MEMORABLE IMPRESSIONS AS SIGNIFICANT DESCRIPTORS OF THE QUALITIES OF A HOUSE: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENTIAL QUALITIES OF THE TRADITIONAL HOUSE IN TETOVO

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ABSTRACT

North Macedonia's traditional houses have been extensively studied, including those in Tetovo, yet very little is known about the experiential qualities of the traditional house as sensed by its inhabitants. Since it is difficult to find a traditional house in Tetovo that is habitable today, the paper explored its experiential qualities through dwellers' memorable impressions as significant descriptors of the house's qualities. The research employed a qualitative approach to study inhabitants' memorable impressions and suggests that the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo are closely related to how the spatial properties of the house as a whole fulfil the inhabitants' multiple psychological and socio-cultural needs.

Keywords: memory, architecture, qualitative content analysis, traditional house, Tetovo

IMPRONTE DI MEMORIA QUALI DESCRITTORI SIGNIFICATIVI DELLE QUALITÀ DI UNA CASA: ESPLORARE LE QUALITÀ ESPERIENZIALI DELLA CASA TRADIZIONALE A TETOVO

SINTESI

Le case tradizionali della Macedonia del Nord in generale, e quelle di Tetovo nello specifico, sono state ampiamente studiate; ciononostante, si sa ancora molto poco sulle qualità esperienziali della casa tradizionale così come venivano percepite dai suoi residenti. Al giorno d'oggi, trovare una casa tradizionale in condizioni abitabili a Tetovo è difficile, pertanto l'articolo ha esplorato le relative qualità esperienziali attraverso le impronte di memoria degli abitanti quali significativi descrittori delle qualità della casa. Nella ricerca è stato impiegato un approccio qualitativo per studiare le impronte di memoria dei residenti che suggerisce che le qualità esperienziali della casa tradizionale a Tetovo sono strettamente legate al modo in cui le proprietà spaziali della stessa soddisfano i molteplici bisogni psicologici e socio-culturali dei suoi residenti.

Parole chiave: memoria, architettura, analisi qualitativa del contenuto, casa tradizionale, Tetovo

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INTRODUCTION

The spatial properties of the house become meaningful through inhabiting as its dwellers roam around, engaging all of their senses, in various psychological and socio-cultural contexts. The house qualities detected by the inhabitants, seen from their perspective as active actors in the physical realm of the house, are referred to in this paper as experiential qualities of the house. To show that exploring the experiential qualities of a house can reveal very intriguing and peculiar dimensions of a house's qualities, the traditional house in Tetovo is selected because, in ordinary conversations with older people in her family, the first author had detected how many significant and impressive house qualities were locked away in the memorable impressions of the inhabitants. Moreover, the traditional house in Tetovo and many cities of North Macedonia, as well as broader in the Balkans, have been studied extensively by many scholars, yet not from the inhabitants' perspective. Hence, investigating the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo might trigger further research into the experiential qualities of traditional houses, and houses generally, in other cities/countries.

The literature review in part one of this paper shows that the scope of studies on the traditional house in Tetovo and North Macedonia generally, considers the genealogy of traditional house types, describes and classifies their functional entities and properties, analyses their anthropomorphic measurements and proportional relations of the parts and the whole, the material used and constructive solutions etc., whereas only a few studies describe their experiential qualities. Even when the latter is done, studies present the traditional house's experiential qualities only as concerns its spatial configuration, paying little attention to how its inhabitants in different psychological and socio--cultural situations perceive it. Very little is known about the experiential qualities of the traditional house in North Macedonia as sensed by living in it. The paper will thus demonstrate how to explore the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo. Since finding a traditional house in an inhabitable state is difficult today, its experiential qualities are explored through its inhabitants' memorable impressions.

The olden days in Tetovo, as recalled by people aged 70 or higher through vivid stories, or people aged 50 –60 years through vague childhood memories, are remembered as hard times compared to today. Times characterised by unstable political and economic circumstances, the deprivation of many psychological and socio--cultural needs and rights (inequality in gender education and representation in public life, difficulties practising one's religion, limits on use of the native language in education and public institutions etc.), deficient health services, cities and villages with poor infrastructure, unsophisticated houses in terms of thermal and acoustic insulation, inventory, hygiene etc. Yet, surprisingly, the retrospective narrative is imbued with fascination and admiration whenever the narrator recollects how creatively these difficult circumstances were used to generate relatively optimum living conditions. The same enthusiasm is evident even when describing the qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo. The memorable impressions of individuals who have spent at least a few years living in a traditional house depict significant aspects of its experiential qualities. Therefore, the second part of this research elaborates on why memorable impressions hold the power to reveal important information, how experiences actually become memorable and why/how they affect the perception of the world generally and architecture in particular, and why memory should be understood and studied in architecture. The memory of a city/neighbourhood/house/place is not only important for providing information about the past, but also for shaping how the present is perceived and the future is imagined. Thus, in the same section, the approaches to architectural memory taken by certain domestic and international architects are briefly discussed to show how the research findings could be incorporated, interpreted and recreated in future designs.

A qualitative approach is adopted to study inhabitants' memorable impressions. In-depth interviews revealed that the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo entail sequences of inhabitants' actions across the house as they pursue their everyday activities and needs. The house is remembered as a spatial configuration, with particular physical properties that help fulfil or suppress inhabitants' various psychological and socio-cultural needs. However, through qualitative content analysis of dwellers' memorable impressions, two themes and ten subthemes that illustrate how the spatial configuration of the house as a whole and its physical properties met the inhabitants' multiple needs were extracted. The house's experiential qualities derived from memorable impressions are described in a general form so that they can be easily recreated and adapted to individuals' contemporary needs in different socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, they are complemented with quotes by the respondents and supporting theories from the fields of psychology, sociology and neuroscience, as well as illustrated with sketches and pictures for extensive elaboration.

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REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON THE TRADITIONAL HOUSE IN TETOVO

Tetovo has always been an important political, economic and socio-cultural centre in North Macedonia[1] and beyond. While it has existed since antiquity, not much is known about its urban structure until the end of the 18th century (Aleksievska, 1985; Ferati, 2011). In the late Ottoman period, Balkan urban architecture was described in the travelogue of a few passers-by as "shabby, dilapidated, and a fire hazard". However, in the 19th century a series of Ottoman authorities' decrees obliged the population to build houses from stone or brick (Marinov, 2017, 452), thereby generating a more time-resistant material culture. Right after World War II, upon the establishment of national republics under the umbrella of socialist Yugoslavia, this led Macedonian institutions and authorities, among others, to call on researchers to study and promote the features of the material culture of the past, and to help build the national image (Grabrijan, 1986; Elezi & Saliu, 2016; Marinov, 2017). Since then, in various studies, the traditional house in Macedonia, including Tetovo, often referred to as Macedonian "vernacular", "folk", "national", "popular" architecture, "architecture without architects" or "architecture with low levels of planning levels", has been presented as the embodiment of multifaceted qualities. Grabrijan (1986), Aleksievska (1985), Tomoski (1960), Čipan (1982) etc. appraise its masterful integration with the natural setting; its careful use of local natural resources as building materials and their adaptation to various climatic conditions; its flexible organisation of functional entities in the horizontal and vertical plane according to anthropometric measurements; the composition of its main volumetric shapes in an interesting play of solid and void; the use of decorative elements in its exterior and interior, as well as the atmosphere and multisensory experience provided by the house as a whole. Moreover, they acknowledge some characteristics of the traditional house in Macedonia as qualities that can easily be compared with those of Le Corbusier's or Adolf Loos' modernist designs. The timber-framed upper floor construction of the traditional house in Macedonia gives the same flexibility in the organisation of space, façade design and openings as Le Corbusier's free plan does. The distribution of the house's programme vertically, with utility and storage rooms on the ground floor while living spaces on the upper, is another similarity. Whereas the most praised feature shared by the Macedonian

and both Le Corbusier's and Loos' modern houses is the spatial plasticity of the exterior and interior. The gradual and sequential enlargement of the upper storeys with oriels and consoles results in exterior plasticity, while the interior plasticity is generated by the dynamism of movement across various levels of horizontal planes with different heights – "the plastic path" (Grabrijan, 1986, 81–86, 115, 129; Elezi & Saliu, 2014). Similarities between the traditional and modern house are also found in the use of anthropomorphic measuring units and in the proportional relations between the parts and the whole (Aleksievska, 1985). These similarities were often highlighted in subsequent studies, although authors have been greatly preoccupied in revealing the genealogy of the types of the traditional house in Macedonia – whether it involves an original mix of European and Oriental houses (Grabrijan, 1986), is pure Macedonian with roots in Greek archetypes (Tomoski, 1960), Slavic/Byzantine (Čipan, 1982), Balkan (Nikoloska, 2003) or Ottoman (Marinov, 2017).

The characteristics of the traditional house in Macedonia are revealed in the study of its spatial, physical and functional properties in various cities. In general, the traditional house in Tetovo is divided into two groups: houses situated in the Sharr foothills (Figure 1a), which mainly belong to the Christian and poorer Muslim community, and houses located in flat areas (Figure 1b) belonging to the ruling Muslim elite. Due to huge concentration, houses on steep terrain often occupy small areas of irregular shape. The frequent absence of a backyard and the arrangement in a row makes the house follow and be oriented towards the street. In contrast, the houses in the flat areas are freely distributed, closed to the street, and oriented towards spacious gardens. In both cases, the houses mostly contain one or two floors. The ground floor, usually of stone or rubble, is the service level. Its main space is an open porch called "hajat" or "trem" around which 2–4 rooms are arranged. The lateral rooms are used for storage and performing economic activities, sometimes also for keeping domestic animals. The hajat may be positioned in front of the rooms, in one of the corners or in the centre, and through it, a connection with the street in houses on steep terrain is established. Further, the straight, L- or U-shaped wooden stairs, which lead to the first floor, are usually located in the hayat or in front of it (Aleksievska & Voljinec, 2000). The timber-framed construction, with walls filled with wattle and earth/bricks, and the wooden beams covered with wooden planks, allows the first floor's volume to protrude over the main corpus of the ground floor, thereby widening the spaces for family living and receiving

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1   Before 2019, North Macedonia was called Macedonia. To allow easier reference to traditional heritage studies prior to 2019, in this text it will be referred to as Macedonia only.

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Figure 1a: Traditional houses on steep terrain, St. Goce Delcev, Tetovo (Photo: Aurora Saidi).

Figure 1b: A traditional house on flat terrain. The house of Mehmet Palloshi, Tetovo (retrieved from Kiprianovski & Trajkoska, 2007).

guests. The rooms are arranged around an open veranda called "çardak", which always has the best views of either the street or the garden. Its size varies but it is not uncommon for it to be larger than the rooms themselves. Due to its ventilation, it was also used for sleeping during the day and night. Therefore, special effort was made while shaping it, distinguishing it with different platforms according to the activity performed. The space for communication is on the same level as the rooms, the largest sitting area called "qyshk" (köşk in Turkish) is a stair or two higher, which might also be differentiated by another horizontal level on the height of benches called "minsofa". Later, in newer versions of these houses, the çardak could also be closed with large windows. On the other side, the rooms were not designed for any specific function; depending on the situation, they were adapted for daily activities or sleeping. Since the furniture was sparse, the presence of the fireplace – "oxhak" – in one corner and the built-in closets and the shower cabin – "hamam" – in one of the walls of Muslim houses, left the rest of the room free. Initially, the sitting and sleeping were arranged on low cushions, later transformed into cushioned benches – "minder" – arranged near the windows. One room was adapted as a kitchen in cases where it was

not located in the garden or on the ground floor, while one of the others was larger and served for receiving guests. It contained a greater amount of wood-carved decoration applied to the ceiling and built-in closets. In the Muslim elites' houses called "konak", there is a distinction between the quarters for receiving guests (*selamlik*) and those for women and family life (*haremlik*). Similarly, when present, it was organised on the second floor too, usually adapted for summer spaces and receiving guests. The roof is not very sharp, mainly four-sided with deep and overhanging eaves and covered with round tiles or slate. (Aleksievska & Voljinec, 2000; Marinov, 2017).

The aforementioned studies on the traditional house in Macedonia concentrate on identifying and classifying the house's physical and functional properties, disregarding or paying very little attention to its experiential qualities. Even when the latter are considered, such qualities are only examined for its spatial configuration as perceived by a few individual researchers/architects. Very little is known about the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Macedonia as perceived by its inhabitants by living in it. This paper therefore intends to explore the qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo as lived by its inhabitants, by those who have experienced the house's spatial qualities while moving inside with their body equipped with various sensory-motor capabilities in various psychological and socio-cultural circumstances. Not many traditional houses are left today in Tetovo. They have either been substituted by new ones or are uninhabitable. Still, one can find people who have lived in a traditional house for a few decades or less than one. The picture in their head might not describe the house as accurately as it was, but it certainly captures its most salient features and the most remarkable experiences they had there.

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Therefore, inhabitants' memorable impressions were used to explore the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo. The next section shows why memorable impressions hold the power to reveal important information, how experiences actually become memorable and why/how they affect the perception of the world generally and architecture in particular, and why memory should be understood and studied in architecture.

MEMORABLE IMPRESSIONS AS SIGNIFICANT DESCRIPTORS OF THE EXPERIENTIAL QUALITIES OF THE HOUSE

The brain's cognitive faculty to encode, store and retrieve past experiences when required is called memory. Still, not all experiences make their way to memory. While some are recalled to the tiniest details, other experiences may appear too vaguely or not at all. Cognition processes sensory data in a very selective way. As beings with particular sensory-motor capabilities, acting embedded in a specific socio-cultural environment, at every instance people receive a million bits of information from the surrounding environment. This sensory data remains in the nervous system long enough for the brain to interpret it, entailing the first storage stage called the sensory register. Sensory memory is a sort of photographic memory, rich in detail, but its retention capacity is very small. As the senses are constantly bombarded with new information by enacting with the world in motion, the sensory impressions evaluated to serve the goal are selected for processing in the short-term memory, while the rest are forgotten and replaced with new ones. If the processed sensory impression is evaluated as important, meaningful and pertinent for the future, it will move from the short--term memory to the long-term memory. Short-term memory, otherwise known as working memory, when necessary, also helps to retrieve information stored in the long-term memory to quickly make sense of newly received sensory data (Loftus, 1980; Wang, 2011; Lalchand, 2012).

Memory is hence not simply about remembering meaningful past information. Evolution favored the development of this faculty to use the stored data to understand new sensory impressions quickly and efficiently in order to instantly avoid danger and thereby increase survival possibilities. A rapid response to external sensory stimuli is possible because diverse related information is clustered into single compound units – "concepts" (Mlodinow, 2018, 76–79) or "schemas" (Arbib, 2015, 64–68) – on many hierarchical levels in long-term memory. Simultaneously coordinated multiple schemas compete in parallel to match the rough features of an object (contour/s, shape, texture/s, colour/s, size etc.) to a previously known one such that no further

information gathering is needed to yield understanding. The world out there is largely constant, but whenever something new is encountered, schemas merge, split and cooperate to yield understanding and thereby generate new schemas. For example, enormous time and energy would be needed to recognise a house by processing each pixel, in similar fashion as the way computers operate. Instead, remembered characteristics and experiences gathered in previously encountered houses are stored under the concept *house*. While encountering the contours of an object ending with a prism in the form of a roof, an information resembling the house's characteristic, the clusters of neurons representing the concept *house* are activated to indicate that this object is most probably a house. The activated schemas then further continue to gather only necessary information from the object to ensure that the initial reaction was grounded. The concept *house* might also be activated from non-physical properties, when one hears someone talking about a house, a house smell one remembers while imagining an event that happened in the house, or from any information that was earlier linked to the concept. If the features of a house do not match those of the houses we know, it is difficult to recognise that the object represents a house. Hence, memorable experiences considerably mediate our understanding of the world.

The process of memory consolidation and retrieving indicates that memory is not an exact recording of the content of all experiences. The brain is the most energy-consuming organ in the body and thus the process favours the storing of experiences that are attended repeatedly several times to allow them to be recognised automatically with minimal processing energy. It also ensures the storage of the peak and most remarkable moments of experiences, those accompanied by emotions like pleasure and fear, such that the positive and negative affordances of future circumstances can be assessed quickly (McGaugh, 2013). The selective and constructive nature of memory shows that past recalling does not always correspond to the true nature of reality. There might be a tendency to overrate some past experiences – historical/personal nostalgia (Batcho, 1998) while underestimating or ignoring others. However, both cases operate based on the meaning and emotional valence caused by the experience. Thus, memory in general is composed of important information about the past. Moreover, the memory of each experience is also imbued with information about the spatial framework in which it occurred because the memory consolidation process occurs in certain brain regions which also assist navigation and imagination (Malpas, 2012; Arbib, 2016;

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Figure 2: The Macedonian Academy of Science and Art (Reprinted from Stojanoska, 2016).

Goldhagen, 2017; Mallgrave, 2010). Accordingly, this paper relies on memorable impressions as descriptors of house qualities because, by describing many events of emotional significance, they can provide important information about them.

Studying memorable impressions about a city/neighbourhood/house/place in general is not only important to understand their perception in the past. The insights generated by memorable impressions also help to understand how places are perceived in the present and what their future developments will most probably look like. A house cannot be recognised if one has never seen a house, whereas the image of a house is built on previous experiences in various houses. This indicates that memory is predominantly individual but, as long as it is also shaped by the broader physical and socio-cultural context in which the individual is situated, it is also partially shared among individuals who belong to the same social group – it is also collective. The collective memory implies that individuals have commonalities in perceiving and understanding the present, also while imagining the future (Halbwachs, 1980; Mlodinow, 2018). Therefore, architectural memory should never be underestimated, especially its experiential qualities, which in this paper are referred to

as inhabitants' memorable impressions since they shape both the way architecture is perceived in the present and how it is imagined for the future.

Indeed, Macedonian and foreign architects have tried in various periods to incorporate and contemporarily interpret architectural memory in Macedonia. Since the period between the two World Wars, influenced by the nineteenth-century European and Balkan historicism, many architects have mixed modern principles of design with traditional architectural elements in different building typologies to emphasise and promote national identity through the special features of the traditional architecture (Grčev, 2004). Later, parallel to the postmodern global movement, a turn to tradition once again became evident. For example, the building of Macedonian's Academy of Science and Arts (1976) by Boris Čipan (Figure 2) represents a mix of international modern style and traditional architectural elements, whereas Stokovna Kuka Most (1977) by Tihomir Arsovski (Figure 3) is a more literal imitation of the Macedonian traditional houses (Tokarev, 2014). While reviewing the designs that incorporated traditional architectural elements, either by way of literal historicism or contemporary interpretation, the authors' focus is only on analysing the appearance,

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composition, interior decoration, stylistic features or the presence of the most recognisable traditional element – çardak. The recreation of the experiential qualities of the traditional architecture in a contemporary way is not a discussed issue. It is unclear and remains to be investigated why and how the architects used traditional architectural elements. The memorable importance of the Macedonian traditional house lies in the fact that its architectural elements as a whole, generated wonderful experiential qualities. While implementing them partially and separated from their original spatial, psychological and socio-cultural context, were they able to evoke comparable experiential qualities to the needs of the contemporary dweller? The memorable associated qualities of *çardak* are not only related to its openness to light and air, nor to its orientation towards wonderful views. *Çardak* was not a simple veranda, a balcony or terrace, it was the heart of the house, the node of all communicative as well as socio-cultural activities in the house, while intentionally or not one found oneself crossing or gravitating towards it. Moreover, if *çardak* does not have the same relation to the other important entities of the contemporary house and adapts equally to the psychological and socio-cultural needs of the contemporary dweller, it is questionable whether it would have comparable experiential qualities to the Macedonian traditional house. The connection to its memory would only be superficial, unable to recreate or evoke its memorable experiential qualities.

The importance of continuing and integrating cultural heritage values in contemporary city planning while designing both public buildings and individual houses was noted by many architects worldwide in the mid-20th century, such as members of Team X (Aldo Van Eyck, Giancarlo de Carlo ...), Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis, Dimitris Pikionis, Aris Konstantinidis, Christopher Alexander, Jože Plečnik etc. They presented and developed several approaches to architectural memory, generally suggesting a critical evaluation of the qualities of the cultural heritage and understanding of their wider physical and socio-cultural context. Although they provide valuable lessons on possible ways to address architectural memory and its critical interpretation given the contemporary way of living, they will not be elaborated here because this paper focuses on developing an alternative way of understanding; initially, what the values of the cultural heritage are. The extracted values of the traditional house in Tetovo, presented here as its experiential qualities, may later guide the process of choosing or developing an approach to their interpretation and recreation in a new socio-cultural setting.

Figure 3: Stokovna kuka Most (reprinted from Tokarev, 2014).

METHODS

The purpose of this paper is to explore the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo from the perspective of its dwellers as felt through inhabiting it. As long as finding a habitable traditional house in Tetovo is hard, the experiential qualities of the traditional house will be explored from the memorable impressions of inhabitants who have lived in one of them for at least a few years. The memory consolidation process described in the previous chapter indicates that an inhabitant's memorable impressions should reveal significant information about the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo. Generating descriptive explanations and theories about the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo from people's experiences as felt in real settings and situations and understanding why precisely those experiences have remained in memory means the study takes a qualitative approach in nature. Therefore, qualitative research methods were adopted for the collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting of the data (Seamon & Gill, 2016)

The two most common qualitative data collection methods for extracting descriptive interpretations about the highly idiosyncratic nature of people/environment experiences are focus groups and face-to-face interviews. The latter was assumed to be the most suitable method due to the nature of the problem studied and because some of the target population would be quite old and it would have been difficult to assemble them for group interviews in one place. To recruit the participants, the snowball sampling technique was adopted. This technique helps with referrals/nominations to locate individuals who are unknown, rare and possess specific characteristics. The first interviewee willing to participate in the study thus

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provides information for the second, the second for the third, and so on until sufficient data are gathered to answer the research questions (Groat & Wang, 2002). A total of 14 participants were recruited, 8 of whom had lived in a traditional house in Tetovo during childhood (now aged 50–60, 1 male and 7 females), while 6 had lived in a traditional house in Tetovo for more than 30 years (now aged 75–85, 1 male and 5 females).

Previous studies on the traditional house in Macedonia and Tetovo mentioned above indicated many of its characteristics, including a few descriptions of its experiential qualities. Nevertheless, these data were not used as a background to compile pre-determined interview questions. Instead, the research encouraged an inductive approach to the problematic, to elicit understanding and explanation of the phenomenon through data collected from the interviewees. Therefore, the interviewees were encouraged to talk by asking them one open-ended question: Could you please describe the traditional house as you remember it?

"*The intention of an unstructured interview is to expose the researcher to unanticipated themes and to help them develop a better understanding of the interviewees' social reality from the interviewees' perspectives*" (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Only when something was unclear was the narration interrupted by adding extra questions of the "why"/"how" problematic to obtain greater insight. The respondents were aware that the research would be of interest to the architectural field and thus a few of them initially provided mainly physical descriptions of the house, such as its functional entities and their characteristics. In this case, they were reminded that they could additionally freely describe anything they recalled related to the house, such as events, everyday activities, what they found particularly interesting, valuable, appropriate etc. The interviews were conducted in the respondents' houses. They were asked to choose a place where the conversation could flow without interruption, and only in the presence of the researcher and interviewee. This meant they usually chose one of the rooms in their house. All of the interviews were sound recorded with the interviewee's consent. The timespan varied, but no interview was less than 40 minutes and longer than 1.5 h.

The method named qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the sound-recorded qualitative data. It is a qualitative approach to written or oral materials, preserved in their original manner of communication, for understanding and classifying its content in similar categories of meanings and themes (Schilling, 2006; Mayring, 2000). Hsieh and Shannon (2005, 1278) defined it as "*a research method for subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*". Any qualitative content analysis begins with a verbatim transcription of oral materials or a written text. It then follows a set of rules and steps that break down a large amount of text into meaningful parts to be further abstractly coded and organised into categories and themes. The categories or themes may represent the manifest meaning of the content or latent meaning as implied from the broader context of the communication. While there is no agreement in the literature on the steps and rules of the analytical process, this paper followed the procedure described by Erlingsson & Brysiewicz (2017). The transcribed interviews were read several times until a general understanding of their content was achieved. The text was then broken into the smallest meaningful parts – meaning units, which were further condensed into shortened text but with the core meaning preserved – condensed meaning units. These condensed meaning units are labelled with codes. They are two or three words/phrases that best describe what the content is communicating. Codes representing similar related meanings, aspects, differences etc. are grouped into more general descriptive categories. Category names are short too but, unlike the codes, they describe more generalised characteristics of similar codes. "*In other words, categories are an expression of manifest content, i.e., what is visible and obvious in the data. A category answers questions about who, what, when, or where?*" (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Developing categories may be the highest level of abstraction in qualitative content analysis, but in this research the underlying meaning of the categories and their relationships was further analysed and organised into subthemes, and subthemes into main themes. "*Themes are expressing data on an interpretative (latent) level. A theme answers questions such as why, how, in what way, or by what means?*" (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

The analytical process was not linear. On the contrary, iterative or forward-backward movements in developing codes, categories, subthemes and themes were constant. To understand and interpret the complex and multifaceted meanings behind people's experiences, several notes/memos were written, different ideas and doubts were tested, various tree diagrams were constructed and combined to clarify the interrelations between the expressed ideas until all findings constituted an easily comprehended whole. Each step was analysed in a separate column, whereas in a diagram and a table the clustering of codes into categories, categories into subthemes, and subthemes into themes (and their relationships) was constructed (Table 1, Figure

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4). In addition to the diagram, analytical findings as suggested by Vaismoradi & Snelgrove (2019) will be presented with a storyline.

The storyline is an integrated story based on all the analytical findings, restructured in a new way that best illustrates the main themes with all the subcategories and subdivisions as well as their relationships, including supporting contextual citations from the respondents. The usual final step for the findings in an inductive qualitative approach is to search for literature or similar studies, for supporting theories (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In this case, the studies in the fields of psychology, sociology and neuroscience, which have investigated the nature of people/environment interaction, not only supported the findings but were also useful for refining the description and names of the categories, subthemes and themes. Therefore, some of them will be presented along with the findings. Further, the respondents' descriptions provided sufficient information to generate mental schemas and patterns that best depict the experiential quality of the traditional house. Hence, each mental schema will be illustrated with sketches and drawings to ensure they are easy to comprehend and use by the audience of the architectural field in particular.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative content analysis of dweller's memorable impressions about the traditional house in Tetovo generated two themes and ten subthemes. They provide general descriptions of what the memorable impressions of the house represent, how it is experienced by living in it, and what the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo are. The themes and subthemes were developed based on the analysis, interpretation and grouping of the smallest meaningful units from the transcribed interviews in more abstract codes, and codes into general manifested meanings – categories, as well as from inferred latent meanings in-between the lines. Initially, several subcategories were developed that were further grouped into three main categories. The themes, subthemes, categories, subcategories and a few of the codes are presented in Table 1, whereas the process of developing them and their interrelation can be better grasped from the diagram in Figure 4. In addition, the storyline below, accompanied by supporting respondent quotations as well as with sketches and pictures, integrates the developed themes and subthemes into a newly restructured narrative that better describes how the traditional house in Tetovo is experienced by its inhabitants.

The dweller's memorable impressions about the traditional house in Tetovo indeed hold compressed information about its experiential qualities. In general, **the memorable impressions of the traditional house in Tetovo are presented as events of interaction of the individual with the physical entities of the house** (**Theme 1,** Table 1**,** Figure 4). The narrative usually captures the identification of the main – *spatial entities, sub-entities, type of interrelation between them, their properties such as size, texture, material,* presence of *water, greenery, sound, light etc.* (*Category 3 – Subcategories*, Table 1, Figure 4), whereas simultaneously, as they move from one entity to another, they recall *the interaction* (*Category 2*, Table 1, Figure 4) that took place in those spaces to fulfil their *psychological needs* (*Category 1 - Subcategories*, Table 1, Figure 4). The narrative is developed from time to time in a different way, it is an event of psychological significance that makes recalling the physical properties of the space entity possible. "[...] *a stone wall, a wide window in it. We always kept something in the wide parapet. A jug, we called "shtamë Shkupi"* (a jug from Skopje). *My father brought it, it aroused quite a sort of pleasure – a jug of clay that we used to keep flowers in. It was no ordinary thing, no one had a similar jug. I used to embroider a lot of pillows and bedclothes fabrics near the window, beside the wall, sometimes sitting in there. I remember showing it to my friend in the neighbouring house through the window – to show her how much I could do. Our house's windows faced theirs* [...]". The recollection of these events, like many others described by the respondents, captures the interaction of the individual with the physical entities of the house as the spatial entity/sub-entity – "wall and window", their properties as material and size – "stone and wide", their relation with the neighbouring house but also their affordance to "work" near or on the wall in the presence of light, to "see" and "sit", to fulfil their psychological needs such as "socialising" with a friend, to show "proudness and status" – a rare pot that nobody else had, but at the same time their need for decoration and plants – "beauty".

After identifying a group of codes that denoted the inhabitant's psychological needs met in the house, the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is borrowed to group and classify them using more accurate descriptive category names. Thus, the house is obviously an object that affords the fulfilment of people's basic needs like physiological needs, safety needs; psychological needs such as social needs (love and belonging) and esteem needs; also self-fulfilment needs like cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, needs for self-actualisation and probably transcendence (Figure 5). Maslow's hierarchy of needs in the field of psychology is a motivational theory of needs. Initially, individuals strive to satisfy their basic needs and, when they

Table 1: The development of Themes 1 and 2 based on the subthemes, categories, subcategories, and some of the codes.

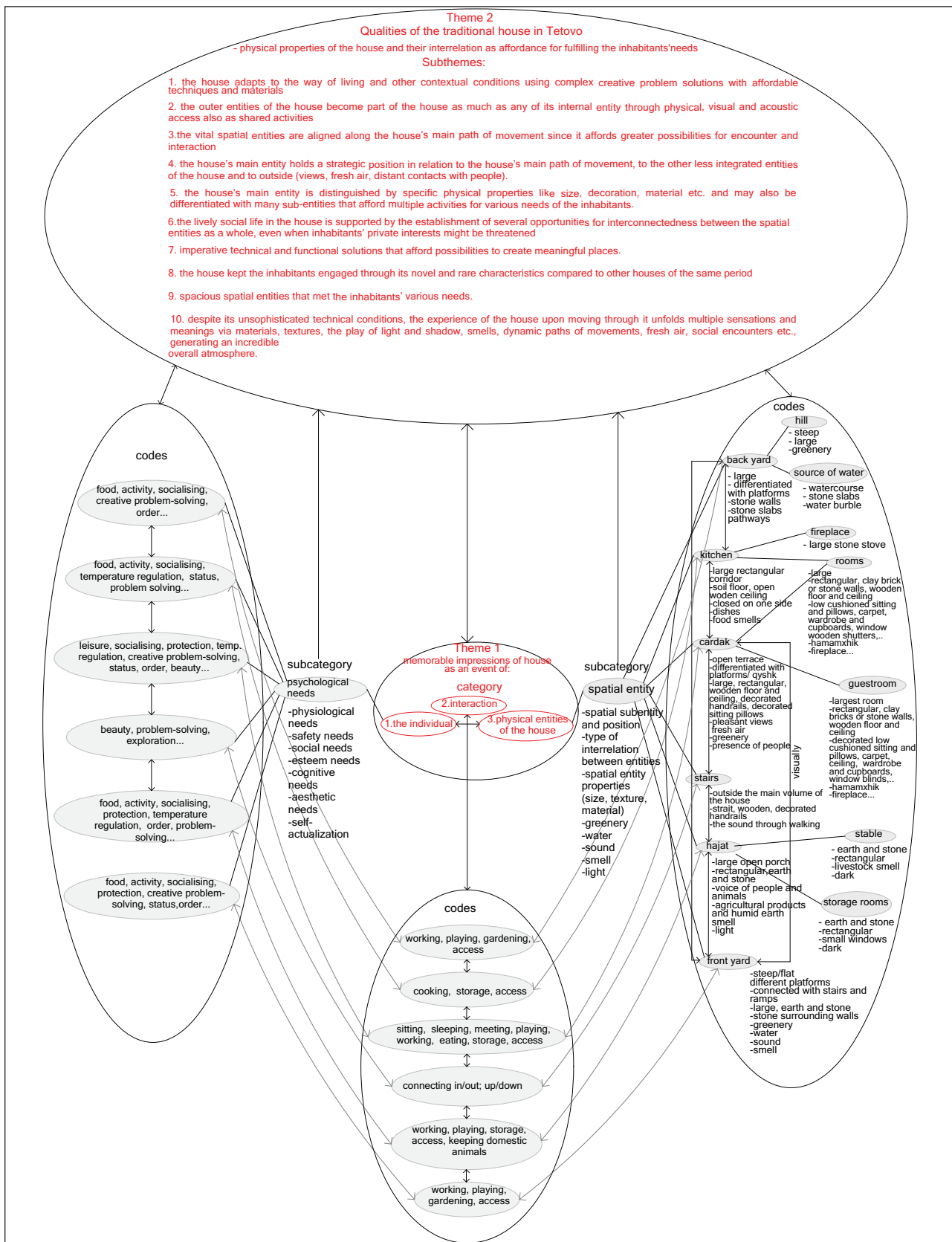| Themes	Subthemes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes
1.The memorable impressions about the traditional house in Tetovo are presented as events of interaction of the individual with the physical entities of the house 2. The experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo are manifested through the affordances the physical entities of the house and their interrelation provide to fulfil the psychological needs of the inhabitants	1. The house is adapted to the way of living and other contextual conditions using complex creative problem solutions with affordable techniques and materials. 2. The outer entities of the house become part of the house as much as any of its internal entities through physical, visual and acoustic access also as shared activities. 3. The vital spatial entities are aligned along the house's main path of movement since it affords greater possibilities for encounter and interaction. 4. The house's main entity holds a strategic position in relation to the house's main path of movement, to the other less integrated entities of the house and to outside (views, fresh air, distant contacts with people).	1. The individual	Psychological needs • physiological needs • safety needs • social needs • esteem needs • cognitive needs • aesthetic needs • self-actualisation	• food • protection • thermal protection • activity • socialising • status • creative problem-solving • leisure • beauty • order • exploration …
	5. The house's main entity is distinguished by specific physical properties like size, decoration, material etc. and may also be differentiated with many sub-entities that afford multiple activities for various needs of the inhabitants. 6. The lively social life in the house is supported by the establishment of several opportunities for interconnectedness between the spatial entities as a whole, even when inhabitants' private interests might be threatened. 7. Imperative technical and functional solutions that afford possibilities to create meaningful places.	2. Interaction		• working • playing • gardening • cooking • storage • sleeping • meeting • cooking …
	8. The house kept the inhabitants engaged through its novel and rare characteristics compared to other houses of the same period. 9. Spacious spatial entities that met the inhabitants' various needs. 10. Despite its unsophisticated technical conditions, the experience of the house upon moving through it unfolds multiple sensations and meanings via materials, textures, the play of light and shadow, smells, dynamic paths of movements, fresh air, social encounters etc., generating an incredible overall atmosphere.	3. Physical entities of the house	spatial entity • spatial sub-entity position • type of interrelation between entities • spatial entity properties (size, texture, material) • greenery • water • sound • smell • light	• front yard • hajat • cardak • rooms • kitchen • terrace • stairs • large • small • higher • open • decorated • wooden • sounds of people and animals • fresh air …

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Theme 2
Qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo
- physical properties of the house and their interrelation as affordance for fulfilling the inhabitants'needs
Subthemes:

1. the house adapts to the way of living and other contextual conditions using complex creative problem solutions with affordable techniques and materials

2. the outer entities of the house become part of the house as much as any of its internal entity through physical, visual and acoustic access also as shared activities

3. the vital spatial entities are aligned along the house's main path of movement since it affords greater possibilities for encounter and interaction

4. the house's main entity holds a strategic position in relation to the house's main path of movement, to the other less integrated entities of the house and to outside (views, fresh air, distant contacts with people).

5. the house's main entity is distinguished by specific physical properties like size, decoration, material etc. and may also be differentiated with many sub-entities that afford multiple activities for various needs of the inhabitants.

6. the lively social life in the house is supported by the establishment of several opportunities for interconnectedness between the spatial entities as a whole, even when inhabitants' private interests might be threatened

7. imperative technical and functional solutions that afford possibilities to create meaningful places.

8. the house kept the inhabitants engaged through its novel and rare characteristics compared to other houses of the same period

9. spacious spatial entities that met the inhabitants' various needs.

10. despite its unsophisticated technical conditions, the experience of the house upon moving through it unfolds multiple sensations and meanings via materials, textures, the play of light and shadow, smells, dynamic paths of movements, fresh air, social encounters etc., generating an incredible overall atmosphere.

codes

hill
- steep
- large
-greenery

back yard
- large
- differentiated with platforms
-stone walls
-stone slabs pathways

source of water
- watercourse
- stone slabs
-water burble

fireplace
- large stone stove

kitchen
-large rectangular corridor
-soil floor, open woden ceiling
-closed on one side
-dishes
-food smells

rooms
-large
-rectangular, clay brick or stone walls, wooden floor and ceiling
-low cushioned sitting and pillows, carpet, wardrobe and cupboards, window wooden shutters,..
-hamamxhik
-fireplace...

cardak
-open terrace
-differentiated with platforms/ qyshk
-large, rectangular, wooden floor and ceiling, decorated handrails, decorated sitting pillows
-pleasant views
-fresh air
-greenery
-presence of people

guestroom
-largest room
-rectangular, clay bricks or stone walls, wooden floor and ceiling
-decorated low cushioned sitting and pillows, carpet, ceiling, wardrobe and cupboards, window blinds,..
-hamamxhik
-fireplace...

stairs
-outside the main volume of the house
-strait, wooden, decorated handrails
-the sound through walking

stable
- earth and stone
-rectangular
-livestock smell
-dark

hajat
-large open porch
-rectangular, earth and stone
-voice of people and animals
-agricultural products and humid earth smell
-light

storage rooms
- earth and stone
-rectangular
-small windows
-dark

front yard
-steep/flat different platforms
-connected with stairs and ramps
-large, earth and stone
-stone surrounding walls
-greenery
-water
-sound
-smell

codes

food, activity, socialising, creative problem-solving, order...

food, activity, socialising, temperature regulation, status, problem solving...

leisure, socialising, protection, temp. regulation, creative problem-solving, status, order, beauty...

beauty, problem-solving, exploration...

food, activity, socialising, protection, temperature regulation, order, problem-solving...

food, activity, socialising, protection, creative problem-solving, status, order...

subcategory

psychological needs

-physiological needs
-safety needs
-social needs
-esteem needs
-cognitive needs
-aesthetic needs
-self-actualization

category

Theme 1
memorable impressions of house as an event of:

2. interaction

1. the individual

3. physical entities of the house

subcategory

spatial entity

-spatial subentity and position
-type of interrelation between entities
-spatial entity properties (size, texture, material)
-greenery
-water
-sound
-smell
-light

codes

working, playing, gardening, access

cooking, storage, access

sitting, sleeping, meeting, playing, working, eating, storage, access

connecting in/out; up/down

working, playing, storage, access, keeping domestic animals

working, playing, gardening, access

visually

Figure 4: Diagram of the relations between Themes 1 and 2, their subthemes, categories and codes.

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are met, they are motivated to work towards achieving the higher levels in the pyramid of needs (McLeod, 2020). This means one can say that **the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo are manifested through the affordances the physical entities of the house and their interrelation provide to fulfil the psychological needs of the inhabitants (Theme 2,** Table 1, Figure 4). Each spatial entity of the traditional house in Tetovo, such as the front yard, *hajat*, *çardak*, rooms, kitchen, backyard, or even the benches, decorated cupboards and ceilings, characterised by specific properties such as size, texture, material, form etc., are specifically orchestrated to fit in the best way possible the needs of the individual as embedded in a particular socio-cultural context. The qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo thus rely on their ability to meet the requirements for survival by way of good ventilation, spaces for eating, leisure and sleeping, to have water as well as protection from different climatic and environmental conditions; spaces for working and storing, for maintaining financial stability; spaces for meeting and socialising so they can generate a sense of belonging and love; spaces where the inhabitants can reveal who and what they are, show their status, gain respect and recognition; spaces that meet their aesthetic needs; spaces in which they can learn, meditate, seek meaning and challenge the image of self but also the need to solve unpredictable problems and be creative through spatial solutions (Figure 4).

Local inhabitants were very well aware of what their needs were. They gradually learned how to accommodate them through the house by optimally using the available materials, technology and terrain configuration. This is evident in the respondents' description of the houses and their creative solutions, yet also in the fascination they express while describing the process of building and problem-solving. "[...] *the houses were all similar, the spaces were the same, hajat, çardak, kitchen, rooms. But, for example, in our house, the first floor was larger than the ground floor. The hill confined the ground floor, and its configuration permitted only that size. On the other side, the first floor was larger, it was extended in the back as much as the terrain allowed for having decent spaces for living, a huge çardak and rooms. I find it quite interesting, now that I recall it. They weren't just a mere cube like the houses today. The houses did not, indeed, have the same conditions as today but, considering the time when they were built, they were very good houses, we had everything we needed*", stated F. S. Another respondent, B. I., while stressing that all the houses were similar, recalls a particular case: "[...] *There were three houses on one parcel. Only one house had access to the street, so half of its ground floor is*

opened and is used as an access road for the other houses, but at the same time as hajat for the house itself". Following the logic of similar discussions, this led to developing one of the sub-themes: **the house is adapted to the way of living and other contextual conditions using complex creative problem solutions with affordable techniques and materials (Subtheme 1**, Table 1, Figure 4).

In fact, the master builders of Tetovo's traditional houses, often referred to as "unknown" and "builders without professional training" were very good at what they were doing. Respondents mentioned the names of individuals possessing great skills and experience in building, who were actually operating on a comparable level to trained architects by actively rethinking, restructuring and upgrading the main adapted types of the house to fresh challenges and needs in completely novel solutions. Hence, the traditional house in Macedonia and in Tetovo is not always a simple "[...]*vernacular building that reproduces a known and socially accepted pattern.*" From time to time, it is architecture.

> *Architecture begins when the configurational aspects of form and space, through which buildings become cultural and social objects, are treated not as unconscious rules to be followed but are raised to the level of conscious, comparative thought, and in this way made part of the object of creative attention* [...]. *Vernacular innovation is therefore included within architecture, but the reduplication of vernacular forms is not.* (Hillier, 1996, 33, 35)

Accentuating the traditional house's creative problem-solving process as a quality may have an explanation similar as to the conclusion of a study conducted by Gallese (2017) and his colleagues to understand the process of artwork appreciation by the perceiver. They concluded that the artwork is not only appreciated as a composition of form and colour, nor solely from the meanings it transmits, but the direction, depth and width of the brushstrokes makes it possible to also appreciate the process of artwork creation. Through vision, they can recognise multiple actions that evoke various sensory-motor feelings and emotions, thereby virtually positioning themselves in the place of the art's creator and feel the process as with their body – an embodied cognition. This is possible due to a system of neurons called mirror and canonical neurons. This set of neurons is activated whenever someone performs an action, but also when someone recognises the same action being performed by another person. Hence, they are capable of evoking and feeling almost the same emotions as if they were conducting the activity first-hand, even
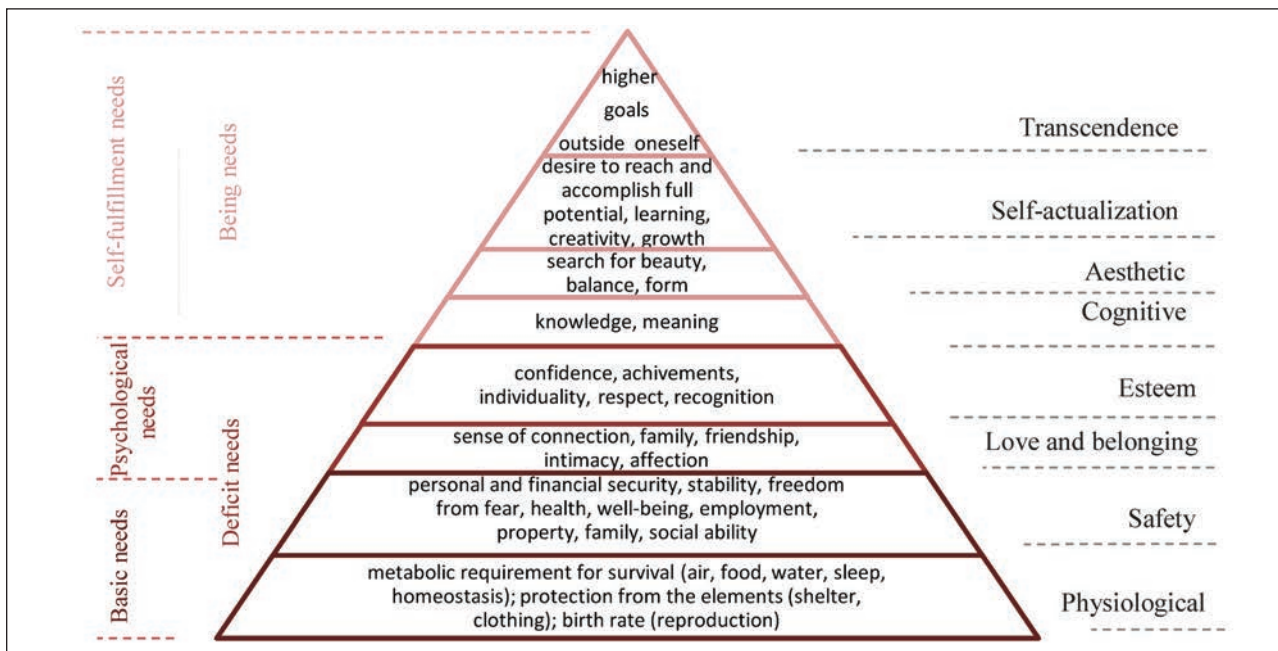
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Figure 5: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Adapted from McLeod, 2020).

when it is performed by somebody else. People are capable of feeling the process empathetically. (Arbib, 2013)

The house's relationship between the front and back yard (Figure 6) once again emphasises people's and builders' ability to arrange the house's entities into an incredible whole that best suits their everyday needs. The narration about the traditional house in Tetovo usually begins with the front yard, and for good reason. Most of the day is spent performing everyday activities moving in and out from the front yard into the house. The front yard, which may be flat and spacious or steep and differentiated with many platforms, is a meaningful part of the house. The transition from one platform to another is established with stone slabs, stairs or slopes whereas each of them, as determined by the terrain's configuration, has been adjusted to accomplish various daily activities. "*Down there the mill, slightly higher were the ironworking and wood processing equipment. We were a huge family, a total of 40 members and each had to do some work outside during the day. In the spring, huge boxes of seedlings were scattered throughout the yard, while we as children usually played and ran among the adults from one side to the other*", as F. O. described the yard of her house (Figure 6 *d*). Sh. S. remembers her house as being small but with a huge flat garden full of plants and fruit trees. "*In the garden, we also had a small hut – we used to call it mutfak. In spring and summer, my mother used to cook there.*" (Figure 6 a) Similarly, Sh. A. recalls the garden in the backyard as "*huge*

and with lovely green grass. We used to stay there always when receiving guests [...]" (Figure 6 b). There were also houses with both a front and a back yard. In these cases, they were usually connected not only through extra yard space around the house but also through the house itself. The physical and visual connection of these spatial entities through windows and terraces generated a unified whole that not only facilitated the daily activities but also made the movement a pleasurable journey throughout the entire house. There were also many activities in the backyard, with B. B. remembering that he entered *"the backyard from the street, through the "kapixhik"* [a small door]. *I used to work there, and I had access to the kitchen through a door while I was done working in the backyard. The kitchen floor used to be paved with mud, so we were not forced to take off our shoes to enter the house. We could go and sit in the çardak, or continue through the stairs and go to the front yard. This was good until I got married* [he laughs]. *My wife didn't want us to go in the house wearing shoes, she made us take them off at the beginning of the stairs.*" (Figure 6 f). Another respondent, F. S., recalls this as one of her favourite things about the house. *"I really enjoyed roaming around the house as a kid, through the sloppy terrain beneath the eaves, and arriving in the backyard. Then you went back to the front yard through the house. Even with the kids who first came to our house, I used to do that to show them how amazing it was."* (Figure 6 e) The integration of the outside and the inside to create a unified whole is another experiential quality
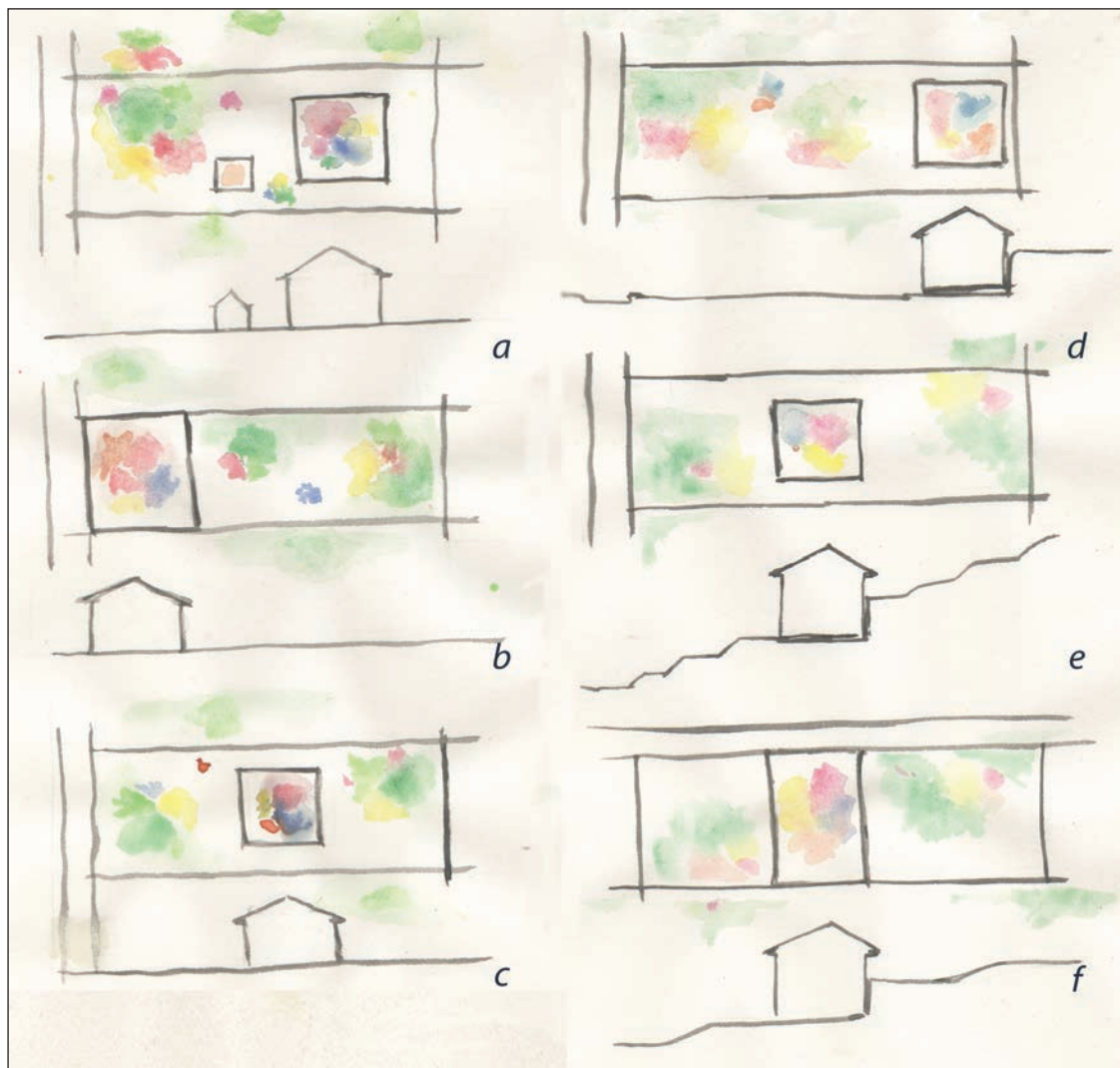
Figure 6: The relation of the front yard and backyard with the house. Flat terrain: a) house with a front yard; b) house with backyard; c) house with a front yard and backyard. Sloppy terrain: d) house with a front yard; e) house with a backyard; f) house with a front and backyard. The mix of various colours shows the multitude of activities and needs performed in each spatial entity: green – maintaining flowers/plants; red – cooking, pink – eating; yellow – working; blue – playing; grey – storage.

of the traditional house in Tetovo, implying that **the outer entities of the house become part of the house as much as any of its internal entities through physical, visual and acoustic access also as shared activities** (Subtheme 2, Table 1, Figure 4).

The above quotations by the respondents, and many similar ones, also imply other important things. The description of the path from the front yard, through the house, to the backyard and vice versa crosses throughout several spatial entities such as the hajat, çardak and kitchen. These entities actually represent the house's main communication, functional, and socio-cultural nodes. The hajat usually represents the ground floor (Figure 7). It is a large

open porch that serves as an access point for at least two or three spatial entities such as the storage and technical rooms but also for the place where domestic animals were kept – a sort of stable. The hajat was also an extension providing shade for the front yard. Most of the activities that are conducted in the front yard span to the hajat and vice versa. On the other side, the *hajat* was the only well-lit space on the ground floor. B. S. still recalls the moment when "[…] *little calves were ready to be sold. They had been forced to move out of the dark stable. They could not bear the light, they were not accustomed to such intense light, so they bellowed very loudly and jumped like crazy*". The ground floor was usu-

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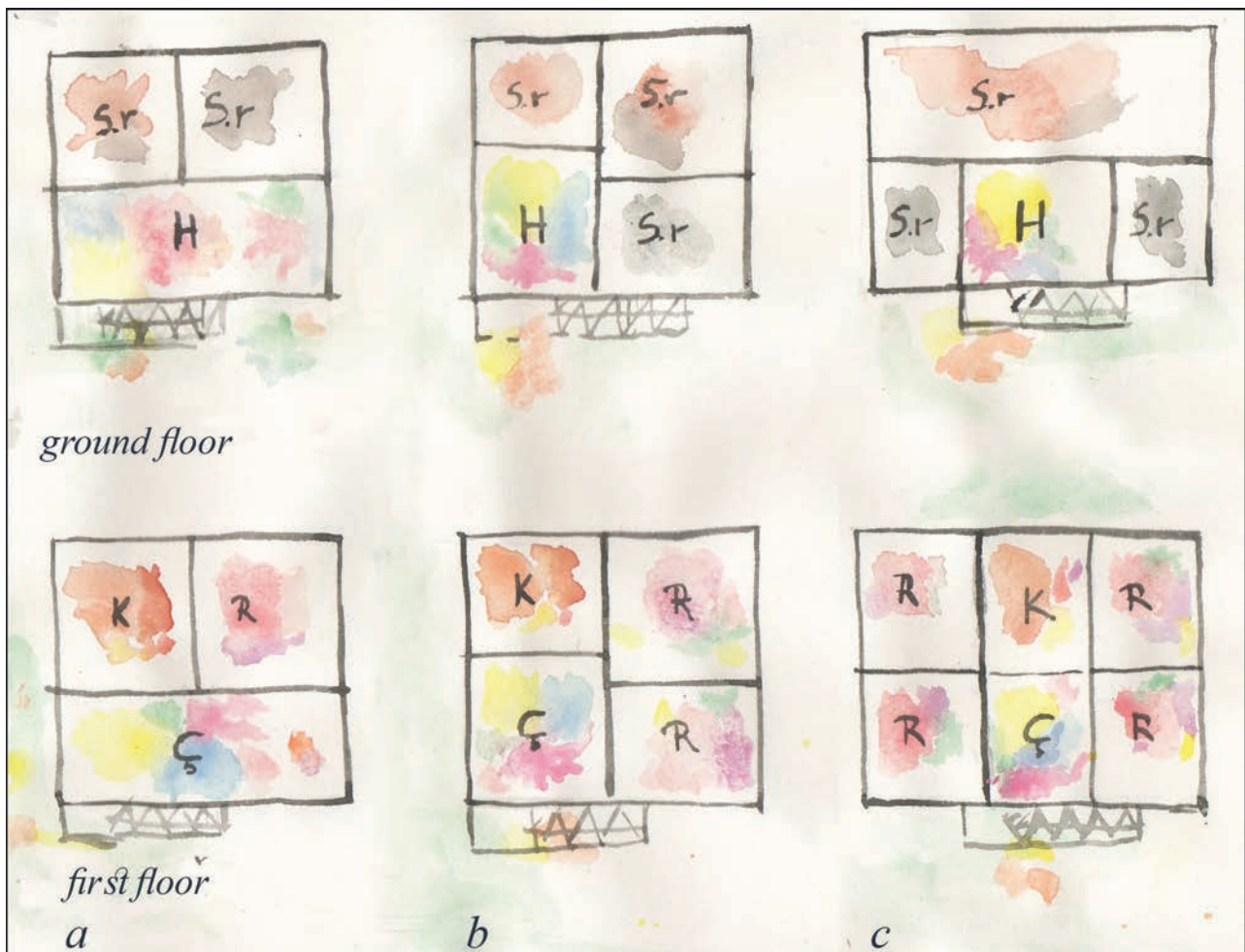
Figure 7: The main functional entities of the traditional house in Tetovo and their distribution on the ground and first floors. The hajat (H) and çardak (Ç) and their disposition: a) at the front of the house; b) in one of the house's corners; c) centrally positioned; K – kitchen, S.r. – storage room, R – room. The mix of various colours shows the multitude of activities and needs performed in each spatial entity: green – maintaining flowers/plants; red – cooking, pink – eating; yellow – playing; blue – working; grey – storage.

ally made of stone and rubble, meaning the spaces had very small openings, whereas the houses on steep terrain could only afford openings at the front or receive light through the hajat itself. The spaces were mainly used for storage; hence less effort was invested in their experiential qualities. For example, F. S. was confused and could not clearly remember whether the entrance to the storage rooms was via stairs or on the same level as the hajat: "*I don't have a clear picture, I rarely went there, I don't have any memory there, really*".

A pair of straight wooden stairs with wooden handrails, sometimes positioned in the hajat or outside the main corpus of the house, leads to the other main entity of the house – the çardak (Figure 7, Figure 8). The çardak is a large open veranda and, just like hajat for the ground floor, it represents the first floor but is also the most favoured place in the house "[…] *we stayed there, we ate there, we received guests there, we even slept in the* çardak *during summer*", recalled B. B. with enthusiasm. The doors of the rooms all faced the çardak, thus it was differentiated with several platforms to distinguish the space for communication only and the one for leisure, eating and sleeping but also to create storage spaces. The communication hall was the lowest one, whereas a platform called *qyshk* was raised by a few stairs. The depth of the *qyshk* was utilised for wheat storage and was sometimes further differentiated depending on its position to ensure the best views of the garden or street. The handmade and decorated cushions and carpets covering the floors, the wooden carved handrails surrounding its perimeter, also the flowers hanging down from the

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Figure 8: An example of the çardak and the qyshk in a traditional house in Tetovo: a) A traditional house in Poroj, Tetovo (personal archives of the respondents); b) The qyshk in the çardak (personal archives of the respondents); c) A traditional house in Janchishte, Tetovo (Photo: Aurora Saidi).

wooden beams of the ceiling, contributed to recalling the çardak as the place in the house where the most impressive events took place. F. O recalled that "*the eldest men almost always sat in çardak during the day. In this way, they could observe what was going on in the garden, but also take care of and be with nephews who were playing there*". Sh. S. re-

membered the çardak on wedding and celebration days, "*a large group of young people, all happy and cheerful, sitting in the çardak, laughing loudly and singing until very late*". In contrast, H. A. recalled the çardak from a totally different perspective: "*The floor was with planks on wooden beams, but they were not perfectly arranged. From place to place, there were some tiny holes where we used to bend down and observe what was going on downstairs in the hajat. We used to stay like that for quite some time until our backs hurt […]. Other times, we used to wear traditional grownups' wooden shoes and jump on the planks to create different rhythms. I still recall it and find it quite interesting*". In addition, M. Xh. and N. S. mention that when as children the wheat depot in the qyshk was their favourite spot for jumping and diving.

From the çardak, the path continues to another important entity in the house: the kitchen (Figure 7). In some houses, one of the rooms has been adapted as a kitchen while in others it was an extension of the wide corridor, thereby representing an access hall for the lateral rooms at the same time. The fireplace was positioned in one of its corners. It was a simple raised platform of one row of stones without a chimney, while for better ventilation the wooden beams were left uncovered by wooden planks. Still, there were very rare cases where the fireplace was in the form of a huge stone oven and chimney. Further, in the kitchen, all the cooking dishes were arranged on very simple shelves. Through a door, the kitchen was connected with the backyard but also with the water source. There were no sinks inside, with H. Q. stating "*We used to wash the dishes near the water source outside the house, and put them aside on stone slates while taking care not to pollute it. The used water was poured outside the channel because the entire neighbourhood was supplied with water from the same source*".

The description of the path running from the front yard through the house to the backyard implies that **the vital spatial entities are aligned along the house's main path of movement since it affords greater possibilities for encounter and interaction** (**Subtheme 3**, Table 1, *Figure 4, Figure 9, Figure 10*). In addition, the above descriptions of the çardak clearly show that **the main entity of the house holds a strategic position relative to the house's main path of movement, to the other less integrated entities of the house and to outside (views, fresh air, distant contacts with people)** (**Subtheme 4**, Table 1, *Figure 4, Figure 9, Figure 10*). Simultaneously, it may be implied that **the main entity in the house is distinguished by specific physical properties like size, decoration, material etc. and may also be differentiated with**

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many sub-entities that afford multiple activities for various needs of the inhabitants (**Subtheme 5**, Table 1, *Figure 4*).

The rooms were not less important. On the contrary, due to the openness of the movement through the house, the entire functional and socio-cultural living in the traditional house in Tetovo was moved within the walls of the rooms in colder weather conditions, especially in the "big" or "guest" room as the respondents used to call it. In contemporary terms, it actually represents the living room. "*We spent the whole day in the* çardak. *In the* çardak *during summer, while in the big room (odë e madhe) during winter*", stated N. S. The rooms were spacious and with flexible, sparse furnishing. Apart from the stove in one corner and the built-in wall closets, cupboards and niches, the rest of the room was left free to accommodate daytime leisure, eating and night-time sleep. The room adaptation process may seem tedious and difficult, but the respondents' descriptions imply that it was designed to be quite easily handled. The low cushioned pillows for sitting and the low round table for eating were easily removable, while the in-wall closets and cupboards (*musandra – Figure 11* a) provided sufficient space for bedclothes and dishes in one of the walls next to the shower cabin (*amamamxhik*) in each room. Moreover, each functional entity in the rooms was carefully decorated as well. To satisfy their aesthetic needs and also to show their status and competence, the woven rugs and embroidered cushioned pillows had wonderful colourful pattern compositions, the wooden doors of the musandra, the covers of the windows and ceilings were masterfully decorated with floral and geometric carvings (*Figure 11* c, 11 d), whereas on the other side the window parapets and stone wall niches were reserved for flowers and rare decorations. Like any other spatial entity in the house, the room design and configuration of its sub-entities were also perfectly arranged to optimally fulfil the various needs of the individual inhabitants.

All of the respondents' descriptions generally together with the few respondents' quotes presented in this paper emphasise that the social life in the house was very important and a valued quality. It was even explicitly stated that people 'from before' were more inclined to socialise, they even sacrificed their personal interest for the common well-being and, despite the various difficult conditions they faced, succeeded to be happier than the average person today: "[...] *they were different times, we had a great time together, people are very isolated now*". The importance of social life in the house is also evident from the house's overall configuration. The strategic position of the house's main socio-cultural nodes concerning the best views, air circulation and ventilation, light and shade, degree of decoration etc., but also the presence of many small doors (*kapixhik*) in the garden for easier contact with the neighbours, as well as several access options for the house and even the rooms indicate that: t**he lively social life in the house is supported by the establishment of several opportunities for interconnectedness between the spatial entities as a whole, even when inhabitants' private interests might be threatened.** (**Subtheme 6**, Table 1, Figure 4, Figure 9).

In addition to the lively public life, the house provided remarkable intimate places. The width of the parapet of the window, determined by the materials available and the construction solutions, was imbued with secondary functions as a place to sit, work, develop creative skills, or even enhance the aesthetic dimension of the room. The same thing happened with the qyshk in the çardak. It was intended to be a storage space, although its height and depth were used as sitting places offering rare views and a little nook for children to play in. Similarly, the sounds incidentally generated by walking with wooden traditional shoes on the wooden planks prompted a desire for children to play and saw them engage in the process of generating various rhythms (Figure 12). The experience of the house is conditioned by the way people perceive the built environment, but also by its physical properties. In explaining Gibson's theory of affordance as an approach to environmental perception, Gifford (2014, 30) stressed that "[...] *we, the users of the built environment do not see form and shape when we see a place; instead, we perceive affordances – what the place can do for us*". Hence the physical properties of the window parapet – like height and width – were apparently associated with an inviting place for sitting. Therefore, another quality of the traditional house in Tetovo is that it possessed ***imperative technical and functional solutions that afford possibilities to create meaningful places*** (**Subtheme 7**, Table 1, Figure 4, Figure 12).

The traditional houses in Tetovo were generally similar. However, when the respondents recalled the features of the traditional houses they had encountered, the characteristics of the houses that seemed to be rare or novel to them were discerned with particular emphasis. "*Our house was one of the largest in the country. Only we had a stone fireplace with an oven and a chimney*", recalls F.S. SH.S. remembers the ceiling of her friend's house that was more ornamented than she was used to seeing, or the texture of window shutters that were not common in her cousin's house. "[...] *they were very simple from the outside, but very densely packed with wooden cudgel inside*". Further, B. I. enthusiastically described the first time she saw a hand-washing basin inside the house of an inhabitant

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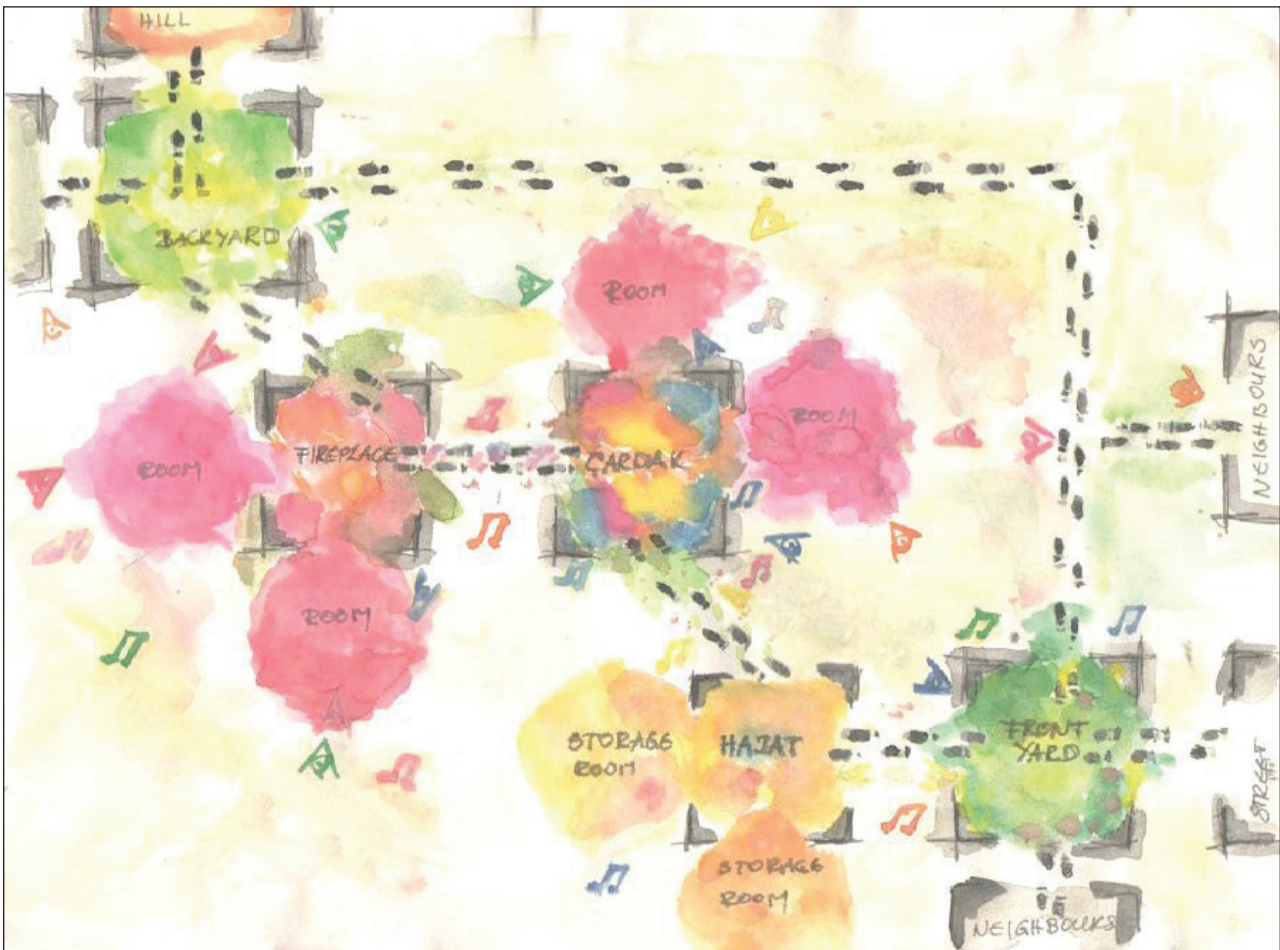
Figure 9: The sketch is an attempt to capture a mental image generated during the respondents' descriptions of the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo. It depicts the physical, visual and acoustic interconnectedness of the front yard, the house's spatial entities, the backyard/neighbourhood and indoors/outdoors; as well as the encountering of various spatial entities and the multitude of activities and needs performed in each spatial entity during the journey from the front yard through the house to the backyard. Each colour indicates an activity (e.g. red – sleeping; green – gardening; yellow – working; blue – sitting etc.), whereas the mix of colours shows the performance of many activities within a spatial entity.

who used to work as an alternative dentist practitioner as well as the use of the hajat also as an entry passage for the adjacent house. Novelty, along with incongruity, complexity and surprisingness, are characteristics of the built environment that keeps the perceiver from being engaged with the built environment, to further explore it and generate various emotional responses. Berlyne labels these characteristics collative properties (Gifford, 2014, 30). Yet, the need for novelty is also a cognitive need. Mallgrave (2010) explains it as the brain's biological need to generate new schemas for more effective responses to future challenges. Therefore, they have not been remembered in vain. It is because **the house kept the inhabitants engaged through its novel and rare characteristics compared to other houses of the same period** (**Subtheme 8**, Table 1, Figure 4)**.**

Among other things, the respondents have a standard in mind regarding the appropriate and adequate size of the spatial entities or the house itself. *"The old houses were spacious, we had abundant space. The rooms were huge"*, recalled B. I. Confirming the same, H. B. noted that "*the guest room was 5 m wide and 5 m long, the kitchen too. I remember that because I needed to know the size to make rugs".* Even though the definition of what is large and small is determined by comparing them with other traditional or contemporary houses, the respondents believed that the traditional house in Tetovo, considering the great number of residents living in one household, had **spacious spatial entities that fulfilled the inhabitants' various needs** (**Subtheme 9**, Table 1, Figure 4). Besides the spaciousness, the respondents constantly compared the traditional house in Tetovo with con-

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Figure 10: The sketch is an attempt to capture a mental image generated during the respondents' descriptions of the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo. It intends to show that the experiential qualities of any house generally are generated along the paths that cross the house while encountering various spatial entities that afford the manifestation of various activities and needs. Each cluster of colours represents a spatial entity and the colour mixture shows the multitude of activities and needs carried out in each of them. Depending on the individual's needs and the socio-cultural context, the scheme can be translated to cover various house shapes and configurations.

temporary ones to emphasise that the former did not possess the same conditions as the latter regarding the quality of the building and materials, thermic and acoustic insulation, inventory, technology etc. However, at the same time, the respondents did this to imply that, **despite its unsophisticated technical conditions, the experience of the house upon moving through it unfolds multiple sensations and meanings via materials, textures, the play of light and shadow, smells, dynamic paths of movements, fresh air, social encounters etc., generating an incredible overall atmosphere** (**Subtheme 10**, Table 1, Figure 4).

The qualitative approach to the study of inhabitants' memorable impressions of the traditional house in Tetovo revealed important information for some of its typologies and their physical as well as functional characteristics, yet also established the traditional house as the backbone for many events with psychological and socio-cultural significance. The definition of the house as the physical embodiment of people's various needs have been implied by many architects and writers, including Baak (2009), Zumthor (2006), Holl, Pallasmaa & Pérez (1994), Jung (1963), Bachelard (1969), Aalto (cited in Jormakka et al., 2014), and the Greek regionalists mentioned above etc. Nevertheless, the developed themes and subthemes, apart from being in line with their observations, also show how the needs of individuals or groups from a real socio-cultural setting were translated into the house's spatial configuration and how this generated admirable experience as a whole. In addition, this research has sought to stress that the dynamic and picturesque ambiances of the traditional house in Tetovo, and most probably in Macedonia generally,

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Figure 11: An illustration of the interior of a traditional house in Tetovo. The house of Mehmet Palloshi, Tetovo: a) musandra – in-wall closets and cupboards; b) windows; c) decorated ceiling; d) decorated doors (retrieved from Kiprianovski & Trajkoska, 2007).

which previous researchers have praised as the main quality, are from the perspective of the inhabitants meaningful for other reasons too. They generate valuable spaces for everyday activities as well as places for socio-cultural encounters. More precisely, Grabrijan's plastic path is a result of shaping the space, using optimally the configuration of the terrain, the materials available and the building technology in order to best accommodate the everyday patterns of behaviour determined by the socio-cultural way of inhabiting the house.

CONCLUSION

The traditional house in Tetovo and Macedonia is praised for many qualities, predominantly related to its spatial configuration and physical properties. However, the findings of this research indicate that,

for the inhabitants, the qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo extend beyond its physical structure. The spatial configuration of the house and its physical properties are meaningful qualities only when they serve well the psychological and socio-cultural needs of its inhabitants. This means the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo are manifested through the affordances the physical entities of the house and their interrelation provide to meet the psychological and socio-cultural needs of its inhabitants.

The experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo were extracted from the memorable impressions of its dwellers. In-depth interviews were used to collect the inhabitants' memorable impressions, while qualitative content analysis was relied on as a method to analyse and interpret the latent and manifest meanings of their content. The extracted meanings, interpreted as themes and subthemes, are

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Figure 12: A traditional house in Janchishte, Tetovo: a) the wide parapet of a window; b) the floor with wooden planks and beams above the hajat (Photo: Aurora Saidi).

presented through general descriptions, illustrated through sketches and complemented by respondents' quotes and relevant explanations from other disciplines like psychology, sociology and neuroscience. They therefore provide a thorough understanding of the qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo, how they are manifested in its spatial configuration, in what context they emerged, and why they are meaningful to the inhabitants. The extensive elaboration seeks to raise awareness of the broader context in which the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo emerged in order to be more sensitive while choosing which qualities to recreate and how to adapt them to the contemporary way of inhabiting the house. It should also be noted that, alongside the experiential qualities presented in this paper, the traditional house in Tetovo may also be imbued with other qualities. The experiences of other interviewees/inhabitants could reveal other aspects of its experiential qualities. The methodology employed and the findings of this study may serve as guidelines for further research. Further, the same methodology may be used to explore the experiential qualities of traditional houses in other cities in and outside North Macedonia and to compare their qualities.

Moreover, apart from providing insight into the experiential qualities of the traditional house in Tetovo from the dwellers' perspective, the research points out that the memorable impressions of the traditional house in Tetovo are significantly compressed information concerning its experiential qualities. The experiential qualities of any building or built environment generally could be extracted from the memorable impressions of its users, especially to assess which qualities are worth preserving or should be recreated and adapted to the contemporary way of living. The memorable impressions about a building/place are not only important for understanding how an existing setting is experienced as they play a significant role in the processes of thinking and decision-making and the experience of future developments. Therefore, learning to understand people's memorable impressions of the built environment, particularly for architects, means knowing how to understand their mental images, which have a profound impact on the way they generally think about, behave in and experience the built environment. The qualitative methods employed in this research have proved reliable in understanding the memorable impressions of people, although in-depth interviews as a qualitative method for data collection and qualitative content analysis for the analysis and interpretation of their contents can be used in any research to understand how people experience the built environment.

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BIVALNE IZKUŠNJE KOT POMEMBNI OPISOVALCI LASTNOSTI HIŠE: RAZISKOVANJE IZKUSTVENIH LASTNOSTI TRADICIONALNE HIŠE V TETOVU

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POVZETEK

Tradicionalne hiše v Severni Makedoniji na splošno in zlasti v Tetovu so bile že obsežno proučevane, vendar je o bivalnih lastnostih tradicionalne hiše, kot jih zaznavajo njeni prebivalci, malo znanega. Ker je danes v Tetovu težko najti tradicionalno hišo v bivalnem stanju, smo raziskali njene izkustvene lastnosti z uporabo spominskih vtisov prebivalcev kot pomembnih izkustvenih opisnikov lastnosti hiše in bivalnega prostora. S kvalitativnim pristopom smo s pomočjo poglobljenih intervjujev med uporabniki, ki so nekoč živeli v tradicionalnih hišah, zbrali podatke vedenjske, socialne in čustvene narave glede bivalnega okolja, npr. spomine na socialne dogod- ke in drugo dogajanje v tradicionalnih hišah, navade in rutine povezane s posameznimi prostori v kontekstu vsakodnevnega življenja in posebnih priložnosti itd. Podatke smo obdelali z eno od tehnik analize kvalitativnih podatkov, rezultati pa kažejo, da so izkustvene lastnosti tradicionalne hiše v Tetovu tesno povezane s tem, kako prostorske lastnosti hiše kot celote izpolnjujejo različne psihološke in družbeno-kulturne potrebe prebivalcev. Rezultati nakazujejo, da je posameznikova spominska izkušnja prostora (hiše in okoliša) povezana z načinom, s katerim posameznik zaznava tudi svoje trenutno bivanjsko okolje in željami glede ureditve bivanjskega okolja v prihodnosti. V članku smo s pomočjo nekdanjih uporabnikov prostorov skušali dobiti ne le vpogled v etnološke posebnosti življenja v tradicionalnih hišah v Tetovu, temveč tudi globlji vpogled v povezave med arhitekturnimi, socialnimi in psihološkimi elementi prostora in njegove uporabe.

Ključne besede: spomin, arhitektura, analiza kakovostne vsebine, tradicionalna hiša, Tetovo

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