

HUMANE

Heads of University Management & Administration Network in Europe

SEMINAR

**Agricultural University of Athens, Harokopio University of Athens &
University of Amsterdam**

Venue: Netherlands Institute at Athens

Friday 19th to Saturday 20th March, 2004

“Sustainable use of ancient buildings?”

Abstracts

Session 1

The consequences of the European Union on the physiognomy of the Greek city

R. Mitoula, Harokopio University Athens (GR)

The physiognomy of the Greek city is shaped by -according to the results of the Laboratory of Urban Design of N.T.U.A. for “the physiognomy of Greek city”- a wide variety of elements of different origin. Some of these are the physically “em-bossed” characteristics, the topography of the soil, the presence of the natural element, the climate etc. Apart from the elements that are determined by geophysical position, a very significant role is played by the cultural and especially the architectural

heritage. Furthermore, the physiognomy of the Greek city is influenced both by political - social - financial systems and by the human factor which is the overall character and the temperament of the Greeks. In addition, it would be a serious omission not to mention the influence of the legislative frame in the shaping of the physiognomy of Greek cities, while the character of Greeks and the specific characteristics of people from different regions of Greece also play a very important part. For example, people from Crete, Macedonia, Cyclades, Thessalia, etc.

Nowadays however, with the accession in the E.U., a new orientation in planning and organizing of Greek cities has taken place based on the European status, while new data is added for research. What is debatable though is the degree of influence the changes and the transformation which will spring from E.U. policies and activities will have on fixed characteristics of Greek urban life. The policies applied for the boosting of the financial and social coherence, for the sustainable development etc. of the European space occupy with the urban surroundings. There have been efforts for a balanced financial and social development. Taking for granted a minimum level of quality of life and offered services and opportunities, there have been attempts for the materialization of relevant programs. The undertaken acts and policies function within urban surroundings and the results are already obvious at the image of Greek cities.

The Historical Buildings of the Agricultural University of Athens - Past and Present

Ms. Angeliki Paraskevopoulou, Agricultural University of Athens (GR)

The campus of the Agricultural University of Athens contains the former home and farmland of the Turkish governor of Athens Hatzi-Ali Haseki (1774-1796) and two early classic buildings of the Otto era. The architecture of Haseki's house and the construction of a fortified wall surrounding the property aimed to protect and defend against possible attacks. Specifically, the windows of the tower like building were replaced by slit windows and the main entrance was located on the first floor and accessed via a drawbridge. Many trees were transplanted from the nearby Olive Grove of Athens and surrounding properties. The soil was fertile and suitable for cultivating vegetables hence the local name Votanikos Kipos which survives till today. A few meters to the east of Haseki's building is an 18th century fountain which is the only Turkish fountain surviving in Athens today. In the mid 19th century part of the building was destroyed and looted. Only an arched stone built section, 13.5 m long by 5.0 m wide, of the ground floor survived. Additional construction to the building's ruins took place during Otto years, and now houses the Department of Floriculture and Landscape Architecture. After the liberation of Hellas in 1833 the property of Haseki passed on to the Hellenic State. In 1838 efforts began to gradually transform the property to a Botanical Garden according to European Standards, hence a stone made cistern was introduced by Christian Hansen. Academia was introduced in 1888 with the foundation of the Triandafillidio Agricultural School of Athens and in 1920 the Faculty of Agriculture was founded. Over the years the area of the University expanded to 25 ha and was renamed the Agricultural University of Athens. Apart from Haseki's building the Agricultural University of Athens contains other buildings of less historical significance, two smaller buildings and a larger one in the form of the Hellenic letter Π that once housed the Veterinary –

Microbiological Institute. All three buildings today have been refurbished; the two former buildings house various departments of the Universities while the latter has also been suitably transformed into an Agricultural Museum. The Agricultural University of Athens has proven to demonstrate great sensitivity towards the use and conservation of its historical buildings thus contributing to the preservation of early Athens town planning heritage.

Session 2

The relevance of the past: problems and prospects of historical and archaeological remains

G. van Wijngaarden, Netherlands Institute of Athens, Athens (GR)

Historical and archaeological remains present serious problems for any organisation. Monuments often limit severely the ways in which buildings can be used, in the sense that spaces and facilities are rarely sufficient. Archaeological remains within a building, or at a building site, slow down construction activities – if they do not stop them altogether. In any case, both historical and archaeological remains usually cause inflated costs and a high degree of inflexibility.

The same remains, however, provide history and status to organisations. The aura of fundamental knowledge and education is strengthened by the apparent timelessness of historical monuments. Good care of archaeological remains, preferably incorporated visibly in new buildings, shows good citizenship and a positive attitude towards culture. Historical and archaeological monuments make universities visible and make them attractive to students and academic staff alike.

With the help of some case studies, this paper will explore the ways in which the problems of historical and archaeological remains can be minimised, while their prospects can be optimised.

Old or new? Background of the choice for a new University Library in the context of the city

R.H.T. Bleijerveld, University of Amsterdam (NL)

At present the University Library of the University of Amsterdam is located at the Singel in the centre of Amsterdam. The Library consists of different buildings that are connected through corridors. The structure is complicated, with many practical difficulties regarding the use of the building. Moreover, there is insufficient space for the special collections. These considerations, together with the wish of the University to centralise the small libraries spread over the city into bigger units, made the university decide to look for a new location for the University Library.

The first option was to move to a building designed by K.P.C. de Bazel in the Vijzel street, a beautiful majestic building from the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the building was too small, some cellars would have to be built at the canal level, which would be a risky operation. Moreover the lay-out of the building was unsuitable for the desired new library function as a Learning Resources Center, with areas to study and meeting places for students. Finally, the University planned to combine the University Library with the Library of Humanities, to create a central university area where the Faculty of Humanities and both libraries could be brought together.

The University found a location where this idea could be realised: the Binnengasthuis area. A new building will be built at the location of a former Theatre School. The building is designed by the Spanish architects Cruz y Ortiz.

This presentation will focus on the exact arguments the University of Amsterdam has used to support the choice for a new in stead of an old building.

Session 3

Old buildings, new arts

E. Freismuth, University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna (AT)

The following words have been attributed to Mahler: „*Tradition is not worship of the ashes, but preservation of the fire*“.

Accordingly Vienna’s University of Music and Performing Arts considers it only appropriate to teach in historical buildings instead of purpose-built blocks.

Buildings with history and tradition provide the perfect setting for an unfolding of the spirit and the soul – a growth of art and its exploration. They bridge the gap between the past and the present, create an atmosphere which enables the individual to escape the narrow confines of personal existence to savour the myriad possibilities of life, the diversity of artistic genius.

Big, generously conceived rooms alone, we feel, can provide the framework for „big generously-conceived“ music, acting singing and filming.

Narrow confines can lead to narrow-mindedness, which, in turn, limits art and cripples creativity.

The goal of this presentation, using the concrete example of Anton-von-Webern-Platz, is to show how we succeeded in giving a new function to a building which was built in 1821/23 to be the Institute of Veterinary Medicine and continued in this original role until 1996.

This was achieved through an enormous effort of cooperation and a vast degree of optimism on the part of all those involved and – as the managing director of the company which owns the building emphasized at the official opening in 1999 – an almost „irrational confidence in everyone’s ability“

We succeeded in bringing this building to life through a new architectural vocabulary, which echoes its new artistic role.