

PROTECTION AND REVIVAL OF RUINED AND ABANDONED VILLAGES IN CYPRUS

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ABSTRACT

The traditional settlements have always constituted a very important part of the cultural heritage of our country with architectural, historical, environmental, and social value. The essence of these settlements depends not only on the fabric of buildings but also on the ways in which they were used and the traditions and the intangible associations attached to them. Recently, the traditional settlements underwent some serious threats due to urbanization, industrialization, and tourist development that accelerated their abandonment. The lack of protection of these settlements through appropriate State legislation hinders the mechanisms of action. The State fails to promote good policy and provide sufficient financial support for the maintenance of traditional settlements as a whole. This research aims to suggest measures and strategies that should be followed in order to safeguard their revival and rehabilitation. Through this study, general guidelines are drawn specifying the basic steps, which could be followed for the documentation, investigation, and revival of the abandoned villages of the island in order to help the sustainable development of the vernacular architectural heritage. For the revival of the abandoned villages, a multidisciplinary approach should be implemented taking into account all the different values of the built vernacular heritage, creating incentives for the conservation and ensuring community participation. Without the personal interest of the inhabitants and detail mechanisms of action, the derelict and abandoned settlements may not be integrated back into the social life of a community.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural and social value of the traditional settlements

The traditional settlements have always constituted an important part of the cultural heritage of our country. Unfortunately, several settlements with a long history and rich architecture have been gradually abandoned. These examples, which were very successfully characterized by Aris Konstantinides as "vessels of life", are now preserved as empty shells of a bygone era. The traditional settlements, which were always the most "alive sites" and evolved in relation to the historic, economic, social, and cultural developments, can no longer follow recent progress. This paper deals with the concerns related to the current attempts for the revival, reuse, and rational management of abandoned traditional settlements on the island by establishing specific goals and strategies that can generally help the sustainable development of the architectural heritage.

The aesthetic, social, historic, environmental and architectural value of these settlements is very important. Every simple traditional village is unique. It is a harmonious and successful combination of natural and built environment, offering high-quality architecture in close relation with the physical environment and the site itself. Traditional settlements are examples of unique urban setting and architectural creation. The human scale, structure and form, and their relationship and integration in the landscape have inspired great artists of architecture. The

architecture of these settlements is a living and invaluable testimony to the historic memory of each place. The aesthetic value is inextricably linked to their authenticity. Their essence depends not only on the fabric of buildings, structures and spaces, but also on the ways in which they were used and appreciated, and the traditions and intangible associations attached to them (Icomos Charter on the built Vernacular heritage -1999). Their social form and close connection to the primary occupations constitute a characteristic of utmost importance [1,2,3,4]. In addition, the vernacular settlements are by definition sustainable, incorporating many environmentally friendly features.

Threats and causes of abandonment

Many traditional settlements, through the ages, have undergone some serious threats. Their survival has been endangered by economic, cultural, political as well as natural forces. Due to these factors, they become extremely vulnerable, facing serious problems of obsolescence and neglect (Icomos Charter on the built vernacular heritage).

The abandonment of rural settlements in Cyprus is not a recent phenomenon. During the 15th and 16th centuries one in five settlements was abandoned mainly due to the colonialist policy of Venice, which favored the growing of more profitable cultures like cotton, a product that could not easily be grown in the island [5]. Thus, numerous villages were abandoned, especially the smaller ones. The phenomenon increased during the Ottoman rule of the island (1571-1878), when 200 villages are reported to have been abandoned, mainly due to the repeated attacks of plague. Other reasons of abandonment during this period were the incompetent and corrupted administration and the heavy and arbitrary taxes. For example, the tax on wine caused the desertion of several mountain villages whose economy was based on viticulture. The population of these villages moved to more fertile and irrigated lands which offered opportunities for other cultivations and commercial exchanges. A new and significant factor initiated in 1960 and intensified in the years that followed was the switch from an agricultural economy to an economy of tourism, industry and services. This resulted in an intense urbanization, which had a devastating impact on the countryside. In 1974, hundreds of villages were abandoned by their inhabitants as a result of the Turkish invasion, and the forced exchange of populations between the south and north of the island. Some of the abandoned villages were occupied by new inhabitants, that were forced to move to other areas. This abnormal situation continues in our days, resulting in the slow deterioration and abandonment of at least one hundred settlements.

It is obvious that the main factors, associated with people, that led to the abandonment of traditional settlements in Cyprus were social and economic such as unsatisfactory primary production and urbanization (Drapia, Parsata, Phikardou) as well as political (Ayios Sozomenos, Ayios Theodoros of Tylliria, Ayio Georgakoudi). Some other natural causes, such as earthquake disasters (Kidasi), land instability (Alassa, Theletra, Kivides), harsh environment and geographical isolation (Foinikas, Agios Georgios tou Kafkallou, Klonari) also led gradually to the abandonment of many traditional settlements. The lack of maintenance due to neglect, progressively led to the collapse of small or large parts thereof, and the gradual disappearance of valuable data. On the other hand, this abandonment led to the intact preservation of some original forms, elements, and structures. Therefore, the abandoned traditional villages are the most authentic testimony to the previous urban fabric and a virgin ground for action [6]. How these settlements will regain their previous prosperity and life with success constitutes a fundamental problem that should be addressed by communities, governments, planners, architects, and conservationists, and by a multidisciplinary group of specialists.

Dealing with traditional settlements as a living heritage. Community Participation and social revival (International Charters and Declarations)

There is often a dilemma: maintenance or development of a ruined traditional settlement. Certainly, the "museum" conservation and "passive" maintenance of existing buildings ignoring the needs of new generations is not the best option. Rather the "dynamic maintenance" should be encouraged, as it is based on the mobilization of people and the motivation of human resources. According to the internationally accepted policy the actions should aim at relating the settlements to new lifestyles, offering a new human environment. This can be achieved by the renovation of old buildings, the organization of social space and the dynamic integration of functions that enhance the revival of the settlements. The best solution is their preservation as a living heritage in the light of social and cultural content in current economy. According to the Declaration of Amsterdam, the success of any integrated conservation depends on considering the social factors. A policy of conservation also means the integration of the architectural heritage into social life. It is rather obvious that the inhabitants of a place keep the district alive.

The involvement of local people in shaping and implementing new policies is essential. A continuous dialogue with the society that has created this invaluable wealth can lead to proper action for the benefit of the architectural heritage. The necessity of the support of public opinion and the participation of the population in every stage of the work (decision-making etc.) is underlined by the Declaration of Amsterdam. It is no exaggeration to mention that private initiative can overcome the often inadequate institutional support.

The rehabilitation of old abandoned areas should be conceived and carried out in such a way as to ensure that, where possible, this does not necessitate a major change in the previous social synthesis of the residents. According to the Declaration of Amsterdam, all people should share the benefits of restoration and be financed by public funds. The Charter of Icomos on the Built Vernacular Heritage declares that the appreciation and successful protection of the vernacular settlements depend on the involvement and support of the community's continuous use and maintenance. Governments and responsible authorities should recognize the right of all communities to maintain their living traditions, to protect these through all available legislation, administrative and financial means and to hand them down to future generations.

Inadequate legislation in Cyprus

The lack of protection of traditional settlements in many countries through appropriate State legislation hinders the mechanisms of action. Although these settlements are unique examples of architectural heritage in accordance with international declarations and conventions, (Declaration of Amsterdam, Icomos Charter on the built vernacular heritage - 1999 etc.) very often the State fails to promote suitable policy and provide sufficient financial support for their maintenance as a whole. The protection by law of entire settlements is inadequate. Most of them are not yet legally protected.

In Cyprus, since 1936, the most important parts of the cultural heritage (historic, architectural, traditional, artistic, and archaeological) can be declared ancient monuments by the Antiquities Law. In addition, more recently according to article 38 of the Town and Country Planning Law (enacted in 1972 and activated in 1990), any building, group of buildings or area with special architectural, social or historic interest and also any physical manifestation of heritage can be included in conservation orders and be protected from any alteration to its original character and aesthetic value. Despite the fact that according to the above-mentioned legislation, entire areas can be

protected, this law was mainly applied to individual buildings and not settlement areas as a whole. A small number of settlements were studied and surveyed in detail by government initiative and only individual vernacular buildings of these settlements were declared listed buildings or ancient monuments. There is also a lack of a single body comprising a combination of specialists responsible for conservation. Bureaucratic procedures and lack of close coordination between existing institutions make the conservation process difficult.

The legal system in connection with preservation seems to be rather slow in responding to the new and compelling threats. An additional reason for the delay in implementing preservation legislation was probably related to the lack of public awareness of this issue. For the majority of people, vernacular buildings were considered as burdens and not as assets for economic development. A relatively small number of people have applied to the Government for the inclusion of their vernacular houses in relative listed orders. So, it is obvious that more efficient action should be taken.

CASE STUDIES OF ABANDONED SETTLEMENTS IN CYPRUS

Aims of the study

This research aims to investigate the specific reasons that led to the neglect of some specific villages of Cyprus in order to suggest measures and strategies that should be followed in order to ensure their revival and rehabilitation. The investigation includes an example of a very attractive settlement that was recently abandoned and for which the Government took actions trying to preserve and revive it. This constitutes the only settlement declared an ancient monument as a whole thus ensuring its protection. The investigation also involves two examples of abandoned villages included in the immediate plans of the State. Through this study general guidelines will be drawn leading to the basic steps that could be followed for the documentation, investigation and revival of the abandoned villages of the island.

Phicardou. An authentic, picturesque rural settlement

An example of State intervention is the case of Phicardou (Fig.1), one of the most picturesque rural settlements in the island, which over time has preserved its original architectural character. The architecture of the village is very valuable. The village was built on a slope along a river. Most houses are built in a continuous building system. At one of the village's entrances, the fountain, the church, the olive mill and the school on the slope of the hill are situated. From this point the narrow cobbled streets and winding passageways begin, following the different levels of the terrain [7,8]. J. Jeffery [9] refers to this village in his book *Historic Monuments of Cyprus* (1918). He describes a very peculiar building, the House of Katsinioros, as being an extraordinary example of a village house of some antiquity, constructed in precisely the same manner as the church with similar decorations of fantastic design painted in long strips on the boards between the rafters of the wooden roof structure.

Most houses have a second storey, with an inclined roof and covering part of the ground floor. Many houses have a small yard surrounded by a high wall with a door opening to the road (*xoportí*). Usually the upper floor hosted the main living rooms, while the ground floor served auxiliary uses (storerooms and stables). Vine growing and wine production traditionally constituted the basis of the village economy, along with cereals, olives and almonds. In most homes, there is a small wine press facility in the ground floor. On the upper floor there is often a semi-open space called an *iliakos* in front of the rooms. The rest of the horizontal roof of the ground floor

served domestic functions, like sun-drying of grapes and pulses. The houses are built with local irregular stones with a mudbrick superstructure. An interesting feature of the village is the presence of stone members bearing an engraved cross and the acronyms IC XC NI KA, laid above the entrance door of several houses.

The village remained unaffected by changes in lifestyle until the beginning of the 20th century but unfortunately, during the last decades, the population gradually decreased approaching complete abandonment due to urbanization and the decline of agriculture. According to statistics, Phikardou had 64 residents in 1881, increasing to 122 in 1931 and remained at about 120 until 1946. Then the population began to decline steadily. After 1960, 81 residents remained and the population continued to decline. In 1982, the population did not exceed the 13 residents, most of whom were elderly. More recently, the population was 2-3 people. Most houses were abandoned. In some cases only their walls remained intact after the collapse of their roof. There are also examples of better-preserved houses, which have many structural problems.

In the 1970's State intervention was considered essential. In order to protect both the character and the natural environment of this important settlement facing the danger of total abandonment and destruction, in 1978 the Department of Antiquities declared by law the entire village an ancient monument, and the surrounding land a controlled area. This legislative protection created the prerequisites for the implementation of practical measures towards the conservation of the village houses. According to article 8 of the Antiquities Law, an Ancient Monument cannot be demolished and no conservation works or interventions of any kind can be carried out without the permission of the Department of Antiquities. Conservation work should be supervised by this Department. A government contribution covering up to 50% of the total expenditure is granted. In 2008-2009 the Department of Antiquities collaborated with the Department of Town Planning and Housing in re-planning the surrounding zones, for more efficient development of the region. The implementation of the new zones will restrain development in the surrounding area in order to protect the natural environment.

As a first step to the revitalization and preservation of Phikardou, some of the most important and representative buildings were expropriated and conserved by the State in the early 1980's (ancient monument of schedule A). Then the Department of Antiquities began a comprehensive maintenance and rehabilitation of more than ten private houses of the settlement. The plans were prepared by the architects of the Department and the conservation works were carried out by its staff. Later on, the conservation work in private homes was carried out by the owners themselves but supervised by the Department. The basic principle for the conservation of the houses was initially to cope with the serious structural problems and at the same time to preserve the original typology, morphology, and construction, with some interior modifications, which were considered necessary to provide modern facilities according to the needs of the owners.

Conservation work started by the end of the decade of 1970 and continues at an increasing pace in recent years due to the continuous growing interest of the owners for the rehabilitation of their homes. Within this framework, several buildings have been preserved, such as the communal wine press and other houses. A house on a hill, to the south of the village, which in the past occasionally functioned as a coffee house, has been converted into a restaurant. Two of the most important dwellings in the village, the house of Katsinioros and the house of Achilleas Dimitri were acquired by the State (ancient monuments of schedule A) and were turned into a local rural museums as living examples of a rural home of the previous centuries. Drawings and photographs as well as furniture, tools and fixtures related to rural life and occupations of the residents are on exhibition. It is worth mentioning that the conservation of houses was not carried out with the intention of

converting the entire village into a museum by preserving architectural forms and structures that belong to the past. The ultimate goal was to create the prerequisites for the enhancement and promotion of authentic specimens of vernacular architecture, leading to the revitalization of this important traditional settlement of the island.

This effort had excellent results from an architectural point of view since most of the vernacular buildings were restored. Two of the houses have been awarded a Europa Nostra Price for their proper conservation. The effort, however, has not led to social revival of the settlement as only very few buildings have been reused. Some houses, although fully conserved, are rarely or not at all used by their owners, who live in the cities or abroad and come to Phikardou only on rare occasions. Nevertheless, the village is now one of the most attractive tourist destinations, mainly due to the fact that it's the venue for on-location filming of a very popular TV series related to village life. This reminds us of the important role that advertisement can play for the promotion of a place.

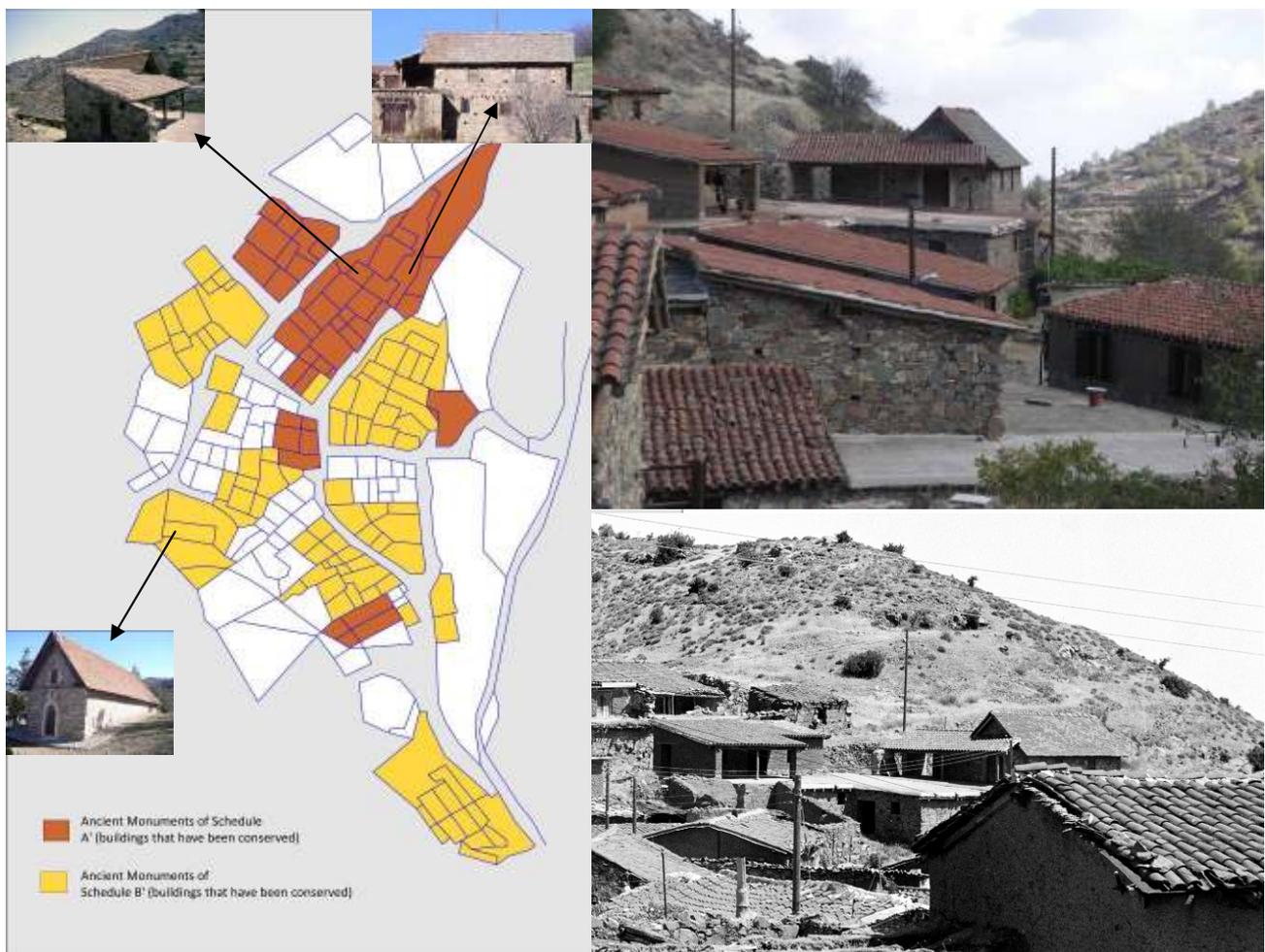


Figure 1. Phikardou. Plan and general views of the village before and after conservation works

Parsada. A small seasonal settlement

The revival of Parsada (Fig.2), another ruined village situated on a small plateau in the semi-mountainous area of Larnaca district, is included in the immediate plans of the State. This settlement is completely abandoned. It used to be the seasonal habitation site of the neighboring village of Ora and functioned as a place of residence for people when they were busy with certain

agricultural activities in the region [4]. Parsada was built entirely of local materials (mostly calcareous sandstone), thus being integrated into the surrounding land and being in harmony with the environment. Its abandonment led to the preservation of its own character without any architectural intervention or changes. It used to be a small, poor settlement, mentioned in Mediaeval sources from 1367 to 1565 with the name of Parsada [6]. By that period, the village of Ora appears in written sources. Could this mean that there was a movement of the inhabitants from Parsada who founded a new village, Ora? If this was the case, the people of Ora kept returning to the original village during harvest season, in order to attend to their various agricultural activities. The decline of agriculture and the new life style introduced in Cyprus with the socio-economic changes that occurred in the last decades brought about the abandonment of the settlement. The village is now in a terrible condition, with several dwellings in various degrees of dilapidation. Only one house is occupied. Several houses are used as sheepfolds.

Parsada consists of about thirty dwellings. Its population was very limited. In 1891, there were only two inhabitants. The number increased to twenty in 1901, decreased to eight in 1911 and to one in 1921. In 1973, there were only two inhabitants, while in the census of 1976 the village appears abandoned. According to J.C. Goodwin [10] in the past the settlement had a population of under fifty but during the first British census there was no population (January 1879). From the above, it is obvious that the population of the village varied over the years, according to the activities of the residents of the parent village of Ora.

All of the vernacular dwellings are single-storey, with flat roofs. It is not clear whether the buildings had private yards, as no surrounding walls have been observed. The layout of the settlement is random and is a result of successive development. Interesting architectural ensembles are the eight threshing areas (*alonia* - large open spaces laid with slabs) that are located within its boundaries, and which played a significant role in the agricultural production of the area in the past. Almost all of the rooms are of the wide-front type of *macrynari* (a long rectangular room) with an entrance on one of its long sides, which divided the functional space into two sections: one for the everyday activities and sleeping and the other for the storage of goods [11]. In most cases each *macrynari* constitutes an individual house. The roofs were usually constructed with the use of irregular roughly-worked tree trunks, smaller timber elements, dry plants and clay mud. The houses of Parsada are characterized by simplicity and lack of any decorative morphological features.

The abandonment of the settlement was gradual and its life disappeared when the economic and social reasons for its necessity ceased to exist. The owners themselves have not shown any interest in its preservation and revival. Therefore, the State is investigating methods of exploitation (open air agricultural museum, thematic park, tourist destination, etc.). This village, together with the neighboring village of Drapia constitute two unique examples of purely agricultural settlements. In this context, the Department of Antiquities has implemented the expropriation of the settlement in its entirety. Thus, the whole village is soon to be included in the list of ancient monuments of the First Schedule (State property, protected by the Antiquities Law). All expenditure regarding its conservation will be covered by the State.

Meanwhile, the Department has proceeded to the documentation of the existing situation. As a first step detailed architectural drawings and an accurate topographical survey have been prepared. The next step will be a research on the socio economic history of the settlement and the preparation of the conservation project. The aim is to preserve the settlement in its original form without the usual interventions that are necessary in the case of privately owned residences. Not only the authentic typology and morphology, but also the construction materials and traditional

building techniques are to be maintained in the conservation works. The Department of Antiquities intends to preserve this village for reuse as a huge workshop for professionals in rehabilitation, a case study for research in traditional architecture and as a living rural museum for the younger generations. The dwellings, once they are fully conserved, will be used for presenting rural life and its various activities – such as harvesting, threshing, bread and cheese making.



Figure 2. Parsada. Views of the settlement

Ayios Sozomenos. A settlement of the buffer zone

Another interesting example is the case of the traditional settlement of Ayios Sozomenos (Fig.3), a small village of the Nicosia district that is situated inside the buffer zone and has been completely abandoned. The settlement had existed since the Middle Ages. The written sources as well as the remains of a mediaeval church and the hermitage of Ayios Sozomenos on the cliff overlooking the village attest to its long history. In recent times it was a mixed village having Greek-Cypriot and Turkish – Cypriot inhabitants. According to Goodwin [11] during 1572, the village had sixteen households. Its population during 1976 was about one hundred. There was an increase in its population from 1881 until 1960. The 90 inhabitants of 1881 increased to 127 in 1911, to 138 in 1931, and to 197 in 1960. Most of the population left the village as refugees in 1964 after the inter-communal conflicts. Only a small number stayed on until the 1974's Turkish invasion when it was completely abandoned.

The settlement has two churches of a very different type and a mosque of more recent date. The primary building material is mudbrick laid on a low stone base, a usual technique of the architecture of the plains. This led to the quick collapse of the buildings after the abandonment of the settlement and the removal of the timber roofs. In the majority of the buildings only the walls and in some cases, only the lower part the walls remained. Therefore, the conservation process becomes difficult.

The intention of the local authority is to make the ruined village of Ayios Sozomenos a “Monument of Historical Consciousness”, a place of remembrance revealing the tormented history of the village and of the island as a whole during the period 1963-1964 and later in 1974. To achieve this, the project proposes the preservation of the village in its “ghostly” state and not the reconstruction of the houses. According to a private study [12] that was submitted to the Department of Antiquities for discussion, only one building (the old Turkish school) is to be fully restored, in order to be converted into a museum and a visitors’ information centre. The rest of the buildings will be preserved as ruins and only the street pattern will be restored, so that the village will regain its original layout. Preserved in this way the whole settlement will become an open air museum, a place dedicated to the historic remembrance of the two communities. Also, the project proposes the enhancement and the carefully planned access to the most important monuments of the settlement, the two churches and the hermitage of Ayios Sozomenos, a much venerated spot attracting hundreds of people on the Saint’s name day and on other religious occasions. The nearby ruined watermill is also to be restored. The geological interest and the beauty of the surrounding

landscape, still intact, has inspired further proposals for the area (cycling routes, a playing ground for children etc.).



Figure 3. Ayios Sozomenos. Views of the settlement – The church and the Turkish school

DISCUSSION

Through the examination of a number of abandoned villages of Cyprus it is obvious that the protection of separate individual vernacular buildings of a settlement by conservation orders (either after private application or by government initiative), reserving the private ownership, ensures to a degree their protection as such orders prohibit the demolition and substantial alteration of the buildings but cannot act as a means for specifying the time limit for the maintenance of each property. This is obvious in the case of the Phikardou private houses many of which are still abandoned. The expropriation of individual buildings, entire neighborhoods or even whole villages and their declaration as ancient monuments of A Schedule (State property) is a more dynamic and effective way of protection. It must be mentioned that, expropriation should be the last mechanism of intervention in the settlements and not the main mechanism of action. It is a rather problematic process, with large and expensive procedures, as it affects the relationship between the State and owners. In this case, the compensation by the State may not be considered by the owners as adequate. This method also affects and changes the social and economic data, as the State now being the new owner and user is responsible to put new efforts towards the revival of the settlements. This work is difficult and the results are not always successful (Declaration of Amsterdam). It is preferable that State intervention is selective, and includes some units in which the integration of public, museum or other features could be incorporated, thus constituting a model for further private initiatives.

It is obvious that the most common cause for the deserting of vernacular settlements is the abandonment of agriculture activities and the socio-economic change of life (Phikardou, Parsada, and Drapia). Fortunately, in this case there are many different thoughts and approaches towards their revival and regeneration. The consideration and investigation of the factors that led to the abandonment of these settlements is essential before the final decision for action is taken. For example Phikardou, Parsada and Drapia constitute three agricultural settlements with an economy based on wine production (Phikardou) or other agricultural activities (cereal and carob growing). The effort should be oriented towards the revival of this agricultural life with financial support of the State. At the same time it is obvious that tourist development is another important factor that

should be seriously considered. Therefore, the State and the inhabitants of the vernacular villages should find a way to take good advantage of it. Agrotourist projects where the inhabitants will be staying permanently in their settlement dealing with their agricultural activities and at the same time offering the extra space in their houses or complexes to tourists should be encouraged. In this way, tourists will have the opportunity to stay in a local farmer's home and experience actual pastoral life, watch the revival of the old way of life and take part in everyday activities. Living in a vernacular village and following the way of life for a while is a much more valuable experience for the tourists than a visit to a Museum. This policy is now being followed in many countries (Austria, China) with excellent results. The tourists are integrated to the villages, using the existing fabric of the vernacular buildings. It is essential that the local inhabitants remain in their villages all year round. The grants and funds of the State are essential to encourage and assist people to stay there and being occupied with their previous activities. Thus, the settlements should not act as seasonal hotels that are close during winter and open again during summer. The intervention should promote rural tourism in association with other activities such as agriculture, considering the villages as multifunctional spaces [15] and expanding both formal and informal activities [13]. It is better if economic development is based not only on tourism, but also on specific traditional industry, and culture-led or housing-led revitalization.

The cases of the villages that have been abandoned due to physical causes constitute the most difficult situation. The inhabitants have been moved to other safer areas and their previous settlements remain empty and silent (Theletra, Alassa etc). The question that is now arising is whether it is right to abandon these settlements without taking any action. To proceed with an integrated conservation of such settlements is rather difficult because the causes that led to their destabilization have to be addressed. It is not right to proceed with any conservation work of the buildings themselves without firstly rectifying the causes of their damage. A possible conservative attitude is the maintenance and preservation of the settlements in their current situation, taking some emergency actions until a completely detailed study of the settlements and the physical environment is completed. Even if the solution is not clear today, in the future there will be a possibility for the discovery of new methods for dealing with their structural problems (earth instability etc.). Here it is worth mentioning that building materials had always played a very important role for the survival of the settlements. The stone structures are more stable and need rather limited conservation work (Parsada, Drapia). On the other hand, mudbrick walls are more vulnerable to the climatic conditions. So in the case of abandoned traditional settlements the wide use of mudbricks led to more serious problems (Ayios Sozomenos) as the exposure of the mud to the rain and moisture led to their almost complete deterioration.

The abandonment of villages due to political factors constitutes a separate interesting but also difficult situation, as solving the political problems that led to the abandonment of the inhabitants in the past may not be possible. This is the case of Ayios Sozomenos and of many other Turkish-Cypriot or mixed villages of Cyprus. The conservation of such villages and the settlement of new inhabitants with different social backgrounds is not the best solution but it is an option that may be investigated with utmost care. It is of course better to take some action towards the conservation and revival of a settlement rather than leaving it abandoned.

At this point, it is essential to emphasize that the final decision for the strategy to be followed for the conservation of an abandoned village should be based on the evaluation, assessment, and hierarchy of its values. For example in the case of Ayios Sozomenos, the political and historic value of the settlement may be considered more important than its social value as a living heritage. So the decision for its preservation is directed towards the conservation of the settlement following a rather "museum" approach, treating the village as a symbol and not as a living community. In the

case of Phikardou, the historic, archeological, and architectural value of the two most important houses led to their acquisition by the State and to their conversion into museums, as these values were considered more important than the social worthiness. The archaeological and historic value of the other buildings of the settlement was considered of less importance than their social function so they retained their original ownership, a condition that could lead to their social revival. It is essential that the final decision for the preservation of a settlement is based on detailed examination and consideration of all various values of the settlement and individual buildings.

Guidelines and suggestions of action

Through this study, it is obvious that the three main steps that could help the revival and the development of the abandoned villages and at the same time lead to the protection and preservation of their authenticity are:

- a. Surveying, registration, and classification of the abandoned villages of Cyprus according to their authentic character emphasizing a series of aspects that characterize the settlements and their values. This may serve as a data base for the elaboration of the proposals [15].
- b. Investigation of the causes or threats that led to their abandonment (socio-economic, physical, political) and classification of the villages according to these factors in order to follow the most appropriate strategies. Drafting of questionnaires to be answered by people that were living in the past in these settlements which record the life style of the past would constitute a tool of utmost importance.
- c. Design of new strategies for a successful rural landscape development. Promotion of integrated programs for the protection and rehabilitation of the settlements. These programs should be integrated in general planning studies of the areas in order to ensure the authenticity of the buildings and the settlements, the relationship of the settlements to the environment and their legislative protection. In these studies, the preservation and enhancement of the environmentally-friendly elements of the settlements have to be taken into serious consideration so that the programs will lead to a sustainable development.

For these strategies to succeed, the rehabilitation projects have to be directly related to the special environmental, social, and architectural characteristics of each area and aim to promote them – emphasizing the patrimonial and environmental values. To preserve this heritage means to protect a sense of identity, to take care of the physical form and fabric, to consider the ways in which it was used and understood, and to respect the intangible associations attached to it [14]. The continuity of the important aspects of the culture and at the same time the change in the physical and socio-economic environment of the settlement should be taken into account [13]. The rural vernacular heritage should be considered as a whole group of structures and environment and not as individual buildings.

It is essential to proceed with the organization and education of all related occupations (architects, civil engineer, and planners) dealing with architectural heritage and at the same time to improve public awareness. The inhabitants should become more sensitive with regard to the value of the vernacular architectural heritage and to the need for its protection and promotion through educational programs and discussions. This will lead to a change in attitude and make it possible for the inhabitants to take part in the decision procedure [13]. In this way community participation will be ensured. This is very important and will lead to better results in project delivery [14] because of a better chance of knowing beneficiary preference. Additionally, this will lead to easier acceptance of project results by beneficiaries, and also to better economy of projects because direct participation reduces costs and enhances willingness to pay. Finally, community participation is a

worthwhile end in itself.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the Kyoto Declaration on the protection of historic heritage (2005), when conserving abandoned vernacular settlements and generally cultural heritage at risk a multidisciplinary approach to damages and assessments should be carried out, recognizing the value of built vernacular heritage, creating incentives for the conservation of vernacular housing, developing building codes compatible with traditional building practices, using authentic materials and skills for repairing and retrofitting heritage-rich buildings and ensuring community participation.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that before making final decisions for any intervention in a traditional ruined village, investigation and consideration of all the positive and negative data should necessarily be done first, in order to avoid (as much as possible) the negative consequences especially in the possibility of any major changes in the socio-economic conditions. Without the personal interest of the inhabitants themselves and the exact mechanisms of action, the derelict and abandoned settlements may not easily be integrated back into the social life of a place. To achieve this, the co-existence of development and conservation is essential, as well as the search for a sustainable balance and promotion of integrated programs enhancing the vernacular heritage and preserving its authenticity.

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