

## GREECE AND THE YEAR OF EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE 1975

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**ABSTRACT** History is present all over Greece. Our land is filled with historic ensembles and elements bearing the memory of successive historic periods. Nonetheless one could not maintain that the policy of heritage protection has been sufficient over the nearly 150 years following the establishment of the Modern Greek state. The development of a movement for heritage protection by Greek intellectuals and special scientists, as well as the opportunities for public dialogue and questioning created by the proposal of the Council of Europe to establish 1975 as the European Heritage Year (EAHY 1975), contributed substantially to the realization of this necessity on the part of the politicians and the broader public. Despite the fact that our country was just emerging from seven years of obscurantism and lack of democracy, experts from Greece became actively involved in cultural protection by organizing scientific meetings and a large thematic exhibition which was taken in Greece's largest cities and in Cyprus. They also participated actively in the Amsterdam conference with their papers. This activity yielded the important result of including the notion of protection and spatial planning for the first time in Greece's modern history, by means of an explicit disposition in the new Constitution of 1975.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. HERITAGE PROTECTION CONDITIONS BEFORE 1975

The EAHY 1975 contributed in many ways in promoting cultural heritage in Greece. In order to understand its influence and role within the context of this very interesting anniversary edition by ICOMOS Austria, we consider that a concise report of the situation before 1975 is in order. The sensitivity and anguish of the Greek people for their heritage is of a piece with their culture and traditions, but legislative acts on the protection of our cultural heritage began to exist after the national liberation and the acknowledgement of Greece as an independent state in 1830. The first Law to mention the issue of protection which should be mentioned at this point is *Law 10/22. 5. 1834 on the Scientific and Technological Collections, on the Discovery and Preserving of Antiquities and their Use*. This law regulated issues pertaining to public museums, private collections, and the transport of antiquities, prohibiting "under all circumstances" the exportation of ancient objects. An ensuing law, the law ΒΧΜΣΤ of 1899 "on antiquities," determined that movable and immovable antiquities since the very beginning of time, belong to the state.

Issues on the property, protection and transfer of antiquities were more amply determined in 1932 by means of Law 5351 (Government Gazette 1932). This Law recognized the state's possession of antiquities and it has ever since been considered that all antiquities belong to the state. The category of protected goods includes works of architecture, sculpture, painting and any art, which were created up to 1830, the year of the establishment of the Modern Hellenic State. However, the law did not stipulate the necessary institutional tools in order to exercise a general policy on the protection of heritage, with priority given to the natural environment, urban heritage and cultural landscapes. A serious factor threatening this protection was the fact that the new urban-planning designs, adopting in priority the principles of neoclassical urban planning and the European symmetry models, ignored the historic structure of the fabric of the Greek cities, as this had been formed over the last few centuries; this resulted in the destruction of con-

siderable buildings and urban ensembles, such as 85 out of the 150 Early Christian, Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches in Athens. The main reason behind this was that the predominant ideology at the time prioritized the preservation and promotion of the relics of classical Athens, while being indifferent to the subsequent historic periods. Later on, the 1929 General Construction Rules of the Hellenic State (Presidential Decree of 3 April 1929, Government Gazette 1929) allowed for a more flexible management of the man-made constructed environment and permitted certain possibilities in order to adapt to new constructions inside the historic fabric (Sarigiannis 1978). After World War II, *Law 1469 on the Protection of Constructions pertaining to special Categories and Works of Art created after 1830* (Government Gazette 1950) was established in the year 1950. This Law extended the protection of monuments and works of art created after 1830 and in regions of historic and particular natural beauty. Law 5351 of 1932 and the additional law 1469 of 1950 constituted the basic protection framework in Greece until 1975.

As one can realize, this framework was incomplete, because it was not combined with measures and policies of a broader spatial design. During the seven-year dictatorship until 1975 in particular, this absence of an integrated protection policy allowed for the systematic destruction of the natural and historic man-made environment in Greece (Sarigiannis 2007). It is very difficult to proceed to a systematic assessment of this destruction, given that much was never seen by the public eye. The ensuing examples are indicative of the manner in which the government at the time dealt with this issue:

- the seaside walls of Piraeus (walls of Conon), which were filled with earth, or painted white in 1969–1973 by the then mayor of the city (*Ephimerida syntakton*, January 10–11, 2015, 17);
- the demolition of the church of Soter (San Salvador) in Heracleion at Crete in the early 1970's. The temple, a Venetian basilica of unique value, was turned into a mosque (Valide Camii) during Ottoman rule (*To Vima*, March 7, 1976, n. 7910, 12);
- the demolition, at the same period, of a group of marble fountains, a gift from the mother of Mohamed Ali to the city of Kavala, his homeland (Sarigiannis 2007);
- the demolition, during the same time, of two characteristic modern buildings in Athens, villa Margarita and the Averof prisons.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the over-exploitation of urban land and the chasing after profit, imposed by the post-war socio-economic context and reinforced by dictatorship politics, altered definitely the shape of built space and its uses in historic cities and villages and in priority to Athens, Thessaloniki and other large cities. The uncontrolled and intense building, exacerbated through the system of exchanging plots and the increase in the height of urban constructions, changed the physiognomy of the historic urban centers. The result was the homogenization of the physiognomy of Greek historic centers, the loss of the distinctive morphology of cities and villages, which ceded its place to the crowding of buildings and aesthetic decline. In the same period, the arbitrary settlement of internal immigrants to the surroundings, of the large urban centers was to integrate natural and cultural sites, ensembles and monuments without any differentiation and any attempt at protection was very hard to make. Finally, the emergence of tourism and vacationing contributed to the creation of important groupings of vacation residences, tourist services and hotel infrastructure, thus exerting considerable pressure on natural and historic landscapes.

In conclusion, the request for protection as a government policy was adopted only in 1975. However, the acknowledgment and defence of architectural heritage occupied Greek intellectuals, architects and other specialists, as well as their scientific bodies. Greek experts have participated and contributed in the *International Congress of Athens 1931* (with its 1931 *Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments*) and in the *IV<sup>th</sup> Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne* with its *CIAM Athens Charter of 1933* (Technical Annals 1933). Eustathios Stikas, architect and director of conservation of the Ministry of Education, co-signed, on behalf of the Greeks, the Venice Charter. Unfortunately, its propagation and practical application did not begin immediately. As we shall see further below, following the upheaval of the dictatorship years, the Charter's translation into Greek was published and it immediately started being taught in the country's Schools of Architecture. The two Architectural Schools at the time, that of

the Athens National Technical University and that of the Aristotle University at Thessaloniki, included in their syllabus courses pertaining to the documentation and preservation of heritage. They also promoted research towards the creation of a national registry of monuments.

## 2. INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITY IN THE CONTEXT OF 1975

The year 1975 is of particular importance for modern Greek history. The seven-year dictatorship, which reinforced the authoritative structures of political power, had ceased to exist, leaving many problems behind. Intense building activity in urban centers, the warped and intensive industrialization and the unplanned touristic development during the dictatorship caused the development of grave problems in the man-made and natural environment and in the quality of living (Komilis 1975). More specifically, the destructions of monuments and historic ensembles sensitized even more the specialists and the Greek people concerning their heritage, which was at threat. Reaching the final months of the dictatorship, it became evident to the sensitized Greek citizens and special scientists that there was an obvious need for the protection of cultural heritage. The movement's demands for protection had now matured, and they were highlighted as part of the broader demands expressed by the Hellenic people for the democratization of public life. The bodies of scientists and specialists now asked for the adoption of a modernized legislation and for the creation of a competent body of public administration, for the establishment of a research center for the registration and evaluation of modern monuments and traditional settlements, the organization of special protection studies on all levels, so that scientists and specialized technical experts could undertake this work. These demands were expressed primarily by the Technical Chamber of Greece, the Pan-Hellenic Association of Architects, the Association of Greek Archaeologists, and by ICOMOS Hellenic.

At the beginning of 1974, after *Europa Nostra* and the EAHY 1975 contacted the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, it was decided that the *National Committee of Architectural Heritage* would be founded under the presidency of the Minister of Culture, in order to organize the participation of Greece in the events for the year 1975. The National Committee had 14 members, including Professors Paul Mylonas, Nikos Moutsopoulos, Dionyssios Zivas, all founding members of ICOMOS Hellenic and today honorary members of ICOMOS.

Professor Paul Mylonas, represented the National Committee in the *Conference of the International Committee of Architectural Heritage*, which convened in Paris on the 14–15 May 1974, where Greece's participation in the events for the year 1975 was announced. The restitution of democracy in Greece, in July 1974, allowed the National Committee to proceed to a preliminary program and express to the democratic government the demand which was now mature enough for a long-term program for the protection of cultural heritage. After the sterile nationalism and catastrophic behavior of the dictators, for whom only classical antiquity mattered, it was very important to restore the meaning and the varied content of cultural heritage in Greece. In its report, addressed to the new, democratic government, the Committee stressed the fact that special attention should be given not only to the heritage of classical antiquity, but also to the protection of the heritage of intermediate and modern periods, as well as of historic villages and cities, as these were of equal importance (Technical Chamber of Greece 1975a, 5–16). The basic propositions of the Committee were:

- A photography exhibition of representative cases of monuments, ensembles and sites with the cases of destruction and of good practice;
- the issuing of stamps;
- an artistic contest for the sign for the year 1975;
- editions of calendars on the subject of the year 1975;
- the publication of a monthly bulletin by the *Technical Chamber of Greece*, mentioning the activities of the international Committee.

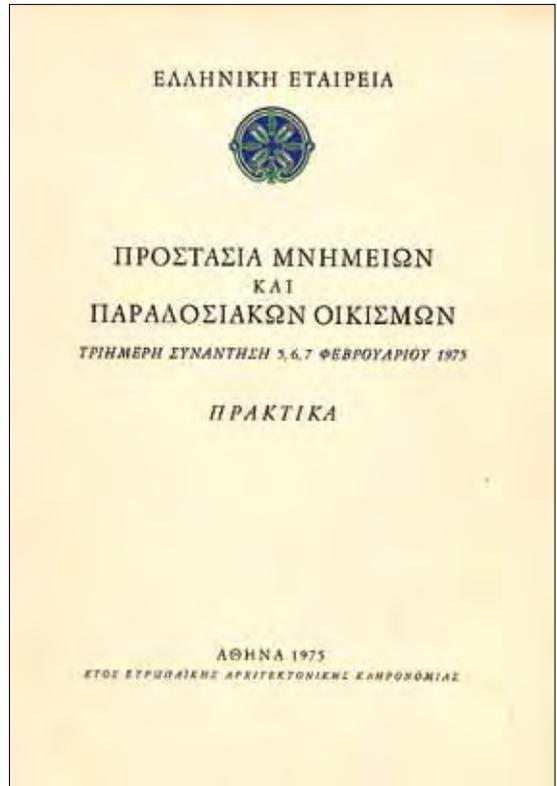
The determination of 1975 as the EAHY 1975 by the Council of Europe came at an opportune moment and constituted a great occasion to reinforce and promote all aforementioned demands for the protection of the natural and cultural environment (Kontaratos 1975).

Through the initiative of the Elliniki Etairia, the National Gallery of Athens hosted the first scientific meeting on the 5–7 February within the context of the EAHY 1975 (Fig. 1), on the subject of *The Protection of Monuments and Traditional Settlements* (Elliniki Etairia 1975). During the first day five papers were presented, referring to the direct and urgent need to record and document the representative categories of Hellenic cultural heritage, as well as to the methods for the creation of documentation and evaluation records for monuments and traditional settlements (Elliniki Etairia 1975, 39–92).

The second day included eight papers concerning proposals to create the necessary framework for the protection of heritage and the natural environment (Elliniki Etairia 1975, 95–134). The third day was dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the problems of representative monuments, ensembles and traditional settlements (Elliniki Etairia 1975, 137–193). The result of the scientific meeting confirmed that architectural heritage is a social good and that its protection should concern not only individual buildings, but also the ensembles in which they belong, along with the human activities they involve (Elliniki Etairia 1975, 197–199). A second conclusion was that the Hellenic state was unable to control the ongoing disasters, due to the lack of organized documentation, of relevant documents, of the lack of an institutional framework for protection and the absence of urban and spatial planning. The suggestions made include the creation of registers and files, to be undertaken by an appropriate body, the creation of dispositions for protection in the new Constitution and the creation of special schools for artisans and the proper post-graduate studies on monument conservation and protection. The need was also noted to feed all education levels with special programs in order to protect cultural heritage and ensure the participation of citizens, through democratic procedures, in the planning, design and implementation of protection programs within the context of local administration.

In May, the Technical Chamber of Greece proceeded to the Special Newsletter (Fig. 2) which was sent for information to all its members, meaning 20.000 engineers of all specialties. Its contents concerned:

- a. the action report for the National Committee for Architectural Heritage for 1974;
- b. the translation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> informative bulletin of the Council of Europe (July 1974);
- c. the report of consultative parties of the Ministry of Culture on the historic building ensembles in Greece.



**Fig. 1:** The cover from the proceedings of the 1st scientific meeting hosted from the National Gallery of Athens, on the subject *The Protection of Monuments and Traditional Settlements* (Elliniki Etairia 1975)



Fig. 2: Cover from the Special Newsletter of the *Technical Chamber of Greece* (May 1975)

Following the proposal made by the *National Committee of Architectural Heritage*, the Hellenic Post organization issued on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1975 a series of five stamps, under the theme *Commemorative Edition on Vernacular Architecture*, on the basis of Prof. N. Mouto-poulos's published drawings of stately residences from the historic cities and settlements of Kastoria, Arnaia, Verroia, Siatista and Ambelakia (Fig. 3).

Another important edition was the 9<sup>th</sup> Issue of the annual architectural review *Architecture in Greece* (Fig. 4), whose subject for 1975 was 'The preservation of architectural heritage'.

The issue included some informative articles concerning the year 1975 and some articles with questions on the more modern approaches to the meaning of heritage, within the context of the issues raised by the *Venice Charter* of 1964, whose translation in Greek was also published now for the first time in that issue. The largest part of that special edition included ten articles concerning the tracing, documentation and evaluation of the traditional settlements in Greece, on the basis of respective studies commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior for the following regions: the Dodecanese, Crete, the Cyclades, the Peloponnese and the Southern Ionian Islands, Central Greece

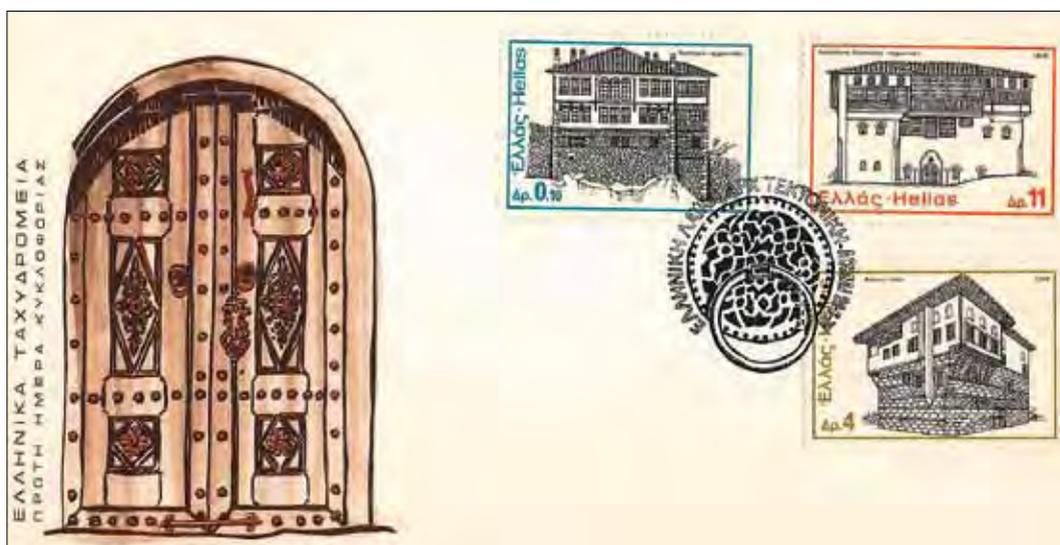
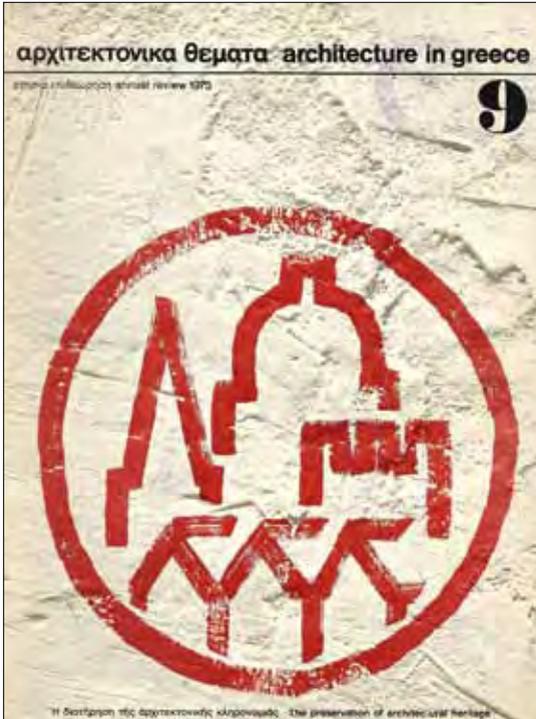


Fig. 3: Series of stamps and envelopes, under the theme *Commemorative Edition on Vernacular Architecture*, issued by Hellenic Post on the June 26, 1975 (Personal archive Sofia Avgerinou-Kolonia)



**Fig. 4:** Cover of the Annual Review *Architecture in Greece 9*, dedicated to the EAHY 1975



**Fig. 5:** The poster of the *Technical Chamber of Greece* for the Exhibition *Our Architectural Heritage – Its Protection being a Social Necessity* (Personal archive Sofia Aygerinou-Kolonia)

and Euboea, Thessaly, the islands of the Northern Aegean, Epirus and the Northern Ionian Islands, Central and Western Macedonia, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. This special issue was exceptionally interesting, as it gathered important information, following the I. P. C. E. standards for the first time, in such a way that this material constitutes an important source of information to this day. Acting under the capacity of the state's technical advisor, the Technical Chamber of Greece undertook most of the initiatives in 1975. In April of 1975, it decided to host an important Exhibition on the subject of *Our Architectural Heritage – Its Protection being a Social Necessity* (Technical Chamber of Greece, 1975 Newsletter, issues 873–6), based on systematic photographic documentation combined with a series of lectures and events on the subject (Fig. 5).

The Exhibition's main goals were (Technical Chamber of Greece 1975b; Technical Chamber of Greece 1976a; Technical Chamber of Greece 1976b; Technical Chamber of Greece 1976c):

- To highlight the elements leading to a deeper knowledge of architectural heritage, deciding to search and document not only the exceptional and individual cultural properties and works of art, but also the often anonymous creations, covering the everyday, the ordinary and depicting the way of life of the Greek people;
- to promote the elements of architectural tradition as irreplaceable sources of inspiration and information on the cultural development of Greece;
- to document the amplitude of the destruction of monuments and forms of civilization for which either the citizens or the competent housing policy bodies were responsible.

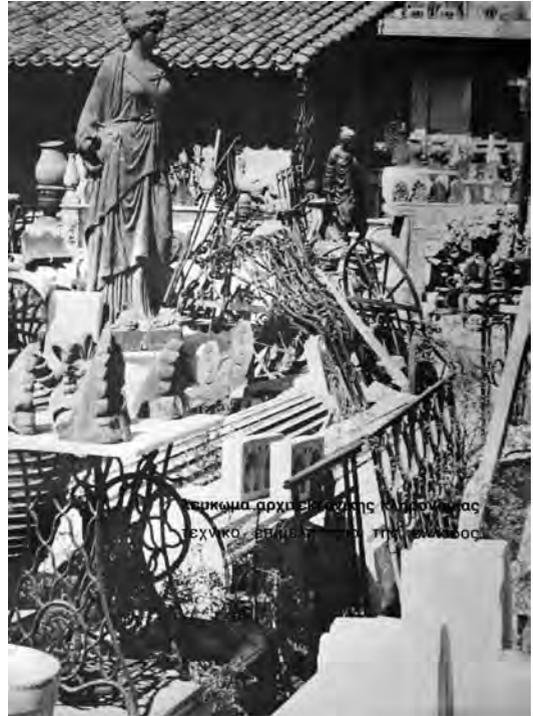
A basic care was to highlight through this Exhibition the relationship between man and his housing environment. The subjects preferred were related to houses, the housing environment, and social events. Moreover, the destruction of the man-made environment was to be described, aiming to reveal problems like abandonment, lack of protection by competent bodies, the irrelevant planning legislation, the lack of programs and unplanned and irresponsible development, and the lack of general cultural education. The Exhibition's theme brought to light the conditions of cultural heritage, within the context of the country's general political, financial and social state. Moreover, it succeeded in constituting an important communication means, so that the broader public and the competent bodies would realize that the protection of our cultural heritage can contribute to the total and harmonious development of Greece. The Exhibition took place from the end of 1975 to February of 1976 in the National Gallery in Athens (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: Photos from the Exhibition, January 9 – February 8, 1976 (Photos: Mary Kavagia)

It then traveled to Thessaloniki, Kavala, Kozani, Larisa, Volos, Lamia, Rhodes, Iraklion, Chania, Patra and Giannena, where lectures also took place and numerous discussions were held, in order to better inform and sensitize young people and the broader public. After this tour through the Greek cities and Cyprus, the Technical Chamber of Greece considered it opportune to re-exhibit in the Zappeion Hall in October of 1976, within the context of the exhibition on housing, organized by the *Hellenic Housing Organization*. The administration of the *Technical Chamber of Greece*, which was elected in July of 1975, called with its documents upon all implicated bodies to visit the Exhibition, in particular the Ministry of Education, and to organize visits. Moreover, it requested Greek radio and television to promote the event and inform the public (Technical Chamber of Greece 1976c) and many daily newspapers referred extensively to this event (*Kathimerini*, January 8, 1976; *Bradyini*, January 8, 1976; *Eleytherotypia*, January 8, 1976; *Ta Nea*, January 8, 1976). The *Technical Chamber of Greece* initially published the catalogue (Fig. 7a) of the 400 photos of the Exhibition and then included the entire photographic material in a specific edition of its monthly bulletin (*Technical Annals* 1978) as a picture book (Fig. 7b).

The lecture of the *Committee of Traditional Settlements and Monuments* of the *Technical Chamber* highlighted the values of the heritage of the intermediate and modern periods, it criticized the insufficiency of state policy to exercise real protection and it requested that a modern and appropriate institutional protection framework be set up, as well as for the *Greek Tourism Organization* to adopt a long-term program for tourism development, respecting our natural and cultural heritage. Moreover, it highlighted the importance of the citizens' participation and the need for education to arm the new generation with the necessary tools.



**Fig. 7a** (left): Cover of the catalogue of the photos of the Exhibition *Our Architectural Heritage – Its Protection being a Social Necessity*. **Fig. 7b** (right): *The cover of Technical Annals* (October–December 1978) on *Pictures of Architectural Heritage*

The Greek delegation which participated in the Congress on the EAHY 1975 in October 1975 was composed of twenty-five persons, with the Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture at its head, as well as with deputies, the mayors of Athens and Larissa, architects, engineers, urban planners and representatives of the *Technical Chamber of Greece* and jurists. The Hellenic authorities co-signed the → *Declaration of Amsterdam* (see appendix). A year later, in September of 1976, the *Technical Chamber of Greece* published in its monthly edition, the *Technical Annals*, the translation of the *Declaration of Amsterdam* (Technical Annals 1976, 70–73) and four very interesting papers read by its representatives in the Congress of Amsterdam:

- “Architectural heritage as a driving force to formulate the built sector of rich countries” (Ch. A. Sfaellos and K. Gartzos), which speaks of the positive role played by heritage in the economic development and mentions specific examples in Greece which are threatened by tourism, such as Delphi and certain Greek islands (Technical Annals 1976, 74–76);
- “Architectural heritage in the year 2000. Some determining factors” (G. Papaioannou), which was a presentation of the research work (1960–2000) of the Athens Center of House Building concerning the city of the future (Technical Annals 1976, 77–81);
- “The legislative framework for the protection of cultural heritage in Greece” (A. Chatzopoulou and J. Stefanou), demonstrating the gaps and insufficiencies in Hellenic legislation and expressing the request to modernize legislation and broaden the notion and the content of protection, to inform and mobilize citizens. (Technical Annals 1976, 83–84);
- “The role of the participation of citizens in the procedures of the protection of Greek architectural heritage” (J. Stefanou), analyzing the arguments in favor of the participation of citizens and delimiting their field of action (Technical Annals 1976, 85–86).

It would not be an exaggeration to state that the movement for the protection of architectural heritage and urban planning and the aforementioned activities inspired the most important event of 1975 on the matter. Indeed, on 9 June 1975, the new Constitution of Greece established through its article 24, expressly and for the first time, the state's obligation to protect the country's natural and cultural environment, as well as monuments and traditional areas. Through these dispositions, the Constitution of Greece created the conditions to broaden the scope and content of protection, as well as to create the means and measures for an effective policy for protection.

### 3. AFTER 1975: A NEW POLICY EMERGED ON THE PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN GREECE

Within this context, important steps were taken. The first was the joint signing of the → *Amsterdam Declaration*. After the 1975 Constitution was signed, a series of modernizing laws defined in greater detail the terms of natural and cultural environment, following the new concepts of the protection and management of cultural environment. Within 1975, the first law was suggested for the urban planning and the protection of the environment, which included, among others, the protection of the cultural environment and of historic spaces. A while later, steps were taken to establish a policy of protection and preservation of the historic centers of the greater cities, like the Plaka in Athens and Ano Poli in Thessaloniki, while a Presidential Decree (GG 594/Δ/13-11-1978) recognized and recorded 400 traditional settlements. There followed the ratification of the *World Heritage Convention* (1981), the signing (1985) and ratification (1992) of the *Granada Convention*.

### CONCLUSION

If we are allowed to draw a conclusion, we can say that today, forty years after 1975, a series of laws are followed in Greece pertaining to construction rules and urban planning, which include the protection of cultural heritage among their goals. They also have the necessary institutional tools at their disposal to establish a broader cultural policy within the context of sustainable development for Greek cities and villages. Moreover, despite the possibilities created, the demands stated in 1975 still remain. The urban and spatial planning continues to face the challenges of commercialization and of the great exploitation of natural and cultural resources. Moreover, within the context of the modern financial and social crisis, it is difficult to establish an integrated preservation and protection scheme. The research and application of modern methods are delayed. The broad participation of citizens is tested. Therefore, a fragmentary approach does not seem to be sufficient in the long term. The protection of the tangible and intangible heritage of Hellenic culture must enter a broader logic and political will, giving it substantial priority, in order to offer our past a creative future of sustainable perspectives.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://news247.gr/eidiseis/mixani-tou-xronou/mhxanh-toy-xronoy-ta-vrwmika-xeria-poy-katedafisan-ton-purgo-athhwn.3231874.html>, accessed January 24, 2015.