

«Thessaloniki, a non capital city of a  
capital meaning»

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## **Thessaloniki: a non capital city of capital meaning**

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“ Εκτορι μεν Τροία συγκάθθανεν ουδ’ έτι χείρας αντήρεν Δαναών παισιν επερχομένοις. Πέλλα δ’ Αλεξάνδρω συναπόλετο, πατριδες άρα ανδράσιν, ου πάτραις άνδρες αγαλλόμεθα.”

“With Hector perished Troy and no longer raised her hand to resist the attack of the Danai. And Pella, too, perished with Alexander. So fatherlands glory in men, their sons, not men in their fatherlands”

Although the above referred text of Anthologia Graeca VII, 139, records Pella, the capital of Macedonia perished, as soon as Alexander the Great died in 323 b.C., in reality the same city still remained the capital of the country for several centuries. Thessaloniki was founded seven years after the death of the great victorious army commander in the year 316. Initially, it was not the official capital city but was going to become very soon the essential, new, local and international centre of Macedonia and the surrounding area with the creation of a firm and constant urban cluster. Thessaloniki will be declared the capital city of Macedonia during the Roman period, and will get the permanent and essential denomination of the country's second largest city during the byzantine period and that of the Turkish domination. Today, it preserves more intensely the character of the second largest city of the new-greek state.

This is the first main paper of the International Congress for the Planning of Capital Cities, which takes place here in a non capital city of capital however importance. Please, allow me to outline briefly the circumstances and the way of foundation and planning of Thessaloniki. Also, I shall refer to the fundamental changes of the city's urban organism - town-planning and others- that the modern second largest city of Greece came through during its rich, multi-phased historical course of 2310 years.

Thus, let us examine the prevailing circumstances of the Macedonian kingdom in the era that hte country lived glorious, historic days, thanks to the unique personality of is child. Alexander the Third, the so called Great, was already dead in Babylon in 323. He had created an Empire unheard-of size, inner inequalities and intensities, as it is proved by the immediate breaking to the states of his heirs in the following years. Macedonia shouldered essentially the political, financial and demographic burden of Alexander's imperial creation and was now

going through a deep financial and political crisis. The members of the royal family to which Alexander the Great belonged, that is Philip Third (III) Arridaeus, heir to the throne, and Olympias, the mother of the victorious army commander, were killed in 317 and 316 respectively. Kassandros, the new powerful man, son of Antipatros, Alexander's general, prevailed; he came to royal power in 317. The kingdom was in a pitiful financial state, since the year 334 b. C. that the glorious expedition of conquering the Asia started, because it continually spared no men and expenses for the sake of that gigantic operation. From the 15.000 men of the task force only 3.000 came back with the booty in 320//319, while the prompt breaking of the short-lived Empire to independent kingdoms and interests gave no possibility to Macedonia to collect all the offers for its creation.

On this crucial politico-financial verge of the illustrious but so far exhausted Macedonian kingdom, Kassandros decides a radical change of policy in order to reconstruct the state with introversion and concentration. Interesting is his building program, part of which constitutes the foundation of Thessaloniki: the plan includes the creation of two new cities, the expansion of Pella and Veria and the fortification of Dion and Aegae. One of these cities is, of course, Thessaloniki, which becomes original as it is named after a woman -something rare for the macedonian tradition- and not after its king, as the custom was with the cities founded by Philip, Alexander with the 72 Alexandrias, Seleukos, Ptolemaeos and Kassandros himself, who gave his name to Kassandria founded in the same period with Thessaloniki. This expanded building program (in which we must add the reconstruction of Thebes as the political act of Kassandros opposed to that of the destroyer of Thebes Alexander the Great twenty years ago) was of multiple target: a) the strengthening and safety of the country from outer dangers and the demonstration of peaceful intensions to all directions, b) the strengthening of Kassandros himself, who purging the members of the preceding dynasty, wanted first of all to detract the reactions of the family's environment by giving the name of his wife Thessaloniki, daughter of Philip II and half-sister of Alexander the Great, to the newly-built city.

Judging Kassandros' building program, we note that it was a necessary measure of inner reconstruction and recovery for the Macedonian state, which abandoned the expansionist policy of both Philip II and Alexander III. The various small settlements are now unified making urban centres, so that defence becomes easier during invasions and outer dangers, while, at the same time, strategical sites are selected for the two new urban centres - Thessaloniki and Kassandria. Their fundamental characteristic is the role they play as ports of importing and exporting trade. In this way, Macedonia is connected with that time's international system of financial exchanges, turning definitely to the sea. The turn is gradual, of course, as the former capitals of Macedonia show: Aegae, which was constructed in the

hinterland of a still agricultural-cattle raising country, and Pella which very soon lost direct connection with the sea, because of the deposits of the rivers Ludias, Axios and Echidoros or today called Gallikos.

The site on which Thessaloniki is founded, is located at 40 degrees, 41' and 10" of north latitude and 20 degrees and 28' of south longitude or in other words at the west point of the cove of Thermaikos gulf, on a low extension of the mount Chortiates, the so-called Kissos. Here, the new city will develop amphitheatrically having in front a good port 6-8 fathoms deep, seasonable for the transit trade. The selected ground for the new city is a mixture of a flat, towards the sea, and inclined plane on the side of Kissos mountain; an option which is in accord with the town-planning model and generally the urban structure of classical Antiquity, as we shall see in what follows.

According to preserved byzantine sources, the climate of Thessaloniki was similar to the one described by Demetrios Kydonos (14th century), the healthiest, and the location of the city the finest: many people coming from other places took refuge there for reasons of therapy. Today, of course, the climate of Thessaloniki cannot be considered ideal; nevertheless the change, towards a wet and hot one, especially in summertime, is due, according to post-byzantine evidence, to the constant and powerful earthquakes harassing the city area for fifty days in the year 1759 a.D.

The flora of the area during the Antiquity was profuse in fruit-bearing trees and vineyards, the waters of springs and rivers were affluent, while in the fauna were included (according to Herodotos and other authors) lions, leopards, wolves, panthers, bears, oxes, deer and other animals. I refer to all these ecological elements to point out that the option of the particular site, apart from the geopolitical and international and local communication parameters, gathers almost all the conditions of the ancient greek urban model, that we have mentioned before. This model has already been proposed, at rare intervals, in the archaic period and formed as the town-planning specifications in the greek-classical one. It includes a whole series of physiological parameters (such as earth configuration, orientation, climate, quality of air and winds), land-planning ones (distance from the other urban centres, roads and junctions of access and the relation of communication of the city with the farmed district and the employment of the inhabitants as well) and others. In our case, all these parameters have been taken into consideration in large measure and completeness by the founder in charge of the new Settlement.

Let me now refer for a while, since the Congress has to do with town-design, to the possible forgotten nowadays physiological parameters of the ancient town-planning. These parameters are directly related to the well-known Hippodamos, of course, not as the "inventor" or the fitter of the "gridiron" in the synonymous system (with which Thessaloniki is

designed), but, in particular, for his other possibly authentic capacity that of the *meteorologist*, with which he is recorded in the historical sources (Photius, Hesychius). No source refers to him as a city-planner. *Meteorology* or *astronomy* is the new science, which appeared in the 5th century b. C. It has to do with the winds, the clouds and generally the meteorological phenomena, that are examined and applied in town-planning specifications for the sanitation of the cities. If we go back to the Greek sources of the time, related to the *settlement* and the *habitation*, we shall find out that they do not refer to the typological, morphological or aesthetic categories, but to the conception of the physiological parameters. In only one paragraph of the work of Aristotle the Macedonian, called "Politika", about the settlement, the words "health" and "healthy" are recorded four times and the word "safety" only twice. There are no words referring to stylistic or morphological characteristics. Even for the particular habitation and its buildings exclusively dominate conceptions such as "health", "welfare", "pleasant" and "useful". If we want to confine the meaning of the word "health", connected with the urban structure, we shall have in mind the conception of "isonomy", that is: "the balance of the powers of wet and dry, hot and cold", e. g. for the wind or the soil, and other similar contrasted powers. This power-balance is known from the quotations of Alkmaeon's texts (6th century) and the School of Hippocrates as well. The domination of just one of these contrasted powers, that is the *monarchy*, gives birth to illness. In the very well-known work of Hippocrates "About winds, waters, places", instructions are given to a doctor visiting an unknown city: "he must examine the subject of years' seasons and find out what kind of influence might each of them have on...". Then: "...the winds, hot and cold, common in all places, furthermore he must examine those confined in every particular place". Moreover: "...how the water which people drink might affect them in that place..." Nevertheless, the soil, is it bare and dry, or luxuriant planted and wet, and whether the place is located in a depression, where heat makes breathing hard. Finally: "how the city is orientated a) in relation to the winds, b) in relation to sunset". In this work, the orientation southwards is considered to be the best, as far as Greek space is concerned. If we sum up these physiological parameters, we shall conclude to the four fundamental nature elements: the soil (earth), the sun, the air and the water, and the way they are connected and worked out; that is whether they equally affect or do not affect men's life. These considerations, based on the findings of Medicine and Meteorology, have already deeply influenced the urban practice of both the Classical and Hellenistic periods, an influence also confined in Thessaloniki's plan, as the later remains of the city show: a flat site is selected for the public buildings of the market (Agora), an inclined soil without *depressions* for the habitation site. The general orientation is to the south and generally: "the location of Thessaloniki is the best and healthiest" (according to

Kydones) and distinguished for: "the quality of winds and the harmony and order of seasons" according to another byzantine author, N. Kavasilas.

The creation of Thessaloniki's urban centre is brought about by the so called in the Antiquity process of the *Synoekismos* (= *Settlement*), as it first appears in Athens and other cities later on. Twenty six villages of Thermaikos gulf, among them Thermi, Chalastra (probably Sindos), Apollonia (near Volvi), Gareskos, Aenia (at Megalo Karabournaki) and Kissos, according to Strabo (VII, 21), constitute the composing settlements of the new city. Although there is no indicative archaeological evidence, to get an idea of the structure and plan of the first phase, the most probable is that Thessaloniki was planned with the right-angled "gridiron", an already generalized and universal way of planning, as it is proved by the hippodamian form of Pella's expansion in the same period. This expansion was made by the same king, Kassandros, as a part of his total building program, as mentioned before. Vicker pointed out in Thessaloniki's town-planning of the Turkish domination period, a declination of the roads east to St Sophia, in relation to the other urban structure of the city. He argues that this small part of the right-angled streets, could be the first core of the hellenistic phase. Nevertheless, this theory is only a hypothesis supported by no findings. Such indications are dated to the next roman phase, in which there are foundations buildings on different axes. However, none of the finds, that have come to light by now, includes any remains of the classical or hellenistic phase. These elements are possibly lost for ever, since the various phases succeed each other on this same site until today, and this means that the remains of the first phase or phases are destroyed and vanished in a city of 2310 years of continuous life. The road network, as well as the various particular centres and parts-religious, civic, commercial, habitation areas e.t.c - that are first planned to function in a city, usually remain as the constant reference points to the next building phase with few exceptions or differentiations. Thus, we shall not very much fail, if we assume this spatial continuity for Thessaloniki, since we are led to this conclusion by the posterior building phase - the roman one - which reveals more important archaeological data. The last theory of my colleague Mr Velenis about the limitation of the first phase of the city in the intra muros area, but only above the modern Kassandrou or Aghiou Demetriou street, I think, meets with the following thoughts: the earth configuration which is intensely inclined, right above the suggested streets, and properly formed for habitation, however not for public sites - civic and commercial, market (Agora), religious buildings e.t.c. On the other hand, in the already mentioned urban planning model of Antiquity, locations are selected with flat grounds for the public and religious buildings (the "isadion" = the flat ground in the middle of the settlement or the so-called "mesochori"). Consequently, we should rather accept the identification, more or less, of the roman and hellenistic agora (market-forum), which complies with the planning model. Also, as far as the

large stretching of the city is concerned - 200 hectares according to Velenis - surpassing even Pella, there will be no problem, if we accept that the perimeter of Thessaloniki's walls remains firm from the beginning. There is no need for the wall-surrounded area to be full of buildings from the very beginning, since we have examples, like that of Maroneia in Thrace, where the *wastelands*, that is the unbuilt areas *intra muros* very much surpass the built ones. The conception of Thessaloniki, as an urban centre and an important junction for international communications, seems to have the good fortune to allocate the necessary and right spatial dimensions from its birth, dimensions which served the life of the city until the industrial revolution of the 19th century. Since 1869 and after, the intensity of the new era is spilled outside the historical fortification with the demolition of a part of the walls, so the city stretches to the east and west and promptly expands ever since.

Let us go back to Antiquity, to examine the fundamental centres of the city functions, as we know them with some spatial clarity from the Roman period (after the year 168 b. C.). The forum (agora-market) includes various sites - open-air or not - arranged in successive terraces in the so-called "closed" town-planning formation of the ancient cities, as similar examples from Pella, Philippi or the cities of Asia Minor show. This formation includes successively escalated squares, the lowest of which is, the so-called in the Byzantine Era, *megalorofos* (=big floor), at the south side of which the monumental gate was located, decorated with the familiar statues *Las Incantadas* (=the "bewitched", according to the castelian dialect), above Egnatias Street. This square, connected with the Egnatias street with a staircase, being on a higher level, must have been the largest in dimensions (230x150m.). The next square, on a higher level, was smaller in dimensions, 145x90m. These squares were, of course, built up in porticoes (stoa) with the familiar colonnades, as it is proved by the name of "chalkeftiki stoa", referred in the later book of St Demetrius Miracles (P.G. 116, 1176) and moreover two others named *Cryptoporticus*. One of these stoa was located at the north side of the lowest square, and the other was found in the yard of the Church of Panaghia Chalkeon. Next to these two squares the formation of space in terraces was continued northwards, to the church of St Demetrius, with other important functions and constructions, like theatre, library, stadium, gymnasium and baths. The larger area of the centre is today defined by the streets: *Selefkidon*, *Aghiou Demetriou*, *Aghiou Nicolaou* and *Kassandrou*; the forum, that is the main market, during the Roman period was enclosed by the modern streets *Olympou* and *Egnatias* (or *Via Regia* or *Maximus Decumanus* of the Romans). East to the Forum was revealed the theatre-odeion, which was completed in the first decades of the 3rd century a.D., when the character and function of the whole market place was established.

The religious centre of the city is developed west to the Forum and might be bounded on the ground enclosed by the modern streets: *Kassandrou* (north), *I. Dragoumi* (east),

Egnatias (south) and Dioeketeriou (west). On the crossing of the streets Krystalle and Dioeketeriou, a stylobate of an ionic temple has come to light, which either existed before the foundation of Thessaloniki, either was carried on the spot from elsewhere. In Dioeketeriou street is also located the Serapeion, which will comprise the religious core, together with the other worships, like those of Isis, Osiris, Arpoerates, Anoubis, the God in the highest, e.t.c., as inscriptions found in this area prove. This religious centre will lose its uniqueness only during the period of the Tetrarchy (end of the 3rd century a. D.), when Thessaloniki will have a radically new town-planning expansion eastwards with the design and creation of the Galerian cluster.

The Galerian cluster is a big unified group of buildings, which will cover the whole east part of the city up to the "Theodosian walls", from the sea (south), to the height, more or less, of the modern Olympou street (north), and Arrianou street (west). It was skeduled and designed in a short period of time (305-311 a. D.), as two fundamental unities - religious northwards with Rotunda and civic - cultural southwards, with the Hippodrome and the Palace. Separating boundaries are the Egnatia's Street and the triumphal arch (Kamara) of Galerius. The new religious core is located on a higher level to the north of Egnatia in an enclosure, where the heavy roman building of the Rotunda dominates; the destination of the latter is not yet absolutely clear: mausoleum, Pantheon or the temple of Kaveiron, it still remains an object for further research and hypotheses. The palace together with the octagonon and the gorgeous chambers and the other private and public grounds, occupy the space south to Egnatia, and together with the Hippodrome near the east wall, compose the secular part of the imperial cluster of Galerius. Both of these parts - religious and secular - constitute the expansion of the city eastwards, without its urban structure or the orientation of the new buildings, in relation to the old existing ones, to be functionally interrupted or differentiated. Important role plays in the connection of the "old" and th "new" town the construction of the Galerius arch (or tetrapylon=arch with four gates). It connects the Rotunda with the palace (axis North - South), as well as the existing urban cluster with the new imperial one, since the Egnatia's street is extended through it (axis West - East). Thus, the structure of the city remains unified in spite of the intense monumentality of the architectural forms of the Galerian cluster, which would have possibly composed the obvious difference in Thessaloniki of the 4th century a. D. Another remark could be made for the planning of the Hippodrome, which is more related to the palace and less to the core of the city. The model palace - Hippodrome is introduced by Diocletian (e. g. in Nicomedia, Antioch) and continued by Galerius in Thessaloniki and the other Emperor Maximian in Milan. Interesting is also the location of the Hippodrome, with its axis from North to South, opposed to the ground inclination, in order



not to interrupt the town-planning continuity of the Palace and the Rotunda. Additionally, this huge construction aimed to occupy less remaining building space *intra muros*.

Until the time of Theodosius the Great (379-395 a. D.), that the city possibly gets the definite form of its walls' contour, another important town-planning intervention is the artificial port at the west edge of the city, attributed to Constantine the Great. With this construction the commercial activity seems to be transferred to this side. The old port of Thessaloniki remained in secondary function.

The coming of Christianity, which here was very early signalled by the visit of apostle Paul in the 1st cent. A. D., means for the "hippodamian" cities, like Thessaloniki, a drastic and opposed to the rational "gridiron" differentiation of the town-planning network. In this steady by now trapezoid form of the city walls, finalized according to one ninemetres inscription on a tower of the east walls by Ormisdas: "...Ormisdas executed this city with unbreakable walls...", a rational overturning of the orthogonal town-planning system, till existing in the 4th cent. a. D., takes place. It is completely abolished, in some central points, by the invasion of the building complexes of Early-Christian basilicas and the monasteries' *metochia* during the next byzantine phase. The phenomenon does not, of course, refer only to Thessaloniki, but also to all the b. C. urban centres assaulted with the passion of pressure by the building structures of Christianity. Thus, these new building structures convert the hellenistic and roman organization into a mixture of the rationalism of the period b. C. and the theocracy of the Byzantine Era. However, Thessaloniki is a characteristic example of the constancy of a large urban centre from the Antiquity till the end of the Middle Ages and after. The city is obviously marked by the effects not only of the financial-social but also the ideological parameters of each era, as far as the formation of the town-planning network and the architecture of the buildings are concerned. The "invasion" of the christian religious monuments timidly begins in the 4th cent., it becomes a triumphant erection in the 5th, and yet a steady location of churches, small and large, and monastery complexes as well, in the following centuries, until the Turkish conquest in 1430 a. D. I note here an indication only of the number of churches and monasteries, which are built according to the written evidence and the archaeological finds in the site of the fortified city, from the 4th to the 15th cent. a. D: four churches in the 4th, four churches in the 5th, three churches in the 6th, three churches in the 7th, one church in the 8th, seven churches in the 9th, four churches and two monasteries in the 10th, four churches and one monastery in the 11th, three churches and four monasteries in the 12th, two churches and four monasteries in the 13th, ten churches and twenty nine monasteries and *metochia* in the 14th and finally five churches and four monasteries in the 15th century.

Thus, fifty small and large churches and forty monasteries and metochia are totally built on the city ground in a period of one thousand years.

These monuments, if we only judge by the most important of them, which are nowadays preserved (St Demetrius, Achiropoitos [Mother of God], St Sophia, Panaghia of Chalkeon [Mother of God], St Panteleimon, St Apostles, St Aechaterini [Catherine], St Nicholas Orphanos, Soteras [Saviour], the Vlatadon Monastery, Prophet Elias) show that, both with their massive appearance and location in an already existing urban space and network, make essential and drastic changes. The excavations and investigations in the area of St Sophia give several evidence for the changes and modifications of the existing road network (declination of the foundations direction of the Early-Christian basilica from the orthogonal system, abolition of some roads, so that the huge Early-Christian complex of the Basilica, the Baptisterion, the Martyrdom, the Bishop's palace [Episcopeion] and other buildings to be constructed. A relevant formation is valid for St Demetrius and the Achiropoitos as well, and, naturally, for all the other religious buildings and complexes. This new conception for the organized urban structure and architecture will compose the firm and general rule for both the existing and the new town-planning complexes of Byzantium. In Thessaloniki, the above referred conception will reach a characteristic exaltation and completion, particularly in the Middle and Late-Byzantine phase, periods in which the city completely loses its unified, public character and the inhabitants cease to be citizens in the ancient-greek meaning, remaining absent from the public sites of the market. Now, the population is grouped together and express itself particularly through parishes. At the same time, the urban space is organized according to this new "theocratic" structure. The large number of the referred churches and monastery complexes are not anymore placed among a strict or loose "hippodamian" gridiron. They freely occupy the urban space of Thessaloniki creating closed building unities, yards, gardens, unbuilt grounds and enclosures. From the interesting description that exist in a record of Iveron Monastery, referring to the rights of the monastery property, like the Leontia's metochi of St Basil's Monastery (in Kapsalou site), St Clement's monastery in the area of the "St Theodore neighbourhood", St Barbara's monastery in the site of the Hippodromion, St Nicholas' monastery "in the site of the eastside-wall" e.t.c. (all these buildings are located in the urban space of the city), the new town-planning and form of medieval Thessaloniki is clearly revealed. If we wanted to define the character of this organization, we would certainly say that, on the basis of the description of these complexes, it is radically differentiated from the previous greek-roman organization, as far as the regularity, the right angles, the optic flights or the axes of symmetry and parallelism are concerned. On the contrary, now slackness and freedom prevail about the location and formation of the buildings (mass) and the free (unoccupied) grounds of a town-planning unity, as well. Nevertheless, at the same time, the

hierarchy of buildings, the spreading of volumes according to floors and sizes, and the interchange of the built - unbuilt areas, are clear with vividness and variety. The above referred characteristics (slackness-freedom e.t.c.) have led distinguished investigators of the Byzantine city and architecture to formulate the almost decisive point of view, that there is a complete absence of design, in the sense that the Byzantines had so far lost the ability of organizing their urban area. Moreover, it is stated that they have (even worse) betrayed any aesthetic sensitivity and connection with the town-planning and architectural experience of Antiquity. For, the so far preserved architectural monuments of Thessaloniki, as well as the byzantine architecture have got harmony and architectural grace and aesthetic value. Consequently, it is necessary to note here that it would be an unheard-of "contradiction" to have important architectural words, located however and dominating in an environment without town-planning design. Thus, in the frame of this "contradictory" image that comes out from such a speculation, I shall try to outline another point of view, which interprets differently the inner determinism of this new way of town-planning design in the period of the intense medieval religiousness. First of all, is it a contradiction or are appearances rather deceptive? What are these forces which act during the Byzantine period in the city of Thessaloniki for example, and alter its town-planning network from the hippodamian structure into a new irregular or disordered structure? Is this a lack of sensitivity and an organizing disability? Nevertheless, in the society of Thessaloniki exist formulated rules and town-planning regulations about matters of protection from fire, wind or humidity and about psychological matters as well, such as the right of view and other particular refined demands. These regulations are all included in the second book, title b', "About innovations" of the famous "Exavivlos" of the jurist from Thessaloniki C. Armenopoulos (1345 a. D.). So, is it possible to maintain that such a society is not able to plan towns and lay out streets?

A similar interpretation which, as already mentioned, has been supported by eminent researchers (like W. Müller-Wiener and Ch. Bouras) seems practically wrong. In the byzantine urban organization the town-planning thought and ability of sensitivity are not absent but here dominates a different conception of space from the respective one of the hippodamian city, to which compared it is inevitably rejected as disordered, irregular or chaotic.

The organization of space in Byzantium, as far as architecture and town-planning are concerned, is not anymore characterized by the geometrical regularity of the Classical and Hellenistic periods. It rather reaches the structure of the Greek-geometric and Archaic periods, where research has used similar conceptions and thoughts to interpret the town-planning clusters, characterizing them as irregular and disordered, if not chaotic. Both periods - the Greek-archaic and the Byzantine- are characterized by the same determinism springing from the similar cosmotheoretical conception (ideology): in both dominates the absolute and

theocentric notion about space, where the regular, geometrical relation of the open and occupied grounds - buildings and free space - obeys to the logic of serving the divine-religious structures. In the light of this absolute and not related (=the geometrically regular interrelation of elements in space) conception of space, a new organizing structure of laying out decades of churches, monasteries and metochia is created in Thessaloniki. Of course, this new structure dissolves the gridiron of the hippodamian city, putting in its place a different conception: the spreading of volumes according to storeys and sizes, the interchange of the built - unbuilt sites, without uniformity and neutrality but with alterations, optic surprises and individuality. In the part and the whole - of the building or cluster and the city - are detected parallel and corresponding formations. Obvious are the escalation, the interchange, the variety and the dynamism of buildings - secular and religious. Nevertheless, they are not included in regular or geometrical frames, consequently they divert from the pre-existing street layout (or town-planning).

The Turkish conquest of Thessaloniki in 1430 a. D. does not essentially change this structure. It only adds to the image of the city a large number of mosque minarets giving, in this way, a more vertical element of theocratic conception and spatial order.

We have briefly examined the course of a large historical city, which, with its constant life as a live and important urban centre, becomes an example of great value to study the successive conceptions of town-planning organization on the greek site. For, this conception, appearing in every period of time in the town-planning area of the city, is not formed apart from the more general notion and thought structure related to space. Thus, let me conclude this brief suggestion (or paper) by outlining the greek-classical conception of space on a philosophical basis:

If we go back to the general theoretical conception about space in two remoted periods of time, the pre-hippodamian Greek and the Byzantine we shall observe parallel formulations: in the Greek-archaic period, the conception of space first appears in the text of the greek theology of that time, the "Theogony", written by Hesiodus, in the word "chaos"= this is not disorder but the mould of all possible organizational structures and categories of order. Later on, it is clearly defined by the Pythagorians in the conception of "vacuum", which is space among numbers. It provides the independence of numbers before even the greek thought had given the spatial relation of numbers to each other *mutatis mutandis* the relation of buildings and their dividing space, if we transfer this law of vacuum and number to the field of town-planning. The conception of "vacuum" is also identified with that of the "boundless spirit", "πνεύματος ἀπειρου", that is the meaning of space in its catholic and absolute conception, such as space or universe containing all and being dominated by the divine power. Conceptions of this type are also found in the philosophical thought of the Byzantine period.

as in the works of N. Blemmydes. He also identifies the "vacuum" with "a space lacking body" extending this conception to the same catholic and absolute sense of "Universe" (=everything): "universe therefore, that is cosmos, and all about it, that is everything above cosmos, is filled with God. This was called the vacuum (=space) ..."

It is obvious, I think, that in both periods, the conception of space is characterized by the absolute and general sense or the universality of the divine, which does not yet permit the rationalism of the Classical and Hellenistic periods. In those periods the afore conception, with Plato, Aristotle and Theophrastus, is included in a relation system of regular - geometrical nature as "the order and position" of bodies in between them, conception which defines with the orthogonal "gridiron" the interrelation of buildings and free space in the so-called "hippodamian" town-planning complexes. Thus, we come from the absolute to the ancient-Greek relative space in both the philosophy and the town-planning.

The Byzantine period seems to be possessed by the same absolute, theocentric space notion of the Archaic period: so, it sacrifices the already existing in the cities from the Antiquity geometrical organization to the needs and demands of a society with an intense conception about the divine. In such a society the orthogonal gridiron cannot be an obstacle, so it fades away for the laying out of decades of churches, monasteries and metochia, which are built, for example, in the urban area of Thessaloniki, as we have seen. St Basil the Great (330-379) had already stated in a very early period the removal of such an organization: "Geometry, after all, and mathematics and stereometry, the legendary astronomy and the busy vanity, which aim do they take us to?"

As a conclusion, I would like to underline this fundamental characteristic of the theocentric town-planning, that is the domination of the absolute space conception, which leads to the grouping of the building clusters in a different way from that of the "anthropocentric" town-planning with the rational geometry of the "gridiron". This, of course, does not mean that the former has a lack of organizing or designing ability. Additionally, it should be underlined here that the rest of the experience from Antiquity, referring to the physiological and psychological parameters of living, which are the ontology and not the morphology of the town-planning action, survives in this geographical area without interruption during the Byzantine period. The "Exavivlos" of the jurist author from Thessaloniki C. Armenopoulos, with its town-planning provisions, gives us the right to state that Thessaloniki is a city, on the body of which are applied the essential selections of the town-planning design of the whole greek history.