

Heterogeneity in rural¹ Greece: Hybridity

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Abstract

Architectural heritage (in all closely related aspects) is important in restructuring rural space. The local identity, especially, that emerges from the various historical pathways of each region, constitutes today one fundamental perspective for local development. Local development promoting local identity is related also to the “third wave” of development, the “informational”, raising issues about preservation, reconstruction or the “making” of architectural heritage and about many other “in-between” notions like hybridity and authenticity. Notions of identity and consumption of built space conceived as local potentiality and traditional representation seem to guide the flows of space on the post-global era, while depending on the architectural heritage and the tradition of each place.

The framework of architectural heritage includes individual monuments, settlements and regions that were constructed in the past, in historical periods with a particular beginning, duration and end, and they should be protected by virtue of a particular legislation implemented in Europe since 1985. The issue of architectural heritage raises questions about authenticity and about new or induced functions in structures under conservation, preservation or restoration as well as their potentiality of endogenous development in order to become self-supporting and financially viable.

Some architectural representations of the past such as neoclassicism with a particular beginning, duration and end constitute architectural heritage and are consequently governed by the legislation of architectural heritage conservation.

Nonetheless, modern representations, (re)constructions and neo-traditional projections as well as typologies that are being put into practice just for consumption, do not imply architectural heritage. Such structures, which have only a specific beginning, but their duration is unpredictable as well as their end, can not be embraced in the definition of architectural heritage. In the etymological sense of architectural heritage, however, the representations and (re)constructions are an architectural product that will be transferred to the coming generations and their duration and end are to determine whether they will be parts of the history of humanity that will be protected or rejected.

This essay displays in parallel the architectural representation of diverse rural settlements originated from different periods of the Greek history, in an effort to point originality and authenticity in some cases in contrast with hybridity and heritage development in others.

Keywords: architectural heritage ; identity ; heterogeneity ; hybridity.

¹ Settlements with population inferior to 2000 inhabitants.

Introduction

Population implosion and interaction imply a variety of interchange and diversity between cultures resulting in the phenomenon of heterogeneous architecture (Jencks, 1993). Hybridity -a notion appeared in the 80s in the work of Homi Bhabha- translates the discourse that actually produce “constructions” of cultural and national identity (AlSayyad 2001). The ambivalent built environment produced and especially what will eventually survive – define the prospect of architectural evolution and identity of each place. In this conceptual framework, the outcome of less implosive situations in the Greek rural space, where the interaction between cultures that occurred in every historical period are recorded in structural and architectural elements, distinct even for neighboring settlements (Fig. 1,2) documents the evolution of the phenomenon. In present time, as long as culture becomes placeless, representation in three dimensions (architecture), as the expression and the synthesis of cultures (hybrids) will reflect the degree of global counteract of the “network society”.

From the aspect of evolutionary theory, every local architecture intercrossed with imposed perceptions and expressions resulting to hybrid forms, in time will eliminate for inexplicable and complicated reasons, the “fruitless offspring varieties” preserving only “the fertile ones” (Gould 2002, p.130). Meaning that, in a later phase –like the implosive uncontrolled present- recording and preserving for the generations to come what has been kept alive in every place, will eventually contribute to meaningful future organizations.

If hybridity is accepted as an inherent constituent of identity then any particular architectural form must be accepted as a reflection of a specific transitional stage in the course of a society. The heterogeneity presumption is an old phenomenon related to population movements, (concentration or dispersion) expressed in three dimensions with the architecture of settlements. In Greece -center of intersection between people since antiquity- the evolution of the phenomenon has been recorded in every historical period. In some cases indeed when development was interrupted momentarily due to a crisis (earthquake or other) the interval of history is clearly perceived through the diverse phases of heterogeneity and hybrids survival. (Fig. 3,4).

Architectural heritage

The issue of the architectural heritage of a region as defined by the Council of Europe, (Granada 1985) emerges as a key element for the prospect of architectural evolution and identity of each place interacting with the two perpetual phenomena:

- hybridity and
- heterogeneity

Architectural heritage is not just a reminder of history but it is a need for development to accommodate inset functions like holidays and tourism -it is important to create meaningful spaces by recognition of the particularities and the *genius loci* (Norberg-Sculz, 1980) that shapes built environment- and it is used as a model for heritage development.

Identity

Identity constitutes a social good according to the specific historical paths of each region, wherefrom the “desired” collective memory “is selected and projected” onto the built environment, in respect to the symbolism of the architectural heritage in favor (Fig. 5,6). In times of conquest, the dominant nation imposes the architecture that expresses it, which consequently results in the coexistence in the same place of monuments and premises of diverse historical origin that compile the architectural heritage, wherefrom prevalent representations are selected in later times of development. The emergence of identity is a very complex phenomenon related to perception, images and interpretations of the users of each place (Fig. 7).

Irrespectively of the historical courses and the local individuality, in recent centuries, the evolution of every society has followed similar intellectual dichotomies, which were represented congenial within the built environment.

- the rural / urban and
- the local / global

The above dichotomies are specified nowadays with the progression of modern information technology (Virilio, 1997). A novel dichotomy is generated between the users of “globalization through the instant communication of information technology” and the receivers of “domestic individuality”(Castell, 2000).

The “users” are seeking the “receivers” as a recourse for their reclusion and the latter utilize the architectural heritage and consequently local individuality, as an endogenous dynamic for development.

The topic of local identity acquires a threefold meaning:

- As architectural heritage.
- As an endogenous dynamic for development (for commodities intended for use)
- As a representation of traditional space (for modern living conditions and recreation).

The threefold revival of local identity also is paralleled with the historical triad-interconnection of the agrarian-industrial-urban society or as it is today determined agrarian-industrial-informational society (Castell, 1996).

The new arrangement of informational society occurs in a virtual level without the need of built forms in three dimensions. What has been already built is suitable for the new era as well (earth becomes placeless). As though there occurs a convocation of the historical evolution and the technological change. At this point every culture is suitable for the informational society and it is possible the reset of culture outside the places that produced them.

Is it, that the regional revival of architectural heritage (with its threefold nature: architectural identity, endogenous dynamic and traditional representation) functions as antidote to virtual reality? Is it a general schema of hybridization of thought and action? or is it simply the wrapping of some nostalgia induced by inertia at critical (De Landa, 2000) times, until a new organization of the built environment currently invisible, arises?

The intersections of cultures and hybrids becomes unpredictable resulting in a pluralistic heterogeneity, declaring the end of all systems of meaning. It creates a mixture of elements that searches formal harmony out of trans-historical and stylistic provocation” (Castell, 2000).

The architectural identity is defined by virtue of individuality and a series of qualities related to uniqueness, differentiation, functionality and cohesion of a form of structure. The logic of architectural identity is established within the framework of the evolutionary theory (Oliver, 1998) and follows its methodology that classifies built form according to geographical units, in order to distinguish the typological differences. The word classification suggests the arrangement of objects under congenial categories and it is the law of the evolutionary process in biology conveyed in architecture (Picon, Ponke, 2002, p. 118).

The evolution of architectural identity is shaped in the course of a number of centuries and compiles 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 are recorded (Gould, 2002)).

- Origin: generation of the norm / type,
Creation of the infrastructure that will approve of the norm / form.
- Duration: flow
Evolution of the norm / type.
- End: destruction of the infrastructure and superstructure

Authenticity

The coding of architectural heritage in typologies based on the criterion of architectural identity demarcates (Oliver, 1998) the architectural norms and types as well as the historical courses of every “authentic” tradition. In the previous context, how authentic architecture emerges and how it is legitimated and integrated? Authenticity (Nara ICOMOS 1995) of the built environment deals with “historic preservation” and preservation activity concludes to constrain physical change. But communities change, values and aspirations change sometimes under the guise of promotion or enhancement (Fig.8). A new character is created and promoted as authentic.

Is it, for instance, neo-classicism authentic? Is it “tradition” in Greece but not in other countries? It was a reconstruction in 19th century but today it is preserved as authentic.

These are questions about time, evolutionary theory, character of a place and sense of place. Are local perceptions significant in developing a sense of place or in “making places” or even in “images creation” since each individual is related to more than one culture and invokes different identities (Lynch 1960, Norberg-Schulz 1980) at different times and different places? What about what is not recorded or interpreted and when is it or who does it (Derrida, Deleuze, Quatarri, Hanerbas)?

Hybridity: Interaction of architectural heritage with modern era

The architectural heritage is perceived as an economic commodity intended for consumption (Mitchell, 2002). The consumption of architectural heritage as a form of cultural good and the “making” of architectural heritage as a trading good, constitute the same argument.

With regard to the economic intention of promoting the architectural heritage, both sides of the contemporary dichotomy cooperate, i.e. the users of “the globalization of instant communication” and the receivers of “domestic individuality” (Castell, 2000). The former for the consumption of tradition and the latter for the promotion of local cultural heritage that they possess or invent. The former are seeking the individuality of architectural heritage, as an economic commodity, while the latter are consuming it, as a product (Fig. 9,10). The traditional representation or (re)construction of cultural heritage is a paradox of recent times and began in the age of colonialism and the projection of systems of symbolism in newly founded states. The major architectural style of representation is the neoclassical that has prevailed as an international representation since the 18th century.

In the beginning of the 21st century, a multi representation of architectural heritage under the definition of “neo-traditional” appears (Soya, 2000,p. 248) with the principles of which new settlements are built. The juxtapositions as well as the threefold debates of architectural heritage are included therein, as it was described.

The modern traditional representations of architectural heritage are practiced in different ways creating spaces of a dreamlike ambience by the use of basic symbolism systems of our virtual culture. The speed of consumption of the architectural heritage doesn’t leave space for authenticity and hybridization comes along (Fig. 11,12).

Conclusion

The intersections between two (imposed) and now three (“network society”) opposite cultures produce hybrids and heterogeneity. What will eventually survive defines the prospect of architectural evolution and architectural heritage to ensuing generations (Fig.13). Greek architecture presents architectural elements distinct even between neighboring settlements documenting the evolution of the phenomenon.

Heterogeneity reflects diversity that exists in time and space and demands respect from current culture and values. Contemporary Greek culture is rooted and continues to elaborate the cultural intersection between East and West. The diversity of architectural heritage in settlements created before 1923 (chronology of the constitution of the contemporary Greek territory) is an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness for study. In every micro-region is recorded a spectacular variety of architectural elements originated from a specific historical period and culture. In most cases indeed, where due to a crisis (earthquake or other) the interval of history is clearly perceived, there is visible appearance of the diverse phases of heterogeneity and hybrids survival.

Architectural heritage is constructed in the past, in historical periods with a particular beginning, duration and end. As it was decided, it should be conserved by virtue of a particular legislative framework implemented in Europe since 1985 and applied by Public authorities. In Greece, the conservation of architectural heritage is under the hospice of the Ministry of Culture.

Some architectural representations of the past such as neoclassicism with a particular beginning, duration and end constitute architectural heritage and are consequently governed by the legislation of architectural heritage conservation.

Nonetheless, 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. For now hybridity deconstructs the intentions of the in-set culture and in this sense reflects the defense of a society to an invasion. The hybrids and what will evolve in future time perhaps will constitute architectural heritage. In the etymological sense of architectural heritage, however, the representations and (re)constructions – with all the deconstructing hybridity- are an architectural product that will be transferred to the coming generations and their duration and end are to determine whether they will be *fertile* or *sterile* chapters of the history of architecture.

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