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Traditional architectural heritage and hybridity

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In all Mediterranean countries traditional architectural heritage is the result of the historic influences describing the dichotomy between east and west cultures and their intersection with the local identity. The intersection between opposite cultures produce hybrids and heterogeneity. What has survived defined the prospect of the architectural heritage to ensuing generations. Greek traditional architecture presents architectural elements distinct even between neighboring rural settlements documenting the evolution of the phenomenon.

In the early 19th century Greece comprehend Peloponissos and Sterea that had been under the Turk occupation since the 15th century. In the early 19th century, parts of Greece like the Ionian islands and Crete -that had been under Latin occupation until then- were turned under Turkish control until their later liberation. Northern and Eastern Greece (Epirus, Macedonia, Thraki and most of the islands of Aegean sea) continued to be under Turkish occupation and were liberated by turns during the 20th century. European romanticism of the 18th century and consequently the development of neoclassical patterns for the built environment while a representation for the nations of the West, for Greece and most mediterranean countries -the land where ruins of classical values were still present- were incorporated in the ideology of the new nation and functioned as part of the domestic evolution. Population movements and intercrosses between mediterranean cultures and ideologies provided a variety of architectural elements that are classified under the term "traditional" that corresponds to the architectural heritage of each micro-region that the modern Greek state inherited.

Architectural heritage is constructed in the past, in historical periods with a particular beginning, duration and end and as it was decided, it should be protected by virtue of a particular legislative framework implemented in Europe since 1985 and applied by Public authorities in order to support protection and promotion policies.

The term hybridity derives from biology and the Darwinian evolutionary theory of species and is challenging about the exclusivity of organism selection "that crosses between varieties of a species are usually fertile, but crosses between species are generally sterile". When this statement is applied to the built environment means that in the long run what is impaired for a culture vanish.

The definition "traditional" architecture is a neologism expressed in the last two centuries with a different meaning between the developed and developing world, between peoples that inherit tradition and new nations that "construct tradition". In addition to the primary definition originated from the local architectural heritage and the delivered identity (tradition) to next generations, one would also have to contemplate on the selection or development of tradition.

Within this context, three historical phases can be defined by the term "traditional" during the Greek modern history, meaning during the last two centuries, with all the hybridity involved.

The first historical phase, corresponds to the mid 19th beginning of 20th century, when in the newly liberated parts of Greece, emphasis on neoclassical architecture was given following a simpler and clearer pattern than other parts of the world, where neoclassicism already was practiced as an international movement. Neoclassicism, while a representation for other countries, for Greece was a "tradition" stemming from the Byzantine era and architectural elements were evolved consequently intercrossing with Latin and Ottoman cultures.

The second historical phase corresponds to the most part of the 20th century, when Greek local identity was expressed under the search of tradition and the evolutionary theory, which formed the antipode to neoclassicism. In the beginning of the 20th century when north Greece was united (1st World War) and millions of Greek population were transfer from Asia Minor -under the International Regulations for exchange of population- an immense reconstruction program was implemented.

The third historical phase correspond to the recent and current one when traditional architectural elements for each micro-region have been implemented, creating a neo-traditional environment. This fact is even more apparent in areas where tourism and holidays are imposing the (re)structuring of the built environment.

On the level of the two dimensional scale (distribution of plots and street patterns) it is clear that for settlements existing before the establishment of the contemporary Greek state (19th century), the distribution was natural in contrast with the systematic distributions of the new era. This is the most obvious characteristic that distinct traditional architecture.

In Greece, the natural distributions of plots were gradually evolved from the Byzantine era and post-Byzantine periods and composed a coherent building fabric, up to the 19th century. The pattern of natural distributions determine the traditional design while, as far as the three dimensions are concerned, traditional architecture provided distinct typologies of one or two-storied buildings for different micro-regions. By the first decades of the 19th century, German and French architects designed the Plans of several towns and later on according to systematic distributions of plots and neoclassical design principles. By the mid 19th century Greek architecture followed simple neoclassical patterns, giving emphasis to symmetry, a threefold arrangement and a pitched roof (Fig.1). In a broad sense, the design of this period correspond to the first phase of neo-traditional design in Greece, when neoclassicism

was practiced.

The second phase of neo-traditional design was implemented during the years between 1920-1940, when a number of new settlements were designed on the basis of systematic principles for refugees coming from Asia Minor after the First World War. During this second phase of neo-traditional design that continued up to the mid 20th century, particular emphasis was given to local traditional architecture, as it was evolved in every micro-region distinctively according to the special historical events.

In rural regions the building pattern has maintained its traditional character and the equivalent natural or systematic plans according to the time of settlement establishment until the beginning of the last quarter of the 20th century (a period of population concentration in urban centers), when many rural settlements have been declined or even abandoned. Thenceforth, parallel to a policy of decentralization, the development of building fabric in rural settlement increased and began to expand beyond their boundaries. In an effort to protect the architectural identity, a building code was applied based on the diversity of architecture elements for each settlement.

The architectural identity is perceived by an order of qualities related to uniqueness, differentiation, functionality and cohesion of the built form. The logic of architectural identity is understood within the framework of the evolutionary theory and follows its methodology that classifies built form according to geographical units, in order to distinguish the typological differences.

The evolution of architectural identity is shaped in the course of a number of centuries and compiles the visual organization at the specific time of observation. For the identification and codification of various architectural norms (types) that are composed from various architectural elements, three stages of evolution has to be recorded (origin, duration and end).

The coding of architectural heritage in typologies based on the criterion of architectural identity demarcates the architectural norms and types as well as the historical courses of every tradition.

The architectural characteristics in Greece vary depending on the geographical region and the historical period of origin of each settlement. Dominant architectural characteristic for their classification is the roof pattern that diversifies between the dichotomy of plain (Fig. 2) or pitched.

Greek micro-regions have been developed according to the specific cultural and economic conditions resulted from the different periods of foreign occupation and population movement. In brief even that population movement in Greece intercrossed Frank, Turk and all the other Mediterranean populations, the main body of Greek population was retreated in mountains regions were an autonomous network of settlements was created preserving the cultural varieties (Fig.3) that constitute Greek culture. The period between 15th to 19th century where tradition is rooted in fact was the period that the continuity of the Greek architectural heritage survived.

Greek architecture has evolved through neo-classical representation from one hand and from the other, with the use of local identity architectural elements distinct in every micro-region. By the same period that other countries had to incorporate neoclassicism and later on the modern movement, as international styles, Greek architecture was context specific for both. Greek traditional architecture served as well as, prototype -with the simples and cubist forms of Aegean sea architecture- for the masters of the modern movement. It seems that

at least for Greek rural settlements (inhabitants less than 2000), the contemporary built environment that the next generation will inherit is a fertile one.

During the second phase (the discovery of local identity) the architectural heritage of each region was preserved and evolved and during the third phase (the current post-traditional), context specific environments are under construction by means of a specific building code for each settlement.

Nonetheless, recent hybridization that comes along with (re)constructions and neo-traditional projections -as well as the typologies just for consumption- does not constitute architectural heritage. Structures, that have only a specific beginning, but unknown duration and end, can not be embraced in the definition of architectural heritage. But hybrids that will survive and what will evolve in future time perhaps will constitute architectural heritage (Fig. 4).