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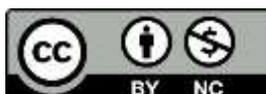
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“TO THE SPLENDOR OF OUR BYZANTINE HERITAGE”¹
MANAGING ORTHODOX CHURCHES ON THE
ISLAND OF NAXOS²

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In the last decade, there has been a growing discussion on the themes of ‘religious heritage’ and ‘living heritage’, as part of the ‘social turn’ in heritage management and its political connotations towards respect and involvement of different views and practices. These themes are commonly related to the management of sacred sites and the problems that rise from the interaction of interested groups, i.e. the religious authorities, official-state managers, local communities, pilgrims and tourists.³ In Greece the discussion has been focusing on those active monastic communities and the negotiation of power between the relevant stakeholders, mostly instigated by the surge of tourism in renowned religious heritage sites and its consequences.⁴

On the basis of this discussion, this paper takes a broader view of the subject, examining issues encountered in the management of Byzantine monuments in Greece and focusing on the island of Naxos. Living heritage is in the foreground, i.e. the Orthodox Byzantine churches used in the course of the Orthodox tradition through the relative policies of the Greek state but also via the local receptions and aspirations of the relevant interested groups, as described above. For the discussion of the latter, I draw on ethnographic data collected in my doctoral and on-going post-doctoral

¹ “to the splendour of our Byzantine heritage” is the last verse from C.P. Cavafy’s poem *In Church*. Cavafy, C.P. (1992), *Collected Poems*, translated by Edmund Keeley & Philip Sherrard, edited by George Savidis, revised edition, Princeton University Press, 1992. Accessed at: <http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=130&cat=1>, last access 14/10/2015.

² The author would like to thank Mr Themis Bilis, architect for drawing his attention to the case of Moni Taxiarchon in Sangri and Ms A. Couvelas, architect for providing the photos of the Metropolis’ paved pavilion. Of course all views and misjudgements remain with the author.

³ Stovel *et al.* (2005); ICCROM (2015); Serageldin *et al.* (2001); Shackley (2001); Paine (2013); Grimes (1992); Minucciani (2013).

⁴ Alexopoulos (2013); Poullos (2014); Lekakis (2008), p. 315; Lekakis (2015a).

research in the southern Aegean.⁵ In conclusion, international management trends are briefly reviewed, focusing on rural religious monuments, locating patterns that might be useful in the Greek case.

Byzantine heritage management: the historic context in Greece

The building of the official, national identity in the infant Greek State focused mainly on the glorious past of Classical antiquity and its landmarks. In Western Europe, this tradition was already perceived through the lenses of Renaissance and Enlightenment as the main tiers of the European civilisation, while contemporary Greece struggled to be acknowledged as their rightful heir.⁶ Neoclassicism fuelled by German romantic nationalism, philhellenism and the deeply orientalist views of the European travellers in Greece provided the imported, adhesive material for the compilation of the national identity. The eclectic narrative that surrounded this ambitious construction left behind parts of history that did not comply with the general neoclassical canon, along with other unofficial perceptions and uses of antiquity that were still thriving at the local level.⁷

Byzantium fell victim to this process, initially disregarded from the national rhetoric as an era of oppression and decadence.⁸ This downplaying of the medieval past in favour of antiquity could be considered as common ground in Europe, as depicted for example in the works of C.-L. Montesquieu (1689-1755) or in E. Gibbon's (1723-1792) *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788), renowned for its open criticism of Christianity and Byzantium as the key agents of the dissolution of the ancient world into an era of darkness.

These views were reflected in the management of the Byzantine monuments in Greece. Thus, apart from the *Expédition scientifique de Morée* (1828-1831) that documented –among others– monuments of that era in the Peloponnese, Attica, the Cyclades and Saronic Gulf islands, the first official concern towards the Byzantine

⁵ Extensive ethnographic fieldwork has been conducted on islands of the southern Aegean Sea (Paros, Amorgos, Kalymnos, Nisyros, Crete, etc.). In Naxos the data has been collected through the public outreach programme 'Local Communities & Monuments' (see below).

⁶ Lowenthal (1988), pp. 243-45; Kokkinidou (2005), p. 33; Leontis (2008).

⁷ Plantzos (2014); Lekakis (2008).

⁸ See for example the speech delivered by Leo von Klenze at the welcoming ceremony of King Otto at the Acropolis, Hamilakis (2008), pp. 58-64.

cultural heritage could be traced in the archaeological law of 1834, among the first in Europe, compiled by the recently established Bavarian government of Greece.⁹ In article A.111, the “earliest Christian era, the so called medieval era” is protected, in an attempt to prevent illicit trade and the quarrying of abandoned churches and other post-Byzantine monuments (A. 85d). In this context, a royal decree of 1837 stressed the need to protect the medieval ruins of Athens.¹⁰ However, the relocation of the capital to Athens, new urban planning and its applications, the ‘purification’ of the ancient monuments from later additions and the concern of the Church to ‘properly’ manage buildings and congregations led to the demolition of historic churches and/or land expropriation or to various neoclassical extensions on existing monuments in order to cater for the needs that the remaining churches had to service.¹¹ These issues along with the lack of resources in the early days of the modern Greek state limited the legislative provisions.

It was not until the second half of the 19th century that Byzantium was finally annexed into the national genealogy as a mid-point in the linear route from antiquity to the contemporary, post-revolution era, through a series of theoretical and practical processes. This annexation was propagated with the writings of K. Paparrigopoulos (1843, 1860) and S. Zambelios (1852, 1857), responding to the theory of J. Fallmerayer (1830 onwards),¹² which stated that modern Greeks should be actually considered Slavic in origin. Over the next years, a number of activities materialized this ‘enhanced’ national identity, such as the establishment of the Christian Archaeological Society in 1884, together with an archive, library and collection, “for the protection and illumination of our history”.¹³ What is more, the new archaeological law (2646/1899)¹⁴ reasserted the protective measures for the relics coming “from the earliest Christian and medieval era of Hellenism” (A.3). At this time, the monastery at Dafni in Attica was restored (1885-1907), reflecting care of its palimpsestic nature, although in an –unsuccessful– attempt to preserve several phases

⁹ Law 1834, ‘Περί των επιστημονικών και τεχνολογικών συλλογών, περί ανακαλύψεως και διατηρήσεως των αρχαιοτήτων και της χρήσεως αυτών’, Petrakos (1982).

¹⁰ Royal Decree 1.19/12/1837, ‘Περί της διατηρήσεως των εν Αθήναις λειψάνων του μεσαιώνος’, Petrakos (1982), p. 21.

¹¹ Chlepa (2011), pp. 34-38.

¹² Herzfeld (2002), pp. 78-91; Skopetea (1997).

¹³ Konstantios (2009), p. 9.

¹⁴ Law ΒΧΜΣΤ’ (2646)/1899, ‘Περί αρχαιοτήτων’, Petrakos (1982).

of the monument.¹⁵

The focus on the preservation of the Byzantine past could refer to the growing appreciation of the medieval past in other European countries such as France, Germany and Britain, however it cannot be disassociated from the political aspirations of Greece at that point. During the Balkan Wars (1912-1914: in Macedonia and Epirus) and after World War I (1919-1922: Asia Minor) Greeks excavated reclaimed lands in order to align monuments to the national narrative of the ‘Megali Idea’, the nationalistic vision of the expanded state of ‘two continents and seven seas’¹⁶ and solidify the shared identity with the liberated brotherhood, illuminating “our Medieval Empire”.¹⁷

After the catastrophe in Asia Minor, a more inward-looking range of activities was introduced. Thus, Byzantine studies became part of the university curriculum, while the establishment of the Ephorate of the Christian and Medieval Antiquities (1910), the Byzantine Museum (1914) and the administrative procedures set by the law 5351/1932 established the Byzantine cultural heritage in terms of its systematic protection and research potential.¹⁸ The second period of restoration at Mystras in the 1930s reveals a more systematic approach to the material aspects of the monuments along with a relative flexibility in their restoration, as observed in the reconstruction of lost architectural members, the imitation of original forms in an abstract way, the removal of later additions, in accordance with the practices in Western Europe;¹⁹ this project set a pattern that would formulate restoration guidelines of medieval monuments well into the 20th century.

In the middle of 20th century, as the Aegean Sea was transformed into a scenic, timeless destination for intellectual pilgrims and the birthplace of the Greek wonder, our perception of Byzantium was modified once again to fit the new description of

¹⁵ Chlepa (2011), pp. 76-103.

¹⁶ Davis (2000).

¹⁷ Sotiriou (1921), p. 53; Lekakis, ‘«Δι’αυτά πολεμήσαμεν»: Ανασκάπτοντας τη γη της Ιονίας 1919-1922’ (Paper presented at the 10th Scientific Colloquium of the Department of Archaeology & History of Art, University of Athens, 2015b).

¹⁸ Law 5351/1932, ‘Περί αρχαιοτήτων’, Petrakos (1982); Kiousoyoulou (2003); Konstantios (2009), p. 33; Karamanolakis (2008).

¹⁹ Chlepa (2011), pp. 135-57.

hellenicity into the neo-aesthetic, nationalistic and orientalist views of the generation of the '30s.²⁰ This added a new layer for the appreciation of the medieval era, defining its place in the “invented tradition” of Greece.²¹ The establishment of the local Byzantine Ephorates in Greece in 1963 and the periodization of ‘Greek antiquity’ in the latest archaeological law (3028/2002), including Byzantine (ca. 4th century-1453) and post-Byzantine monuments (1453-1830) (see also footnote 26) are the most recent acts of the State, setting up the parameters for the official field of Byzantine heritage management in Greece.²²

Contemporary context and stakeholders

Turning our focus to contemporary heritage management and the major stakeholders that occupy the field, we can discern a number of interesting points related to the historic context examined above.

Even though a national inventory of monuments will soon be accessible through the long overdue archaeological cadastre in Greece,²³ a refined search in the listed monuments of Greece returns 4,201 ministerial decrees –most of which relate to multiple monuments from the Byzantine and the post-Byzantine period– concerning listing and protection decisions.²⁴ On the island of Naxos, a place endowed with outstanding natural and cultural resources, there are a large number of Byzantine monuments, at least 120 of which are decorated with wall-paintings, covering a wide range of Byzantine and post-Byzantine architectural and artistic production.²⁵

In Greece, Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches are still commonly used for religious purposes. Use patterns may vary from full use, as is the case in large

²⁰ Leontis (1995); Tziouvas (2011).

²¹ Hobsbawm and Ranger (1988).

²² Law 3028/2002, ‘Για την προστασία των αρχαιοτήτων και εν γένει της πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς’, Accessed at: http://www.yppo.gr/files/g_1950.pdf, last access: 15/11/16.

²³ The archaeological cadastre was expected in the end of 2015: <http://archaeocadastre.culture.gr/el/>, last access: 15/11/16.

²⁴ <http://listedmonuments.culture.gr/>, last access: 15/11/16.

²⁵ Mastoropoulos (2007), p. 65. Referring to the abundance of Byzantine monuments in Greece, 7 out of the 18 World Heritage Sites in Greece are Byzantine and post-Byzantine: Monastic Republic of Holy Mount Athos (1988), Early Christian and Byzantine monuments of Thessaloniki (1988), Monastic complex of Meteora (1988), Medieval town of Rhodes (1988), Mystras (1989), Monasteries of Daphni, Osios Loukas and Nea Moni of Chios (1990), Historic centre (Chora) with the Monastery of St. John ‘the Theologian’ and the Cave of the Apocalypse on the Island of Patmos (1999). The Area of the Prespes Lakes and several Late Medieval Bastioned Fortifications in Greece are also part of the Tentative List for inclusion in the World Heritage List.

monastic complexes (e.g. in Meteora or Holy Mount Athos), to ordinary liturgies or for specific celebration days, this applies to the majority of the chapels in the rural areas of Naxos (see e.g. Agios Ioannis Theologos Adissarou, fig. 1). Some of these have been restored by the Ministry of Culture and marked as touristic destinations (e.g. Taxiarchis in Monoitsia, fig. 2), while there are also many ruined and abandoned monuments (e.g. Moni Genniseos – Kaloritissa, fig. 3). Apart from their state of conservation, the use of the churches is defined by the responsible management bodies, the Orthodox dogma, the communities surrounding them and the relevant agendas advocated by each of them. The stakeholders may be identified as follows:

Ministry of Culture

The Greek Ministry of Culture, through its 52 local Ephorates, is the official manager of Byzantine and post-Byzantine sites and buildings in Greece.²⁶ The Ministry monitors any intervention to the physical fabric of the monuments and relative alterations in its environment (restorations, cleaning operations etc.). However, churches still in active use are also managed by the local diocese, always under the Ministry's supervision.²⁷

The Ministry is visibly understaffed and suffering from severe cuts to its budget, and is commonly criticized for lack of attention to the demands and needs of the local communities.²⁸ However, people working in the Ministry are, in most cases, experienced and of high expertise. According to a recent study on Naxos, local citizens recognize the need for a central, national body to protect and manage cultural heritage.²⁹

Although the Archaeological Service is no longer seen to prioritize classical monuments over medieval, it is sometimes held responsible for an authoritarian exclusion of different views on heritage management, in its effort to preserve the

²⁶ According to the latest archaeological law (3028/2002: A.2.αα) all the monuments dated up to 1830 AD are automatically considered 'ancient monuments' and protected by the Ministry of Culture.

²⁷ The local administration may participate as well in the management of churches in use but this is mostly at the level of funding restoration studies or providing personnel for relevant works. See below for a short discussion.

²⁸ Lekakis (2013), p. 239.

²⁹ Gratsia (2010). The Ministry of Culture scores 73% in the question "Who do you believe should be responsible for protecting the monuments" in Naxos, followed by the Municipality: 50%, Citizens themselves: 22,7% and Private companies: 4,5%.

scientific values of monuments (see also below). In churches this may include restrictions in worship, rendering spiritual appreciation incomplete or even absent, in the case of churches (mostly abandoned) being converted to monuments for touristic appreciation. Even though this criticism could be sustained for those religious monuments of the other religions in Greece (especially mosques), those personnel concerned with the Byzantine heritage in Ephorates respect the religious sentiments and attempt to limit disruptions during restoration processes.

Finally, over the last two decades a new trend seems to guide the central management and communication of this period which promotes the non-monumental aspects of the Byzantine world, its secular tradition and everyday life, as observed in the establishment of the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki (1994), the exhibition ‘Ὁρεξ Βυζαντίου’ in various sites across Greece (2001-2002), and the re-exhibition of the permanent collections of the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens (2004).³⁰

Church of Greece

Greece is divided into 81 Orthodox dioceses; 36 of these in northern Greece and in the major islands in the north and northeast Aegean are spiritually under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, along with the Monastic Republic of Holy Mount Athos and the semi-autonomous, archdiocese of Crete; the remaining dioceses are managed by the Church of Greece.³¹ Naxos is part of the Paros and Naxos archdiocese with long and significant history.³²

The Church of Greece is a public corporation, administered by the Holy Synod but essentially part of the State, since the latter appoints and provides salary and health insurance to clerics as civil servants. Even though calls for the ‘separation’ of State affairs are on the political agenda for the past few decades, governments of Greece have refrained from touching this sensitive issue for fear of losing support from the public, who quietly affirm the significance of religious sentiment; a Greek

³⁰ YPPO (2001); Alexopoulos (2017); Chronis (2005).

³¹ The monuments in use by other approved creeds and religions are jointly managed by the Ministry of Culture and the respective governing body, e.g. the Archdiocese of Naxos-Tinos (Catholic Church of Greece) or the Jewish Community of Athens.

³² <http://www.i-m-paronaxias.gr/>, last access: 15/11/16.

idiosyncrasy in the European religious landscape, dependent on various historical and social parameters.³³

The Constitution of Greece accepts Orthodox Christianity as the “prevailing” religion of the country, while guaranteeing freedom of religious consciousness for all.³⁴ In fact, the religious sentiment in Greece is well depicted in the latest Standard Eurobarometer survey, where to the question “which are the three most important values for you personally?”, the majority preferred “religion” (14%) to “tolerance” (2%), “self-fulfilment” (3%) and “respect for other cultures” (8%),³⁵ while in an older survey, Greece had one of the highest percentages among European Union members of “people believing there is a God” (79%),³⁶ a standard commitment as recorded in various surveys from the 1980s onwards.³⁷

This religiosity is commonly associated with the Greco-Christian consciousness; a concept introduced by S. Zambelios in his 19th century writings, in the context of amalgamating the vital aspects of Greek identity in one historical continuum. This concept has been summoned in different contexts and still appears in the political agenda, as an ultra-conservative aspiration against multiculturalism. It draws its affinities from the military junta (1967-1974) and their totalitarian cultural practices that promoted a shallow, nationalistic narrative of the concept that has lingered on after its collapse.³⁸

As discussed above, the local dioceses and ecclesiastical councils manage monuments in use, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture. However, the Church is the major stakeholder in this process, applying restrictions for practical and theological reasons, as we will examine in the case studies below. In fact the Church loses no chance to re-affirm jurisdiction over its properties, especially when feeling that their ownership rights are jeopardized. This policy could be observed in the recent response of the Church to the Ministry of Culture, when the latter asked for the documentation

³³ Makrides and Molokotos-Liederman (2004), p. 461.

³⁴ Greek Parliament (2008), A. 13.3 & A.13.1.

³⁵ European Commission (2015), p. 128.

³⁶ European Commission (2010), p. 204.

³⁷ Makrides and Molokotos-Liederman (2004), p. 466.

³⁸ Herzfeld (1982), pp. 35-52; Hamilakis and Yalouri (1999), pp. 128-29.

of the moveable finds in the ecclesiastical museums in Greece, to be included in the National Archive of Monuments. The Church approved the request, after discussing the legal framework and stating that the Ministry has only “scientific jurisdiction” over the material but no administrative or managerial capacity whatsoever over the ecclesiastical museums and their contents.³⁹

Apart from the different perceptions on heritage, this event illustrates very well the distance between the ‘scientific’ aims of heritage management and the active religious viewpoint; the application of results reached through the rigorous exploration of an academic discipline on the material objects of the past (archaeology, conservation, architecture etc.),⁴⁰ in our case, seems to be in sharp contrast to the religious perception of material culture as expressions of spirituality, faith and thanksgiving.⁴¹

However, this patronizing and somehow condescending stance of the Church could be seen, in a broader view, as a socio-political act.⁴² As Stewart documented in the infamous case of the Rotonda in Thessaloniki, where the Roman monument was occupied –involving physical violence– and used for liturgy in an attempt to claim one layer of its historical palimpsest, the process of defining ownership rights by the Church involves a tendency to actively challenge the jurisdiction of the State, asserting its long-established political role in the representation of the nation.⁴³ The latter tendency is commonly accompanied by a negative stance towards the contemporary European vision of Greece along with criticism of European values, in favour of an exceptional Greek self, based on the truly original-traditional values that the Church claims to guard.⁴⁴ This pattern could easily be related to the tendency of the Church to promote a nationalistic agenda inside and outside Greece, a pattern dating back to its successful claiming of autocephaly from the Patriarchate in 1853, placing its religious validity at the centre of the socio-political psyche of Greeks on a

³⁹ Church of Greece (2015). See other examples in Naxos: Doulas (2013), p. 10; Lambrinouidakis (2013), p. 43.

⁴⁰ Examining this from the other end, Dinsmoor (1927) acknowledges the restored building as a “publication in itself” (p. 315), adequate to communicate its original form to the public, through its remains.

⁴¹ Kalpatsinidou (2014), pp. 14-15.

⁴² Laburthe-Tolra and Warnier (2003), p. 250.

⁴³ Stewart (2011).

⁴⁴ Liakos (2007), pp. 190-91; Herzfeld (2011), p. 462.

national and local level.⁴⁵ However, the motives for the (re)appropriation of the monuments, as the Rotonda case hints, could also be a bit more pragmatic.

The case of the 17th-century Pyrgos Bazaiou - Moni Timiou Stavrou on a prominent crossroad at the centre of Naxos is a revealing case study, concerning the latter point (fig. 4). The tower complex followed the fate of many small and abandoned monasteries in the 19th century, which were expropriated to provide funds for the infant State. In 2000, the heir of the original buyer decided to restore the building and use it for cultural activities, commencing at the same time an on-going dispute with the local diocese. The Bazeos Tower is now the home of the successful 'Naxos Festival', hosting a number of artists and significant sold-out performances and exhibitions every summer.⁴⁶ The local diocese has been swift in criticising these activities, charging the recent occupants with the desecration of the Byzantine *katholikon* and censuring the entrance ticket for the art installations and performances. The public of Naxos is divided: some assert the imminent need to reopen the *katholikon* for the public –now being restored–, and others comment on the fact that before the re-opening in 2000, the site was used as a pen. Some have also commented on the conservation status of other Byzantine churches that fall into disrepair in the hinterland of Naxos, especially without the economic potential of the Bazeos Tower and in a less privileged place.

The local diocese, thus, challenges the current ownership of the Tower by providing an alternative reading to the 19th-century contract of sale. They read this with reference to the dogmatic and canonical parameters of the Orthodox creed, stating that once a building is consecrated, the blessings apply for eternity and it cannot be secularized.⁴⁷ This has generally been the main argument for the Church in various cases, keeping an extremely reserved stance or commonly criticising other uses of buildings, which are in conflict with its original, sacred purpose. However, in some cases the Church keeps a milder position for alternative uses, especially when it comes to aspects of touristic appropriation of sites.⁴⁸ In fact, cultural or religious

⁴⁵ Kitromilides (1989), p. 166.

⁴⁶ <http://www.bazeostower.gr/eng/festival.php>, last access: 15/11/15.

⁴⁷ Lekakis *et al.* (2016), pp. 84-86.

⁴⁸ See for example the recently launched <http://www.religiousgreece.gr/>, last access: 15/11/15 that provides information for the religious monuments in Greece.

tourism is a choice that the Church of Greece along with local dioceses are now focusing on, with both positive and negative consequences for the preservation of monuments.

The opening of churches, outside time of worship, for example, is a well-established practice, allowing free visits to the interested public (e.g. in Panagia Protothronos in Chalki opened by local volunteers or the Metropolis in Chora). This has also had a positive benefit for the collection of funds for the preservation of historic churches (see below) and to support this aspect of religious tourism. On the other hand, a comparable case from Thera concerns the Monastery of Panagia Kalamiotissa on the island of Anaphi which was constructed on top of the ruins of the Temple of Apollo Aigletes. In 2009, an ‘enhancement’ plan appeared in the local media, which involved leasing the monastery’s land for the construction of major infrastructure to attract ‘religious tourism’. The project was organized by the Thera diocese and a private investor but without the participation of the local Ephorate, and endangered the ancient site and the surrounding Natura 2000 landscape.⁴⁹ As in the cases of the Rotonda and Bazeos Tower, these activities cannot be disassociated from the economic potential and advantage of developing a pilgrimage site, since its tax-free earnings are directly managed by the Bishopric.⁵⁰

In general, the Church aims to manage its capital in buildings by itself.⁵¹ In this way, the Church is more likely to build/expand churches than preserve historical monuments. However, there are several positive examples where the local ecclesiastical council has petitioned for the collection of funds and restored several churches with the efforts of the local community and in collaboration with the Ministry (e.g. Agios Isidoros, Agia Irini and Agios Georgios in Galanado, Naxos).⁵² However, there are cases where the intervention to the physical fabric of the monuments is undertaken without the Ministry’s consent, involving the destruction or concealment of important elements (e.g. the paved pavilion in Metropolis square, fig. 5) or non-reversible alterations to the landscape (e.g. the construction of a five-storey

⁴⁹ Kazalotti (2009a); Kazalotti (2009b).

⁵⁰ Stewart (2011), p. 189.

⁵¹ See for example the case of the former 401 Military Hospital in Athens, Iliopoulou (2007).

⁵² Gratsia (2007).

building at Roussanou Monastery at Meteora to house the monks, while tourists occupied the historic structures).⁵³

Interestingly enough, for almost a decade, the Supreme Ecclesiastical Academy of Athens has been running a four-year degree in the ‘Management of Ecclesiastical Keimelia’⁵⁴ involving a number of modules on heritage conservation, interpretation and management.⁵⁵ Even though the benefits from this programme are not yet visible, the holders of this degree may come to promote good practices in the maintenance of the physical fabric of Byzantine monuments in use in Greece and provide an informed intermediary in the relevant discussions between the Ministry and the local communities.

In discussing the two main stakeholders in the management of Byzantine churches, one does not fail to acknowledge the tensions emerging between the different viewpoints of the protection and use of the religious buildings. However, apart from the ontological/secular versus spiritual/religious conflict, there is also the struggle to establish and maintain ownership rights over monuments at the local or national level; an issue that will be also discussed in the following section.

Local communities of Naxos

In order to complete the jigsaw puzzle of stakeholders in the discussion, we shall now turn to the description of local interests encountered on the island. Most of the evidence presented here has been collected through ethnographic research, part of the ‘Local Communities and Monuments’ programme (LCMO), operating on the island since 2007. This is a public outreach scheme to approach and understand beliefs and practices of the local communities towards heritage, mainly through open, regulated public dialogue meetings.⁵⁶

In general, the citizens of Naxos Island are proud of the history and the monuments of their area, especially when comparing the local cultural resources from one village to

⁵³ Poullos (2014), pp. 80-87.

⁵⁴ Heirloom or heritage. As Alexopoulos (2013), p. 65 comments, the word *keimilia* embodies symbolisms of living religious heritage.

⁵⁵ Athens: <http://bit.ly/1N3yooQ> and Thessaloniki: <http://bit.ly/1RVpoQY>. Last access: 01/11/2016.

⁵⁶ <http://tkm.monumenta.org>, last access: 01/11/2016. The project nests under the auspice of the Greek NGO MONUMENTA, Lekakis (2013).

another and then as Naxians against the rest of the Greeks.⁵⁷ This vital aspect of identity is commonly accompanied by an emotional connection and a sense of ownership and responsibility for the monuments. In Byzantine monuments, this emotional stance conflates with a strong sentiment of piety. These concepts are not connected with the national narrative on the importance of cultural heritage for Greek identity and most of the time people cannot comment on the scientific value of the monuments, such as when they were built or what is their ‘official’ history.⁵⁸ On the other hand, this local, ‘unofficial’ stance towards the monuments is articulated through the traditional nodes of rural community life, experience and oral history.⁵⁹

If we attempt to examine this pattern in its historicity, we will observe that despite the official rhetoric, examined above and cultivated in the urban centres of Greece since the beginnings of the national State, (Byzantine) monuments and various ritual and secular practices surrounding them, remained vividly embedded in the local level, interpreted through folk tradition and everyday life experiences. For the Byzantine churches, their importance in the social landscape continues to reflect the organizational system of the Ottoman Empire (*millet*), imposed on Greece until its independence. This system placed religion at the centre of political and administrative life, at regional and local levels, rendering spiritual leaders the official representatives of the people towards the Sultan.⁶⁰

This multi-temporal blend of beliefs and practices runs parallel with the State’s approaches to heritage management. It has been described as ‘social time’ or ‘social capital’ of the monuments, to mark the distance from the official rhetoric and appropriation of culture as heritage,⁶¹ commonly theorised under the concept of ‘Romiosyni’; the collective, internal identity of the Greek-self, revolving around Orthodoxy and other traditional values, inspiring a different way of understanding, historicizing and managing the past.⁶²

⁵⁷ Gratsia (2010).

⁵⁸ See parallels in Turkey: Atalay (2010), pp. 422-23 and Peru: Onuki (2007), pp. 101, 109. Commonly in these cases there is a personal and/or economic interest in their appropriation, see in Egypt: Fushiya (2010), pp. 342-45.

⁵⁹ Lekakis (2008).

⁶⁰ Chasiotis (2001).

⁶¹ Kotsakis (1998), p. 55; Hamilakis (2007).

⁶² The noun derives from ‘Romii’ the attributive of the Eastern Roman Empire dwellers, that in post-Byzantine Greece came to characterise the Christian, traditional identity of Greeks as opposed to the

From this viewpoint, churches are considered and treated as part of a living heritage, operating as spaces of cult that might be celebrated only once a year, they are however of non-negotiable importance, holding a paramount, symbolic role in various agrarian processes and the cohesion/circumscription of the landscape in general.⁶³ This emotional stance has saved many Byzantine monuments from the cataclysmic effects of summer tourism and its unregulated building activities to cater for the tourists in Naxos.⁶⁴ It has however created other kinds of problems. Locals, as an offer to the saint of the church –as a token of their piety, or in urgent situations– tend to restore churches according to their own means and ways or modify architectural elements without the adequate permission and/or guidance from the Ministry. Even though this practice has saved monuments from collapse and degradation, in many cases it has contributed to the loss of architectural authenticity (e.g. cemented walls and roofs), drastic alterations to the surrounding landscape or even demolition of monuments⁶⁵ (see below: Moni Taxiarchon, Sangri). Alternatively, in Naxos, there have been several cases of fruitful cooperation between the locals and the Ministry, as in the case of Panagia Drosiani in Moni (fig. 6), where locals offered part of their fields to open and arrange access to the church walkway during the restoration of the monument.⁶⁶

The sentiment of piety needs to be examined along with the ‘mentality of ownership’, that recurs in the discussions with several individuals and in the public dialogue meetings. Antiquities in the consciousness of the locals ‘belong’ to the people that live nearby, tend to them or actually discover them, a pattern embedded in the local culture.⁶⁷ For example, the owner/s of the field in which the church exists can be expected to provide all the necessary means for the protection and well-being of their church, ‘their saint’ (*ton ághio touís*), as well as cleaning, vegetation removing, white-

west-oriented Hellenic identity. Herzfeld (1982); Herzfeld (1987), pp. 101-104; Stewart (2012), pp. 179-88.

⁶³ Du Boulay (2009), pp.157-58; Lekakis, ‘The unseen landscape of Naxos. Cultural heritage and the social dynamics in the Aegean’ (in prep.)

⁶⁴ Lekakis (2012). There are cases however, where abandoned churches were used as pens until the 1960s, as Agios Georgios Diasoritis, Doumas (2013), pp. 10-11 until 1960 or Agios Sozon Giallous, still used as one.

⁶⁵ See parallels in other parts of Greece, as in Mani, Peloponnese: Liwieratos (2009), pp. 80, 88.

⁶⁶ Doumas (2013), pp.15-16.

⁶⁷ Lekakis (2006).

washing (*ásprisma*), candle lighting, and other activities that build up to the celebration date of the church. These might involve provisions for an in situ feast or even opening their house to those attending the celebration liturgy. Failing to perform these activities⁶⁸ meets the silent scold of the community for the ‘owners’, their relatives or their neighbours, who are expected to undertake them. These activities, if attentively fulfilled, provide prestige to the person or party in charge but also they could be considered as one of the customary practices set as communal means of taking care of the public infrastructure, further cementing collective identity and feeding back to community life.

From this perspective, monuments are sometimes considered as the tangible remains left by the predecessors to their descendants in a form of ‘inheritance’; to be locally venerated and used, as opposed to the national appropriated ‘heritage’. This inheritance could be communal, and is shared to shape local identity, as a commentator stated in one of our meetings for the need to protect Agia Kyriaki Kallonis:⁶⁹ “We, the Aperathítes (the citizens of Apeiranthos) left Agia Kyriaki to perish. It was our own thing, our own creation in the 9th century. We were there, back then, the same people. But in the passage of time, we left it to perish.” The monument in this case is considered as a reference point in a multi-temporal judgemental appreciation of the local community, underlining a specific bond of the people with the landscape, forming a vital characteristic of their identity.⁷⁰

However, monuments could also be considered as private properties, as in most cases when moveable objects of antiquity are concerned.⁷¹ This could be easily deduced from the 19th-century law framework. The first archaeological law of 1834 was unable to literally enforce ‘public ownership’ over antiquities (A.61) and thus promoted cooperation and an ‘exchange-mode’ with the local communities. This was materialized by being flexible on issues of property rights; acknowledging private ownership of antiquities in collections and co-ownership on private lands, for recently

⁶⁸ On Tinos Island they are called ‘ομπλίγκο’, coming from the Italian ‘obbligo’: obligation. Florakis (2002), p. 38.

⁶⁹ Gratsia and Lekakis (2011), p. 57.

⁷⁰ Stewart (2012), p. 123; Lekakis, ‘The unseen landscape of Naxos. Cultural heritage and the social dynamics in the Aegean’ (in prep.)

⁷¹ cf. Lekakis (2006), p. 12, footnote 28.

excavated material, by individuals with an official permit.⁷² This provision reflected the everyday reality in rural areas, where apart from other aspects, recovered antiquities bore similar economic values to the crops that a field could yield and were routinely sold to foreign travellers.⁷³ A telling instance of how the mentality of private ownership spread in the 19th and 20th century Aegean is the incident of the two citizens from Anaphi Island, who sent a letter to the *Éktaktos Epítropos Notíon Kykládon* (Temporary Commissioner of the Southern Cyclades) asking to exchange their discoveries for limited compensation and their appointment as paid civil servants by the State;⁷⁴ maybe one of the first records of a *rousféti* (from the Turkish ‘rüşvet’: bribe, shell game), in the history of the modern Greek state. The subsequent archaeological law of 1899 transferred all rights over antiquities to the State (A.1).

Back in Naxos, these social patterns concerning pious sentiments and notions of ownership subject to wider social negotiations, modify perceptions and interpretations of monuments which can be divergent from scientific understandings or official narratives. They may include local interpretations of use, age or importance.⁷⁵ A characteristic example emerged at the second public dialogue meeting of the LCMO programme, the theme of which was ‘Monuments at risk, the citizens’ voice’. During the meeting, one of the speakers presented a list of Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments at risk, according to the views of the local community of Apeiranthos village. More monuments were added to the list by the public present in order to meet the acceptance of the majority. However, when the list was compared to the priorities of the local Ephorate the divergence was evident.⁷⁶

The case of Moni Christou Photodoti in Danakos encompasses all the issues discussed so far: piety, ownership and perception through local lenses and sentiments, ascribing different values and generating personal and collective identities. This Byzantine basilica was converted in the 16th century into a fortress-monastery (fig. 7).⁷⁷ For the

⁷² Petrakos (1982), pp. 132, 139.

⁷³ Tolia (1996).

⁷⁴ Protosaltis (1967), pp. 148–49.

⁷⁵ See for example the use of spolia in churches, encompassing symbolic, apotropaic, even identity-related personal or communal values, apart from the economy of labour and money, the variety of which exceeds the limits of this paper. Papalexandrou (2003); Lekakis (2008); Kakridis (1978).

⁷⁶ Lekakis and Gratsia (2011), pp. 60–63.

⁷⁷ Mastoropoulos (2007), p. 209.

hinterland communities, especially locals in Danakos and surrounding villages, the monument is considered central in their identity. Quoting one local of Danakos: “It has been inscribed in the collective memory of the locals. We have lived with it, felt joy, love and sadness... We have always been aware for the protection of this cultural treasure of our village”.⁷⁸ Indeed, the local cultural organization *Fíloi ton Ekklisiatikón Mnimeíon: O Photodótis* (Friends of the Ecclesiastical Monuments: Photodotis) has systematically attempted to preserve and restore the monastery since the 1980s, funding or securing funds for the relevant studies. Finally, the restoration project was funded by the 3rd Co-financed Development Programmes (2000-2006) and now stands restored and protected.⁷⁹

However, in the public dialogue meetings of our programme in 2008 and 2010 there was a widespread uneasiness about the type of restoration and especially the effect on the image of the monument: “The monument (after the restoration) looks as if it’s not our own anymore. It seems as if it came from somewhere else and landed there, at the same point. And this is very frustrating” and after a while, “the people that live in a place, OK, we say that they don’t protect the monuments, OK they may not protect them, but they are theirs, they own them, they feel them. As soon as they leave their hands, they will stop being theirs. They will stop being interested.”⁸⁰

However, this romantic perception about the preservation of the traditional image is not always predominant. Nationally and/or locally instigated modernizing trends often sweep localities, taking their toll of old structures and customs. Affected by one of these trends in the 1950s, local opinions had the opposite results on the Moni Taxiarchon in Sangri. There the 16th-century monastery was demolished following an initiative from part of the local community and the local administration in order to erect a modern church on site.⁸¹

The case of Moni Taxiarchon implies that local politics play a crucial role in the wellbeing of the monuments in the localities. The local administration, in this case the

⁷⁸ Gratsia *et al.* (2010), p. 37.

⁷⁹ Gratsia *et al.* (2010), pp. 37-39.

⁸⁰ Gratsia *et al.* p. 54. The same unease was expressed about the covering of the dome of Panagia Aperathitissa in Apeiranthos and the Metropolis in Chora with metal sheets, Gratsia *et al.* (2010), p. 55.

⁸¹ Magnisali (2013).

municipality, often following the dominant national-level discourse could contribute to the conservation or not of monuments through their actions and omissions. Even though the current legal framework (L. 346/2006, A.75.1) allows them to contribute to the protection of the monuments in general, most of the time they are interested in activities that will enhance the economic growth of the area and their prestige, focusing mainly on iconic monuments or those that are already touristic attractions, sometimes through dubious activities.⁸² Their interaction with the Ministry and the Church can only be judged on a case-by-case scenario.⁸³

A mental map of the management of churches in use

Summarizing the above, the official manager of the Byzantine monuments in use, the Ministry of Culture in Greece is confronted by both the current economic circumstances and the fixed attitudes of the Church to defend its rights over attributed property on political and economic grounds, even though effectively the Church is part of the State. These confrontations are followed by those local communities that sustain and regularly engage with the monuments –claiming again their jurisdiction– operating mainly on their religious sentiment on a communal or personal level, with unsure outcome regarding their maintenance.

Compiling this mental map of practices and relationships between the key stakeholders at the national, regional and local level is a revealing process that could help us understand the synchronic context of the management of Byzantine churches. But how might these lead us to a sustainable management model?

The international perspective

Such a question cannot be systematically answered in the limited space of this paper, but reviewing the evidence so far, we are able to set the limits to the field, which can draw on concepts and practices discussed outside Greece. Thus, from a wider point of view, we could acknowledge that neglect and abandonment of rural historic churches and places of worship is a common phenomenon across Europe. Catholic and Protestant churches become redundant, their infrastructures abandoned, as in Belgium and Germany; a pattern fuelled by lack of funding, ongoing processes of disengaging

⁸² Efthymiadou and Papastathopoulou (2012), pp. 27-30.

⁸³ Lekakis (2013), pp. 245-46; Doumas (2011), p. 10.

religious aspects from state affairs, the decline of religious spirituality and the rise of secular modernity in Europe⁸⁴ with the associated fall in the numbers of priests and the drastic reduction of congregations.⁸⁵

For this reason a growing number of organisations has been established in order to find strategic solutions for historic churches at both national and local levels, as ‘Churches Conservation Trust’⁸⁶ and ‘Förderkreis Alte Kirchen’⁸⁷ or at international level as ‘Future for Religious Heritage’, a network of relative organisations and stakeholders “working to protect religious buildings and interiors across Europe”.⁸⁸

It is possible to see that these organisations work on various solutions, ranging from systematic inventories, assessment studies, restoration projects, public outreach schemes to propose a consistent change of use, providing the building with a secular, second life. The common denominator is the attempt to provide extended use to the religious buildings, most commonly outside the scope of worship.

Even though their work has limited application for our case study, where a change of use would not be tolerated by the Orthodox creed, their activities and modus operandi, in relation to the stakeholder parameters discussed above, offer valuable insights towards the formulation of a strategic plan for Byzantine heritage management in Greece. A few activities are presented here that could be initiated from locally- or regionally-based stakeholders.

Horizontal appreciation of cultural resources

The basis of planning for the effective distribution of resources is the complete inventory of all heritage resources present. Although this will probably be available with the Greek archaeological cadastre, as already discussed, it should be cross-referenced with other locally or regionally available data in order to gain a holistic view of the sites, their conservation state and recorded needs from interested

⁸⁴ Makrides and Molokotos-Liederman (2004), p. 459.

⁸⁵ FRH (2007).

⁸⁶ <http://www.visitchurches.org.uk>, last access: 01/11/2016.

⁸⁷ <http://www.altekirchen.de/>, last access: 01/11/2015. Elliniki Etairia, Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage is one of the oldest NGOs in Greece. Its activities involve fundraising for the conservation of historic churches, <http://www.ellet.gr/>, last access: 01/11/2016.

⁸⁸ <http://www.frh-europe.org/>, last access: 01/11/2015.

communities.⁸⁹

Reframing of existing patterns in private funding

The current conservation project of Agia Kyriaki Kallonis at Apeiranthos is mainly based on private funding,⁹⁰ an example added to a long list of projects around Greece, partially or on the whole funded by private institutions and individuals. Private capital has long contributed to the preservation of the medieval and modern cultural heritage in Greece. In view of the present bleak economic situation, a systematic re-examination of relative laws and processes should apply, in order to attract and absorb funds in a more efficient way. For example, tax relief currently applies for donors, probably a field that could be further amended (see e.g. the VAT recovery scheme on listed building repairs in effect in the UK).⁹¹

Involvement of relevant stakeholders

Contemporary heritage management calls for the participation of all relevant stakeholders in all the relevant stages of a heritage project (e.g. planning, execution, monitoring), in an open, social and reflective way, as stated in the 1999 Burra Charter prepared by the Australian ICOMOS. This charter apart from prescribing participatory processes in the management of sites, configures a value-based approach to assess significance, enveloping all the relevant stakeholders. We may reach the same conclusion: the need to involve a wide community of interested parties. Thus, if we examine the latest discussion on cultural economics the participation of the public is considered crucial as part of the evaluation and accountability of the heritage projects.⁹² Attempting to involve all interested stakeholders, especially in the light of our analysis above, may result in a studious and tedious process that may not convey easy steps forward. There are however, several methodologies of assembling these kinds of agencies/fora,⁹³ helping to record views and aspirations of different parties and synchronise them closer to a mutual understanding. Their compilation, organisation and potential operation in Greek heritage management would be greatly

⁸⁹ See for example the MuA Project, documenting monuments at risk through an online interactive map. Lekakis and Ganiatsas (2014); www.mua.gr, last access: 01/11/2016.

⁹⁰ The Swiss 'Association Hagia Kyriaki' led the petition for the protection and restoration of the church. <http://hagia-kyriaki.org>, last access: 01/11/2016.

⁹¹ DCMS (2013).

⁹² Clark (2006).

⁹³ Lekakis (2013): Synchronic Context Analysis & Creating Participation Schema.

benefitted by the critical examination of existing paradigms,⁹⁴ also taking advantage of the existing opportunities in the legal context.⁹⁵

It could be said that exactly this exposure to contrasting interests, values and practices among stakeholders is the main benefit of the ‘living heritage approach’ concept, mentioned above. Apart from ticking various politically correct boxes of participation, sustainability etc., if operationally analysed, the concept could provide the platform to debate heritage management among various interested communities that claim special, even religious, affinities with the remains. From this point of view the ‘living’ heritage approach focuses mainly on the disruptions in the life of a heritage site, examining roles and power relations along with their results in the management of the resource. It can therefore distance us from the quest of trying to locate and preserve an anti-modern, nostalgic ‘continuity’, frequently catering for specific interest groups (e.g. the monastic communities), ultimately creating semi-alive, or zombie heritage sites, as discussed elsewhere.⁹⁶

Recording, understanding and using local knowledge

Finally, the examination of local knowledge –learning from local communities– is currently considered imperative for the management of local resources, from a practical point of view. The beginnings of this trend could be traced in the 1990s, with the inscription of East Rennell Island, Solomon Islands in the World Heritage List: a site under customary land ownership and management. This was a move that acknowledged the importance of local systems and values, not only important for the natural environment but also for the effective management processes applied.⁹⁷ The establishment of the List of World Heritage in danger with the upgraded role of the citizens in the inscription of sites further explored this idea,⁹⁸ providing the grounds for the development of the relevant theory on the ways of research, collection and re-use of the available local knowledge through archaeological ethnography –as this research– or the commencement of long-term projects.⁹⁹ In our case, even if we are

⁹⁴ e.g. Alexopoulos (2013); Xu (2007).

⁹⁵ Kalpatsinidou, (2014), pp. 27-29.

⁹⁶ Lekakis (2015): pp. 197-99.

⁹⁷ UNESCO (2015a).

⁹⁸ UNESCO (2015b); Lekakis and Ganiatsas (2014).

⁹⁹ See for example, the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems by UNESCO. Accessed at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/links/>, last Access: 06/11/15.

not dealing with indigenous communities, the use of relevant tools and practices in local communities of Europe is a well-established practice with a good record of useful results.¹⁰⁰

Ways forward

The management of Byzantine cultural heritage in Greece has evolved from neglect and solely religious use to complete protection and touristic appropriation in a matter of less than two hundred years. During these years the State, the Church of Greece and various communities emerged as prominent stakeholders in their management affecting use patterns and most importantly the monuments per se.

The systematic appreciation of views and practices could reveal the mosaic of values on which the Byzantine monuments currently stand; however, vital for their successful conservation is their ethical inscription in both social and economic terms in long term planning. This cannot be imagined without the participation of the surrounding, local communities in an interactive way that will acknowledge long established concepts and practices but also promote informed experience and interaction with the monuments. It is actually the only way to democratically reframe religious heritage in the current sociocultural present, underlining its ‘living’ attributes in its broader cultural values.

Naxos, the land of numerous cultural resources, is a valuable testing ground to examine the effectiveness of policies, customary views and patterns, along with the potential measures for the collective management and protection of cultural heritage. Considering the latter, cultural tourism is a preferred and plausible means to engage and involve, and an option that both the State and the Church of Greece turn to. This however should be negotiated with respect to the historical context and the dynamics of the surrounding communities. The international perspective urges us to think globally, keeping however a solid ground; to reflect the truth of the Byzantine architectural religious heritage through our management decisions.

¹⁰⁰ Atalay (2007).

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