The Monument and the Reconstruction of Memory:
The Case of Athens, from 19th Century to the Present
อนุสาวรีย์และการสร้างขึ้นใหม่ของความทรงจำ: กรณีศึกษา กรุงเอเธนส์
ตั้งแต่ศตวรรษที่ 19 ถึงปัจจุบัน

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Abstract

This paper investigates the implication of the monument in architecture and planning concerning its function and potential in modern discourse from the beginning of 19th century. The study focuses on ruins of urban artefacts that become a memorial representation of the past civilisation, more importantly, be beneficial to those associated with the process. To better understanding, since the Acropolis is viewed as a symbol of the classical spirit and civilisation of Western culture with the great architectural aesthetic of Ancient Greek, three Athenian urban projects are taken as a case study, namely, 'the new Athens' master plan' of the 19th century, 'landscaping around Acropolis' by Dimitris Pikionis of the 1960s, and the current proposal 'Rethink Athens'. By collecting and analysing related maps, images and scholarly writings, the paper formulates an argument that traces of Ancient Greek have been evident in the urban development processes of Athens in the modern era.

From the construction of national image in the early 19th century, the conservation through aesthetic creativity during the mid-20th century, to the commercialisation of urban space in the present time, the exploration of three projects serves as an explanation of the multiple roles of the monument in different circumstances. This examination reveals that orders and forms of urban fabric are substantially involved political forces, individual attitude, and economic condition. Against the notion of prolonging and representing societal values, the original meaning of the monument is obscured and distorted. In truth, the function of the monument depends on the desires of those associate with an authority or hegemonic power at a certain time. As a consequence, what visitors pursue is the ever-changing meaning of the monument rather than the fixed one.

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้ตั้งอยู่บนกรอบความคิดที่มุ่งศึกษาบทบาทและศักยภาพที่แฝงอยู่ของความเป็นอนุสาวรีย์ในงาน
สถาปัตยกรรมและผังเมืองในวาทกรรมสมัยใหม่ตั้งแต่ช่วงต้นศตวรรษที่ 19 โดยนำเสนอถึงซากปรักหักพังของเมืองที่เคย
รุ่งเรืองในอดีต ซึ่งได้กลายเป็นอนุสรณ์ตัวแทนของอารยธรรมและได้สร้างผลประโยชน์ให้กลุ่มผู้มีอำนาจที่เกี่ยวข้อง ทั้งนี้
ผู้เขียนใช้กรุงเอเธนส์ซึ่งเป็นเมืองหลวงของประเทศกรีซเป็นกรณีศึกษา โดยให้ความสำคัญกับอะโครโพลิสเนื่องจากเป็น
สัญลักษณ์ของรากฐานวัฒนธรรมตะวันตกที่มีความสง่างามในเชิงสถาปัตยกรรมของอารยธรรมกรีกโบราณ ผู้เขียนได้
ศึกษาโครงการพัฒนาเมืองที่สำคัญ 3 โครงการ ได้แก่ โครงการผังเมืองใหม่ของกรุงเอเธนส์ ค.ศ. 1932 โครงการปรับปรุง
ภูมิทัศน์รอบอะโครโพลิส ค.ศ. 1960 และโครงการ Rethink Athens ค.ศ. 2012 ทั้งนี้ผู้เขียนได้รวบรวมแผนที่ ภาพตัวแทน
ทางสถาปัตยกรรม และงานเขียนทางวิชาการที่เกี่ยวข้องในการวิเคราะห์เพื่อพิสูจน์ว่าร่องรอยของอารยธรรมกรีกโบราณ
มีอิทธิพลต่อการเติบโตทางกายภาพของกรุงเอเธนส์จวบจนถึงปัจจุบัน

จากกรณีศึกษาทั้งการสร้างเมืองใหม่ตั้งแต่ช่วงต้นศตวรรษที่ 19 การอนุรักษ์จากการสร้างสรรค์สุนทรียภาพ
ในช่วงกลางศตวรรษที่ 20 และการกระตุ้นเศรษฐกิจบริเวณใจกลางเมืองในปัจจุบัน แสดงให้เห็นว่าความหมายของอนุสาวรีย์
ในงานสถาปัตยกรรมและผังเมืองสามารถเปลี่ยนแปลงหรือสร้างขึ้นใหม่ โดยขึ้นอยู่กับวาทกรรมของกลุ่มผู้มีอำนาจทาง
การเมือง การแสดงออกถึงทัศนะส่วนบุคคล และสภาวะทางเศรษฐกิจที่แฝงไว้ซึ่งมิติเวลาและบริบททางสังคมอันมีส่วน
ทำให้เกิดการบิดเบือน หรือลดคุณค่าความสำคัญดั้งเดิมของอนุสาวรีย์นั้น

Keywords (คำสำคัญ)

Monument (อนุสาวรีย์)

Collective Memory (ความทรงจำร่วม)

Athens (กรุงเอเธนส์)

Acropolis (อะโครโพลิส)

Architectural History (ประวัติศาสตร์สถาปัตยกรรม)

Urban Design (การออกแบบชุมชนเมือง)

Introduction

The city … consist[s] … of relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past. … The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls. (Calvino, 1972, p. 9)

Since the last century, the notion regarding the monument and its place in modern discourse has caused as much dissension as agreement. One would argues that recording human memory in buildings or any artefacts has a power to resist its fragility and fragmentation. These objects might be seen as representations of technological and social evolution of urbanism, more importantly, a means of prolonging collective memory of specific people or events. Yet it has to be said that this mental material is not subject to the same processes of ruination as the physical object, it serves the act of forgetting much more successfully. In many instances, the object has survived from natural or deliberate human actions, but never lastingly stood for what it commemorated. This supports the argument that the memory attached to monumental forms is not always static. Over times, it has acquired new meanings being far beyond its original function through ways which it was used to serve the particular intentions of those associated with the process.

The study theoretically concentrates on the function and potential of material objects in regard to the idea of re-inventing assigned memory. This essay examines how ruins of historical and cultural artefacts have been worked as a memorial representation and clarifies how modern men benefit their interest from these ruins in different circumstances. To be more specific, with numerous evidences of historical significance, Athens is taken as a case study. The Athenian Acropolis is a symbol of the classical spirit and civilisation of Western culture, moreover, it forms the greatest architectural and artistic complex bequeathed by Ancient Greek to the world. The essay focuses on three important projects from 19th century to the present which the memory of the same monument has reappeared in disparate forms, namely, 'the new Athens' master plan' of the 19th century, 'landscaping around Acropolis' by Dimitris Pikionis of the 1960s, and the current proposal 'Rethink Athens'. Regardless of their metho- dologies, the case studies show similar intentional apprehension and compre- hension towards the Acropolis and its surrounding monumental antiquities. Interestingly enough, traces of Ancient Greek manifesting a glorious civilisation have constantly affected the capital's urban develop- ment processes in modern period. The meaning of the monument has been constructed every time anew, each time serving a different purpose, by those endowed it with new levels of priority as appropriate to their own perspectives.

With reference to the discussion on the monument, there are different notions over the pos- sibility of reconstruction of the assigned memory. In the Architecture of the City (1982), Aldo Rossi suggests that the monument is a projection of historic moments which consists of the collective consciousness of people in the society. It is considered as a meaningful element that belongs to the public and be associated with sculpture, architecture, as well as, planning and layout. Since social groups have retained their identity through their common memory of particular places, over times, the monument has recorded its past and manifested as an evidence in the present. According to Maurice Halbwachs (1980), however, there is some trouble to agree with Rossi that, in truth, the collec- tive memory relates not just to an existing physical space, but to the certain mental image of the space formed by the social members. In other words, it is not urban artefacts that are the agents of memory but each person's knowledge and experience con- cerning the specific events occurred in the place. Along with the commemorative function of the

monument, referring to Sigmund Freud's words, Adrian Forty (1999) claims that the memory can never be recorded in a physical object for the reason that the assigned memory is also subject to the process of forgetting in term of material decay and ruination. When memory is fixed and immovable, it has fallen into decay (Forty, 2000).

We will never know what the monument will be when it is finished, and for those of our descendants in a remote future who will see the finished work, time will have wrought its own labours, which make every ruins appear venerable and beautiful. (Cited in Gentile, 1996, p.12)

Monument is interdependent with ruins. Once the monument is established on the landscape, however, it takes on life of its own, frequently, resisting what it was originated. As a result of their age-value that embodies the zeitgeist in a successful way, over times, ruins of the ancient have concretised particular deliberate interpretations that constructs collective soul and memory. Since the new generation visits the monument under new circumstances, the idealised memory would be disparately constructed followed from his own knowledge and attitude. The memory is in fact open to adaptation and reinvention.

One of the most important attributes of a vital urban environment is one that has rarely been achieved in past civilisations: the capacity for renewal. Against the fixed shell and the static monument, the new architecture places its faith in the powers of social adaptation and reproduction. The sign of the older order of architecture, in almost every culture, was the House of the Death: in modern culture, it is the dwelling house, or House of the Living, renewable generation by generation. (Mumford, 1938, p. 432)

Civilisation is for different reasons with different ends in view. Despite the fact that all things flow and human is part of an eternally changing cycle of nature, the search for civilisation is persistent (DeCoste & Schwartz, 2000). As indicated by Lewis Mumford (1938), the monument for commemoration challenges the essence of modern civilisation, the

potential for renewal and rejuvenation. Renewal through reproduction is an apparatus of ensuring continuity. Although to forget is to risk the repetition of unpleasant historical moments, throughout history, countries, societies, groups and individuals continually forget in order to function, to collaborate and coexist. On the account of a basis of common relations that societies depend on the assumption of shared experiences and memories, John Ruskin (1849, p. 58) claims that architecture is a means by which a nation constitutes its identity and distinction. Alongside the persistency of civilisation, works of architecture are incorporated in the construction of shared ideals and values among the people, giving them access to history, mythology and religion, as well as, demonstrating traditions and cultural patterns of society as a whole. Accordingly, those associated with the power use architecture, mostly public institutions, as part of the unified nation. In the same line of thought, Walter Benjamin (1968, p. 87) argues that history often frames certain sets of memory and creates distorted versions of events for the sake of those involved in social and political power. In other words, the monument reveals part of what would be remembered and conceals part of what would be forgotten. As a consequence, collective memory, through which fragments of the past entered the present uncontrollably, is a methodology which one could resist the hegemony of history.

(Source: The Creation of Modern Athens: Planning the Myth, Bastéa, 2000)
Figure 1. View of the Parthenon with Mosque by Christian Hansen, 1836. When the king visited the city after the victory against the Ottoman Empire, the Parthenon was deformed into a mosque.

Between mid-15th and the early 19th century, Greece was in an unpleasant time of cultural and economic decline under the rule of Ottoman Empire. In this period, the Parthenon was transformed into a mosque (Figure 1) and the Erechtheion functioned as a harem (Brown & Hamilakis, 2003). After the War of Independence in 1832, Prince Otto of Bavaria, the first king of Greece being enthroned by the European powers as king (Figure 2), intended to remedy the fragility of the country and to forge a strong national image of modern Greek state to the public. Through the formation of a shared history, purpose, and destination among the Athenians, this led to the emergence of the unified Greek nation with one language, one culture, one religion and a common historical consciousness (Aureli, 2013). As part of this intellectual strategy, Athens was hence established as the new capital.

(Source: The Creation of Modern Athens: Planning the Myth, Bastéa, 2000)

Figure 2. Reception of King Otto of Greece in Athens on 12 January 1835 by Peter von Hess, 1839. Painted by the German painter when the Prince was enthroned by the European powers as king.

According to Bastéa (2000), two German architects, Stamatios Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert, were authorised to redesign the new capital Athens. This urban project tended to assume a symbolic role within the political, social and economic transformation, moreover, introduced the modern governance and Greek identity as a continuation of the ancient civilisation.

We believed that the government might later use our survey as a useful preliminary plan for the reconstruction of Athens out of its ruins, whether or not the city should be designated as the future capital of Greece. … In May of the present year [1832] we were actually commissioned by the provisional government to design the drawings of New Athens, keeping in mind the glory and the beauty of the ancient one. (Stamatios Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert, Memorandom accompanying their design for New Athens in 1832, Eleni Bastéa, The Creation of Modern Athens: Planning the Myth, 2000.)

The statement of Kleanthis and Schaubert explains that this programme of city development could be seen as part of a highly politicised debate over the cultural content and character of modern country with the object of restoring Athens after the fragmentation and of representing its former and glorious civilisation. The interesting exploration of Athenian urban evolution is that traces of Ancient Greek have considerably affected this modern city over the last century. The monumental antiquity has devised its meaning due to the desires of those who have an authority or hegemonic power at a certain time.

The master plan of the new Athens, 1832

(Source: The Creation of Modern Athens: Planning the Myth, Bastéa, 2000)

Figure 3. Plan of Athens in 18th century, L.F.S. Fauvel. The map of Athens with the old wall of Ancient Greek, the residence of Ottoman garrison and the old villages.

The project for the new capital of Greece was emerged after the reception of King Otto in 1832. However, a debate of transferring the capital to Athens

revealed the disparity between the vision of metropolitan Athens and its physical inadequacies of a small village (Figure 3). As a result, the master plan for the new Athens was intellectually initiated with the archaeological information of William Martin Leake's map (Figure 4) as a basis for the new plan. The importance of this strategy is that, through the works of architecture and urban planning, the project in itself is capable of achieving an initial political content representing the new nation being built on the ruins of its old order which promotes a new society that would be formed by the communities of the descendants of the ancient Greeks. The reconstruction of memory from the past's fragmentation is a method for political construction of the new centre of power and control.

(Source: The Creation of Modern Athens: Planning the Myth, Bastéa, 2000).

Figure 4. Plan of the Antiquities by William Martin Leake, 1821. The plan influenced the early planning of new capital Athens in 19th century.

The first master plan of the modern capital incorporates Leake's plan of antiquities and lays out of the proposed new city (Figure 5). It follows an overall symmetrical pattern and forms the triangle plan with three axes: on the western side, the axis follows the long wall of Ancient Greek leading to the port of classical Athens in Piraeus, the middle axis directs to the Acropolis hill, and the eastern one points to the Ancient Stadium of Panathenaic (Figure 6). The Royal Palace was the centre of the design, being located directly north of the Acropolis, it overlooked the Lykabettos Hill, the stadium and the ancient

temple on the Athenian Acropolis, the Parthenon. Although the plan was revised afterwards (Figure 7), the fundamental idea to provide the king with the sight of the city's great monuments substantially constitutes rational orders expressing a new governing power of this independent country.
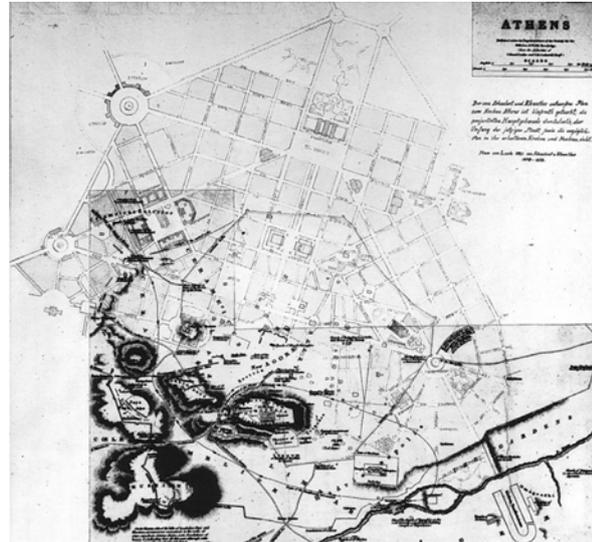

(Source: Athens- from the 19th to the 20th Century, Biris, 1966)

Figure 5. First plan for the New City of Athens by Stamatios Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert, 1833. The plan incorporates the archaeological information of William Martin Leake's map, while it also lays out of the proposed new city.

(Source: Athens- from the 19th to the 20th Century, Biris, 1966)

Figure 6. Final Plan of Modern Athens by Stamatios Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert, 1833. The Royal Palace was the centre of the design in order to provide the king with sights of the great monuments.
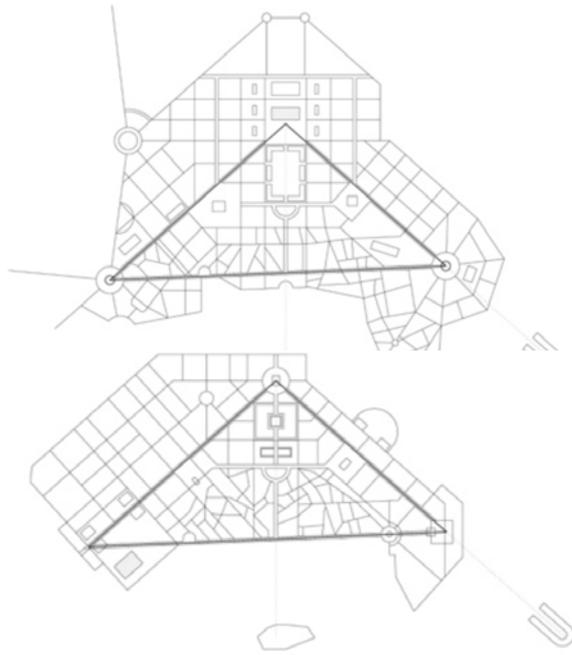
Figure 7. The Evolution of the plan of Athens by Stamatios Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert in 1833 and by Leo von Klenze in 1834. The Plan was revised afterward due to the increase of land price after the plan approval.

This urban project of the capital Athens is not merely significant as being part of the emerging power of the king and various institutions, but also the evolution of the specific architectural language. Neo-classicism is adopted as a methodology since its architectural discourse centres on the revival of the style and spirit of classic antiquity inspired by the classical period that suites the reform's philosophy. This master plan gives constitutional form to a coherent narrative in which the architectural manifestation of neoclassical orders and forms undermined the colonial domination and strengthened the power of the new political authority (Hutchison, 2010).

This 19th century project could be viewed as a successful strategy for re-inventing historical references to Athenian antiquity. By highlighting the cultural legacy of the past civilisation, this particular architectural language and planning uniformity convincingly reframes Athens as the cultural and political image of Greece. Regarding the concept of the monument for commemoration, in this sense, the ancient ruins serve as a means of resisting the

memory during the time of the Ottoman Rule, most importantly, of consolidating the emerging political power of the modern governance which is of service to the various national institutions and the king who had an absolute authority in the country.
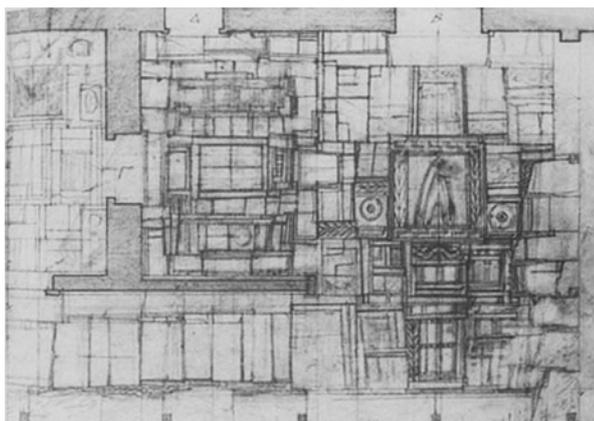
Landscaping of the Acropolis of Athens, 1953
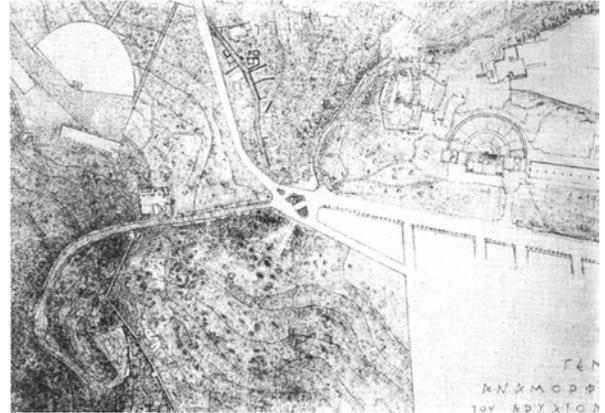
Figure 8. General layout of the pedestrian approaches to the Acropolis.

In the mid-20th century, most of the area in central Athens fell into total neglect since the country had struggled to rebound after centuries of decline and occupation during the Second World War. This led to an improvement programme in 1953 when the Greek government generated a landscaping project for the purpose of enhancing the important historic area of the city, the area around the Acropolis hill (Figure 8). As Agni Pikionis (1993) illustrated, the intervention gave precedence to the archaeological sites involving a network of pedestrian paths providing access to Herodes Atticus theatre, the Acropolis and the Philopappos hill. The goal was not just to ameliorate the areas, but to clear all the existing structures that offended the historical and aesthetic characters (Pikionis, 1994). It could be argued that the project concretises much of the architect Dimitris Pikionis' interpretations. Through the artistic patchwork of antique stones, the continuity of history and the spirituality of Greek tradition seem to be devaluated; monumental antiquities become a representation of individuality.

Figure 9. Initial drawing of Dimitris Pikionis for the Landscaping
of the Acropolis of Athens.

Dimitris Pikionis, architect and Professor of Architecture at Athens Polytechnic, was responsible for this landscaping project that was full of symbolic and historical significance. The arrangement and decoration of pavements in this particular area principally used the fragmentation of leftover marble and clay shards from the destruction of neoclassical Athens (Figure 9 -12). Referring to Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas (2010, p. 3), Pikionis conceived the notion of Greekness as combined by East and West traditions; the West is distinguished by technological advances demonstrating its knowledge and ability to lead while the East is more distinctive in spiritualism. Moreover, Pikionis is associated with formalism and romantic localism as he was convinced that architectural forms are supposed to be ordered in relation to their natural and cultural context (Ferlenga, 1999). Through the hands of craftsmen and the quality of execution, his work on the pavement around the Acropolis has been recognised as both sensitive and well accomplished; the antique fragments are composed into a large collage, the landscape and time, both of past and present.

This Landscaping of the Acropolis of Athens was influenced by modernist ideology. As claimed by Lejeune, J. F. and Sabatino M. (2010), the work could be considered as a resonation of modernism since it reflects a shift away from medieval modes of spiritual organisation and emphasises more of the

development of experimental science. It implies a movement in the direction of a rational scrutiny of traditional practices that suppresses the conventional idea of untouchable historical artefacts. Interestingly enough, it is characterised by intellectual and practical execution which is opposed to the reverence for and emulation of archaic traditions and beliefs.

Figure 10. Pavement of a courtyard.

Despite the fact that the landscaping intervention interested a number of architects, archaeologists, artists as well as the general public, it also faced a number of criticism based on the notion of the inviolability of historical sites. As Papageorgiou-Venetas (2010) noted, Charalambos Bouras, Professor of Architecture at Athens Polytechnic and Chairman of the Committee for the Preservation of the Acropolis, disagrees with the project as it approached the ancient site by deviating from historical continuity. In other words, Pikionis is criticised for establishing his own interpretative relationship with the objects. In accordance with this dissension, those who supports the

notion of the untouchability of the archaeological site describe his work as merely an imitation of the picturesque setting of the legacy.
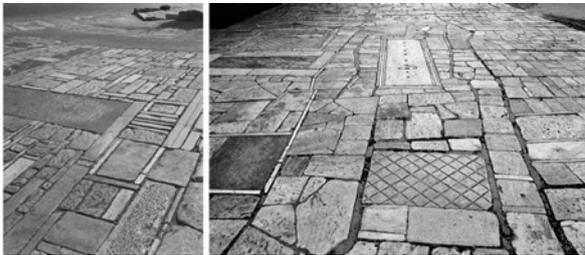
Figure 11. Landscaping of the Acropolis of Athens.

The discussion here unveils that, through the use of recycled stone fragments for pedestrianising the streets, Dimitris Pikionis expressed his modernist perspective towards the cultural patterns and traditional ideologies. The past memory appears to be obscured and distorted since the ruins are graced with new meanings and levels of priority. The historical objects are treated as a design component that manifests the artistic creativity and imagination. In this case, the monumental antiquities are in fact a representation of individual attitudes rather than collective ones.
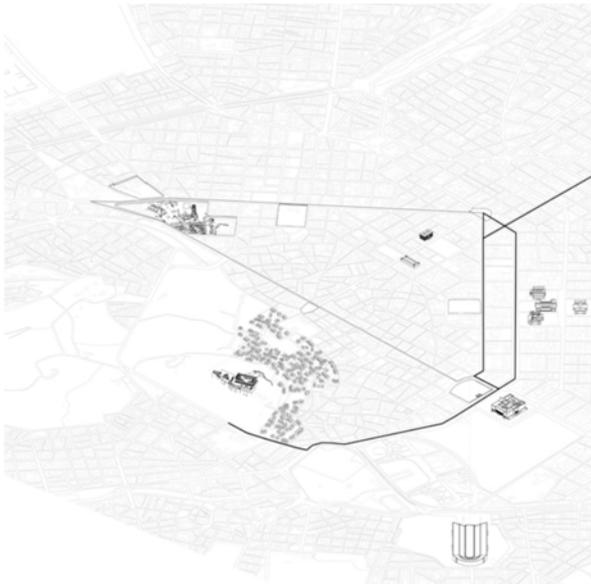
Rethink Athens, 2012

Over the last decade, Greece has experienced the collapse of world economics which causes the abandonment in the large part of Athens. The glorious narrative of the ancient empire is left behind while the capital becomes a reflection of underdeveloped and strengthless nation of the European South. Being part of the improvement plans in 2012, Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, and of Transport, Infrastructure and Networks issued a European architectural competition called 'Rethink Athens', organised and funded by Onassis Foundation. According to Dr. Anthony S. Papadimitriou (2012), President of the Onassis Foundation, the project tends to contribute to the regeneration of the central area

of the capital by introducing a desirable environment of new landscape intervention. By this, it could enhance the quality of public spaces and living conditions for the inhabitants, most importantly, be beneficial to the economic growth of the city. Interestingly, the study of Rethink Athens unveils how a socio-economic development plan intervenes in the restoration of historic narratives of Athens in order to represent the city's modernity and to develop a business strategy from the traces of its past.

With regard to the brief of the competition (2012), the main site of intervention is stated to be the area between the two major archaeological museums, the National Archaeological Museum of the 19th century and the New Acropolis Museum completed in 2007. This implies the new development of the whole Panepistimiou Street, part of Patission Street, down to Vasilissis Sofias Avenue and the pedestrianised street Dionyssiou Areopagitou to the Acropolis (Figure 12). The scope of the project can be viewed as an attempt to create a connection between the modern and the historical parts of the city. Accordingly, the tourists would be greatly benefited through the pedestrianisation of street network from the Parthenon and surrounding archaeological sites to the central cultural and commercial areas.

The first prize of the competition was won by the proposal of the Dutch architectural practice, OKRA Landschapsarchitecten, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2016. It is designed as a large green infrastructure (Figure 13) including high-quality public transportation and spaces for recreation (Figure 14). The work does not seem to serve only the global interests in Athens by creating a new landscape structure for the urban regeneration project, but also the national one that aims for reactivating the local business area of the city. Since the time of political construction of modern Greek republic in 1832, the new neoclassical civic buildings and squares has formed the new Athens on top of its ancient ruins. This project, however, aims not just to make the Athenians inhabit the ruins of the glorious past,

Figure 12. Rethink Athens' intervention areas.

but to engage them with the city, physically and mentally, and recreate it anew (Onassis Foundation, 2012). By providing a contemporary civic spaces for the common people, the intervention could be understood as a challenge to the traditional city design which mainly served the monarchy and aristocracy.

As the winning proposal initiated a network of large green public space in the central part of Athens, the Onassis Foundation admits that it has been criticised for not addressing the roots of the problems. Inhabitants question the project's necessity as it could possibly give rise to traffic congestion and land price. Most crucially, with an insufficient funding, the project could result in another economic failure.

Figure 14. Rethink Athens First Price by OKRA Landschap sarchitecten. The project intends to enhance the quality of public spaces, to recreate better living conditions for the inhabitants and to highlight the historical and cultural image of the city.

Figure 13. Rethink Athens First Price by OKRA Landschapsar chitecten. The proposal is to initiate green public spaces from the city's centre to the Acropolis hill.

In relation to the economic crisis, the traditional role of the Acropolis and archaeological sites appear to be shifted and distorted during the critical phase of modernity. Similarly to the first two examples, in a new time and company in which it find itself, the monument has constantly derived new meanings. The antiquities of Ancient Greek is being used as a

crucial part of the project to symbolise the nation's modernity and to reclaim Athens as a great capital, as well as, to repopulate the city's centre which could bring about the economic benefit from activating administrative, cultural and commercial activities. As a consequence, the competition Rethink Athens is an interesting discourse reflecting the fact that urban artefacts has been concerned less with their original meanings by the people involved but more on the part they play as an instrument of financial advantage.

Conclusion

It can be seen that the monument for commemoration is an ineffective means of preserving collective remembrance. Against the function of commemorating and representing societal values, its original intention is in fact indeterminate. In contrast to the static value of the material object, the nature of memory is instability and depends on a person or a society to remember or to forget. Hence, the memory is able to be adapted and renewed. Interestingly enough, the memory is in truth part of individuals' freedom to obtain the imagination and pleasure, collectively or personally. As a result, what visitors pursue is the variable meaning of the monument rather than the fixed one.

Since the memorial representation through erecting a monument serves the act of forgetting more successfully than the act of remembering, the shared memory of the monumental antiquity of Ancient Greek is able to be reinvented every time anew. The three urban projects outlined endow the monument with new implications, selecting, adding and organising various elements and orders which contradictorily becoming the removal of original meanings. Through the 19th-century Athens' master plan, the new commemorative function was assigned to the urban artefacts in order to devaluate the undesirable memory of the period under Ottoman Empire and also to devise cultural references based on its ancient past. Most importantly, it is an expression of the new political reform of the modern governance. In a

similar condition, the Landscaping of the Acropolis of Athens during the mid-20th century by Dimitris Pikionis reveals his creative yet aggressive idea of treating the ancient ruins as works of art. This work on the pavement substantially associated with the architect's personal comprehension instead of the collective one. Finally, the contemporary project of 2012 is purposed to identify specific historical sites as traces of the past century which could be related to the form of the contemporary city. To recreate better living conditions for the residences and regenerate the local economic area, the Rethink Athens vision shows how the ancient monument is appropriated beyond a representation of either nationality or individuality. Ruins of the ancient have become an apparatus of business.

By investigating the urban case studies from the formation of national image in the early 19th century, the conservation through aesthetic imagination during the mid-20th century, to the commercialisation of urban space in the new millennium, Athens particularly serves as a prime clarification to better understanding the multiple roles of the enduring monument performed in different contexts. The examination, thus, confirms that political motives, personal position, and economical factors have played a significant role to acquire the new meanings. As a result, the collective memory of the exact monument is actually ever-changing.

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