that a space already has, or with one that the planners wish to develop. As in the case of Navarinou Square, where a romantic and retro music genre has been chosen in order to provoke specific cognitive procedures to the users of the space, it could be argued that for every desired outcome there could be a proper music event.

On the other hand, a unilateral imposition of creative activities in the public realm by the planners and policy makers, without the participation and appreciation of the experiences constructed by the civilians leads to a decline of the value of public life as well as an underestimation of the creative, social and/or political statement that the creative activity presents ((38 pp. 126-127); (39 p. 162)). Minton (25) reflects on this problem of public space by spotting the source of the issue on the persistence of planners and authorities in general to have everything under control. This tendency denies any sense of creativity and spontaneity in the public realm and does not allow the user of the space to engage with it (25 pp. 22-23). It is argued that there should be a balance between allowing and creating the circumstances under which qualitative music performances take place in the public realm and arranging issues such as security and public safety. The planner's and policy maker's role should be to create the ideal conditions for the musical activities to flourish, rather than to exclusively focus on organizing top-down festivals and events themselves. People's participation in revitalization procedures is very important to the successful, or not, outcome of such a strategy (40 p. 23). Bottom-up procedures, such as public art, that can later be included in a top-down strategy seem to be promoted as a very successful tool for public space revitalization.

The goal should be to have a point of triangulation in the public realm that would prompt people to interact with each other, socialize and eventually use a space, while simultaneously caring for the standard needs that a space has in terms of infrastructure and maintenance. A music event is a tool that can bring more people to a space and help change the perception and identity of a place, but music on its own cannot radically affect the quality of public spaces.

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