

Proceedings
of the
International Conference on
Changing Cities II
Spatial, Design, Landscape & Socio-economic Dimensions

Under the aegis of

The Department of Planning and Regional Development, University of Thessaly

The Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate Change

The Greek Ministry of Tourism

EDITOR:

Prof. Aspa Gospodini,

University of Thessaly

Porto Heli, Peloponnese, Greece, June 22-26, 2015

TITLE **Proceedings of the International Conference on Changing Cities II:
Spatial, Design, Landscape & Socio-economic dimensions**

ISBN **978-960-6865-88-6**

Copyright 2015 Grafima Publ.

Grafima Publ.
Str. Eksadaktylou 5
54635 Thessaloniki, Greece
Tel/Fax: 2310-248272
www.grafima.com.gr,
E-mail: grafima@grafima.com.gr

Traditional settlements and the architecture of tourism. The case of Santorini

D. Monioudi-Gavala

University of Patras

Department of Cultural Heritage Management and New Technologies (Agrinio)

Corresponding author: E-mail: dmoga@upatras.gr

Abstract

This paper examines the ways in which significant heritage settlements of the past are managed in the current era of tourist development. It focuses on traditional settlements and the architecture of tourism through the study of Santorini. An effort is made to show the interrelations in the handling of historic groups of buildings and architecture, given that the historical continuity and preservation of the architectural heritage can and must co-exist with development. The place of modern architecture in relation to pre-existing buildings is examined. Questions are raised about the effectiveness of the measures taken to protect these buildings and their compatibility with the cataclysmic changes taking place.

Keywords: traditional settlements; architecture; tourism; Santorini.

1. TREATMENT OF HISTORIC SETTLEMENTS IN GREECE

Although many of Greece's isolated monuments became objects of state protection as early as 1832, the problem of preserving settlements with particular historical interest did not come to the fore until comparatively recently, when experts were given the opportunity to express their views. Considerable work has been done in this regard over the past forty years, given that until the 1970s, Greek legislation had made no provision for the active protection of such settlements through administrative or other measures. A landmark year in the preservation of this heritage was 1975, the year of European Architectural Heritage. Whereas up to 1970, the usual methods of intervention in a town or city involved either building or widening roads, with speculation over the constant increase in the height of new buildings, this new means of protecting our architectural heritage changed the entire picture. What was old ceased to be identified as out-dated; new reconstructions generated income and altered city maps. A new world was created in the Ministry of Culture, in the Ministry of the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, and in other public and especially private organisations.

A significant number of historic city centres and traditional settlements in Greece were refurbished and upgraded through urban development, including the creation of pedestrian zones and selected building renovations. Some have received international recognition, for example by Europe Nostra and others.

2. REVIEW OF MODERN DEVELOPMENT

The traditional settlements of Santorini bear witness to a unique architectural heritage (figures 1-4). They express the historical conditions that created them, including features from earlier styles and functions. During the decades that preceded the mid-20th century, and using the island's ordinary methods and materials, its inhabitants created unique residential groups. In July 1956, the island suffered a series of devastating earthquakes that caused much of its population to move to Piraeus and Athens. Santorini then became the object of decisive state interventions through the post-seismic reconstruction and the Hellenic Tourism Organisation's [HTO] programme. In recent decades, and especially after 2000, Santorini has become one of the top tourist destinations worldwide. In the past few years, it has witnessed massive changes, with the private sector as arbiter.

The demands of tourism generated significant construction activity on new sites and rebuilding on existing ones, entailing a change of usage and style. Changes in the built environment of Santorini were recorded, as were discussions about sustainable future development.



figure 1. View of Oia before the earthquake of 1956. Source: D. Monioudi-Gavala, 1997, *Santorini. Society and Shelter, 15th-20th century*, Bellonias' Foundation.

3. POST-SEISMIC RECONSTRUCTION

The earthquakes of July 1956 caused large sections of the settlements along the caldera to slide into the sea, carrying buildings with them. The heaviest damages were sustained by the neoclassical or late-Renaissance-style buildings with trough-shaped vaults, while dugout and vaulted structures suffered less. The task of rehabilitating the earthquake victims was undertaken by the Settlement Service [1] which established the Settlement Bureau of Thera [2] to organise the reconstruction on-site.

The island's post-seismic reconstruction was not an easy undertaking. To provide for the earthquake victims, areas were expropriated for reconstruction. A total of eleven settlements were extended and one was moved entirely to a new location at Kamari. About one hundred homeless families were included in the reconstruction programme, as were a number of public buildings such as schools, kindergartens, community centres and stables [3]. This was an organised building programme, the parameters of which have been presented and assessed [4].

The intention of the reconstruction design was to apply modern architecture, with memories from tradition, through buildings integrated into the old fabric of towns and settlements. According to Savvas Kontaratos, the architects were aiming to allude to a model through the modernism by which they had clearly been influenced. One example of such a borrowing from traditional forms was the barrel vault.

The self-housing system was used, by means of which the state provided the lot free of charge to the beneficiary. The design, supervision, financing and construction were secured. The creation of lots was based on a plan and entailed two types of lots with dimensions of either 10x17 m. or 8.5x20 m., and with the same area (170 sq.m.). Two basic types of housing were created, both with the possibility of future extension, providing nuclei awaiting the personal intervention of the user. Inasmuch as, for anti-seismic reasons, the buildings could have only one floor, extensions would necessarily reduce the open space around them. The urban plan was characterized by geometricity, and vehicular traffic was separated from pedestrian by the creation of sidewalks. Small squares were interpolated as a memory of the broad squares in old villages. Both the architecture and the urban scale were clearly influenced by Le Corbusier.

The buildings of the post-seismic reconstruction were not well received by their users: protests were registered by the island's inhabitants over the use of vaults, standardisation and simplicity. The building problems that arose (mainly in the damp-proofing) were due to the lack of skilled crews. The most negative stylistic change came later, when additions to the height totally undermined the morphology of the initial buildings. Although the designs provided for ground-floor housing, the later possibility of adding a floor introduced solutions that failed to respect the intentions of the initial architect and produced aesthetically poor results. Was it, however, easy to prohibit such an addition, given the changing needs of the home-owners? The solutions chosen were criticised on the theoretical level as well [5]. The writer agrees with the response of Constantinos Decavallas to criticism of the stylistic approach: "We did not copy houses that had existed before the disaster. We arrived at the same conclusion, but by a different path. The restrictions were specific – there was a lack of materials, transportation and skilled workers. We tried to create modern architecture for Santorini, using our experience, tools and knowledge at that particular period. We did not want to build traditional 'quaint' architecture, as we have been accused of doing, because we were not interested in such a thing... Indeed, the end result suggests that we were taught by the architecture we found; we studied it and based ourselves on the way in which it had been created. We sought to create pictures and architectural compositions in the settlements, not just to juxtapose features. In this, I believe, we succeeded..." [6].



figure 2. View of Pyrgos in a photo by Elli Sougioutzoglou-Seraidari (Nelly' s) between 1925-1930. Benaki Museum, Photograph Archives.

4. THE HTO PROGRAMME FOR OIA

The HTO programme for Oia, an exemplary project that received international praise (the Europa Nostra 1980 award, Architecture Biennale Sofia 1986), provided a model for the inhabitants of the settlement. It included the repair of about 60 dwellings with traditional architecture and their conversion into guesthouses with a total capacity of some 200 beds. Regarding the lots on which they were built, HTO signed ten-year leases with the option of a six-year extension. The houses were located in small clusters in the central part of the settlement, in Perivola and on Ammoudi Bay. The works were carried out between 1976 and 1991 [7].

Under the programme, in addition to the houses that were repaired and converted into guesthouses, an old coffee shop became an information bureau and engineers' office and an old store was used to house a textile factory established by HTO. Important settlement structures were restored, such as churches and mills, a main square was created and many sidewalks. Infrastructure projects were undertaken (sewage network), as were reservoirs and wells to improve the water supply.

The principles of this architectural intervention were as follows:

- retention of all of a building's stylistic features,
- preservation of its functional structure. If the buildings had been residences and were converted into independent guesthouses, the conversion of the ancillary space into a bathroom was sufficient to adapt it to the new usage.
- damaged sections were replaced in their initial style, as testified by old photographs and any other available data.
- visible interventions were minimised.

Regarding restoration and anti-seismic protection, shotcrete was applied to 70% of buildings. Local materials were used and local crews, who created a tradition. The example of HTO was then followed by private citizens, who gradually repaired their houses and remodelled them for tourism purposes.

5. THE LEGISLATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Protection of the Cycladic architectural heritage began in 1978 when, by virtue of Presidential Decree (PD) 19.10.1978 (Government Gazette [GG] 594Δ), some settlements on the Cycladic islands were designated traditional, among which were six on Santorini. The initial decree was followed by PD 11.5.1989 (GG 345Δ) with special terms and restrictions on building. The decree regulated coverage; the land-building ratio (LBR) required that large building volumes be split, or completely separated; it stipulated the maximum number of floors (two), the maximum height of structures and the stylistic obligations (dimensions and ratios of openings etc.). It likewise specified the bodies responsible for monitoring architecture. For Oia, PD 28.6.1993 (GG 817Δ) set out the building terms and restrictions for that particular settlement; this decree was for many years the main instrument controlling the growing pressures.

Table: Legislation on the traditional settlements of Santorini

PD.	DATE	GG	Theme
PD	19.10.1978	594Δ	Designation of the following settlements as traditional: Thera (Fira), Vothonas, Emporio, Pyrgos, Oia and Megalohori. Determination of the terms and restrictions on building.
PD.	17.6/14.7.1988	504Δ	Designation of the following settlements as traditional: Akrotiri, Exo Gonia, Episcope Gonia, Imerovigli, Karterados, Mesaria, Finikia, Tholos, bays of Ammoudi and Armeni. Specification of minimum lot size, LBR (graded), splitting up of building surfaces larger than 240 sq.m, maximum number of floors two; maximum height 7.5 m., wooden doors and window frames in the traditional style; colour of building: white, use of

			indigo. Regarding placement of the building on the lot. -It should not affect the urban fabric of the settlement. -The basic views of common ground and adjoining lots should be protected. -Downgraded empty spaces should not be created between neighbouring properties.
PD	11.5.1989	345Δ	Determination of the terms and restrictions on building in Oia.
PD	28.6/20.7.1993	817Δ	Determination of the terms and restrictions on building in Oia. Separation of the settlement into zones (central section, remaining section). Determination of minimum lot size, LBR (graded), total surface of building floors <400 sq.m., splitting of volumes. Determination of settlement functions (numerically), Colours: white or ochre.

In addition to the traditional settlements, the Santorini network includes newer seaside villages such as Kamari, which was created on the island's east side after the 1956 earthquakes with a nucleus of post-seismic reconstruction, and Perissa, a resort community on the southeast coast. Construction in recent decades ought to have provided an opportunity to create modern architecture, without the stylistic restrictions applicable to traditional settlements. Despite which, stylistic restrictions led to reproduction of the 'neo-traditional' model in these communities as well.

6. FROM WINE CELLARS TO SMALL LUXURY HOTELS

The successful example of the HTO intervention, the legislation and the procedures imposed by state supervision bodies ensured the island significant protection over a fairly long period. The move of overhead networks underground was beneficial to the appearance of Oia. This project is expected to be extended to other settlements as well. Meanwhile, the mass influx of tourists in previous years, and the resulting creation of similar expectations for the future, has increased the number of tourist accommodations and other facilities by leaps and bounds.

Notwithstanding the many examples of good restorations of existing buildings, the alteration of the settlements' traditional shell is a fact. What saves the situation somewhat is that the limited height of the buildings, the splitting up of the volumes, and the businessmen's awareness that the 'traditional' and good aesthetics 'sell' have created a tourist setting in which the fine line between the authentic and the copy is indiscernible. But the heavy burden placed on the island augurs serious dangers for the future, unless appropriate measures are taken. Santorini's worst enemy is the lack of moderation and the prevailing excesses. These excesses have seriously damaged Fira while also constituting a grave threat to the settlements of Firostefani, Imerovigli and above all Oia. The extension of the existing dugout buildings, which is prohibited by law, as well as the creation of new ones, should be controlled and stopped, as should the continuing residential expansion to the detriment of the vineyards, which applies to the island as a whole. The enormous traffic problem created by vehicles of all types at the height of the tourist season must likewise be controlled and stopped. The abandonment of most settlements during the winter months should also be dealt with.

What were the changes of usage in traditional settlements? The existence of outdoor spaces around the buildings of the past favoured their conversion into resort accommodations. By merging once independent older dwellings, it has been possible to create clusters. Every older residential unit became part of a new grouping. The dugout rooms of wine cellars (called *kánaves*) in which wine was produced and stored, with their arched entrance and barrel-vaulted ceiling, were usually transformed into elegant suites. The merged outdoor spaces became public courtyards. These clusters were carefully designed and contain no jarring notes. Wine cellars became private homes or suites in small luxury hotels. Water was provided by desalination systems that permitted the abolition of the traditional underground tanks which, in some tourist accommodations, were

imaginatively converted into usable space or pools. Courtyards acquired pools, creating a significant change in the use of water. The 'non-visible' storage of water became a conspicuous pool and water, a scarce commodity in the old days, became a basic feature of leisure activities. The old was conquered by the new through what Dimitris Pikionis called 'ingenious adjustments' (regarding re-use of the Fortress in Rethymno, 1966). A multitude of dugout buildings have been, and continue to be, converted into tourist accommodations and homes, with very good results [8], lending them new life and a modern look.

Despite the many problems, the island has won high marks on the global tourist market. In the end, the small scale of the buildings and what is for non-experts the indistinguishable line between the authentic and the neotraditional, together with businessmen's efforts to ensure high aesthetics and offer quality services, have saved the situation. But for how long? In the meantime, authenticity has certainly been lost.



figure 3. Ascending from Gyalos to Fira. In the right hand corner of the photo can be seen the mansions before the earthquake of 1956. Source: D. Monioudi-Gavala, *op.cit.*

7. TOWARDS WHAT CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE?

A sentence taken from the Internet advertisement for a Santorini hotel reads: ‘...rooms built in the cave style, elegant Cycladic decoration’. The photograph shows a dugout space that has become ‘cave style’. The legislation and the special construction regulations established by state agencies led to reproducing the styles of the past and inhibiting the creation of modern architecture. The special construction regulations and their implementation – even inadequately – were certainly one way of ensuring an average standard of buildings that could coexist with the remnants of history. It did not, however, permit cultivation of a creative relationship with the architectural past and renewal through the harmonious integration of contemporary buildings without resorting to superficial stylistic imitation. The realisation by people in the tourist industry that the ‘old’ attracts business led to production of the neotraditional on a broad scale. The morphology of the ‘traditional’ was overused, while ensuring profits. In some cases, the imitation is so ‘successful’ that it is difficult to distinguish between the authentic old and the new.

Is there an opportunity today to propose new solutions, beyond the narrowly morphological specifications contained in the special regulations? On tourism-related buildings in particular, the aesthetic sense of the Greek businessman appears divided: it walks a tightrope between reproducing the styles of the past, mainly traditional architecture, and neoclassicism. It also embodies the modern (such as visible pools and hydromassage facilities), as proof of the knowledge of international standards. Although there is certainly some hesitation over the creative interpretation and rendering of the old, it is even greater with regard to innovation. And even if, for the experts, modern architecture is lacking and visitors are ‘misled’ on authenticity issues, for the users, the picture is absolutely satisfactory, as can be concluded from the comments published in the electronic media. The limited height and splitting of the building volumes that were imposed by legislation have had a positive effect, at least in the case of the Cycladic islands. The state, through the agencies that monitor architecture, failed to provide an opportunity for architectural renewal, leading to reproduction of the styles of the past, but at least it saved the valuable feature of the human scale.

One example of architectural renewal is the Grace Hotel on Santorini [9]. In 2011, the judges of the World Architecture News Awards, which bring top-ranking architecture to public attention worldwide, short-listed it among the six best boutique hotels in the world with the following remark: ‘The no-frills design permits the unique landscape to dominate the setting. The hotel provides a modern version of the local architecture which is characterised by economy of space, radical simplicity and natural lines’.

How has private initiative in tourism by entrepreneurs, architects and other technical professionals shaped the built environment in recent years? For this is indeed what has happened. The aim has been to create high-level aesthetics. Minimalism is used extensively to do this. It likewise aims to satisfy the demand for luxury accommodation, a factor altogether recent and unrelated to the island’s historic past. What policies should be implemented for the built environment in order to ensure its sustainability? The view of G. Aesopos, Greek commissioner at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2014, is enlightening: ‘It should be sober, fundamental and ascetic to some degree. We must bring in something new and radical on an international level, putting forward features of our culture that have always been here and were forgotten during the period of excess.’



figure 4. Ammoudi and Oia before the earthquake of 1956. Benaki Museum, Photograph Archives.

8. AFTERWORD

In historical settlements, modern buildings should be constructed that are representative of our era and its aesthetic views. They should be constructed in such a way that the buildings will enrich the historical environment and become one with it without downgrading or damaging it, but also without imitating it. What is ultimately required is to balance these demands, so that the artistic and aesthetic multiformity of the buildings in a community can end up in a happy combination that will simultaneously outline its evolution through history. There are ways in which this can be achieved successfully.

References

1. With A. Spanos as director, followed by P. Vasileiadis.
2. The design group was made up of architects: C. Decavallas, S. Kontaratos, V. Bogakos and N.

Sapountzis. Other young architects in special fields of study and application also supported the project.

3. Decavallas C., 2007, Earthquake, town planning outcome and protection of buildings, traditional and non-traditional alike. The reconstruction of Santorini. *Mediterranean City after earthquakes*, 152-161 (in greek).
4. Lavvas G., 1972, Anonymous and modern architecture. *Architecture in Greece*, 6, 49-59, Kontaratos S., 1972, Modern and vernacular architecture. Another view of the rebuilding of Santorini. *Architecture in Greece*, 6, 60-62, Aesopos G. -Gyftopoulos St. -Philippa K. -Hatziyannouli M., 1992, Return to Santorini. *Architecture in Greece*, 26, 42-46 (in greek), Philippidis D., 2007. The revenge of modernism. Architecture in Santorini, *Mediterranean City after earthquakes*, 162-169 (in greek).
5. Lavvas G., *ibid*.
6. Aesopos G. - Gyftopoulos St. -Philippa K. -Hatziyannouli M., *op. cit*.
7. Architects in charge: P. Bozineki-Didoni, N. Agriantonis, E. Papazoi, Ch. Anastassopoulos.
8. The Tsitouras Collection, Perivolos. Kyrini, and other tourist accommodations or houses.
9. Architects N. Travasaros, M. Philippidis, M. Nikoloutsou.