

Spatial and Ethnic Patterns

The interface between 'majority' and 'minority' in Macedonia

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Abstract

This paper investigates ethnic group relations. By utilizing Space Syntax theory and methodology, it considers one dimension of social relations between Albanians and Macedonians. That dimension is spatial appropriation during the evening hanging out and evening informal activities at the weekends. Otherwise, the overall relations between these two ethnic groups have been paradoxical, ranging from co-existence and respect to armed conflict.

Two multiethnic towns in the western part of Macedonia are investigated. The "majority" in one of the towns is presented by Albanians and in the other one by Macedonians. Also, the use of the terms "majority" and "minority" is conditional, having in mind the slight difference between the size of the ethnic groups in the study cases.

The study reveals similar - if not identical - social and spatial patterns. In fact, the relation between "majority" and "minority" is constant. In each town considered, during the evening events, the "majority", correspondingly "minority", uses a set of spaces with similar configurational properties. The set of spaces used by the "minority" is separated, but, adjacent to the set of spaces used by the "majority", which together belong to the centre of the town.

1. Introduction

Macedonia is a multiethnic and multicultural country. According to the last census (State Statistical Office, 2005), 1297981 of the population is Macedonian, 509083 is Albanian, and the rest of the population is made of Turks, Serbs and other nationalities (Table1). While the eastern part of the country is populated by Macedonians, the western part is the multiethnic part with Albanians and Macedonians as the largest ethnic groups.

Total	Macedonians	Albanians	Turks	Rhomas	Vlachs	Serbs	Bosniaks	Other
2022547	1297981	509083	77959	53879	9695	35939	17018	20993

Table 1

Total population of the Republic of Macedonia according the ethnic affiliation

Macedonians and Albanians have been living together for centuries in this region. Their relations, having ups and downs during different periods of time, have been paradoxical, ranging from co-existence and respect to armed conflict. The armed conflict in 2001 was in fact the worst crisis between the two ethnicities. Today, although the war had some repercussions on these relations, still, both ethnic groups live and work together, respecting their cultural differences.

This paper investigates ethnic group relations. By utilizing Space Syntax theory and methodology, especially Hillier's work on exploring interfaces between different categories of people (1996), it considers one dimension of the complex social relations between Albanians and Macedonians. That dimension is spatial appropriation during evening hanging out at the weekends. Although they live, work and shop together, still, hanging out is something they do separately. Having fun separately means they use spatially segregated spaces.

So, this research, will try to answer few questions: what set of spaces each ethnic group uses, or it is more likely to use during the evening hours of informal activities?; how are those spaces embedded in the spatial configuration of the town?; what are the relations between ethnic groups and the relations between the spaces they use?

2.1 Case studies

In order to investigate the spatial appropriation by ethnic groups and the "virtual communities" they create during the evenings for the weekends, Tetovo and Kicevo, two multiethnic towns from the western part of Macedonia have been chosen.

Macedonians are the "majority" in the municipality of Kicevo, whereas Albanians are the "majority" in the municipality of Tetovo. Beside multiethnicity, the criteria for the selection of these towns, is the relatively small difference in size between the population of the two ethnic groups (between the "majority" and "minority") and the significant size of each group (Table 2). Having that in mind, both groups would have the necessary social, economical and cultural strength to create their identifiable social and spatial patterns, what makes the use of the terms "majority" and "minority" to be considered as conditional.

Town	Total	Macedonians	Albanians	Turks	Rhomas	Vlachs	Serbs	Bosniaks	Other
Kicevo	30138	16140	9202	2430	1630	76	86	7	567
Tetovo	86580	20053	60886	1882	2357	15	604	156	627

Table 2

Total population of the selected towns according the ethnic affiliation

Observation on pedestrian movement, classifying the pedestrian ethnic background by the language, behaviour and lifestyle, was carried out during September 2008. September is chosen because the climate at this period of the year is very pleasant for evening informal activities, citizens are back from their summer holidays and those who work abroad are still in Macedonia. People and their movement were observed from 9.00 pm to 12.00 pm, on Friday and Saturday night. It is the time to see and to be seen, time to have dinner, time when new social patterns are created.

2.2 Syntactical Analysis

The investigation starts with the syntactical analysis of the entire area of each town in order to discover the degree of integration of the set of spaces used for informal evening activities out at the the weekends. These spaces are represented by the thick coloured lines in the global integration maps (Figure 1a, 2a, 1b and 2b). The syntactic analysis reveals that these axial lines are in fact spaces which belong to the integration core of the system – the centre of the town.

In both cases, the most integrated axial line, as a major connector of the system, is part of the set of spaces used for hanging out. We have a high concentration of catering facilities along this line, taking advantage of the spatial configuration and pedestrian movement (Hillier 1993). The rest of the lines are just off the main integrator, one or two step away from it, with catering facilities as well.

The level of synergy is also checked. The scattergrams and the correlation coefficients resulting from the correlation between local (R3) and global integration (RN) values (Figure 1c and 2c) indicate a good level of spatial and social interaction in both towns.

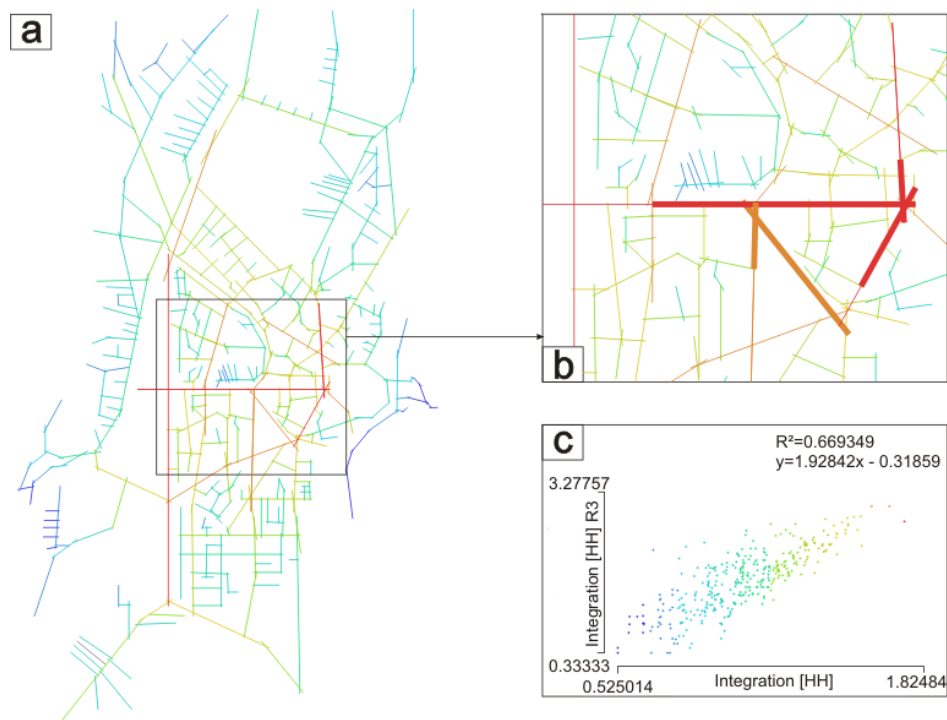


Figure 1

Syntactic analysis of Kicevo:

a. Axial map of Kicevo showing Global Integration (RN) values, b. Hanging out spaces represented by the thick lines, c. Synergy scattergram.

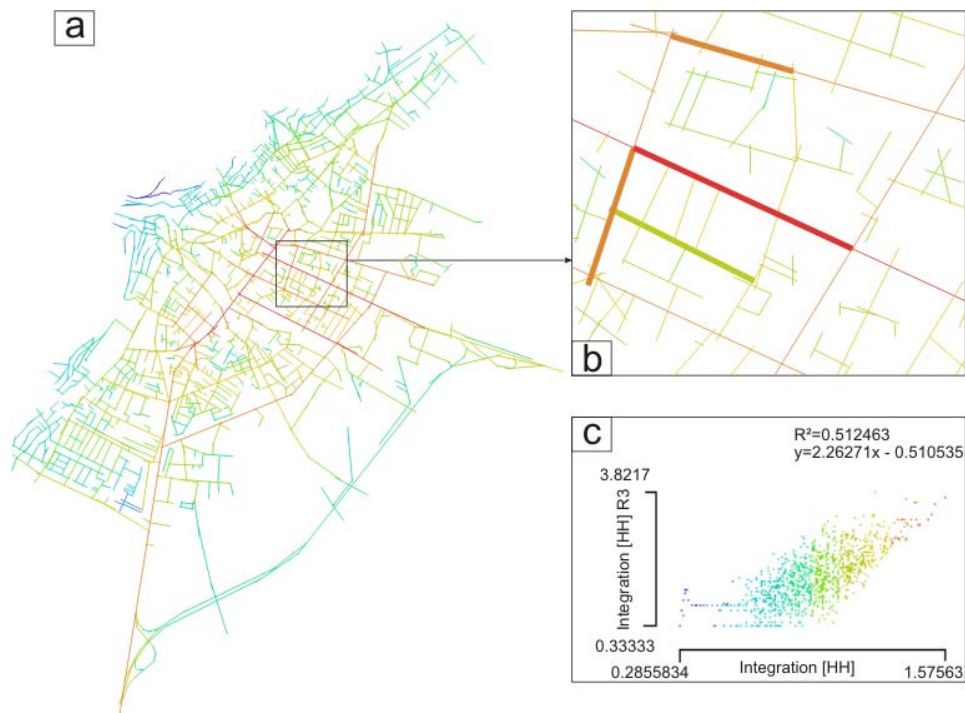


Figure 2

Syntactic analysis of Tetovo:

a. Axial map of Tetovo showing Global Integration (RN) values, b. Hanging out spaces represented by the thick lines, c. Synergy scattergram.

2.3 Ethnic structure of space

The interface between ethnic groups is one of the most critical among the multiple interfaces that characterize urban space (Hillier, 1996). Scattergrams, in which the movement of "majority" is set against the movement of "minority" will help to understand the interface and the relations between Albanians and Macedonians.

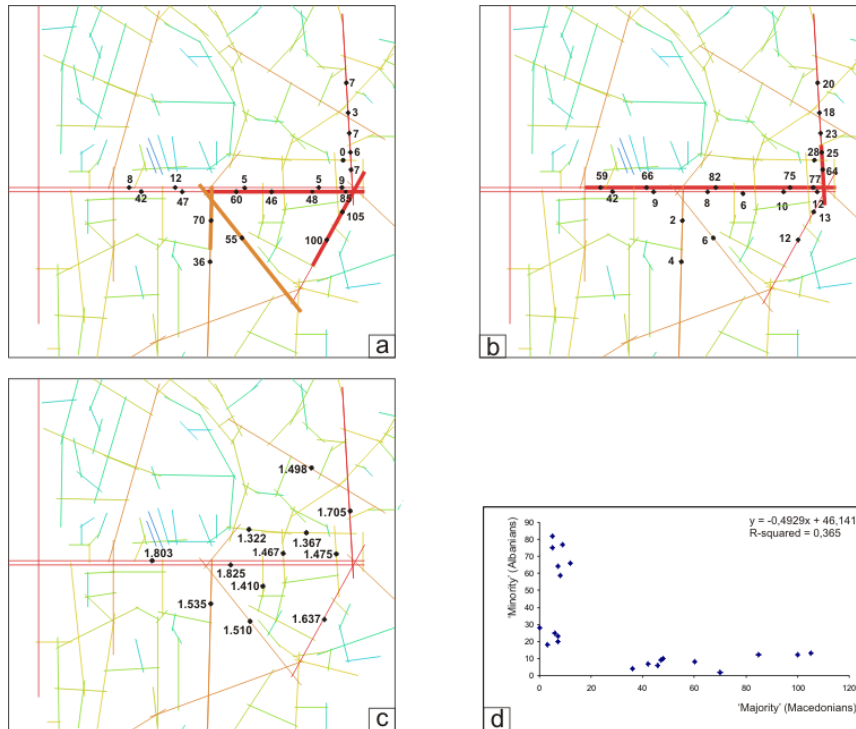


Figure 3

Patterns in Kicevo.; a. Average number of Macedonians ('majority') per five minute period, b. Average number of Albanians ('minority') per five minute period, c. Integration value of axial lines that are used for evening informal activities, d. Scattergram, showing the interface between 'Majority' and 'Minority'.

All the scattergrams (Figure 3d and 4d) show that within the hanging out area the probabilistic interface between "majority" and "minority" is very poor during the evening (starting from 9.00 pm to 12.00 pm on Friday and Saturday night). The L shaped scattergrams show that both ethnicities are less equally likely to be present in all space.

That means, that, each group is prioritizing a certain set of spaces. Graphically, in the axial maps, we plot the presence of "majority" and "minority" for an average five minute time period (figure 3a, 3b, 4a and 4b). We see that the "majority", which ever ethnic group is, is prioritizing the most integrated line or street (figure 3a, and 4a) and the "minority", which ever ethnic group is, is one or two step away from the main integrator (figure 3b and 4b). So, the "minority" is less integrated than the "majority", but about as integrated as it can be.

What we have here is a dual intention. Both ethnic groups tend to be spatially segregated from each other, but, integrated into the system as much as possible. This dual intention is made possible by the spatial configuration and by the power of the strong integrator or the centre itself. So, space plays a substantial and decisive role on shaping the relations between ethnic groups. The case of Kicevo is a good example (figure 1 and 3), where both ethnic groups use the main

integrator, if seen as one axial line from a low resolution axial map (figure 1), or the "majority" using the most integrated sidewalk of the same street as it can be seen from the high resolution axial map (figure 3).

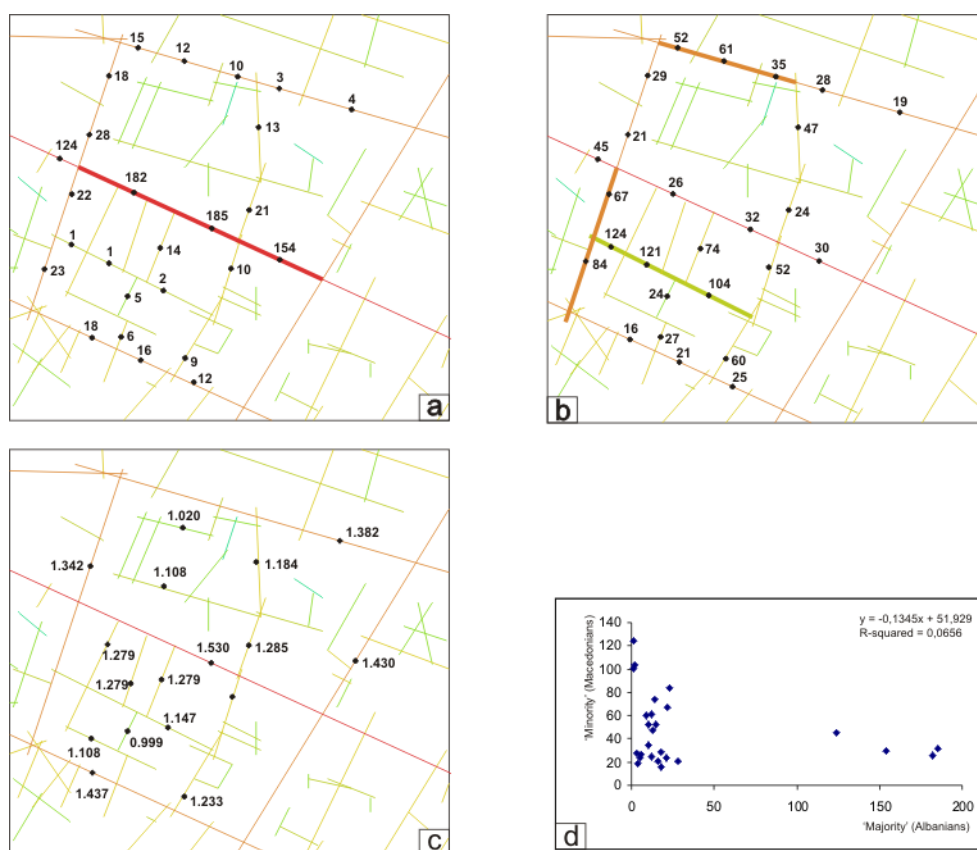


Figure 4

Patterns in Tetovo, a. Average number of Albanians ('majority') per five minute period, b. Average number of Macedonians ('minority') per five minute period, c. Integration value of axial lines that are used for evening informal activities, d. Scattergram, showing the interface between 'Majority' and 'Minority'.

3. Conclusion

The study reveals similar, - if not identical – social and spatial patterns. The set of spaces used for informal evening activities for the weekends, belongs to the most integrated spaces of the system, including the major connector of the system. The most integrated spaces in the spatial system attract more movement (B.Hillier, 1993) and with their gravitational force carry the potential for creating social interaction. But, the study also reveals , that during the evening hanging out, the social interaction is not equal to ethnic interaction. Social interaction happens only within the members of the same ethnicity. Macedonians and Albanians are spatially segregated from each other, but, within a region or set of spaces which belong to the natural movement or just off it.

The relation between "majority" and "minority" is constant. In each town considered, during the evening events, the "majority", respectively "minority", uses a set of spaces with similar configurational properties. The set of spaces used by the "minority" is separated, but, adjacent to the set of spaces used by the "majority", which together belong to the centre of the town.

The "majority", which ever ethnic group it is, occupies the most integrated ones. The "minority", which ever ethnic group it is, occupies the spaces one or two step away from the most integrated ones. So, the "minority" is not looking for segregated places, but, seek out the most integrated spaces that are available there , and if they are occupied, then, they seek out and occupy spaces

that are just off the major connector of the system, but only during this period of evening hanging out, otherwise natural movement counts for both of the ethnicities.

However, as it is mentioned earlier, this is just one dimension of the complex relations between ethnic groups. Further research is vital, in order to understand the ethnic relations in detail. Different variables must be taken into account including the political decisions and conditions and their impact on the creation and change of the spatial and social patterns over time.

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