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## THE VENICE CHARTER - THE FOUNDATION OF HERITAGE PROTECTION OR THE BURDEN OF THE PAST? AN ANSWER THROUGH THE GREEK EXPERIENCE

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**ABSTRACT:** In the 60 years since its adoption, the Venice Charter has become a foremost point of reference in the conservation agenda of numerous countries around the globe, especially in Europe. The celebrated document's relation with Greece in particular started upon its very conception; one of the contributors to its compilation came from Greece, namely architect Efstathios Stikas. Yet despite this early connection, the charter's influence in Greek conservation matters was initially minimal, and only after 1974, became substantial. Based on bibliographic and archival research, coupled with personal experience from related duties, the present paper seeks to review and appraise the development of the usefulness of the charter in the Greek context, with emphasis on its post-1974 contribution in four major fields of related action: legislation, judicial affairs, specialized education, and conservation and restoration works. This assessment provides the basis for a conclusive remark as to the acclaimed document's culminating function, along with proposals for an optimization of its future contribution.

**KEY WORDS:** Venice Charter, Greece, legislation, judicial affairs, education, conservation

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## **Introduction**

Few guiding documents in the various fields of postwar scientific progress can claim the fundamental role and worldwide reach of the Venice Charter. A foremost point of reference in the conservation agenda of numerous countries around the globe, it has had, over the 60 years since its adoption, an impact primarily in the European context, Greece not being an exception. The charter's relation with the setting of certain of the most celebrated monuments in the world actually started upon its very conception; one of the 23 delegates who contributed to its compilation came from Greece, namely Efstathios Stikas, then Head of the Department of Anastylosis in the Hellenic Ministry for the Presidency of the Government.

Despite this early connection, the charter's influence in Greek conservation matters was initially minimal. It was only after 1974 that a substantial impact began to be noted, culminating, at present, in an undisputed role in multiple domains of action related to built heritage protection. This development allows for an appraisal of the hitherto usefulness of the charter, and on the present occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its adoption, for an assessment of its culminating function: a foundation of heritage protection or a burden of the past?

The present paper pursues this appraisal, through a systematic review, analysis, and evaluation of the charter's so far impact. Moreover, in the wake of the overall assessment, it shapes a fully documented answer to the vital question of the title, complemented with proposals for an optimization of the charter's future contribution. The material for this task was provided from bibliographic and archival research, coupled with personal experience from related duties in the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and the Department of Architecture of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

## **I. An initial decade of missed opportunities (1964 - 1974)**

In the early 1960s, just prior to the drafting of the Venice Charter, the conservation agenda in Greece was largely determined, not in accordance with an overall policy and specific rules, laid out in laws or doctrinal texts, but on the basis of the priorities and practices set by a single person. The latter was architect Efstathios Stikas (Fig. 1), in his capacity as head of the Department of Anastylosis, one of the two major branches of the state service charged with monument protection<sup>1</sup>.



Fig. 1 Efstathios Stikas (1912 - 1983)



Fig. 2 Charalambos Bouras (1933 - 2016)

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<sup>1</sup> The information provided in this section, as to the leading figures in Greek conservation matters between 1964 - 1974 and their practices, was derived from the detailed discussion of the issue by Bouras Ch. (2010). *I apokatastasi ton architektonikon mnimeion stin Ellada. Chroniko peninta eton, 1950-2000* (The restoration of architectural monuments in Greece. A chronicle of fifty years, 1950-2000) [in:] Ch. Bouras, P. Tournikiotis (Eds.), *Syntirisi, anastilosi kai apokatastasi mnimeion stin Ellada, 1950-2000* (Conservation, anastylosis and restoration of monuments in Greece, 1950-2000) (pp. 30-44). Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation; Mallouchou-Tufano F. (2010). *Nees epistimonikes apaitiseis versus kathieromenes praktikes. Oi periptoseis tis anastilosis tou Ierou tis Samothrakis kai tou Odeiou tou Irodou tou Attikou* (New scientific requirements versus established practices. The cases of the anastylosis of the Sanctuary of Samothrace and the Odeon of Herodes Atticus) [in:] Ch. Bouras, P. Tournikiotis (Eds.), *Syntirisi, anastilosi kai apokatastasi mnimeion stin Ellada, 1950-2000* (Conservation, anastylosis and restoration of monuments in Greece, 1950-2000) (pp. 131, 144, 148). Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation.

Following in the footsteps of his distinguished predecessor, architect-archaeologist Anastasios Orlandos, Stikas directed conservation care under the pressures of the booming tourism industry and the demands of local bodies and politicians. The methods applied reflected solely his attitudes and expertise, to which concepts such as theoretical backdrop, documentation, drafting of projects, review of works, and above all, appraisal of the completed interventions, were totally alien.

When the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments was convened in Venice, in 1964, it was only natural for Greece to be represented by its head figure in built heritage preservation. What is more, his participation in the drafting of the conference's concluding document raised the hopeful prospect of a major change in Greek conservation matters. Yet upon returning to Greece, Stikas did not take action to diffuse and implement the principles he had just acknowledged. Instead, he continued his one-sided course, thus eliminating the beneficial possibility of an immediate adoption of the guidelines of the charter.

In 1965, growing unrest among the Greek archaeological community, in the light of the drastic interventions undertaken on several ancient monuments, starting with the reconstruction of the *Stoa of Attalos*, in the *Agora* of Athens, and culminating with the restoration of the temple of Aphaia, on the island of Aegina, brought about the dismissal of Stikas and his replacement by architect Charalambos Bouras (Fig. 2). A firm proponent of the adoption of widely acclaimed principles, Bouras set out to introduce in the Greek conservation world the concepts of meticulous documentation and preparation of projects, in conjunction with the pursuit of interventions of minimal disturbance, appropriate discernability, and critical thinking, in all, the theoretical context that had been laid out one year earlier in Venice.

Regrettably, this positive development was short-lived, as Bouras' tenure lasted a mere few months. What is worse, in 1967, Greece came under the rule of a military junta. The dictatorship that followed until 1974, resulted, not just in a standstill, but in a major backsliding in conservation care, sadly reflected in the degradation and even destruction of numerous historic buildings and sites throughout the country. Hence, the diffusion of the principles of the Venice Charter was once again halted, yet thankfully, for the last time.

## II. A reversal of fortunes (1974 - 2024)

The restoration of democratic rule in Greece, in the summer of 1974, marked a pivotal change, not only in the country's political arena but also in the severely weakened conservation domain<sup>2</sup>. Events in the years that followed the transition actually set the issue on a completely new, modern

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<sup>2</sup> For an overall discussion of the issue, see Bouras Ch. (2010). *I apokatastasi ton architektonikon mnimeion stin Ellada. Chroniko peninta eton, 1950-2000* (The restoration of architectural monuments in Greece. A chronicle of fifty years, 1950-2000) [in:] Ch. Bouras, P. Tournikiotis (Eds.), *Syntirisi, anastilosi kai apokatastasi mnimeion stin Ellada, 1950-2000 (Conservation, anastylosis and restoration of monuments in Greece, 1950-2000)* (pp. 44-69). Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation.

basis, which persists to this day. Starting in 1975, simultaneously with the celebration of the European Architectural Heritage Year, Greece acquired a new Constitution, which prescribed, for the first time, precedence of built heritage protection over private interest<sup>3</sup>. Two years later (1977), the restructuring of the Ministry of Culture initiated a slow, yet steady increase in the number of services involved, introducing, among others, units for the safeguarding of the buildings and sites of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. In parallel, an engagement of specialized professionals began to be noted, thanks to the completion of postgraduate studies abroad, since at that time (and up to 1998), similar courses were not offered in Greece<sup>5</sup>. Last, but not least, the country's incorporation into the European Union, in 1981, established multiple ties with the wider cultural setting, including obligatory alignment with related declarations, resolutions, and recommendations.

Within this fundamentally renewed context, and further to an initial translation into Greek in 1975<sup>6</sup>, the treatment of the Venice Charter experienced what could be described as “a reversal of fortunes”, manifested in the document's hitherto contribution in four major areas, as follows.

### **Legislation**

Unlike other doctrinal texts on issues of built heritage preservation (e.g. Convention for the Protection of the European Architectural Heritage, 1985; European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, revised, 1992<sup>7</sup>), the Venice Charter is a type of document that cannot be ratified under Greek law. Nonetheless, over the past 50 years, it has achieved a certain influence on the country's standing legislation.

After 1974, apart from the previously mentioned constitutional clauses, the related legal backdrop was enriched with two major points of reference, each regulating a distinct framework of protection: Law 3028/2002 (subsequently revised and currently in force as Law 4858/2021), the principal leg of the Ministry of Culture, and Law 1577/1985 (art. 4, subsequently revised as Law 2831/2000, art. 3, and currently in force as Law 4067/2012, art. 6), the respective tool of

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<sup>3</sup> *Constitution of Greece*. (1975). Art. 24. (Government Gazette 111/v. A/09-06-1975).

<sup>4</sup> *Presidential Decree 941/15-10-1977*. (1997). “Peri Organismou tou Ypourgeiou Politismou kai Epistimon” (Regarding the Structure of the Ministry of Culture and Sciences). (Government Gazette 320/v. A/17-10-1977).

<sup>5</sup> Zygomalas D. (2006). Educating on conservation: The Greek experience in preparing specialists in built heritage preservation and enhancement [in:] S. Andolsun, A. Temizsoy, M. Uçar (Eds.), *Built Environment & Information Technologies, Proceedings of 1st International CIB endorsed METU postgraduate conference* (p. 91). Middle East Technical University, Faculty of Architecture.

<sup>6</sup> The translation was produced by E. Ferentinos and was published in the annual review *Architecture in Greece*, 9 (1975), 108. To this day, it remains a point of reference in Greek conservation matters, due to its accuracy and consistency.

<sup>7</sup> *Law 2039*. (1992). “Kyrosi tis Symvasis gia tin prostasia tis architektonikis klironomias tis Evropis” (Ratification of the Convention for the protection of the architectural heritage of Europe). (Government Gazette 61/v. A/13-04-1992); *Law 3378*. (2005). “Kyrosi tis Evropaikis Symvasis gia tin prostasia tis archaiologikis klironomias, anatheorimeni” (Ratification of the European Convention on the protection of the archaeological heritage, revised). (Government Gazette 203/v. A/19-08-2005).

the Ministry of the Interior. Both clusters make no direct reference to the Venice Charter or its separate articles.

Upon a second reading, though, one notes that Laws 3028/2002 and 4858/2021 display certain similarities, which attest to an indirect interaction. To be more precise:

- the two laws declare that work on monuments should aim “*to preserve their... authenticity*” (art. 40, par. 1), just as the charter calls for preservation “*in the full richness of their authenticity*” (preamble).

- both laws exclude the repositioning of a monument, except when required “*for its preservation from danger due to physical phenomena or realization of major technical works that are necessary for national defense purposes or have major importance for the national economy and satisfy vital needs of the people*” (art. 42, par. 1), similarly to the charter’s concession in cases “*where the safeguarding of that monument demands it or where it is justified by national or international interest of paramount importance*” (art. 7).

- the two laws exclude the removal of sculpted, painted, decorative, or other features, except in cases where it is “*absolutely necessary for their preservation*” (art. 42, par. 2), a clear similarity with the charter’s request for removal only “*if this is the sole means of ensuring their preservation*” (art. 8).

- both laws acknowledge “*recording, surveying, and documenting*” as part of the conservation process (art. 40, par. 4), just as the charter calls for restoration to be preceded “*by an archaeological and historical study of the monument*” (art. 9).

- the two laws require that, in the case of excavations, care should be taken “*for the preservation of the findings, preferably in situ, their fixing and conservation*”, along with concern for “*the shaping of the excavated space, and if necessary, for its enhancement*” and “*appropriate measures for the anastylosis of the monuments, if the latter is required*” (art. 36, par. 8), a provision resembling the charter’s request that “*ruins must be maintained and measures necessary for the permanent conservation and protection of architectural features and of objects discovered must be taken*”, while “*every means must be taken to facilitate the understanding of the monument*”, keeping in mind that “*only anastylosis, ..., can be permitted*” (art. 15).

- both laws determine procedures and standards for the publication of excavations and their findings (art. 39), in addition to demanding the submission of reports for all concluded conservation works (art. 44), similarly to the call of the charter for “*precise documentation in the form of analytical and critical reports*”, which “*should be placed in the archives of a public institution*” (art. 16).

As is evident from the above comparison, the similarities between the two laws and the renowned document concern mainly procedural matters. In terms of the technical issues, namely the practice of conservation, to which the bulk of the charter’s guidelines is dedicated, a similar connection is not noted. The reason for this is that the two laws do not address this segment at all, with the mere exception of a provision for the establishment of “*more specific rules... for the conduct of works*”, under a separate Ministerial Decision (art. 40, par. 4). Such a decision



was indeed issued in 2019, settling, though, again procedural matters<sup>8</sup>. Hence, like the option of direct reference in standing legal tools, the alternative prospect of an indirect acknowledgment of the charter's most vital clauses remains on hold.

### ***Judicial affairs***

Though not part of the standing Greek legislation, the Venice Charter has had over the past years a notable influence in judicial affairs, namely in the hearing processes before the country's Supreme Administrative Court, the Council of State. An inquiry into the open archives of the latter reveals that, only in the last 20 years, a remarkable number of 17 petitions were decided by the court, with direct reference to the charter in the respective verdicts.

The petitions in question involved the annulment of Ministerial Decisions on a wide range of issues related to built heritage protection, from neglect or refusal to safeguard specific buildings and sites, to approval of building works in historic areas and repositioning of monuments of exceptional value. In most cases, the references were made by the court, in acknowledgment of the charter's function as a basis for the already ratified, under Greek law, Convention for the Protection of the European Architectural Heritage<sup>9</sup>. Otherwise, they formed part of the arguments presented by the involved parties, most frequently, in conjunction with mentioning of specific articles<sup>10</sup>. As is evident, the charter's role has been, in both cases, rather typical and superficial. A more substantial contribution would require its formal acknowledgment, through direct or indirect references to its clauses in the standing Greek legislation.

### ***Specialized education***

The preparation of specialists in built heritage preservation is a relative novelty in the Greek conservation agenda. Related postgraduate courses began to be offered only in 1998, in the country's two major cities, namely Athens and Thessaloniki<sup>11</sup>. Nonetheless, from the very beginning, the curricula of both, and in particular, their modules on conservation theory and practice, laid particular emphasis on the review and analysis of the Venice Charter, clearly acknowledging it as a foremost point of reference for the conception and realization of any intervention on a historic building. At the same time, under the same capacity, the charter has

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<sup>8</sup> *Ministerial Decision 356112/929/02-07-2019*. (2019). "Kanonistiko plaisio gia tin ekponisi meleton kai tin ektelesi ergasion se akinita mnimeia" (Regulatory framework for the preparation of projects and the conduct of works on immovable monuments). (Government Gazette 2837/v. B/05-07-2019).

<sup>9</sup> See (indicatively) Decisions 3050/2004, 1100/2005, 3611/2007, 1732/2015, 2034/2015, 306/2018, 307/2018, 308/2018, 309/2018, 64/2020, 65/2020, 2033/2022, and 384/2023, as published on the court's website (<https://www.adjustice.gr>).

<sup>10</sup> See (indicatively) Decisions 991/2021, 993/2021, 1337/2021, and 2457/2022, as published on the court's website (<https://www.adjustice.gr>).

<sup>11</sup> Zygomalas D. (2006). Educating on conservation: The Greek experience in preparing specialists in built heritage preservation and enhancement [in:] S. Andolsun, A. Temizsoy, M. Uçar (Eds.), *Built Environment & Information Technologies, Proceedings of 1st International CIB endorsed METU postgraduate conference* (p. 91). Middle East Technical University, Faculty of Architecture.

functioned as a fundamental tool for the drafting of projects in the framework of the courses' design workshops.

The contribution of the renowned document is not limited, though, to the postgraduate level. Reference to its clauses, initially typical and gradually more substantial, is noted at the undergraduate level as well. To be more precise, firmly starting in 1974 and up to this day, the theoretical and practical courses on monument protection in all the Greek Schools of Architecture have consistently examined the charter, rendering it a basic parameter for the initial acquaintance of their students with the theoretical basis of conservation<sup>12</sup>.

### ***Conservation and restoration works***

Compared to the preceding three fields, the concluding fourth stands out as the one over which the charter has exercised, by far, its greatest influence. Since 1974, conservation and restoration projects throughout the country have been consistently drafted, approved, and realized in direct association with the acclaimed document's procedural requirements, chief among them the multidisciplinary approach to conservation, and much more notably, with its multiple practical guidelines. In addition, over the years, certain of these guidelines attracted particular attention, to the point of generating a remarkable evolution in the respective responses of the professionals and state bodies involved.

A random focus on the concluded works in the country's second-largest city, Thessaloniki, reveals three such cases of evolution that deserve notice<sup>13</sup>. The first revolves around the charter's 5th article, namely its clause that the use of a monument "is therefore desirable but it must not change the lay-out... of the building". Between 1985 and 1986, in the course of the restoration of the late 19th-century mansion of Th. Chatzimisef (3, Vas. Olgas Avenue) and its reuse, as a school, related concern led to a compromise. On both levels of the two-storied building, the characteristic central corridor that linked the two main fronts was partly incorporated into the rooms flanking the main entrance, in order to create appropriately sized classrooms. What is more, along the remaining part of the corridor, which was preserved in what was considered an adequate reference to the original disposition, the rooms were freely rearranged, again in view of the functional requirements, which altogether had a clearly negative impact on the monument's interior (Fig. 3).

In sharp contrast, 30 years later (2013 - 2016), the restoration and similar reuse of the adjacent late 19th-century mansion of G. Modiano (5, Vas. Olgas Avenue) entailed, not only the complete preservation of the building's initial layout but also meticulous care for the arrangement of indispensable new features, such as a lift, in the most discreet manner, namely within the boundaries of original spaces (Fig. 4). Hence, the charter's guideline was much more appropriately acknowledged, just as it is in all current projects in Thessaloniki's listed buildings.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem (pp. 86-91).

<sup>13</sup> The information provided below on the conservation projects completed in Thessaloniki, along with full details on each project, are available in the respective files of the archive of the Service of Modern Monuments and Technical Works of Central Macedonia, of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, in addition to the information provided by the relevant sources in the bibliography.



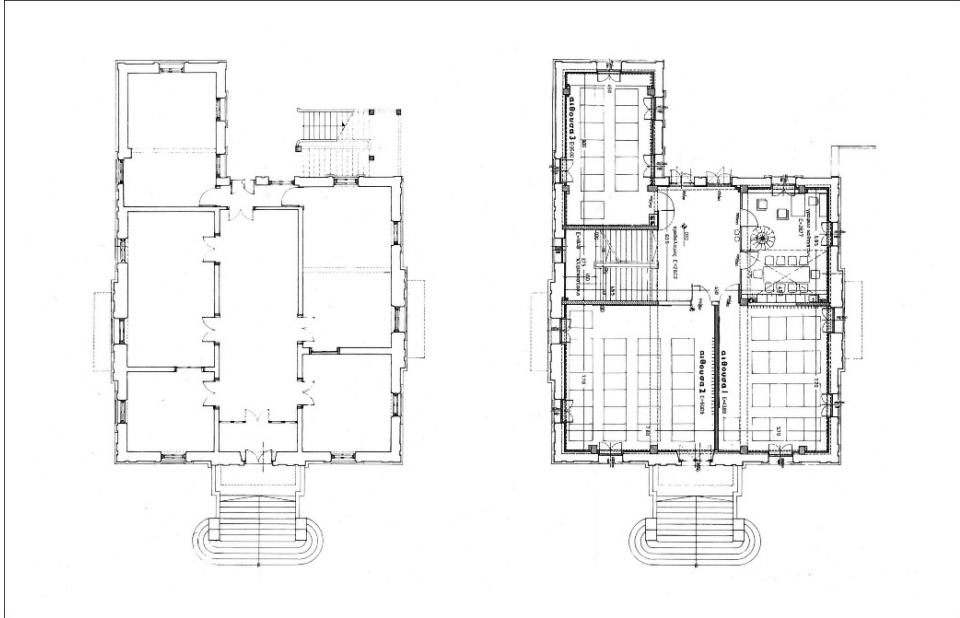


Fig. 3 Mansion of Th. Chatzimisef, ground floor plan, before (left) and after (right) reuse

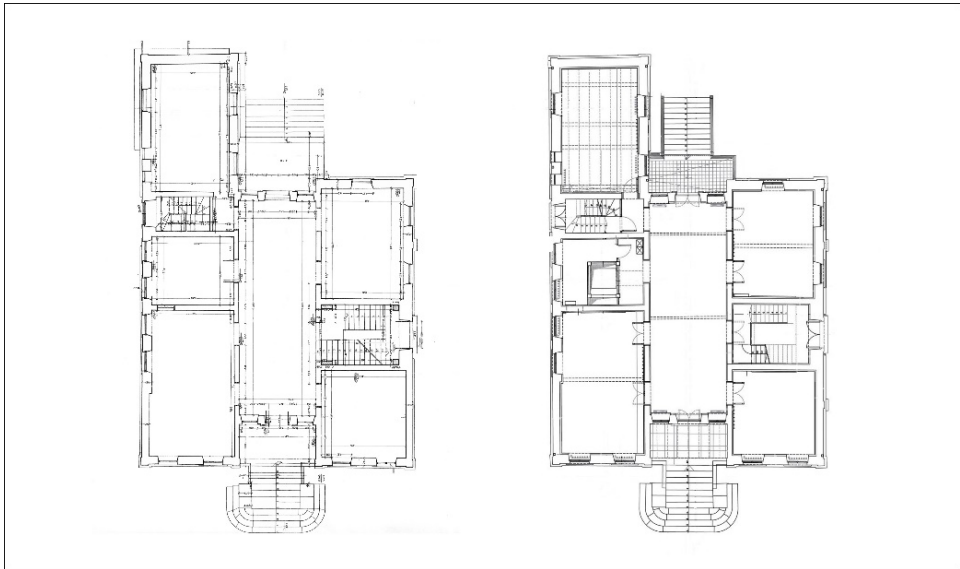


Fig. 4 Mansion of G. Modiano, ground floor plan, before (left) and after (right) reuse

The second case is related to the charter's 12<sup>th</sup> article, according to which “*replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original*”. A notable interpretation of this guideline was provided in the restoration of the painted decoration of the ceilings of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century mansion of Ach. Kapantzi (105, Vas. Olgas Avenue, 1993 - 1995)<sup>14</sup>. The missing parts of the decoration, after meticulous documentation of their layout and form, were accurately reproduced in terms of the linear pattern, omitting the color infill, in order to allow a clear, yet eventually vivid distinction (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 Mansion of Ach. Kapantzi, painted ceiling decoration, after restoration

<sup>14</sup> For added details on the project, see Trakosopoulou-Tzimou K. (2001). Apokatastasi tis epavlis A. Kapantzi stin Thessaloniki kai epanachrisi tis os edra tou Organismou gia tin Politistiki Protevousa tis Evropis '97 (Restoration of the mansion of A. Kapantzi in Thessaloniki and reuse as headquarters of the Organization for the Cultural Capital of Europe '97) [in:] M. Nomikos (Ed.), *Apokatastasi - Epanachrisi Mnimeion kai Istorikon ktirion sti Voreia Ellada (Restoration - Reuse of Monuments and Historic buildings in northern Greece)*. (Vol. II, pp. 118-139). Ergon IV.

In more recent years, similar contrasts were avoided, in favor of a softer effect. In the restoration of the painted decoration of the ceilings of the already mentioned mansion of G. Modiano (2013 - 2016), the missing fragments, once fully documented in terms of arrangement and form, were recreated, this time without confinement to linear patterns. Complete reproduction at a subtle recess from the face of the original material was preferred, thus allowing a more discreet identification. Yet at the same time, upon a focused view of the ceilings from below, one gets the awkward impression of localized swallowing of the plaster substrate, as if due to water penetration (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6 Mansion of G. Modiano, painted ceiling decoration, after restoration

In the restoration of the painted decoration of the ceilings of the interwar Loggos Mansion (31, Ag. Sophias Street, 2017 - 2019), this imperfection was avoided<sup>15</sup>. Reproduction was performed at an even surface with the original parts, leaving their meticulously preserved patina, along with the detailed documentation of the intervention, to highlight in an appropriately discreet manner the conducted substitutions (Fig. 7). Worth noting is that this course of action is nowadays in frequent use in the monuments of Thessaloniki.

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<sup>15</sup> For added details on the project, see Pavlidis G., Sarvani P., Massen V. (2020). *Megaro Longou, Apokatastasi kai epanachrisi diatiriteou mnimeiou sti Thessaloniki (Loggos Mansion, Restoration and reuse of listed monument in Thessaloniki)*. *Ktirio*, 3, 32-43.





Fig. 7 Loggos Mansion, painted ceiling decoration, after restoration

The third case revolves around the 13<sup>th</sup> article of the charter, which prescribes that “*additions cannot be allowed except in so far as they do not detract from the interesting parts of the building, its traditional setting, the balance of its composition and its relation with its surroundings*”. Over the past 25 years, the construction of multiple additions on top of historic buildings flanked by multi-storied apartment blocks in the historic center of Thessaloniki has proved a real challenge in view of this principle<sup>16</sup>. At 54, Egnatias Street (2001), the original four-storied interwar building was complemented with another four stories, in a somewhat playful combination of an elevated glass Rubik’s cube and curved side screens, also of glass. As was intended from the start, the selected forms and materials produced a clearly modern intervention, which, nonetheless, due to its volume and shaping, comes in brutal contrast with the underlying historic fabric, thus leaving no space at all for its enhancement (Fig. 8).

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<sup>16</sup> For added details on the extensions over the buildings on 54, Egnatias Street and 26, Pavlou Mela Street, see Zygomas D. (2005). On top of the monument: A review of post-war extensions over the historic buildings of Thessaloniki, Greece. *Poster in the digital proceedings of the XXII World Congress of Architecture “UIA2005istanbul, Cities: Grand Bazaar of ArchitectureS”*. UIA.



Fig. 8 54, Egnatias Street, main front, after extension



Rather simultaneously (1998 - 2000), the three-storied interwar building on 26, Pavlou Mela Street, was extended with five stories, this time at a stepped recess from the original front. The additional shaping of the extension as an alternation of solid concrete and glass bands has led to yet another clearly contemporary intervention, which, as a result of its recessed and plain design, attests to a more appropriate acknowledgment of the guideline of the charter, though at a certain distance from its full potential (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9 26, Pavlou Mela Street, main front, after extension



This distance appears to have been covered in the most recent extension to have been completed in Thessaloniki, namely the addition of five floors over the three-storied interwar building of the Olympos - Naoussa Restaurant (5, Nikis Avenue, 2022). Though equally voluminous, the overall shaping of the main front of the new section, a plain grid of beams and columns, complemented with ultra-light sunshades, and further back, glass screens, has produced once more an easily recognizable modern intervention. Yet this time, due to its regular and refined form, the addition boasts an appropriately discreet presence over the original building, whose main front is clearly the center of attention (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 5, Nikis Avenue, main front, after extension

Further focus in the Greek context reveals one last sequence of responses to the clauses of the charter that deserves to be noted, particularly as it is related to the treatment of the archaeological remains, which abound in Greece and have actually already set in motion a discussion as to the adequacy of the respective guidelines, given their multiplicity and overall significance<sup>17</sup>. Under the 15th article of the charter, in the case of ruins, “*only anastylosis, ... can be permitted*”, while “*the material used for integration should always be recognizable ...*”. Anastylosis has indeed been the dominant course of added action in the archaeological sites of Greece, starting in 1975, at the country’s flagship in conservation care, namely the Acropolis of Athens. As concerns discernability, over the years, work on the Acropolis and further away has set forth a considerable array of solutions, among them differentiation of texture, artificial aging, localized date carving, and even, in the case of the pronaos of the Parthenon (2001), integration of even column drums (Fig. 11), which were shortly after, though, carved with grooves<sup>18</sup>.



Fig. 11 Parthenon, *pronaos* columns, after the restoration works of 2001

<sup>17</sup> Bouras Ch. (2010). *I apokatastasi ton architektonikon mnimeion stin Ellada. Chroniko peninta eton, 1950-2000* (The restoration of architectural monuments in Greece. A chronicle of fifty years, 1950-2000) [in:] Ch. Bouras, P. Tournikiotis (Eds.), *Syntirisi, anastilosi kai apokatastasi mnimeion stin Ellada, 1950-2000* (Conservation, anastylosis and restoration of monuments in Greece, 1950-2000) (p. 46). Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation.

<sup>18</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the adopted methods, see Zygomalas D. (2004). *Anakataskefes se archaia mnimeia tou elladikou chorou: I empeiria tis armonika entassomenis kai diakritis prosthikis* (Reconstructions in ancient monuments of Greece: The experience of the harmonically integrated and distinguishable addition) [in:] K. Trakossopoulou, M. Doussi, N. K. Hatzitrifon (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd National Conference “Appropriate interventions for the protection of historic structures”* (Vol. 1, pp. 81-91). Hellenic Ministry of Culture - Technical Chamber of Greece.

The currently endorsed handling of the issue is most characteristically displayed in the restoration of the north colonnade of the Parthenon (2000 - 2010)<sup>19</sup>. The surviving building material allowed the reinstatement of the entire row of 17 columns, after meticulous conservation of the original parts and substitution of the least required missing ones. The latter were shaped as exact copies of the original pieces, both in terms of material and form, after exhaustive documentation and meticulous carving, in order to secure a perfect fit, with no damage to the surviving parts. The vivid difference in color between old and new, a result of the patina of the preserved material, along with the detailed documentation of the intervention, allow a clear identification of the contemporary substitutions, which in due time will acquire a similar patina, thus leading to a softer integration into the whole picture (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12 Parthenon, north colonnade, after the restoration works of 2000 - 2010

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<sup>19</sup> For added details on the project, see Lebidaki E. (Ed.). (2011). *The restoration of the monuments of the Athenian Acropolis*. Acropolis Restoration Service; Lebidaki E. (Ed.). (2018). *O Charalampos Bouras kai i anastilosi ton mnimeion tis Akropolis (Charalampos Bouras and the anastylosis of the Acropolis monuments)*. Acropolis Restoration Service.



## **Conclusions**

The preceding analysis leaves no doubt that, in the Greek context, the hitherto contribution of the Venice Charter has been multiple and substantial, altogether clearly beneficial, and hence, indicative of a foundation of heritage protection, and certainly not, a burden of the past. What is more, the culminating role of the charter, that of a fundamental point of reference in the country's conservation agenda, bears considerable potential for enhancement, indicatively possible in two main directions.

First, the charter needs to be formally acknowledged in the standing Greek legislation. Such a development could be secured through a direct mention of the document in the two main laws governing built heritage protection, as well as in the ministerial decision regulating the conduct of conservation works. In addition, given the overall absence of Greek doctrinal texts, a document interpreting and supplementing the clauses of the Venice Charter with regard to the Greek context, namely a Greek charter for conservation, could be produced and similarly acknowledged.

Second, considering the multiplicity of conservation and restoration works completed each year in Greece, without any subsequent care to discuss their theoretical backdrop on a collective basis, an annual conference could be held, in aim of reviewing the completed works and addressing the theoretical issues that arose from their realization, followed, if necessary, by an amendment of the Greek charter.

Needless to mention such actions will require extensive and sustained cooperation between the state services and non-governmental bodies involved, to the benefit, not only of the latter, but also of the educational and judicial sector, and most importantly, of the people, in the name of which conservation is performed.

## **Picture credits**

All pictures by the author, except for Fig. 1 [Archaeological Society at Athens. (1937). *Lefkoma tis Ekatontaetiridos tis En Athinai Archaiologikis Etaireias, 1837 - 1937* (Album of the Centenary of the Archaeological Society at Athens, 1837 - 1937). (p. 55)], Fig. 2 (<https://www.archaiologia.gr>, photo by S. Mavromatis, accessed: 26-02-2024), Figs. 3, 4, and 7 (Archive of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture/Service of Modern Monuments and Technical Works of Central Macedonia), and Fig. 5 [Trakosopoulou-Tzimou, K. (2001). (p. 134)].

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