

University of Thessaly
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Course: Place Marketing

**Expressions of Creativity in the Landscape and
the Role of Place Marketing:
The Regional Unity of Magnesia, Greece**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The notion of **creativity** and the analysis of **senses** have high impact on the perception of **landscape** and the promotion of place through **place marketing and place branding** procedures

The factors of creativity, sensoryscape and place marketing are analysed aiming at the quest of place identity that combine expressions of creativity, while sensoryscapes emerge

The research focuses on the analysis of such **‘creative sensory milieus’ in Magnesia, Greece** investigating: a) how creative activities can contribute to the **sensorial perception of a landscape**, and b) how the interaction between sensoryscapes and creative activities can be turned into an advantage for the **promotion of a place identity**

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II. CREATIVITY AND PLACE

Scholars, professionals and theorists have been debating over the notion of creativity through the years covering diverse fields. The most interesting theories involved the notion that embodies **structured space, urban centres and urban economies**

The '**creative city**' paradigm focused on creativity and creative thinking on the urban challenges that had to be resolved, according to Landry. Theory aimed at the development of a **creative milieu**, fostering peoples' talent and creativity

Florida's more 'classy' creative theory was engaged with the emergence of the **creative class**, stating that its attraction and maintenance in a place can bring urban development, rising many challenges

The **main criteria** that are mostly taken into account in the definition of a creative environment, resulting in a more **holistic approach** of the qualities that a creative environment should have:

1. Leadership and Vision
2. Diversity and Expressiveness
3. Tolerance, Participation and Collaboration
4. Education and Research
5. Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology
6. Authenticity and Cultural Assets
7. Networking and Place Promotion
8. Quality of Life and Environmental Awareness

III. LANDSCAPE AND SENSES

Landscape - the region, which is perceived by **people**, and whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors

The concept of landscape contains not only physical, but also perceptual dimensions

People experience landscape in a holistic, **multi-sensory way**, using not only their vision, but also other non-visual senses

Lynch referred to the **sensory city** as the heart of the lived experience, while in other disciplines phenomenological approaches have reinforced the sensory elements in shaping landscape

In this paper we focus on the **sensory landscapes** -that exist only through human perception of the general environment of a place- and specifically about: a) **sightscape** (visual landscape),
b) **soundscape** (acoustic landscape) and
c) **smellscape** (olfactory landscape)

The three senses examined (vision, hearing, olfactory) don't require physical contact with the object

Research has been conducted with various approaches. The methodological approach largely depends on the way researchers decide to analyse the perception of the environment

Many researchers have suggested sensorymaps based on the human perception of the sensory environment in order to visualize the objective and subjective data

Sightscape: research deal with **landscape character assessment** (land-use map) and **landscape preference**

Focus on identifying preferences for different types of landscapes in terms of responses to physical features

Soundscape (Schafer, 1969): soundscape research explores the contribution of sounds to place identities and landscape perception

Soundwalks: walks conducted individually or in groups where participants are asked to listen and evaluate the acoustic environment

Narrative interviews: method often used when the researcher has limited knowledge providing qualitative data about the participants' understanding of the acoustic environment

Smellscape (Porteous, 1985): research in order to address the **sociocultural connections** between smell and place by employing surveys, carrying out smellwalks and conducting content analysis through literature that deals with how smell is depicted

IV. PLACE MARKETING, CREATIVITY, LANDSCAPE AND IDENTITY

Place marketing as a form of strategic planning of the image of the place (landscape) can generate a **strong place identity**

Landscape is the basis of the interpretation and the formation of place identity and the final provided good in the process of place marketing

Thus the discovery of place identity can create a **new sensory landscape experience** and place marketing can create and manage **sensory associations between the people and the place**

The visual emphasis in place marketing procedures is a reality. Other senses can provide different but important information regarding the place experience, which could provide a real point of difference in related place marketing effort. However, **senses other than sight have been largely ignored** in place marketing academic discussions

During the previous decades place marketing and place branding had a strong relationship with the **creative city debate**

Cultural branding, through major interventions, defined place identity and attracted residents, visitors or investors

After the hard-branding of the city, came the marketing of the **‘creative city’ label** with the engagement of the components of the new economy in urban places at a local dimension, supporting participatory methods and focusing on the authenticity of the place

The overall aim was to construct a **creative identity or atmosphere** in order to attract people/businesses for urban development or to establish the **authentic identity of the place**

The strongest elements and links between creativity and landscape are people and place

Place's inhabitants are not only observants but also creative activators.

People generate creative landscapes, through public and human activities

If the landscape is perceived as a **living organism** that evolves constantly, changes in the upcoming sensory effect and the overall atmosphere of the place mainly depend on the ability of the landscape to absorb permanent changes and adapt to new conditions

Creativity is strongly linked to this evolution, stemming from the human capital and engaging to social and cultural contexts

Thus, the creative identity of a place can be defined as the **sensorial expression of creative activities that its inhabitants produce and the place supports**, along with the basic qualities that a creative landscape should have

V. RESEARCH AREA AND METHODOLOGY

The study is limited to the **Regional Unit of Magnesia**, and specifically in the selected landscapes of the settlements of **Old Village of Alonissos** Island, **Agios Lavrentios** and **Anavra** and the urban centre of **Volos** that display creative characteristics/activities in sensoryscapes



These landscapes have been selected because of their differentiations along with the unique creative characteristics/activities that manage to establish a **strong place image**



Aim:

investigate how creative activities can contribute to the sensory perception of a landscape and how the interaction between sensory landscapes and creative activities can be turned into an advantage for the promotion of a place's identity

Originality:

-it is the first time that creativity and landscape have been approached through the senses, proposing the introduction of these combined notions as part of the research into places;

-a new dimension of place branding is proposed, including the creative sensoryscapes, that is derived from the interaction between the landscape and the expressed creativity.

Research questions:

1. How is creativity expressed in place?
2. Can creativity influence the sensory landscape, leading to specific sensoryscapes?
3. Can the area of a place, or the number of creativity criteria, influence the dynamic of a sensoryscape?
4. Can specific creativity criteria be related to specific sensoryscapes?
5. How do creative sensory landscapes contribute to place marketing and branding procedures?

METHODOLOGY:

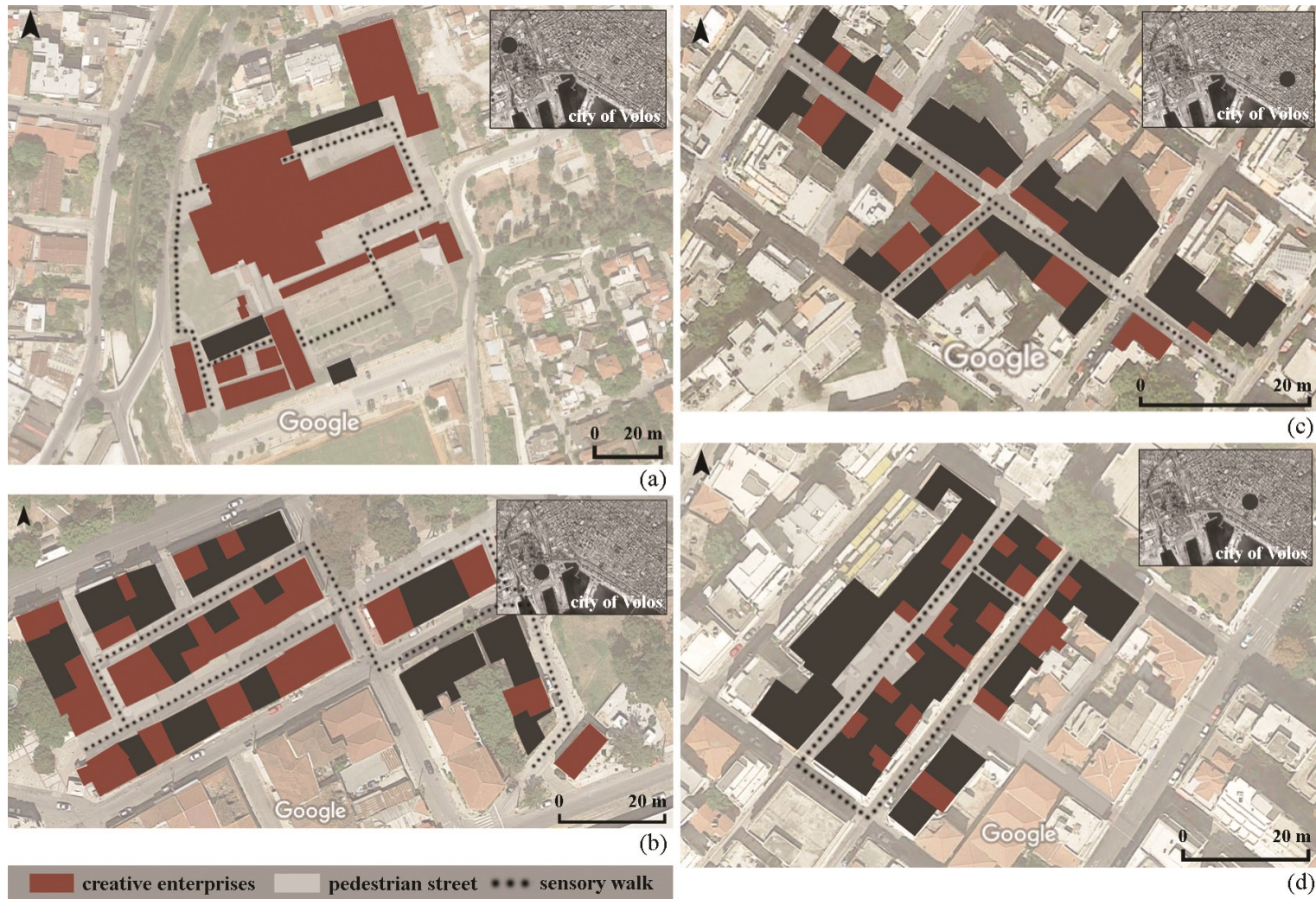
combines observational analysis and semi-structured/ narrative interviews for the selected settlements and semi-structured/ narrative interviews and questionnaires in Volos and observational analysis and sensorywalks in selected urban areas

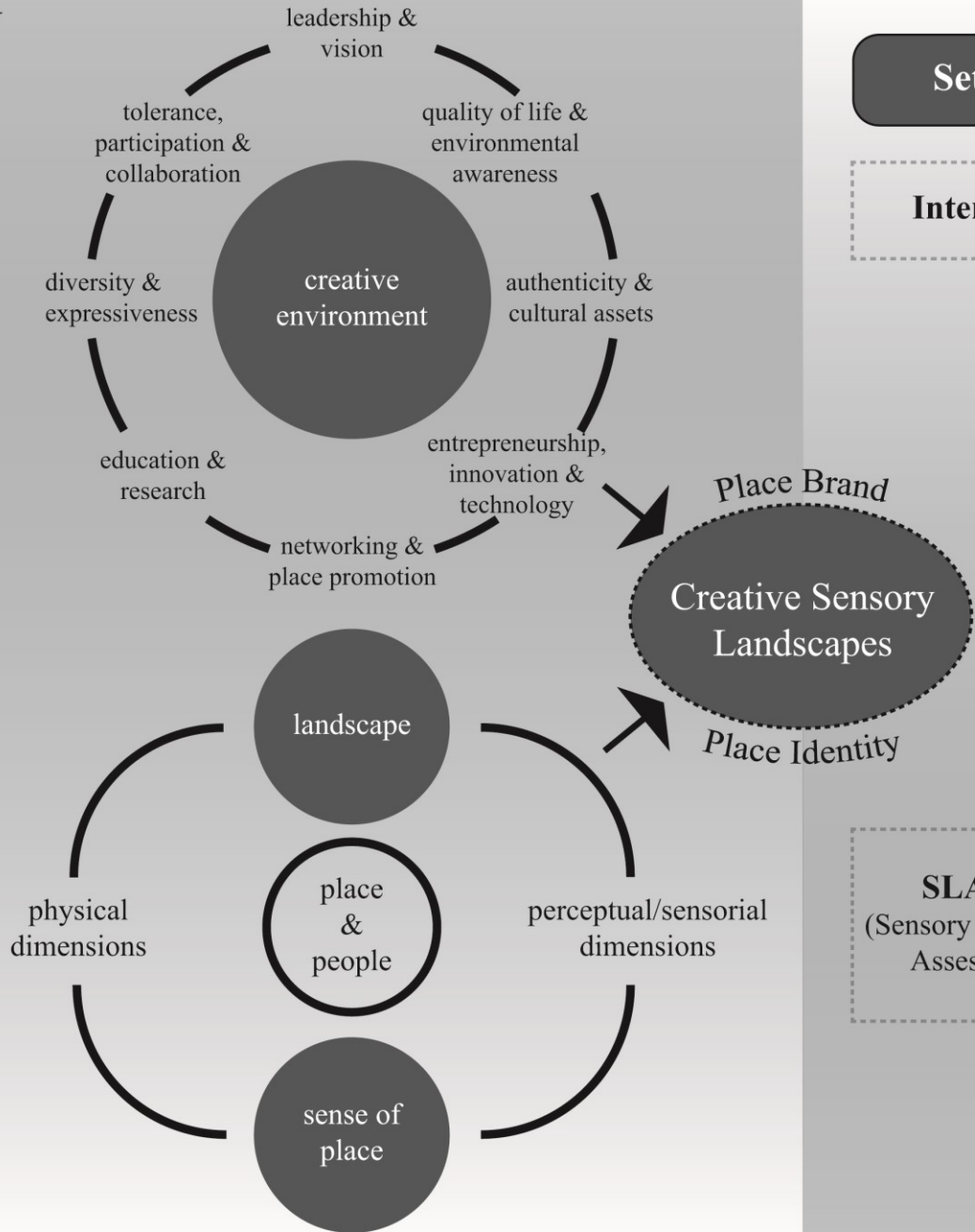
Observational Analysis - Sensory Landscape Assessment (SLA):

combines various data, defined whether they come from nature or human activities and separated by the three studied senses (vision, hearing and olfaction). The assessment is completed in situ through walks, along specific routes and mostly in the centre of the settlements/ selected urban areas

Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI): done with people who represent organisations of the settlements and Volos, based on two criteria: a) whether they can contribute in the understanding of the creative identity of the place and b) whether their creative activity affects the sensoryscape

Sensorywalks: done with creative professionals from selected urban areas, in order to describe the creativity, the sensory landscape and their relationship, as well as the interest of the professionals from the area to cooperate in order to promote and strengthen local creativity





Settlements

Interviews

Volos

Interviews
Questionnaires

4 specific urban areas

SLA tool
(Sensory Landscape Assessment)

SLA tool
Sensory Walks



VI. RESEARCH ANALYSIS

Settlements

OLD VILLAGE - ALONNISOS ISLAND

Population: 208 residents (2011), altitude: 250m, location: Aegean Sea/Sporades

SLA

Visual data: settlement, traditional architecture, undulating topography, no road network, paths, people, donkeys, mules and horses, churches

Acoustic data: speech, footsteps, donkey, mule and horse steps

Olfactory data: homemade food and pastries, flowers

SSI

Distinctive characteristics: preservation of the traditional character

The Old Village of Alonissos Island is a special case where the settlement was reoccupied after abandonment during the 1990s and currently is thriving in the summer season due to tourism

Nevertheless the settlement preserved the tradition and authenticity in the built environment (buildings and networks), the events organized (e.g. representation of traditional marriage) and the local gastronomy

sightscape



Factors that contributed in the conservation of tradition:

- team spirit and collaboration
- volunteerism
- tolerance towards new and not local residents
- environmental awareness
- characterisation as a traditional settlement

Sensoryscape:

- **images:** stone, old renovated houses, ruins, Castle, panoramic view, colorings from flowers
- sounds: air, birds, speech, petals of horses used for supplying shops
- smells: clean air, wild and aromatic herbs, cinnamon and vanilla from pastries, barbeque



AGIOS LAVRENTIOS - MOUNT PELION

Population: 273 residents (2011), altitude: 600m, location: Eastern Magnesia

SLA

Visual data: settlement, traditional architecture, undulating topography, no road network, paths, people, dogs and horses, forest, square, fountains

Acoustic data: singing, musical instruments, speech, water, air

Olfactory data: clean air-mountain

SSI

Distinctive activity: International Music Community ‘Music Village’ (MV)

- Special music event organized every August for the past 11 years
- One of the most wide open artistic communities in Europe, bringing together artists across the world in a cultural cross-breeding
- During the event the landscape is transformed into a soundscape, unique for Greece
- Starting from the MV, the settlement and its residents (permanent or temporary) created a series of music activities, during the whole year

soundscape



Factors that contributed in the development of MV:

- the initiatives of the original organizers, networking
- the complex social structure of the settlement
- the support of the event from the locals and the tolerance and acceptance of the diversity
- uniqueness of the character of the event
- landscape preservation
- media promotion

Sensoryscape:

- images: stone, paths, central square, Vafini square, musicians
- **sounds:** mostly from musical instruments, singing and natural sounds
- smells: nature and local food

ANAVRA - MOUNT OTHRIS

Population: 584 residents (2011), altitude: 780m, location: Western Magnesia

SLA

Visual data: settlement, undulating topography, springs, forage farming land, meadow, pigs and cows, provincial roads, square

Acoustic data: water, air

Olfactory data: clean air-mountain, animals, springs, barbeque

SSI

Distinctive characteristics: Environmental Park (EP), Wind Park (WP), Animal Breeding Parks (ABP)

Since 1990 Anavra transformed the landscape of the settlement and its environment, improving the quality of life of the residents and achieving the rise of the population, reversing the tendency of shrinking population in the Greek countryside

The projects involved an environmental park where educational activities happened along with the display of traditional activities, a wind park and animal breeding parks, where biological meat is produced in modern facilities. A district heating supply is expected



smellscape

Factors that contributed in the development of the Parks:

- leadership
- vision
- novel and technological ideas
- EU funds and the absorption from the municipality-unusual for the Greek region
- team spirit, collaboration

Sensorscape:

- images: natural environment, green spaces, virgin landscape
- sounds: running water, animals, birds, speech, children playing
- **smells:** clean air, trees, soil, animals, barbeque, running water

Volos

Elements that compose the creative identity of Volos:

- **the natural and cultural landscape of the area**
- **the diversity of collectives and cultural and sports associations**
- **the presence of social solidarity groups, volunteering groups and groups with intense environmental initiative**
- **the presence of research, artistic and sports activities**
- **the local products**
- **the cooperation** of the city's enterprises with the city's collectives and their **participation** in different kinds of events
- **the rare participation of the residents in the events and the collectives**

Volos society is not distinguished by diversity and expressiveness, participation or cooperation

Volos should further develop entrepreneurship, research and education, cooperation networks, place's promotion

No particular associations were identified between the overall creative identity of the city and the sensory landscape → identify specific urban areas

Tsalapatas Complex

An old Brickworks Factory in Volos, which ceased its operation in 1978 and became a derelict area with no use, was subsequently turned into a cultural area, highlighting the city's historical identity and contributing to the preservation and promotion of its industrial heritage

Creative identity: the natural landscape and the cultural heritage, the quality and tranquillity of the place, the sense of countryside and the private initiatives that take place (e.g. theatrical productions, music concerts, films and festivals)/ the Tsalapatas complex displays all the creativity criteria but it is mainly characterised by **leadership and vision, authenticity and cultural assets, quality of life and environmental awareness and entrepreneurship**

Creative sensory landscape:

Images: factory building and historic elements (e.g. the wagons, the chimneys and the bricks)

Sounds: natural sounds, birds singing, the rustling of leaves, the voices of children playing and the conversation from customers during the restaurants' working hours

Smells: grass, trees, aromatic plants and food



Palatia

Part of the historic centre of Volos and originally the traditional shopping centre of the city, with workshops and crafts shops/ The area was pedestrianised during the 1990s, and since then, land use has changed from residence and commerce to entertainment, due to the opening of restaurants, tavernas, 'tsipouradika' (tavernas offering seafood and the traditional drink of the region 'tsipouro'), bars and nightclubs

Creative identity: the sense of neighbourhood, the autonomous and district identity enhanced by its participants, the criterion of entrepreneurship through gastronomy and creative activity/ all the creativity criteria, apart from education and research are present/ other creativity criteria that mainly appear in the area are **leadership and vision, diversity and expressiveness, and authenticity and cultural assets**

Creative sensory landscape:

Images: people

Sounds: people's conversations, laughter, music, mechanical sounds from traffic and machinery

Smells: aromas of the delicacies of 'tsipouradika' and tavernas, smells from productive processes (burning wood), sewers, exhausts



Taki Oikonomaki

A centre of residence and formerly an area with commercial properties/ From 2011 onwards, the area was mainly developed based on the opening of cafés and bars

Creative identity: spatial centrality but a quiet neighborhood, daily entertainment with an ‘alternative’ character, creative enterprises with ‘artistic’ shop windows/ all the creativity criteria, apart from education and research and authenticity and cultural assets are present, but is characterized mainly by the creativity criterions of **entrepreneurship**, through entertainment and creative activity, **diversity and expressiveness, tolerance, participation and collaboration and networking and place promotion**

Creative sensory landscape:

Images: pedestrian street full of tables and chairs, people, artistic shop windows

Sounds: conversations, music

Smells: urban smells such as exhaust fumes and dust - not associated with creativity



Pavlou Mela

In the past, the wider area had a concentration of printing shops and publishing companies/ Since 2008, the area has been home to a cluster of creative companies in the fields of design, graphic design and manufacturing

Creative identity: creative enterprises, people who want to get involved and communicate with the neighbouring customers/ the area is mainly characterised by **entrepreneurship, innovation and technology**. Other creativity criteria that appear to a much lesser extent are **diversity and expressiveness and tolerance, participation and collaboration**

The creative characteristics of the Pavlou Mela area **do not enhance its sensoryscape**. The area seems not to have the basis to evolve in the creative field and thus, it is considered that it cannot have a dynamic creative sensory identity



Promotion of the Creative Sensory Identity

Old village of Alonnisos Island: inadequate promotion, even though the settlement's activities are supported through specific actions in Greece and abroad (e.g. special European and Greek TV programs, international tourism and gastronomy exhibitions)

Agios Lavrentios: sufficient promotion mainly through the organisers of the MV/ The creation of a website for the promotion of the musical-creative activities not associated with MV is essential

Anavra: adequate promotion since the purpose is to preserve the quality of life of the residents and not primarily, to attract tourists/ However, in the past the settlement was promoted both at national and international level by the media, emphasising its resilience against the Greek crisis

Volos:

- sufficient promotion but with potential for improvement, mainly done through the organisations' websites and social media, participation in exhibitions and famtrips
- in some cases the promotion is considered inadequate with the need to further promote and organise activities aimed primarily at the promotion of tourism, the disposal and sale of local products and the attraction of innovative enterprises
- need for a strategic marketing plan for the strengthening of the city's creative sensory identity

VII. DISCUSSION

The concepts of creativity and sensory landscape are **abstract and subjective**; hence everyone could potentially perceive them in a different way

It is not possible to deduce a solid theoretical relationship between them

Results that contribute towards the further understanding of the interaction between expressions of creativity and the senses present in the landscape, reflecting on the value of this case study for a wider geographical audience:

- almost **all creativity criteria** appear in the settlements and the specific urban areas of Volos
- only the criterion of **education and research** seems to be more difficult to identify, both in the settlements and in Volos, mainly due to its special nature
- **authenticity and cultural assets** do not seem to appear in purely urban areas which do not have a distinctive character

There are some **criteria** that seem to have a link with the **resulting sensoryscapes**:

- **leadership and vision** → responsible for the organised production of ambitious creative activities that affect the landscape and produce vibrant sensoryscapes (e.g. Agios Lavrentios, Anavra)
- **preservation of historic, architectural or industrial heritage** (related to the creativity criterion of authenticity and the cultural assets of a place) → ombined with the settlement of creative enterprises or the production of creative activities, it can lead to the development of strong sightscapes (e.g. Tsalapatas complex, Palaia, Old Village of Alonnisos Island)
- **production and distribution of traditional local products** (also related to the creativity criterion of authenticity and cultural assets through local gastronomy) → can enhance the smellscape of an area (e.g. Anavra, Old Village of Alonnisos Island, Volos)
- **special events** → affect the sensory landscape at the time when they take place (e.g. Agios Lavrentios, Old Village of Alonnisos Island)

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Creativity can be pointed out in different spatial units and can define local identity and landscape perception. Landscape can also be perceived by **senses** and all senses (not only the examined) are present in the landscape. Thus **human activities and place interventions**, creative or not, **change the sensory qualities of a place**

The research focused on the analysis of three ‘creative sensory milieus’ in Magnesia in order to discover the best practices in the Regional Unit and examine if this interaction between sensoryscapes and creative activities can be used for the **promotion of place identity**

1. How is creativity expressed in place?

- creativity is assumed to be expressed in different ways according to the **distinctive characteristics of the place**, its **evolution** through the years and the **activities** that people are engaged with in that specific place. **Thus, creativity largely depends on place, time and people**

2. *Can creativity influence the sensory landscape, leading to specific sensoryscapes?*
3. *Can the area of a place, or the number of creativity criteria, influence the dynamic of a sensoryscape?*
- the three landscapes can be classified as following:
 - The old village of Alonissos Island as a **sightscape**, with emphasis on the **authenticity** and the **maintenance of the traditional character of the village**;
 - Agios Lavrentios as a **soundscape** with emphasis on the **music events**;
 - Anavra as a **smellscape** with emphasis on the **natural environment**
 - this undoubtedly has to do with the size of the places studied, as in the case of the city what occur are a conglomeration of senses rather than the dominance of one specific sense, thus the rise of a specific sensoryscape

- Overall, in Volos, the researched areas produced distinct sensoryscapes:
 - the Tsalapatas complex is mostly identified by its **cultural heritage** and the **sense of countryside**;
 - the Palaia area by its **sense of neighbourhood**, the **gastronomic experience** there and the **autonomous element** that prevails;
 - the Taki Oikonomaki area by its **air of creativity and art**, along with the **youth culture**;
 - the Pavlou Mela area by the **creative enterprises in the field of design** which thrive there

Despite all this, **it is not possible to identify a particular sensory landscape in each area**, according to the three senses, as all the senses are curiously yet equally intermingled in their impact on the urban landscape

Interestingly, however, the areas of Tsalapata, the Palaia and Taki Oikonomaki, which display **multiple creativity criteria**, have **diverse and intense sensoryscapes**

On the contrary, the Pavlou Mela area shows **moderate sensory expressions**, in the urban landscape, due to the **lack of a multitude of creativity criteria**

4. Can specific creativity criteria be related to specific sensoryscapes?

- no specific theories can be identified
- there are some criteria from the research that appear to have a strong effect, on the rise of sensoryscapes

5. How do creative sensory landscapes contribute to place marketing and branding procedures?

- the creative elements or activities along with the sensory landscapes of the settlements and the areas of the urban centre of Volos, apart from the Pavlou Mela area, could act in a complementary way as **‘creative sensory poles’**, which **will activate different senses and attract different target groups** in order to establish a general sense of place in the researched region

- Old village of Alonnisos Island → **traditional character**
- Agios Lavrentios → **artistic musicians' haunt**
- Anavra → **natural environment**
- Tsalapatas complex → **cultural and sports activities**
- Palaia → **artistic and gastronomic character**
- Taki Oikonomaki → **artistic interventions for the alternative youth culture**

Thus, a new form of branding could be proposed based on the unique sensoryscapes that arise from the interaction between the landscape and the creative characteristics, or activities that exist or occur in a place featuring its unique identity