

---

POSITION PAPER

# An Identity Crisis of Architectural Critique

Kostas Tsiambaos\*

---

Over the last three years Greece has been facing one of its worst crises since the 1950s, a crisis which most understand to be a financial one. The word crisis (from the Greek κρίσις) has a double meaning in the Greek language. Its first meaning indicates a radical — usually negative — change in the sum of conditions or flow of events, while its second refers to an opinion, a theory, a personal judgment or point of view towards a specific subject. I will argue that the current crisis is not just financial, but deeply cultural. An examination of the history of architectural discourse in Greece will help us better understand the cultural identity of the recent crisis by illuminating its core: the ambivalent relationship between Greece and Europe, from the establishment of the Greek state until today.

---

One of the major debates concerning the Greek crisis is the economic relationship between Greece and Europe. The debate on the causes of the crisis, and suggestions on how to overcome it, revolves around the status of the country's relationship with the European Union. Should we blame our participation in the EU for the current recession? Should the Greek state become more 'European' in order to overcome this crisis? Should the country abandon the common currency in order to become productive again?

A study of the history of architectural discourse in Greece will show that an analogous debate was established at its very core many decades ago, and is still a dominant issue today.<sup>1</sup> The question regarding the status of Greece as a part of Europe, a debate on the country's identity related to the question of how Greece is, and should be, associated with the rest of Europe, has been encountered by architects and theorists of architecture on numerous occasions throughout the 19th and the 20th centuries. It was considered a key issue long before it emerged in current discussions about the relationship between Greece, in its current economic crisis, and the European Union.

Most of the discussions on Greek architecture, in other words, did nothing else but keep repeating one of the central enquiries existing since the creation of the Greek state: What does cultural autonomy mean in an environment where influences and dependencies are continuous and intense? How can an identity be maintained in an environment which becomes more and more globalised? How can one establish a clear separating line between what is native and original and what is imported?

Greece has found itself at the center of global attention. The re-conceptualization of its peripheral identity in relation to the established architectural theories can provide

us with new tools of understanding current, intensely debated, issues. This re-conceptualization is highly important for a deeper understanding of the elements shaping the 'Greek case' — its characteristics, specificities, structural difficulties and contradictions — within the broader European crisis environment.

As the word 'crisis' itself — the decisive moment, the turning point in a difficult or critical condition — implies, one cannot talk about the crisis without distinguishing the various facets of its twofold meaning. One cannot deal with the current financial crisis without urging a broader cultural critique.

## Imported theories

During the early 19th century, the period of the foundation of the Greek state which coincides with the consolidation of neoclassicism in Greece, a discussion on architecture in the form of a public criticism was initiated on an immediate, practical level (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994; Bastéa 2000; Staikos 2003; Biris-Adami 2004). In a small city with a medieval structure, where there were only a few hundred houses still standing after the war (Lacour 1834; von Maurer 1835), the new plan set forward in 1832 by the Greek Stamatis Kleanthis and the Prussian Eduard Schaubert, with large boulevards and open spaces, generated intense criticism.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand this criticism had to do with a question of whose buildings had to be demolished or expropriated and why, or whose house was legal or illegal. On the other hand there was a question of which buildings were 'beautiful' and which were not. There were questions about who was legitimized to own or occupy the public space and what exactly comprised this new aesthetic form.

These two questions were sometimes linked so that the use of new design tools themselves were thought to result in a more 'ordered' city. For example, after learning of the advantages of the grid in city planning, planners immediately turned the grid itself into an aesthetic

---

\* National Technical University of Athens, Greece  
kostastsiambaos@gmail.com

criterion. In this way regularity, symmetry and other theoretical concepts of neoclassicism became ideas that made an acceptable aesthetic framework for the public mind. However, these aesthetic judgments often disguised individual interests rather than sincere concerns. Even those who were talking about the new aesthetic principles relating to the design of the city did not really believe in the principles. They were just seeking ways to promote their own interests or to upgrade the value of their own property.<sup>3</sup> One can read, in the press of the era, about the frequent debates between the land owners and the state, debates which finally led to the dismissal of the Kleanthis-Schaubert plan and the inauguration of a series of alternative, more 'politically correct', plans.<sup>4</sup>

This dispute between the modern Athenians and their state illustrates the reaction of the people of a community to a plan 'imposed' on their city.<sup>5</sup> The replacement of an indigenous urban configuration by an imported European plan was nevertheless related to the establishment of a formal theory of architecture. The new neoclassical plan had its own design principles and aesthetic values which were in opposition to those which currently existed.<sup>6</sup> The architects who designed the new plans – whether Greek or not – had all studied abroad, importing a 'western' culture, in contrast to the existing Ottoman mentalities. In addition to Kleanthis and Schaubert, there were also Gottfried Semper, who accompanied Ludwig Thiersch in Athens; Leo von Klenze, who created the second, revised plan of Athens in 1834; Lysandros Kaftantzoglou; the brothers Christian and Theophil Hansen; Friedrich von Gärtner and Ernst Ziller. All of these architects had a strong theoretical background due to their studies in Germany, Italy, Austria, Denmark and other countries. They lived for shorter or longer periods in Athens and tested their theoretical views in situ while working on the Acropolis and when designing some of the most important buildings in 19th-century Athens.<sup>7</sup>

What was of special interest in the case of Greece, however, is that Greek Revival architecture – related to the rediscovery of Greece already explored in Stuart and Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens* (Stuart and Revett 1762) and Julien-David Le Roy's *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce* (Le Roy 1758) – was not only considered an 'international' architecture but an architecture that also returned to its 'birthplace'. This was the main reason that the new style was strongly legitimized in the eyes of the government, the architects, and, most importantly, the public.<sup>8</sup> Not only was it a contemporary architectural style, since in every European city from Austria and Germany to Russia and Finland one could see similar buildings, but it was also something that reinstated the Greek culture in the modern era.

Many Greek architects even took a further step and argued that the 'best' neoclassical buildings were those built in Greece, since only these were in their 'natural' environment, set into the Attic landscape, directly referring to the adjacent ancient monuments.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the fact that Greek Revival happened to be the new international 19th-century trend in architecture made it much

easier for Greek architects to participate in the forefront of a global movement, as the advocates of authenticity and the real connoisseurs of neoclassicism, even if this style and its theory was originally cultivated somewhere other than in their own country.

### It's all Greekness to me

The reference of international architectural discourse to ancient Greece was not something that began and ended in the 19th century. Ancient Greek architecture continued to be, for many important architects, the supreme aesthetic standard during the following century, the age of modernism (Tournikiotis 1996). Especially in the period between the wars, Greek architects were particularly pleased to see their architect heroes still using Greece as a constant reference.<sup>10</sup> Le Corbusier's participation in the 4th Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) in Athens, in August of 1933, and his declared admiration of the Parthenon – an admiration already affirmed in the pages of the journal he founded ten years earlier, *L'Esprit nouveau* – encouraged young Greek architects to assert that modern architectural structure and form was constantly influenced by its ancient Greek archetypes (Le Corbusier 1935).

This direction of the revival of antiquity as an aesthetic standard for the modern era was also strengthened by Greek writers, editors and intellectuals who belonged to an international cultural elite, such as Christian Zervos (Christos Zervos) or Tériade (Stratis Eleftheriadis). These individuals were part of the vanguard of modern art in Paris – art critics and publishers of art magazines, where pictures of modern paintings were often placed next to photos of ancient amphorae and statues in a conscious effort to aesthetically link the one to the other.<sup>11</sup> During the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, a small number of Greek architects studying in famous schools, such as the École Normale Supérieure, the Bauhaus, or the newly founded School of Architecture of the National Technical University of Athens (established in 1917), read those magazines and felt obliged to embrace the ideology of the classical roots of modernism.

Since this ideology was international, the new generation of Greek architects promoted themselves as both Greek and European, both national and international at the same time. For some members of the Greek cultural scene, however, this cosmopolitanism was not well accepted since the West, after a devastating world war, had proven its cultural and moral degeneration.<sup>12</sup> This explains why, during the 1930s, the concept of 'Greekness' (ελληνικότητα) dominated the search for an autonomous identity.<sup>13</sup>

In architecture, Greekness was initially expressed through the work of Aristotelis Zachos, who had studied in Munich, Stuttgart and Karlsruhe, and whose teachers included Friedrich von Thiersch, Carl Schäfer and Josef Durm.<sup>14</sup> Zachos, more of a patriot than an internationalist, started implementing traditional typologies, materials, forms and construction techniques in his buildings in an effort to recognize the value of vernacular architecture and to critically reproduce the images he had seen

as a child: the houses of the northern Greece and the Balkans, the Byzantine churches and even the Ottoman public buildings.<sup>15</sup> This was clearly a differentiated contemplation of the tradition, one moving towards the recent, still alive, culture of Greece, and distancing itself from its ancient civilization; a reappraisal of its genuine eastern atmosphere as opposed to its constructed western image.

This notion of Greekness was not, however, autonomous, since it could not be considered in isolation. It only existed in opposition to something else: in response, in confrontation, in conflict. Greekness gradually became an ideology derived from the need of a nation — a nation in the racial sense, not a state in the legal sense — to construct a discourse against 'Europeanisation'.<sup>16</sup> It is no coincidence that during the same period similar concepts such as 'Englishness', 'italianità' or 'négritude' were already being discussed in other countries. The fact is that a hundred years after the establishment of the Greek state, the search for an aesthetic identity in the name of 'Greekness' became a conscious instrument of criticism and blame for the European cultural model in general. The new nation claimed its determination to image itself in its very own way (Anderson 1991).

### Local versus global

Most agree that the first architect who systematically worked as a theorist of architecture in Greece was Panayotis Michelis.<sup>17</sup> Michelis, because of his studies in Dresden, approached the theory of architecture through art history. He cultivated his architectural discourse based on the Kantian categories in relation to the sublime; the aesthetic theories of Kuno Fischer and Theodor Lipps; and the role of intuition (*Einfühlung*) (Michelis 1977). Michelis neither idealized traditional architecture nor wrote specifically about 'Greekness'.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, his attempt to analyze ancient Greek and Byzantine architecture using the same tools he used in writing about modern architecture (from cars and houses to skyscrapers and silos) shows his intent to create a continuum of aesthetic principles from antiquity through the Greek middle ages to the 20th century (Michelis 1955). Hence the universal archetypes of architecture, although newly approached, remained theoretically in their known place: the Parthenon as the standard of harmony and Hagia Sophia as the standard of the sublime.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from Michelis, who was acknowledged worldwide,<sup>20</sup> other architects also wrote extensively, for example Dimitris Pikionis and Aris Konstantinidis. These architects also studied abroad (in Munich and Paris) and wrote polemical essays while simultaneously promoting their work and the projects they built. Although Pikionis or Konstantinidis may not have written theoretical essays, they both expressed, albeit in an indirect way, a certain discourse through their texts.<sup>21</sup> But unlike Michelis, the prototypes referred to by these two architects were not to be found among classical temples, imperial Byzantine churches or Athenian neoclassical buildings.<sup>22</sup> What moved them was the folk culture, the

vernacular architecture, which was a product of the place and not something imported from abroad.<sup>23</sup>

This interest in traditional architecture was followed by a conscious effort made by both architects, during the 1950s and 1960s, to escape from an international postwar style in order to cultivate a native architectural vocabulary. This could be called a 'universal' or 'real' architecture, but there is no doubt that it was — or was supposed to be — an architecture which tried to shape its identity in relation to place and in opposition to international flows and fashions.<sup>24</sup> Thus, in the texts of Pikionis and Konstantinidis we encounter a desire to differ from the dominant images and forms along with a parallel attempt to cultivate an original viewpoint that comes from alternative or 'peripheral' sources and not from the established European centers.<sup>25</sup>

The Greek theorist Alexander Tzonis<sup>26</sup> was the first to stress this 'center versus periphery' distinction by introducing the term 'critical regionalism' (Tzonis and Lefaivre 1981), when referring to the work of Dimitris and Souzana Antonakakis.<sup>27</sup> Kenneth Frampton followed shortly afterwards, embracing the term in a somewhat different context (Frampton 1983) and advancing architects like Konstantinidis to the forefront of current architectural debates. However, even if critical regionalism was a theoretical concept, the role of theory here was either not clear enough or else deliberately made ambiguous. If regional architecture did not need any theory in order to be revived — since it naturally existed as an offspring of the place and its people — then what was the value of a theory for such an architecture?

There was a broader issue, however. It was difficult to claim that Greece created a truly 'autonomous' architectural tradition, whether theoretical or design-based. The reference to the regionalism of Greek architecture was less about a kind of exclusivity and more about the identification of a practice common to many places globally. Even during the 1950s and 1960s the main reference for Greek students of architecture was *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, an international journal in which one could discover many and various regionalisms, from France and Finland to Mexico and Egypt. Among these, the Greek regionalism was just one of many variations.

One could argue therefore that, no matter what Konstantinidis believed, his indigenous architecture was as international as the 'Greek' neoclassical architecture was a hundred years before — a highly original architecture whose origins were not necessarily native or regional.<sup>28</sup> In fact, his architecture was born, and matured, within the field of conflict (both real and imaginary)<sup>29</sup> between an international and a local architectural past, present and future; encompassing tradition, current action and future direction.

### Postmodern fears

Architects like Pikionis and Konstantinidis were trying to prove that traditional architecture was expressing a 'truth' in itself and did not need further theoretical support. This is why they were usually suspicious of any theoretical discourse coming from abroad, in its content and its

uses. However, the younger generation did not feel the same way. The 1960s brought about a vital enhancement of architectural discourse globally, and in this context a renewed discourse also developed in Greece; a discourse which did not care to highlight the value of the local past but preferred to envision a common global future.

It was in the 1960s that Takis Zenetos introduced his visionary cybernetic utopias (*urbanisme électronique*).<sup>30</sup> Like other avant-garde teams, such as Archigram, the Independent Group, the Japanese Metabolists, Yona Friedman, Constant, Archizoom and others, Zenetos set no limits on what technology could do. In Zenetos's mind, the location, at least in its historical and cultural context, was also not a limit, since he was not interested in trying to attribute any local 'identity' to his projects and buildings. The location was relevant only in a strictly materialist view: the contours of the landscape, the geology of the rocks, the direction of the sun, the intensity of the wind, etc. This perhaps explains why his utopia is literally suspended in the air, at a distance from the 'virgin' earth.

During the same period, Constantinos Doxiadis developed an original multidisciplinary theoretical discourse which had an international impact. Doxiadis promoted himself as a conscious internationalist who believed that a new science should be established. This science, called *Ekistics*, should develop new interdisciplinary models, methods and tools to deal with emerging urban phenomena and the existing issues of the human communities across the world. To do this he worked closely with many important scientists and theorists, such as Marshall McLuhan, Buckminster Fuller, Arnold J. Toynbee, Margaret Mead and Barbara Ward (Kyrtis 2006).

It was in 1967 that the first issue of *Architecture in Greece*, arguably the leading architectural journal in Greece for more than forty years (1967–2013), was published.<sup>31</sup> Its editor, Orestis Doumanis, and his collaborators, who were among the most important Greek architects and professors of architecture, attempted, from the very first issue, to introduce a dialogue concerning the production of space in Greece as a reflection of the international theoretical discourse on design, architecture, urbanism, regional planning, etc. This dialogue would be updated every ten years or so through the various tributes the journal gave to themes such as urbanism and the landscape; history and the cultural heritage; public housing and private dwelling; architectural education; classicism versus avant-garde, and so on.

Regarding architectural education, in the Thessaloniki school of architecture, organized by Michelis during the 1950s, Dimitris Fatouros gradually introduced various theoretical tools in relation to architectural design. In particular, tools from anthropology, sociology and systems theory were considered in relation to planning and design, in an effort to make the newly founded School of Thessaloniki an avant-garde hub for the mid 20th century.

In contrast, at the more conservative National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) the development of a contemporary theory of architecture sounded threatening. To a school proud of its modernist heritage – a modernism

closely bound to the local architectural tradition – the appearance of the word 'postmodern' was like a dangerous weed which should be destroyed. In 1977, the only copy of Jencks's *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* that reached the school was circulated conspiratorially, from hand to hand, and was read in secret. The postmodern criticism could not be easily accepted. Any theory menacing the well-established Greek modernism should be totally rejected.<sup>32</sup> Although postmodernism, with its historical-linguistic turn, valued the classical prototypes, including the Greek ones, this architecture was rejected by most Greek architects in favor of the more 'authentic' modernist spirit of the 1960s.<sup>33</sup>

This mentality slowly retreated during the 1980s. In 1985 a Theory of Architecture chair was created in the NTUA School of Architecture for the first time.<sup>34</sup> This provided an opportunity for the cultivation of multiple theoretical courses, which became more and more important as the school gradually moved away from such limiting ideologies as Greekness. There even came a time, in the 1990s and 2000s, when a younger generation of architects declared an intense desire for total opposition to the regional tradition by re-introducing Greek modernism as just one of the many facets of an international phenomenon.<sup>35</sup> What was native and traditional seemed more and more conservative and outdated, a remnant of the past that could not be part of the new global scene.

This younger generation of architects had pursued postgraduate studies in such schools as Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Harvard's Graduate School of Design, University College London's Bartlett School of Architecture and the Architectural Association.<sup>36</sup> They rejected traditionalism after experiencing and evaluating both the newly emerging concept of architectural theory and design through the use of advanced computer software tools (in their education), and the global influence and prestige of a new type of star architecture in the few years before the new millennium (in their practice).<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, the expansion of architectural education in Greece through the establishment of three new schools of architecture in 1999 (in Patras, Volos and Xanthi) gave these younger architects the opportunity to hold teaching positions, propose alternative theoretical directions, design from scratch new educational programs, promote novel tools and procedures, and advance the computer as the main design tool, according to their recently acquired experience abroad.<sup>38</sup>

### The unanswered question

Although Greek architects, professors and students of architecture were even more in favor of globalism throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, the question of the identity and value of architecture in Greece (in comparison with or as opposed to contemporary international architectural production) continued intruding into their discussions. The need for a distinction between Greece and the 'others', between what is local and what is global, still troubles architectural discourse in Greece.<sup>39</sup>

Especially after the 2004 Greek Olympic Games and the ensuing 'depression' which soon became a financial depression as well, this appreciation of what is extroverted, international and global was vastly moderated. The realization that globalism also has its dark side affected architectural discourse. Architects, even those with well-established practices, saw their assignments diminish in an exponential way, and students now faced a rather uncertain professional future. A new relationship between the local and the global should be sought – a new, sustainable cultivation of the local seed in the global ground, a strong national architectural identity which might also be relevant and viable at an international level.

The title of the Greek participation in the 2012 Venice Biennale professed this in the most emphatic way: 'Made in Athens' was a declaration of something which not only originates from Greece but also is addressed to an international audience. What is considered as new, in the Greek architectural scene, is a kind of architectural Esperanto, a hybrid of a local and a global language – a language which is less regional and more cosmopolitan, less critical and more communicative, less ideological and more cynical, less conceptual and more consumable.<sup>40</sup>

This new architectural language is called 'Greeklish' language, and the new generation of architects is called the 'Greeklish' generation.<sup>41</sup> This term expresses, once more, the need to deal with this moving pendulum, this constant fluctuation between the local and the global. In other words, this term is proof that history cannot but repeat itself.<sup>42</sup> If Greek architecture still speaks a language which is both Greek and English, both native and international, both traditional and modern, that is because architectural discourse in Greece, even when it tries hard to do otherwise, has never been able to distinguish one from the other. But even if uncomfortable and problematic, this continuing identity crisis of critique is perhaps the most interesting and productive field in the study of Greek architecture.

### Acknowledgement

This essay is based on a recent discussion of the history of architectural discourse in Greece between myself, Savvas Kontaratos, Dimitris Philippides and Panayotis Tournikiotis. For this friendly and fruitful discussion I would like to thank them heartily.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> I see architectural discourse in Greece not only within a formal academic framework but as a broader critical discussion of architecture that includes lectures, treatises, books, manifestoes, magazines, newspaper articles, competition entries, reviews, etc.
- <sup>2</sup> Both Kleantes and Schaubert were pupils of Karl Friedrich Schinkel at the Bauakademie in Berlin.
- <sup>3</sup> Most of the time by degrading the value of the adjacent areas where other citizens owned the property.
- <sup>4</sup> 'Politically correct' here meaning: accepted by the majority of land owners. Klenze was the next person

appointed to make the plan more acceptable and viable.

- <sup>5</sup> This was to be expected since the plan was not presented to or discussed with the citizens of Athens in any way.
- <sup>6</sup> Philippos Oraiopoulos argues that a specific urban model did exist in Greece, with its own rules and principles, rather different from that of neoclassicism. See Oraiopoulos 1988.
- <sup>7</sup> Most of the aforementioned architects designed and built new structures while participating in archaeological excavations. Thus, they were at the same time shaping the future as a representation of the past that they researched, studied and brought to the surface.
- <sup>8</sup> This populist dimension of the 'return' of neoclassicism to its 'birthplace' can be related to Paul Taggart's notion of 'heartland'. See Taggart 2000.
- <sup>9</sup> Kaftantzoglou was constantly arguing that any neoclassical building that is not faithful to its ancient Greek origins is just a result of a 'harlequin' architecture.
- <sup>10</sup> The fact that Greece is one of the most homogeneous countries in Europe (demographically, socially, culturally, etc.) is reflected in the way that 'Greek architect' and 'Greek architecture' are usually defined as specific, 'closed' terms.
- <sup>11</sup> Zervos, mainly known as an art critic and founder of the *Cahiers d'art* magazine, was an important patron of modern art as well as of Greek and prehistoric art. Among the books he published were books on the art of Crete and the Cyclades as well as monographs of Picasso, Léger and Brancusi. Tériade, an art critic and editor of avant-garde art magazines like *Minotaure* and *Verve*, collaborated closely with such artists as Matisse, Braque, Picasso, Chagall, Léger and Miró.
- <sup>12</sup> The so-called 'betrayal' – that is, the refusal of the 'great powers' to intervene when Mustapha Kemal (Atatürk) led his troops into Smyrna, a predominantly Christian city, in September 1922 – was also one of the main reasons for the 'moral decline' of the West in the eyes of the Greeks.
- <sup>13</sup> The word 'Greekness' (ελληνικότητα) appears for the first time in the writings of two well-known scholars of the 19th century: Konstantinos Pop (in 1851) and Iakovos Polyas (in 1860). The art critic Periklis Giannopoulos used it extensively in the 1920s and 1930s. For a contemporary view on issues related to the notion of Greekness, see Damaskos and Plantzos 2008.
- <sup>14</sup> Zachos was born in 1871 in the town of Kastoria which, back then, was still a part of the Ottoman Empire. He lived as a child in the village of Belesa (today Veles, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).
- <sup>15</sup> As a child, Zachos had not encountered any images of classical or neoclassical buildings in the area where he was raised.
- <sup>16</sup> The word 'nation', as a racial term, has always been more ideologically charged than the word 'state', a legal term.
- <sup>17</sup> Panayotis A. Michelis (1903–1969) was born in Patras and graduated from the Faculty of Architecture of the

- University of Dresden in 1926. He began his career as an architect in Dresden and later worked in Patras and Athens. Very soon, however, he devoted himself almost exclusively to theoretical studies on architecture, art and aesthetics. He held the Morphology and Rhythmology chair at the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) School of Architecture from 1941 to 1969. There was no Theory of Architecture department at that time.
- <sup>18</sup> Michelis did not agree with the 'architecture without architects' view of vernacular architecture. His opinion was that even the traditional builder-craftsman was a kind of architect-artist.
- <sup>19</sup> Patrick Geddes, long before Michelis, had set Hagia Sophia as the prototype for any temple. See Welter 2003: 70–71.
- <sup>20</sup> As a visiting professor, Michelis had taught at universities and colleges in Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Sweden) and the US (Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology).
- <sup>21</sup> Although not 'theorists' in any formal way, their theoretical references are numerous and disparate: Pikionis, for example, was someone who was affected by romanticism in general and Ruskin's ideas in particular. He had read many works that were outside the architectural field: pre-Socratic philosophers, the lives of Christian Orthodox saints, Indian sacred texts, books by Nietzsche, Rodin, Chestov, etc. Konstantinidis was also influenced by various philosophers (Aristotle, Kant), poets (Rilke, Solomos, Seferis) and modern architects (Loos, Mies).
- <sup>22</sup> Indeed, Konstantinidis altogether rejected neoclassicism as a fake, imported architectural style that was not related to the living Greek tradition. Even when commenting on the Kleantis-Schaubert plan he presented it as one of the many 'Europeanities' that are not compatible with the 'nature' (the Aristotelian essence) of the Greek land. See Konstantinidis 1989: 39–43.
- <sup>23</sup> The local was considered 'authentic' in contrast to the imported, which could be easily regarded as 'fake' or 'inappropriate'.
- <sup>24</sup> Konstantinidis even characterized vernacular structures as 'God-built' (the title of his last book).
- <sup>25</sup> While Pikionis was rather careful and moderate in his comments, Konstantinidis used a more offensive rhetoric and was openly against anything 'imported' – from the 19th century's neoclassicism to the various postmodern trends.
- <sup>26</sup> Tzonis (b. 1937) studied architecture in the National Technical University of Athens. In 1961 he moved to the United States as a Ford fellow, where he pursued his studies at Yale University.
- <sup>27</sup> Critical regionalism was distanced from 'national identity' in favor of 'local identity' in geographical terms, having Braudel's *la Méditerranée* as a reference. It is no coincidence that Dimitris Antonakakis was among the founders of the 'Center of Architecture of the Mediterranean' in Chania, Crete (est. 1997).
- <sup>28</sup> Even projects like Le Corbusier's 1929 Villa de Madame H. de Mandrot or his 1935 Villa 'Le Sextant' are not that far from Konstantinidis's realizations of the 1960s.
- <sup>29</sup> I use the word *imaginary* in the context of Castoriadis. See Castoriadis 1975.
- <sup>30</sup> Takis Zenetos was born in Athens, and studied at the École des beaux-arts in Paris, graduating in 1954. In 1955 he returned to Athens and established his own office. See Kalafati and Papalexopoulos 2006.
- <sup>31</sup> The last issue of the journal was published in 2013, the year of the death of Orestis Doumanis (1929–2013). For many years one could find the Greek journal in selected bookstores worldwide, from Finland to South Africa and from India to Peru.
- <sup>32</sup> This is also related to the strong anti-American feelings shared by most of the 'leftist' students and professors a few years after the re-establishment of democracy in Greece in 1974.
- <sup>33</sup> It is interesting that such architects as Demetri Porphyrios built many postmodern 'Greek' buildings in the UK and the US, but his work was heavily criticized by many professors in Athens.
- <sup>34</sup> Panayotis Tournikiotis and Andreas Kourkoulas pursued PhD studies in Paris and London respectively, and were the final candidates for the Theory of Architecture chair. Not many teachers at the school had a PhD degree at that time. In fact, many among them viewed postgraduate studies as irrelevant to the education of an architect-master builder.
- <sup>35</sup> From 1999 to 2005 the exhibition 'Landscapes of Modernization, Greek Architecture from the 1960s to the 1990s', curated by Yorgos Simeoforidis and Yannis Aesopos and supported by the Greek Ministry of Culture, was presented in Rotterdam, Barcelona, Helsinki, Thessaloniki, Belgrade, Pescara, Chania and Athens.
- <sup>36</sup> It is a fact that while the Greek architects studying in the US could usually be counted on the fingers of one hand, during the 1990s and the 2000s dozens of young Greek architects were accepted at famous US schools to pursue postgraduate courses or work in the offices of such star architects as OMA, Hadid and Tschumi. This participation in a global educational/professional architectural environment is of course related to the continued economic growth in Greece throughout the last decades (pre-crisis). The Erasmus program of student exchange has also promoted cosmopolitanism and mobility as a cultural value.
- <sup>37</sup> During this period Bernard Tschumi won the first prize in the 'New Museum of Acropolis' international competition and Santiago Calatrava became the architect of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. The Athenian works of both architects were intensely criticized (usually in a negative way) by most Greek architects.
- <sup>38</sup> This was the case in Patras and Volos. It is interesting to note that in the Xanthi School, which was organized by a 'modernist' generation of NTUA teachers, hand-sketching is still considered the essential expression and research technique, while the computer is only

regarded as a rendering machine used at the very end of the design procedure.

<sup>39</sup> In many cases this opposition between the local and the global becomes an opposition between the ethical and the immoral. In a recent (March 2014) lecture in Harvard's *GreeceGSD* Academic Group, Tassos Biris, professor emeritus of the NTUA School of Architecture, noted, 'It is very interesting to observe how a special kind of 'avant-garde' architecture has gradually worked its way through the last decade and finally succeeded in currently becoming so highly promoted and well known at an international level [...] In the meantime, excellent architecture is being designed and built by good architects all over the world. But it is based on the concept of "ethics", which relates to the meaning of the ancient Greek word "oikos" and of the English word "dwelling" [sic], defined as the "archetypal space for human inhabitation". A concept that can be considered as a fundamental definition of architecture as a whole.'

<sup>40</sup> 'New' in terms of brand architecture.

<sup>41</sup> 'We could approach this phenomenon by drawing upon a term which describes a corresponding crisis taking place with the Greek language. In youth circles, particularly amongst adolescents who communicate through mobile phone and online messaging services, the use of Greeklish is particularly widespread. Greeklish isn't, of course, a language; it is a particular manner of writing Greek using Latin characters and the frequent use of English words. The extensive use of Greeklish expresses a crisis of identity caused by globalisation. However, it is also an expression of the exciting contradictions of our times: multiculturalism and the potential of forming choices which bear no ideological charge.' See Dragonas 2012. It is also interesting that in opposition to older generations, most young Greek architects use English or international 'titles' for their firms instead of their actual Greek names.

<sup>42</sup> Symptoms of a kind of a repetition compulsion. See Freud 1914.

## References

- Anderson, B R** 1991 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Bastéa, E** 2000 *The Creation of Modern Athens: Planning the Myth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Biris, M, and Kardamitsi-Adami, M** 2004 *Neoclassical Architecture in Greece*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum.
- Castoriadis, C** 1975 *L'Institution imaginaire de la société*. Paris: Seuil.
- Damaskos, D, and Plantzos, D** (eds.) 2008 *A Singular Antiquity*. Athens: Benaki Museum.
- Dragonas, P** 2012 The Renewal of Design Ethos [website] 28 September. <<http://panosdragonas.net/?p=675>> accessed 13 December 2013.
- Frampton, K** 1983 Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance. In: Foster, H (ed.) *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Seattle: Bay Press.
- Freud, S** 1914 Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II). In: James Strachey et al. (eds.) *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 12. London: Hogart Press / Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1958. pp. 147–156.
- Kalafati, E, and Papalexopoulos, D** 2006 *Takis Zenetos: Visioni digitali, architetture costruite*. Rome: Edilstampa.
- Konstantinidis, A** 1989 *Ta Prolegomena*. Athens: Agra.
- Kyrtsis, A** (ed.) 2006 *Constantinos A. Doxiadis: Texts, Design Drawings, Settlements*. Athens: Ikaros publications.
- Lacour, J L** 1834 *Excursions en Grèce dans les années 1832 et 1833*. Paris: n.p.
- Le Corbusier, C-E** 1935 Air, son, lumière. In: Le Corbusier, *La Ville radieuse*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal.
- Le Roy, J D** 1758 *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce*. Paris.
- Michelis, P A** 1955 *An Aesthetic Approach to Byzantine Art*. London: Batsford.
- Michelis, P A** 1977 *Aisthetikos: Essays in Art, Architecture and Aesthetics*. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press.
- Oraïopoulos, P** 1988 *Le modèle spatial de l'Orient hellène: Le discours néohellénique sur la ville et l'architecture*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Papageorgiou-Venetas, A** 1994 *Hauptstadt Athen: Ein Stadtgedanke des Klassizismus*. Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag.
- Staikos, K** et al. 2003 *Athens: From the Classical Period to the Present Day*. Delaware: Oak Knoll.
- Stuart, J, and Revett, N** 1762 *The Antiquities of Athens and Other Monuments of Greece*. London.
- Taggart, P** 2000 *Populism*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Tournikiotis, P** (ed.) 1996 *The Parthenon and Its Impact in Modern Times*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.
- Tzonis, A, and Lefaivre, L** 1981 The grid and the pathway: An introduction to the work of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis. *Architecture in Greece* 15: 164–178.
- von Maurer, G L** 1835 *Das Griechische Volk*. Heidelberg: n.p.
- Welter, V M** 2003 *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. pp. 70–71.

**How to cite this article:** Tsiambaos, K 2014 An Identity Crisis of Architectural Critique. *Architectural Histories*, 2(1): 6, pp. 1-8, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/ah.bi>

**Published:** 21 May 2014

**Copyright:** © 2014 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License (CC-BY 3.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>.

**]u[** *Architectural Histories* is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Ubiquity Press.

**OPEN ACCESS** 