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TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE ERA OF TOURISM

Abstract

The synthesis of the terms “traditional architecture and tourism ” concludes that traditional architectural diversity produces a renaissance on tourism, with the built environment playing a central role.

Diversity is the product of the senses of a place, it is the identity of each unique environment, that the global pressure of tourism reduce to simulacra, today, that instant communication and profit does not allow the time for authentic evolution. The diversity emerges from the various historical pathways of settlements and constitutes today the fundamental perspective for local development.

Traditional identity - which constitutes a social good- means the specific character that each place present, according to the historical paths of each region, from where “the desired” collective memory “it is selected and projected” onto the built environment, in respect to the symbolism of the architectural heritage in favour. It is related also to the “third wave” of development, the “informational”, raising issues about reconstruction or “place making” and about many other “in-between” notions like heterogeneity, hybridity and authenticity.

For Greece, the reconstruction of the nation in the mid of the 19th century implemented neoclassical designs patterns for new towns, preserving the traditional distributions in existing cases. Neoclassical pattern while a representation for developed nations of the West, for Greece -the land that produced classical values- functioned as part of the domestic evolution. post-traditional architecture during the last two centuries corresponds to three historical phases: Neoclassicism, Local identity and neo-traditional.

Now days under the topic of tourism, traditional architecture acquired the potential as an endogenous dynamic for tourism development (for commodities intended for use) and as an architectural representation (as itself a simulacra) of a traditional space for recreation. It means a set of practices, normally governed by a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms by reputation, which automatically implies continuity with the past.

KEY WORDS: Traditional architecture, Neo-traditional design, neoclassicism, local identity, representation, tourism.

1. Context of Greek traditional architecture.

The restructuring of the Greek country followed different phases according to the addition of successive regions that had been under distinct occupation for centuries. 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. Population movements and intercrossoes between cultures provided a variety of architectural elements distinct even in neighboring settlements and are classified under the term “traditional” that corresponds to the architectural heritage of each micro-region that the modern Greek state inherited.

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 -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. In fact the clear distinction in Greece can only be perceived in the distribution of plots and plans, while in three dimensions neoclassicism is fused with traditional patterns.

From the mid 20th century modern architectural movement, once more inspired from simple cubic forms of Aegean sea islands architecture, intercrossed with previous traditional and neoclassical architecture composed the contemporary Greek architecture that continuous to evolve and to be context specific.

In fact in Greece the historical phases since 19th century have been expressed in the architecture of the built environment giving rise sequentially to post-traditional designs (Neoclassicism, Local identity and Neo-traditional)¹.

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

¹ J. Theodoraki-Patsi, Neo-traditional design: Beyond “open cities”, p.61-68.



Fig.1: Beginning of 19th century: neo-classicism (Symi island).



Fig. 2: Beginning of 20th century: discovery of the local identity issue (Tylos island)..

a simpler (Fig.1) and clearer pattern than other parts of the world, where neoclassicism already was practiced as an international movement. For Greece the term traditional architecture corresponds to architectural elements before the 19th century while neoclassicism corresponds to the first phase of neo-traditional design. 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 evolutionary² theory (Fig.2), 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 transferred from Asia Minor -under the International Regulations for exchange of population- an immense reconstruction program was implemented. Emphasis was given to the search of the Greek origins of traditional architectural elements in order to implement design prototypes for the new towns and extensions plans for the new population.

After the Second World War and during the urbanization process in Greece less intention was given to local identity and modern architecture was practiced in order to resolve the problem of a high density population concentrating in the urban centers.

The third historical phase correspond to the recent and current one with tourism and globalization that consumes the individuality of tradition and the local cultural heritage. In rural Greece, the last three decades -under building code legislation- 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 an international scale a contradiction of definitions emerges where, for instance, the principles of neoclassicism are defined as “traditional design” in the west, unlike Greek regions, where local tradition has evolved incorporating classical or consecutive Byzantine and post Byzantine architectural elements and every micro-region is typified by discernible traditional architectural typology. For Greece, the meaning of the built environment is composed by traditional and neo-traditional elements. The (re)presentation of classical (neoclassical) is of Greek origin and consequently some elements concur within some traditional designs and continue to evolve.

One clear distinction however is present between the two dimension pattern of land distribution. The natural distributions correspond to traditional design, while the systematic distributions to neo-traditional and modern design.

In summary, in Greece³ the built environment is the product of literally traditional and neo-traditional designs that are respectively defined by natural or systematic organization of land uses according to the historical period of their implementation:

- Traditional, in existing settlements that the new nation inherited, based on physical distributions (Antropological, concentric eastern logic).(Fig.3).

² Oliver, P., (ed.), Enc. of Vernacular architecture of the world, vol. I, p. 12.

³ No mention is made to arbitrary construction incorporated in the plan at later times, contributing to the mosaic of constructed space nor is any mention made to modern tourism resort and residential developments during the last 50 years, with diverse designs, which, nonetheless do not fall under a category as traditional or neoclassical.

- Neo-traditional / neoclassical, in new settlement design after 1923, based on systematic distributions (western logic) (Fig. 4,5).

2. Identity and traditional architecture

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 theory⁴ 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 biology⁵ conveyed⁶ in architecture.

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:

- Creation of the infrastructure that will accept of the norm / form.
- Evolution of the norm / type.
- Destruction of the infrastructure and superstructure.

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 plane or pitched. In general, the settlements that existed before the year 1923, were distinguished into two categories. Firstly the settlements of continental Greece, where the pitched roof pattern dominates (Fig.6) and secondly the settlements of the Aegean Sea islands, where the plain roof pattern dominates (Fig.7).

⁴ In the history of architecture, the evolutionary theory has been formulated and expressed very often and determines quite a number of beliefs: the classical, that of the Enlightenment, the romantic, the positivistic, the anthropological and the modern: P. Oliver (ed.), Enc. of vernacular architecture of the world, 1998, vol.1, p.36.

⁵ Gould, S. J., The structure of evolutionary theory, p. 602.

⁶ Since the era of Vitruvius and Leonardo da Vinci, science has provided images and metaphorical associations in architecture and these have produced an immediate repercussion on the depiction of constructed place. Viollet le Duc, the fundamental Apostle of rationalism in the 19th century, borrows from biology the association of infrastructure, skeleton and organic function in order to interpret medieval architecture, as Martin Bressant states, *Viollet-le-Duc's optic* in the book of A. Picon & A. Ponke (ed), Architecture and the sciences, exchanging metaphors, p. 118.



Fig.6: Pitched roof pattern (Stenies settlement in Aniros island)



Fig.7: Plain roof pattern (Avgonima settlement in Chios island)

There is, although, diversity between each micro-region of the same area due to the different historical period of each settlement's development. 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 where an autonomous network of settlements was created preserving the cultural varieties that constitute Greek culture (Fig. 8). The period between 15th to 19th century that is classified as "traditional" in fact was the period that the continuity of the Greek architectural heritage survived.



Fig.8: Architectural elements of North Greece (Neo Souli settlement in Serres District).

3. Endogenous dynamic of development/Traditional representation and reconstruction

Today, during the post-traditional era which started two centuries ago, the architectural heritage⁷ is perceived as an economic commodity intended for consumption (tourism). Promotion of the architectural heritage, as the current trend favors, gives accent to traditional and neo-traditional designs and even fulfil the reconstruction of settlements with several kinds of representations (Fig. 9).

The current traditional representations of neo-traditional design follows two directions:

- (Re)construction of context specific environment⁸, by use of a specific building code for each settlement, favoring authentic local traditional architecture (Fig. 10).
- Creation of dreamlike images, by use of basic symbolic means (Fig. 11).

⁷ As stated by the *Conservation of architectural heritage* of the Council of Europe, signed on 3.10.1985 in Granada, Spain. In this spirit the Nara document (ICOMOS 1995), extends the scope adding *that in a world that is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and homogenization, and in a world in which the search for cultural identity is sometimes pursued through aggressive nationalism and the suppression of the cultures of minorities, the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity*, <http://www.international.icomos.org>.

⁸ The last 50 years many methodologies have been emerged for the creation of context specific environment. For the built environment is worth to mention the works of K. Lynch , *The image of the city*, 1960 and Chr. N. Schulz, *Genius loci, a phenomenology of architecture*, 1980.



Fig. 9: Neoclassical representation.



Fig. 10: Context specific (Hydra island)



Fig. 11: Dreamlike image (Ia settlement in Santorini island)..

4. Reconstruction and heritage development for the attraction of tourism

The intersections between opposite cognitive systems and now the network society in the context of a continual influx of information activates new hybridity due to the heterogeneity involved. The antithesis of the two cognitive systems in the current post-global age, continuous to be evident producing simulacra beyond control which deconstruct every significance. In other words, the difficulty of "place making for both users" is becoming more intense, as there is notable discord between "western linear" and "eastern concentric" logic and their coexistence leads to heterogeneous phenomena.

It seems however that to a larger extent than historic forms, it is the people who define place and the consequent individual atmosphere, the people who inhabit the place and perform a number of activities there.

Simulacra are copies of things that no longer have an original use, but they keep the traditional form pretending to be the result of the original needs that created the form. In these sense any traditional reconstruction or representation can be included in this term.

The question that remains is about the recent dichotomy between the "users" of the instant communication (product of western rational thinking) and the "receivers" of local cultures, injecting information into contradictory contexts, once inaccessible, and transforming local individualities in theme parks and finally wrapping with some nostalgia the paradox "instant" amusement of contemporary tourism.

Tourism, by it self, as an experience expect staged authenticity, but also a "true" authenticity to exist. The last introduces traditional architecture as the "true" authenticity that "wraps" the package.

1. It seems that the "users" of the instant communication technology (western logic) are the best "users" (tourists) of the local environment (receivers: eastern logic).
2. As a result, there is a general schema of current hybridization of thought and action that creates spaces using any available possibility (historical paths, instant uses, natural environment, every day life) in order to fulfill the current order of tourism.
3. Probably, in the era of globalization, there is a fusion between the eastern and the western logic, which the built environment is trying to digest.

Considering that identity constitutes a social good according to the specific historical paths of each region, from where "the desired" collective memory "it is selected and projected" onto the built environment, in respect to the symbolism of the architectural heritage in favour, and that simulacra is every architectural representation, traditional Greek architecture provides the "authentication" certificate to invite tourism.

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