

Utilising public space and digital tools to facilitate urban coexistence

A framework for the development of civic culture

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background

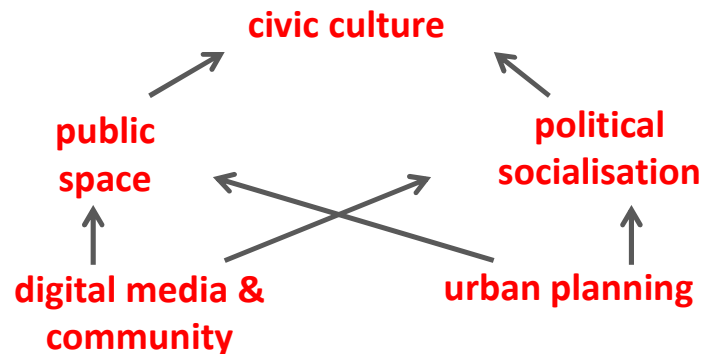
the physical, material and spatial consequences,
artefacts and traces of politics

civic/urban culture = αστική/πολιτική κουλτούρα

αστικός • (astikós) *m.*

1. urban, civic

study context



literature

urban studies

diversity (Iveson)

tolerance (Bannister & Kearns)

urban environmental education (Breitbart 1994, 1998)

public space

conceptualisation and youth perspectives (Leahy
Laughlin and Johnson 2011)

typologies and boundaries (Humphreys 2010)

public v. private (Giroux 2011)

background

public space in Athens = arena of power contests,
conflict and coexistence



Polis I and II (Athens)

primary data

six in-depth interviews with architects, public space
experts and civic group leaders

secondary data

case studies (regeneration projects, critical events,
newspaper coverage)



urbicide

urban destruction as a fundamentally deliberate act
of ideological warfare against the state



directed against the concepts of historical continuity,
entrepreneurship and private property = **class warfare**
against the bourgeoisie ("urban class" – αστική τάξη)

family

"The **embrace of the family** intervenes in the relationship
between the individual and society, meaning that the
individual is unable to establish any relationships outside of
that embrace" (Kiourti).

home

"The home reproduces social **stereotypes** and **socially
constructed** notions and practices about your body, your gender,
your sexuality, familial **hierarchies**, the relationship between the
public and the private, which altogether form **a net from which
you can't escape**" (Kiourti).

“Space starts from **our own internal space** [i.e. the perception of the self and the personal mentality]: the core of the problem is within ourselves” (Vatopoulos)

self- reflection actualisation

the pathologies of Athens’ public spaces and the civic culture can be partly attributed to our problematic relationship with the self and with the family

continuity, collective memory

“When you walk through a city and you get a **wave of emotions** that’s because you come across the **footprints** of those who have lived and died there – whatever is left behind, **a certain ‘humidity’**. This is not merely the product of our individual culture – it is that, times one billion for those who have gone before us, and another billion for those who will come after us. We exist **at that edge of the present** and this is what a city is” (Vatopoulos).



Polis III (Boston)

primary data

- visual ethnography (24 field trips/walks across predetermined or flexible paths, 7,000+ photos, observation, engagement with locals, fieldwork journal) across public spaces, urban communities and transport hubs in Boston, Cambridge and surrounding towns
- student survey at Emerson on youth engagement with urban public spaces and public art



secondary data

- case studies (regeneration history, Art in Transit)
- four-month residence at the Engagement Game Lab

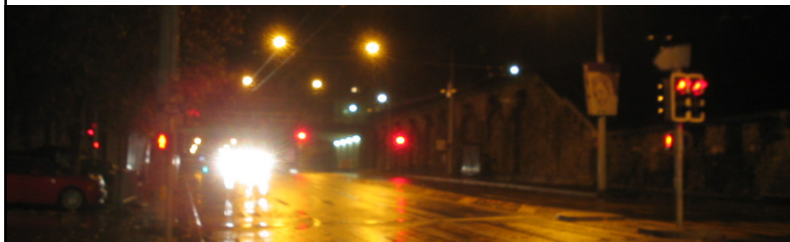




urban / civic culture

"[T]he interplay of **density** and **propinquity** and their spatial embodiment in the city define, in part, the qualities and potential of **encounters with difference**" (Bannister & Kearns 2013)

→ **speed, movement, regulation**



urban / civic culture

coercion

+

= engagement

diversity

+

= withdrawal

choice

"In the face of greater individualisation, privatism, inequality and ethnic and cultural diversity, there has been a tendency towards **privacy, withdrawal, segregation** and increasing **anxiety** about the behaviour and values of others.

The **spatial and social distances** between individuals and groups means that, when others who behave differently are encountered, they are perceived as posing a **threat**, and **distaste for the unfamiliar** and less legitimate can lead to **hostility**" (Watson 2006, Bannister & Kearns 2013, Putnam 2007)

ghettos exclusion crime
 gated communities
superdiversity multiculturalism

towards a normative
framework for the nurturing
of civic culture in public space

- ✓ Bringing people together into a common/shared space
- ✓ Crossing boundaries/borders
- ✓ Getting outside of your private bubble
- ✓ Emphasizing co-existence
- ✓ Preserving collective memory
- ✓ Sharing knowledge
- ✓ Encouraging participation

civic education
digital literacy
public art

"crucial to both imagining and sustaining the dreamscape of an aspiring democracy are the **institutions** and **practices** of a **formative culture** that provide modes of **thought** and **agency** that constitute and support the very foundations of the culture" (Giroux 2011)

concluding thought

(how) can cities/civic cultures survive and thrive in a context of rapid movement, globalisation, post-institutionalism, post-democracy, crisis governance, climate change?

- by regulating behaviour so as to protect freedom, equality and respect
- by preserving memory
- by encouraging/enforcing engagement
- by allowing for the unexpected and the new

"Too many strong ties in a locality can lead to provincialism and the kind of oppressive small town culture that sociologist Georg Simmel (1971) warned against, where apparently local concerns blanket the global or systemic issues facing a locality"
(Gordon and de Souza e Silva 2011).