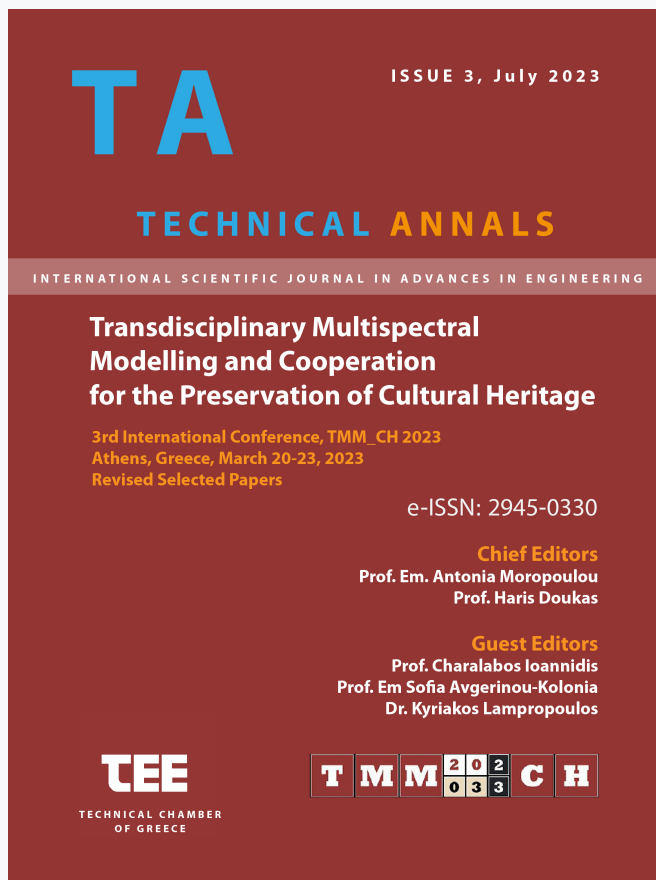


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# Highlighting of the Interwar identity of the Fokionos Negri street-linear park; The iconic Lanaras apartment building

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**Abstract.** The Greek legal framework for the protection of the architectural heritage of the center of Athens promotes, for historical-political reasons, its archaeological wealth and neoclassical interpretation, neglecting the protection and promotion of important buildings and open spaces of the 20th century. These are modern monuments that complete the city's image and identity, interpreting its evolution mechanisms and the way that people appropriate it in the everyday life. The research project aims to study the historic urban landscape of the Fokionos Negri street- linear park that has been formed during the first half of the 20th century and hosts many buildings characteristic of "Athenian modernism". It is an area of significant importance for the functional and social evolution of the wider center of Athens. The research goals have a triple approach, architecture, landscape and social. One of the main goals is the presentation and analysis of the notable morphological and typological features of the interwar apartment buildings on the street, but also of the history of their people. Through maps, archival research, personal observations, interviews with the linear park owners and patrons, film and photographs, we focus on interwar apartment buildings along the street, when the park was the leisure center of Athens. This approach is presented in the issue we created for one of the Interwar apartment buildings and landmark of the area, the Lanaras family's apartment building. The methodological choice appears to provide information of deep empirical and interpretive value which contribute to the understanding and appreciation of the historical urban landscape in Greece.

**Keywords:** Historic Urban Landscape, Interwar Urban Heritage, Fokionos Negri Street, Athenian Modernism, Kypseli.

## 1 Introduction

The Urban Landscape indicates the lifestyle of the inhabitants, their activities and their interactions, the beliefs and values of the residents, the affiliations of the city to the geographical location, time, climate, economy, society and politics [1]. The Landscape is the first manifestation of historical, socio-cultural, economic and natural elements of the city, a complicated cell which is a result of the action and reaction between

human and environment [2]. In this interaction three parameters are influenced: society, culture and economy [3].

By examining the history of urban change and studying the different perspectives of urban studies and related theorists of architecture and urban planning, four main approaches to the Urban Landscape can be proposed: “*artistic approach, functional approach, perceptual/ situational approach and sustainable approach*” [4]. The geographic, anthropological, cultural and sociological-economical parameters of the landscape point to the need for a multidisciplinary approach to its conception, while the ways in which it affects imaginary and collective behavior point to the need for sensitive management policies. This means establishing a reliable method of Urban Landscape assessment that takes into account people’s shared values and wishes [5]. In this frame, the research project<sup>1</sup> aims to contribute both to the documentation of the interwar architectural heritage of Athens and to the production of a broad framework of knowledge that may be the basis for how to understand and appreciate the historic urban landscape in Greece, in order to elaborate the criteria of its protection and prudent management.

## **2 Highlighting of the Interwar identity of the Fokionos Negri Street-Linear Park**

Understanding and valuing Historic Urban Landscapes (H.U.L.) [6] [7] is an area currently being studied worldwide. The approach of UNESCO to managing H.U.L. is holistic, integrating the goals of urban heritage conservation and social and economic development [5]. The research project aims to study the H.U.L. of an area of Athens (the Fokionos Negri linear open space) that has been formed during the first half of the 20th century and hosts many buildings characteristic of “Athenian modernism”. It is an area of significant importance for the functional and social evolution of its surrounding (Kypseli) and the wider center of Athens. The study area’s structure derives from the location of the upper and middle class around the historic center of the Greek capital from the end of 19th century to the ‘60’s and ‘70’s, when it represented a specific way of life and recreation. Around ‘90’s the area received the negative impact of suburbanization and, today, has developed a multi-cultural character. One of the objectives of the research is to identify and study the buildings of special architectural / historical / cultural value, which contribute in a special way to the construction of the urban landscape [8]. They bear witness to the overlapping layers of the city’s history, the mechanisms of spatial production which operated in each era and they indicate the way of life, the values and the social context of the time. Such buildings are the residential buildings of the interwar period.

It is obvious that the rescued buildings from the cities’ past show, among others, the selective way in which the administration evaluates and manages the collective memory. The Greek legal framework for the protection of the architectural heritage of

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<sup>1</sup>The PhD research in progress titled “Diachronic interpretations of interwar urban landscapes. The “modern” apartment buildings of Fokionos Negri”.

the center of Athens promotes, for historical-political reasons, its archaeological wealth and neoclassical interpretation, neglecting the protection and promotion of important buildings and open spaces of the 20th century. These are modern monuments which complete the city's image and identity, interpreting its evolution mechanisms and the way that people appropriate it in the everyday life [5]. The PhD research will insist on the interwar buildings, as it is an insufficiently studied and anyway not protected part of our architectural heritage (threatened by modern building activity). The interwar apartment buildings are also a characteristic part of the residential stock of the study area, which is also connected to the time when the wider area was composed and the linear park was formed.

The interwar residential buildings in the area need to be studied because:

- They bear witness to the introduction of the vocabulary and compositional principles of the modern movement in Athens (and the major cities of Greece) in a critical historical period. A period in which occurs the collapse of the "Great Idea", the consolidation of national borders and the attempt to reconstruct the economy and the institutions of the Greek state. This era sees the fixation on archeology recede in favor of the trends of modernization (if not Europeanization) manifested in all fields of social life while, at the same time, the debate develops around the characteristics that constitute the peculiarity of modern Greece.
- They bear witness to the production mechanisms of the space in that time (the forms of ownership, the construction methods, the institutional framework of urban planning, the housing standards, the relationship between public / private space, etc.)
- They retain important architectural qualities (in their form, function and placement in space) as projects by well-known architects and residences of many of the influential personalities of that period.
- They capture elements of the way of life, morals, consumer and aesthetic preferences (taste) of the upper classes of the time. In this way, they refer to the form of the society and the relations that governed it at that time (class structure, dominance relations, symbolic order) [9].
- In their comparison with the most modern buildings, they narrate the changes that have occurred since then in the production of the housing stock in Athens. Through this comparison, we can distinguish changes in the aesthetic standards, principles, relationships and ethos of social coexistence, ways and rhythms of life and in the priorities of urban and architectural planning.

### **3 The Issue of the Lanaras Family's Apartment Building**

The research goals of the study of Historic Urban Landscape (H.U.L.) in the case of the Fokionos Negri linear open space have a triple approach, architecture, landscape and social [10]. One of the main goals, as mentioned, is the presentation and analysis of the notable morphological and typological features of the interwar apartment buildings on the street, but also of the history of their people. This approach is presented in

the issue created for one of the interwar apartment buildings and landmark of the area, the Lanaras family's apartment building.

The Lanaras apartment building is an emblematic building of this category which has a high architectural value and aesthetics, it is the project of a well-known architect of that time, it was the property and residence of a family that marked the industrial history of the country, it occupies a distinguished position in terms of linear park of Fokionos Negri and has a strong imprint on the collective memory as it is located close to historical haunts of the area and we can see it in various films and photo reports from the time when the linear park represented a recreation pole in the center of Athens with a very special physiognomy and radiation.

In preparation for my research, I have already studied the Lanaras apartment building [11] through archival research, personal observation, interviewing one of the original owners who still lives in the building, as well as patrons of the park- a methodology that I shall follow for the evaluation of the others "modern" apartment buildings surrounding the linear park.

### 3.1 The Property Address/Date of Erection

**Lanaras Family's Apartment Building.** Address: 23, Fokionos Negri Street & 46, Eptanisou Street, Kypseli, Athens. Date of Erection: 1937-1938



**Fig. 1.** (Left)[12], **Fig. 2.** (In the middle)[13]& **Fig. 3.** (Right) [14] Aspects of the Lanaras Family's Apartment Building

### 3.2 The Owners

The apartment building had, when it was built, the character of a large family one. The original owners were the brothers Konstantinos, Thomas, Stavros and Theodoros Lanaras. The Lanaras family, a well-known family of industrialists originally from Naoussa, a city in Northern Greece, traditionally associated with weaving, due to its waterfalls, has associated its name with the beginnings of the Greek textile industry. The family business starts operating in 1909 and reaches its peak in the interwar period, playing a leading role in the textile industry – one of the most powerful sectors of the Greek economy at that time. From 1932, the "Lanarades" expanded their business activities in Athens, establishing new factories, which were also staffed with workers from Naoussa.

As Mrs. Poly Lanara describes in personal communication (2018), Konstantinos and Olga Lanara, nee Angelos Angelakis, were the owners of the first floor of the apartment

building, while Olga's parents (A. Angelakis family) owned the ground floor apartment. Thomas and Aphrodite Lanara were owners of the 2nd floor, Stavros and Maria Lanara of the 3rd floor and Theodoros Lanaras and Olga Lanara-Angelaki of the 4th floor. Periklis Lanaras, son of Konstantinos and Olga, and his wife Polyxeni (Poly), after their marriage in 1953, lived on the first floor, while since 1982; Poly Lanara lives in the ground floor apartment. Along the way, the descendants of the original owners transferred the apartments to different owners. For a while, the owner of the 2nd floor apartment was the Benaki Museum. Their second cousins, Giorgos and Alexandros Lanaras, are the owners of the well-known *Lanaras house* in Anavyssos, by the architect Nikos Valsamakis.

### **3.3 The Architect Engineer- Civil Engineer**

As Mrs. Polly Lanara said in her interview to *Flâneur* magazine (2015), "*my house was built by a famous architect (Ioannis Zolotas) in 1937. My father-in-law ordered it.*" It is a fact that the highly aesthetic apartment buildings of the interwar period were designed by important architects at the behest of wealthy landlords and echo the class stratification of urban formations. Although Mrs. P. Lanara adds that it was the first apartment building to be built in Fokionos Negri Street, our research has shown that there are some apartment buildings which were built in the early to mid 1930s that still exist today [15].

**Ioannis G. Zolotas** studied civil engineering at the National Technical University of Athens, where he graduated in 1914, subsequently acquiring the specialty of architect. His seat was in Athens, on Syngrou Avenue no 2 upper floors [16]. During the period 1914-1915 he worked as an engineer of the Directorate of Railways of the Ministry of Transport, while from 1915 to 1921 he was a reserve military engineer. His projects, during this period, are the study and execution of the barracks of Drama and Kavala (two cities in Northern Greece, with an important tobacco industry at the time, which joined the borders of the country after the Balkan wars of 1912-1913), the military hospital of Drama and the study of the construction of the extreme supply of Drama. From 1921 he worked as a freelancer, preparing architectural studies and erecting buildings. Some of his projects are the Piraeus Association Building, for the study of which he was awarded, and the Post Office Building in Athens [17].

### **3.4 The Lanaras Apartment Building and the modern architecture**

In the interwar period, Greek architects had become familiar with the vocabulary and construction logic of the modern movement, and high-rise residential buildings with a reinforced concrete structure and particularly comfortable apartments proliferated in the big cities and especially in Athens. Emmanuel V. Marmaras (1985) uses the term "Urban Polykatoikia" ("Urban Apartment Building") for this kind of buildings [18]. He wanted to give "*emphasis on its urban component to significantly cover the two main implementing factors, namely the production process developed in Athens at the time and the social content it acquired*" [5]. The Lanaras apartment building is a typical example of the interwar modern architecture, bears the aesthetic characteristics

launched by the Bauhaus School, and at the same time has a special personality and excellent construction quality.

**The Facades** are configured with straight balconies 1.20 m wide with curved outer walls at the corners in connection with bay windows (*erker*), but also with corner ones (Fig.1, 2&3). The balustrade is linear, metal, with art deco elements above a built parapet (Fig.2&3). The bay windows (*erker*), rectangular in shape with a width of 1.20 m, are arranged symmetrically in the building, on the A', B' and C' floors, have openings around the perimeter and are continuous at their outer corners (Fig.1&3). They are not independent architectural protrusions on the facade of the apartment building, but are kept at the same vertical level (face) as the parapet of the balconies. A single mesh of elements is thus created, which is located in a projection with respect to the basic vertical plane of the facade.

The front view on the 4th floor (penthouse) and on the Roof is formed by a continuous balcony with the same linear, metal railing. The existence of the balcony at the level of the 4th floor creates a cornice, which gives the feeling of crowning the building. On the eastern front view towards the uncovered area, there is a covered terrace (semi-outdoor area) with the same linear metal railing. The openings are individual, wooden opening with roller shutters, while in the curved part of the A', B' and C' floors they are continuous. The collaboration of bay windows, balconies and openings create an interesting geometric relationship.

The central exterior door is placed in the curved part of the building, in a recess with three steps and is metal with glass (Fig. 4). It is sheltered from a cantilever. There are also two secondary, asymmetrically placed, exterior glass and metal doors as well (Fig. 2 &3), which form the independent entrances to the raised ground floor apartment.

**Construction / Facilities / Materials.** The load-bearing structure of the apartment building is made of reinforced concrete and a proof of its construction quality is that during the major earthquakes (1981 & 1999) in Athens, according to Mrs. P. Lanara (2018), it did not show any damage, as was also established by the levels of engineers, who conducted the corresponding post-earthquake controls. The apartment building has a shelter, as, according to the extensive program of Civil Protection from the regime of I. Metaxas (1936-1940), the construction of an underground anti-aircraft shelter was mandatory in every newly erected building of three floors or more (including the ground floor)[19]. During the German occupation, the apartment building was requisitioned and turned into a hospital, according to Mrs. P. Lanara.

According to the principles of the modern movement, the apartment building had amenities, such as central heating (currently has natural gas heating), lift (central and auxiliary), as well as telephone and electrical wiring and fully equipped kitchens. It is impressive that a closed car parking area with an entrance from Eptanisou Street, which belonged, according to Mrs. Poly Lanara's description, to the apartment on the 1st floor, was provided for during the construction of the apartment building. While the second floor apartment includes the two warehouses with a vestibule, located on the mezzanine above the garage on Eptanisou Street, as described in the corresponding sales contract. Also, the courtyard on Fokionos Negri Street has been converted into an outdoor car parking area, as evidenced by the existence of a garage door.

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The luxury in the interior construction of the space (Fig.11,12,13&14) is displayed with wooden floors with the decoration of meanders and other geometric designs in the reception areas, wooden paneling on the walls, heavy wooden interior doors, elaborate plaster ceilings and stained glass windows in the openings of the lounge. The bedrooms also have wooden floors, while the auxiliary spaces (kitchen, bathroom) have flooring with a mosaic with large marble pieces.

**The Main Entrance.** The entrance consists of three functional units, characteristic feature of the interwar apartment buildings: the external entrance area, the vestibule and the stairwell area (Fig.4&5), thus offering the visitor the feeling of a smooth transition from the external public environment to the interior private space.

The front door recedes (Fig.4), leaving an open space in front of it, which opens outwards with pleated walls. This space is essentially the extension of the public space to the private space and stimulates the way of transition from the outside to the inside. The vestibule (Fig.5) is separated from the stairwell space by a double-leaf wooden door with glass, axially placed, thus creating a second internal entrance and has a staircase to the level of the central circular hall, which has great height.

**The Main Stairwell.** In this space is also the concierge in an independent closed space, but with a large opening, so that there is the possibility of checking those entering the apartment building. The stairwell area and the elevator are on an elevated level by four steps (Fig.5), in relation to the central hall. As a peculiarity, the placement of the central entrance of the apartment building on the curved corner (Fig.4) is noted, which is a rather rare choice, as is the circular shape of the central hall (Fig.5).

The vestibule and the main hall are decorated with white, gray and black marble, with elaborate floor and wall design (Fig.5). The staircase (Fig.6) is impressive, also decorated with the same types of marble and has bronze sconces and apartment bells decorated with animal designs (Fig.7), cast iron balustrade with wooden handrail (Fig.9) and stained glass in the openings (Fig.10). The entrance doors of the apartments are solid dark wood with glass opening. The elevator doors are also wooden (Fig.8).



**Fig. 4.** (Left)The main entrance, **Fig. 5.** (In the middle) The vestibule and the central hall& **Fig. 6.** (Right)The main staircase (Archive of G. Eleftheraki)



**Fig.7.** (Left) Bronze apartment bells, **Fig. 8.** (In the middle-left) Wooden elevator doors, **Fig. 9.** (In the middle-right) Cast iron balustrade with wooden handrail & **Fig.10.** (Right) Stained glass (Archive of G. Eleftheraki)

**The 1st, 2nd & 3rd Floor Apartment.** The apartment building consists of four floors, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th (penthouse apartment), an elevated ground floor and a semi-basement. Each floor is a separate large apartment (five apartments in total), while the ground floor apartment has independent entrances, not through the main entrance of the building. According to the apartment building internal regulation, the apartments can only be used as residences. The building has been erected on a plot of land, with an area of 662.87m<sup>2</sup>, and is adjacent to the street line, while it is located at a distance from the lateral boundaries, leaving uncovered space in the eastern part of the plot.

The floor plan (Fig.11) of the 1st, 2nd & 3rd floors is similarly configured as a typical floor, with a total area of 365.35 m<sup>2</sup>, according to the imprint floor plan (1998) of the architect engineer D. Dais. It consists of an apartment with an area of 320.91m<sup>2</sup> and two common areas (staircases and elevators). The common area K.X.1 (21.98 m<sup>2</sup>) is the central stairwell and the main elevator of the apartment building, while the common area K.X.2 (12.46 m<sup>2</sup>) is the service stairwell with the auxiliary elevator, located in contact with the service room and in the same functional space as the kitchen. The social separation is evident in the floor plan, as there is a social organization of the spaces (for the tenants of the apartment and for the service, which a residence of this size needs).

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**Fig.11.** (Left) Floor plan of the 1st, 2nd & 3rd floor apartment (Archive of G. Eleftheraki), **Fig.12.&13.** (In the middle up & down) Interior views of the 2nd floor apartment (Archive of G. Eleftheraki, ©P. Tranidou), **Fig.14.&15.** (Right up & down) Interior views of the ground floor apartment (Archive of G. Eleftheraki)

*The "Public" Space of the Apartment.* The entrance – hall introduces the visitor to the apartment and the reception areas, the main living room, the separate living room (with the stained glass) and the dining room they have access to each other, that is, they are rooms-passages of primary use, where movement and function are correlated (Fig.13). Their proximity to the entrance and their placement facing Eptanisou Street, so that they have access to natural lighting and ventilation, are the translation of their "public" position in the floor plan of the apartment.

The stained glass room and the dining room have a west orientation, while the living room is located on the eastern side and has access to a covered terrace of approximately 16 m<sup>2</sup> and 2.90m wide, which can be used most of the year, as a "natural extension" of the living room. This roofed veranda "looks" towards the lateral uncovered area of the plot, in a sense a courtyard, with an eastern orientation and at the same time, it has a side view towards Fokionos Negri, thus acquiring a unique character. It is protected enough from prying eyes to maintain its privacy, but at the same time, it is not cut off from the outside environment.

*The "Private" Space of the Apartment.* In that zone of the residence belong the three comfortable bedrooms, which are located on the view on Fokionos Negri (Fig.11 & 12), with a southern orientation and communicate with each other through a third space-corridor. The corridor, like the hall and the entrance, are transitional spaces that articulate the parts of the residence with each other and, at the same time, act as a filter between the "private" and "public" space. The two bathrooms, which serve the residents of the apartment, are located diametrically opposite the access corridor to the bedrooms and have natural lighting and ventilation, and big bathtubs and wash basins.

*The Kitchen & Service Area of the Apartment.* The comfortable kitchen with large marble sink, solid wood cabinets and lots of storage, together with the adjacent service

area (service room and w. c.) is located towards the eastern and northern uncovered area of the plot and in proximity to the auxiliary staircase and elevator. These two spaces form a hybrid subset of the apartment, which maintains a dual character. It has the privacy of bedrooms, as a non-clean space, which should not be projected, but at the same time, it also has the need to be immediately adjacent to the dining area, so that meals can be transported and served with speed and ease. It is characteristic that between the dining room and the kitchen there is a corridor, a transitional space which serves, on the one hand, to isolate the smells of the kitchen from the rest of the house and, on the other hand, functions as a storage area for tools and electrical appliances, such as the washing machine. This transitional space also leads to the roofed terrace in front of the sitting room, providing immediate service during the summer months, when it is mainly used.

**The Ground Floor Apartment.** The apartment on the raised ground floor is designed in a similar way to the apartments on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors. Its area is smaller than these floors, due to the reduction from the central entrance area of the apartment building, but it remains a very large apartment. The arrangement and structure of the "public" and "private" space, the kitchen and the service room remain in the same logic, as described above, as well as the luxury of its interior. It has sitting rooms, as well as large and comfortable reception areas, with walls covered with tapestries, Saridis furniture and expensive decorative objects (Fig. 15). The two bedrooms, which have the same orientation as the other floors towards Fokionos Negri, include a lounge and large wardrobes-furniture (Fig.14).

**Mrs Polly Lanara.** The owner of the ground floor apartment has lived in the apartment building since 1953, after her marriage to the scion of the well-known family of industrialists, Periklis Lanaras, while she has lived in this apartment since 1982. She had studied classical music and wanted to become a soprano, but "*chose her husband than opera*". She has lived a rich life and has traveled almost all over the world. After the collapse of the family industry, she uses her apartment for TV and film shoots (personal communication, 2018).

### 3.5 The Lanaras Apartment Building in Greek Cinema

In the stills from the film "*Neither cat. Nor damage*" ("*No harm. No foul*")(1955) we see the wealthy protagonist (actor Lambros Konstandaras) sitting and waiting for the beautiful protagonist (actress Iliia Livykou), in the famous pastry shop of the era *Select* (Fig.16), which started operating during the second half of the 1940s on the corner of Eptanisou and Thiras Street, opposite the Lanaras apartment building, where its entrance can be seen. Then, in November 1959, the "*new Parisian*" *Select* was opened, in the place of the *Media Luz* cinema on 26 Fokionos Negri Street and Eptanisou Street, where it is still today. We can distinguish the Lanaras apartment building on the left of the Fig.17.



**Fig.16.** (Left) Stills from the film *"Neither cat. Nor damage"* (*"No harm. No foul"*) (1955) [20],  
**Fig.17.** (Right) Panoramic view of Fokionos Negri from the height of Eptanisou Street in front  
of *Select* (1964) [21]

### 3.6 Opinions for the Lanaras Apartment Building and the Fokionos Negri linear park

**Architects.** The Lanaras apartment building with the purist and rationalist directions in its design, *"it impresses even today, with the quality of its construction, its curved forms and the robust appearance of its volume, as it projects dynamically in a diagonal direction towards the axis of Fokionos Negri"*, M. Biris, professor N.T.U.A., observes in his article "A living urban architecture" in the tribute "Kypseli. The urban yesterday, the colorful today", published on February 23, 2003 in the insert "Seven days" of the newspaper *Kathimerini* [22]. In the same dedication and in her article entitled "The Genealogy of Kypseli", the architect Maria Vaschenhoven writes that the Lanaras apartment building *"with its solid volume, the rough proportions and curved forms of its elements, the diagonal arrangement of its marble-clad entrance is imposed as an element of urban reference in the area"*[23].

**Habitants.** *"My house is across the street from Select so I go there for coffee. I've been living here since 1953. On the site of the Max Perry (opposite today's Select) was a famous tavern. Every night when the theaters closed, all the famous actors came to eat there. They chatted and joked until six or seven in the morning. [...] The road used to be (until the mid-1930s) a river and that's why we have so many trees. Here was a pond; we had water every day [...]. Fokionos Negri Street was called Via Veneto. But now it changed, everyone moved to the suburbs, except for those who died. I was twenty years old when I came here [...]"*. P. Lanara, interview to *Flâneur* magazine (2015). *"The functionality of the Lanaras apartment building is noteworthy"* P. Tranidou - resident of the apartment building, personal communication (2018).

## 4 Epilogue

In conclusion: a) The methodological choice to connect the study of the buildings on the one hand with the stories of their inhabitants and on the other with the narratives of the current residents of the area seems to yield information with experiential depth and interpretive value. b) The Lanaras apartment building has architectural qualities (functional and aesthetic elements) that are characteristic of the Athenian modernism of the interwar period, but even today are required in the study of high-end residential buildings (a finding that advocates the need of the characterization and protection of such buildings). c) Through the study of the interwar buildings we come into contact with the economic-social processes and the persons who influenced the development

of the area we are interested in, if not the history of the country itself. This allows us to formulate questions about how the current residents, workers and patrons of the area experience and evaluate the changes that have taken place in the urban landscape, how they perceive its production processes, the persons and social relations that signify it.

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