

Review

# Protection of Cultural Heritage in Thessaloniki: A Review of Designation Actions

Maria Margarita Vyzantiadou \* and Melissa Selevista

Department of Traditional Settlements and Listed Buildings, Ministry of Interior,  
Sector of Macedonia and Thrace, 54123 Thessaloniki, Greece; mlselevista@gmail.com

\* Correspondence: mvyzanti@gmail.com; Tel.: +30-2310-379362

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**Abstract:** This paper presents a part of the work of the Department of Traditional Settlements and Listed Buildings (Department of T. S. & L. B.) of the Ministry of Interior (sector of Macedonia and Thrace) which concerns to the specialized legislative policy for the protection and designation of architectural culture, giving a brief reference on major designation processes of properties from the region of Macedonia and Thrace. The Department of T. S. & L. B. is responsible, since 1986, for identifying and protecting the architectural heritage of Northern Greece, by preserving buildings and areas or settlements from inappropriate changes or destruction, thus recognizing them as listed buildings or traditional settlements according to specific administrative procedure. Formal designation helps to protect traditional properties as listed buildings from inappropriate changes or destruction; meanwhile, the establishment of specific protection terms and restrictions of construction, the approval of architectural plans for restorations, interventions, uses or additions contribute that all listed buildings survive and prosper as “live shells”, along with other monuments. Additionally, in cases of traditional areas and settlements, other actions, e.g., modification of city plans, establishment of building rules, etc. have created a holistic protection framework preserving the architectural, urban and aesthetic character of significant historical areas of the city.

**Keywords:** policy for the protection of architectural culture; sustainable preservation and management of historic cities; architectural heritage of Northern Greece; listed buildings and traditional areas in Thessaloniki; protection of cultural heritage in Macedonia and Thrace

## 1. Introduction

Protection laws of cultural heritage in Greece are established according to the 1964 Venice Charter, the Declaration of Amsterdam of 1975, Paris Convention of 1972, the Granada Convention of 1985 and the Constitution of Greece, which, in its 24th article, mandates: “The protection of the natural and cultural environment constitutes a duty of the State and a right of every person. The State is bound to adopt special preventive or repressive measures for the preservation of the environment in the context of the principle of sustainable development” [1]. “Architectural heritage is an irreplaceable expression of the richness of our cultural heritage and an invaluable testimony of the past” [2]. The concept of architectural heritage includes buildings of traditional architecture, residential complexes, traditional settlements, general elements of the human environment and places, landscapes or natural formations. Its protection and enhancement are an obligation of the Greek State in accordance with Article 24 of the Constitution, as a result of international obligations of the country that the Greek State has legally recognized and relevant laws. A significant part of this duty has been carried out by the M. Int.-s. Ma. & Th. (Ministry of Interior, sector of Macedonia and Thrace), since 1986 and extends throughout Macedonia and Thrace [3].

The Department of T. S. & L. B. of the M. Int.-s. Ma. & Th. records and protects settlements or buildings from alterations or demolitions by designating them as traditional settlements or listed buildings and areas as distinct landscapes. It is responsible, for a significant number of architectural and natural heritage of Northern Greece, listing about 3000 preserved buildings, 70 traditional settlements and more than 20 sites—landscapes of special natural beauty—in the 16 Prefectures of Macedonia and Thrace.

The work of the above department, part of which is presented in this paper, concerns the preservation and highlighting of valuable data according to the 6th article of the New Building Regulation Law, for the purpose of “preserving and enhancing its special historical, urban, architectural, traditional, social and aesthetic aspect” [4], namely:

- The designation of buildings or parts of buildings or building complexes, the establishment of special protection terms and restrictions of construction and uses, as well as the approval of studies for rehabilitation, interventions or additions to listed buildings, construction of new buildings on adjacent to them properties, etc.
- The designation of settlements as traditional, the definition of the construction ruling into them, the outlining of their traditional part, the revision and modification of urban plans, as well as the approval of their integration in general or special spatial plans, the approval of re-development studies, etc.
- The designation of sites or landscapes or exceptional natural formations that accompany or surround elements of architectural heritage, as well as formations of natural or manmade character, as sites of particular natural beauty [4,5].

The 6th article of the New Building Regulation Law also includes policies for restoration and maintenance of listed buildings, e.g., the establishments of specific protection terms and their use; the approval of architectural plans for restorations, interventions or additions to listed buildings; construction of new buildings on adjusted estates; reconstruction of listed buildings if they have been demolished due to a major force like an earthquake, fire, etc., or if their building structure has been damaged by aging phenomena and has to be demolished for safety reasons; etc. [4]. In addition, maintenance, adaptation and re-use can allow the architectural heritage to yield aesthetic, environmental and economic benefits even where the original use may no longer be viable. According to this law, special specifications can be instructed for each listed building itself.

The designation criteria are based, in general, on a circular of 1992 by the Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works as follows [6]:

- Architectural style and particular aspects as morphology, rhythm, facades, geometry of forms, etc.
- Historical significance (e.g., design by well-known architects).
- Their use (e.g., historical significance of special use as market places, etc.).
- Their place in urban fabric (e.g., stand-alone structures, areas of buildings, buildings next to others of significant value, etc.) and the surrounding urban quality of each building.
- The condition of the building at the time of designation as far as its deterioration is concerned [6].

## 2. Ministry’s Actions on Protecting the Architectural Heritage in Thessaloniki

The city of Thessaloniki has a rich history, architectural heritage and culture as well as buildings and groups of buildings, which testify its uninterrupted long-standing presence and highlight its character from the last decades of the 19th century to the first decades of the 20th century. Various architectural styles, such as the traditional Macedonian architecture or the neoclassical and eclectic rhythm up to the modern architecture of the interwar period, indicate the richness of the tradition of the city.

The Department of T. S. & L. B. is responsible for the protection of many preserved buildings and has contributed to the preservation of the rich architectural identity of Thessaloniki. Its major actions

aim to the protection of traditional settlements and parts of the city and the designation of buildings, as presented in the next pages.

## 2.1. The Framework of the Protection of the Traditional Area of “Ano Poli” (Old Town or Upper Town)

### 2.1.1. The Architectural Heritage of Ano Poli

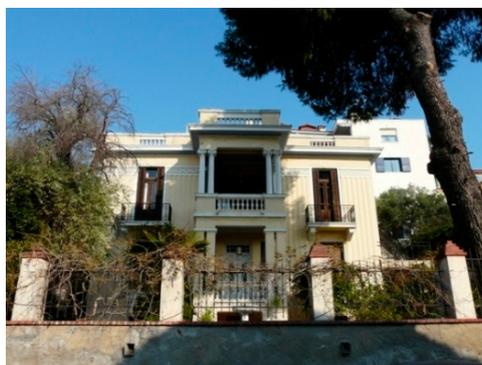
The Ano Poli of Thessaloniki is built on a hill with large slopes. It is defined by the three sides by the Byzantine City Walls, while to the south by Olympiada Street. Architectural works have been created, throughout its history, presenting a variety of rhythms, from folk architecture to eclecticism and the use of neoclassical morphological elements, a combination of different features and color variations alongside a complex urban web (Figures 1–4). At the level of urban plan, the features of medieval cities can be noticed, with labyrinthine narrow streets and small squares. One can perceive the neighborhood, the small scale of the man in a short distance from the city center.



**Figure 1.** Aerial view of Ano Poli with settlement delimitation (google earth).



**Figure 2.** Traditional house in Ano Poli, Thessaloniki.



**Figure 3.** Neoclassical style house in Ano Poli, Thessaloniki.



**Figure 4.** Folk architecture in Ano Poli, Thessaloniki.

### 2.1.2. The Institutional Protection Frame Work after 1978

By the end of the 1950s, the settlement was a coherent entity, developed around monuments of early Christian, Byzantine and Ottoman period. In the early 1960s and until the 1970s, commercial blocks of flats, incompatible in scale and form with the existing historic buildings, were built. Many remarkable buildings were demolished and traditional neighborhoods disappeared.

The first attempt to preserve the character of the area was after the earthquakes of 1978, when a series of administrative actions took place (1979–1985), under the proposal of Minister for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works. These actions concerned in its designation as a traditional settlement (1979) [7], the definition of special terms of construction and restrictions on the land areas of the urban plan (1979) [8] and the modification and revision of the urban plan of Thessaloniki (1980 and 1985) [9–11]. In addition, 48 houses were designated by the Ministry of Culture as works of art that need special protection (1979) [12].

Since the implementation of the above-mentioned legislative framework of the settlement (1979–1985) and for a period of over 20 years, some significant negative elements were still mentioned for the rescue of the urban fabric, such as the high building factor and the terms of construction, road widening in accordance with a new spatial plan that spoiled the irregular urban web, the joining of the properties (Figure 5), the exploitation of the building factor, which they constructed on a sloping block piece of land large scale volumes, etc. At the same time, however, the lack of a more general design, which would define technical guidelines, such as urban planning, protection, etc., was obvious.



**Figure 5.** The original small-scale buildings (before) and the large scale volumes (after) created according to the urban plan of 1979 [13].

### 2.1.3. The Ministry's Framework of Preserving and Enhancing Ano Poli

The Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace (M. Int.—s. Ma. & Th.), in mid-1997 and early 1998, set up a study group of representatives from all specialized agencies of the city, to define a more general protection plan for the traditional area. The aim of the group was to highlight the particular morphological and urban character of the traditional settlement, the surrounding area of the Byzantine monuments and the preserved buildings, and to preserve its historical character [14]. At the end, the following actions took place:

- (1) The specific terms of the Presidential Decree (P.D.) of 1979 were modified with the P.D. of 1999 [15]. In summary, alternations focused on the protection of the surrounding area of monuments, the protection of small property, the avoidance of compact solid volumes, the maintenance of the traditional scale with lower building factors, the protection of the amphitheatric placement of the area by determining the heights of the structures according to the degree of ground slopes, etc.
- (2) Two ministry designation decisions took place in 1999 and 2002, concerning 281 individual buildings of the area, including the imposition of specific terms and restrictions for the construction, protection and use of these buildings [14,16,17]. These decisions aimed to preserve buildings, dating from the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, for historical, architectural and urban planning reasons. Within the framework of these decisions, preservation categories were defined so each of these listed buildings was given the needed form of protection, as follows:
  - The first category concerned 115 buildings of absolute protection (Figure 6). This category included an amount of buildings that had already been protected by the Ministry of Culture.
  - The second category concerned the protection of 91 shells of buildings (Figure 7).
  - The third category concerned 66 buildings in which their volumetric contour was protected and permitted to rebuild.
  - The fourth category concerned eight buildings, which were required to preserve their facades, and permitted to add floors.
  - In addition, 42 elements of the architectural and urban planning equipment such as fences, terraces, stairs, trees, rocks, rocky reliefs, etc. were protected, as they characterize the architectural and urban planning of the traditional settlement and the destruction or removal of them was prohibited (Figure 8).



Figure 6. Listed building of the first category of protection.



**Figure 7.** Listed building of the second category of protection.



**Figure 8.** Elements of urban planning equipment.

- (3) Finally, specific additional terms and restrictions were imposed for buildings and uses, defined by the P.D. of 2007, concerning: prohibition of mobile antennas, underground gas installation, repealing of roads widening to protect listed buildings, restrictions to maintain the narrow dimension of a road, etc. [18].

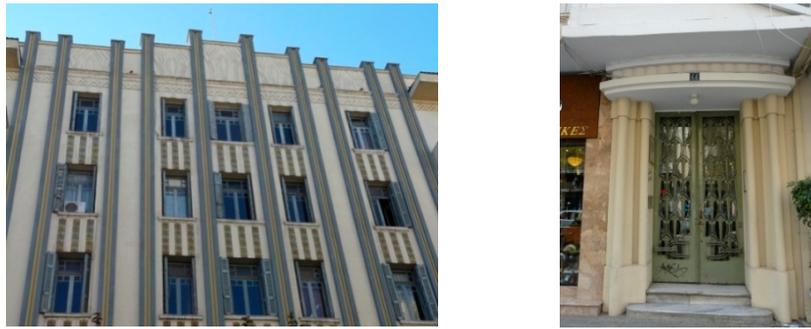
All the above actions, such as modification of city plans and designation of buildings, create a holistic protection framework preserving the architectural, urban and aesthetic character of the traditional settlement of Ano Poli.

## 2.2. *The Administrative Protection of Buildings at the Historical Centre of Thessaloniki*

### 2.2.1. Thessaloniki's Architectural Heritage (19th–20th Century)

The architecture that dominated the city of Thessaloniki during the 19th and early 20th centuries exhibits a multiplicity of styles, reflecting the influence of local, regional, multinational and cosmopolitan trends and tastes. These styles refer to a variety of historical rhythms, such as Ancient, Roman–Byzantine, Ottoman, European, baroque, art nouveau, art deco, and modern architecture.

During the late 19th century, major changes took place in the city of Thessaloniki. Due to the influence of the industrial revolution in Europe together with new construction materials and methodologies, a modern eclecticism style appeared in public architecture, industrial buildings, markets and houses. The evolution of eclecticism associated with the Modern Greek reality marked the change of the city's image, expressing with the development of new architectural styles, such as art deco, or modern style during the interwar period of the 1920s to the 1940s [19] (Figure 9). Both styles represent a new aesthetics, free from the styles and forms of the past. Buildings are characterized by geometric forms or elements, curving forms and smooth polished surfaces. Modern buildings may be found in a variety of forms from large scale urban buildings such as government buildings, factories and theatres, to smaller scale buildings, such as schools, houses and apartment buildings. Their architectural style emphasizes curving forms and long horizontal lines (Figure 10).



**Figure 9.** Art deco style buildings and elements in the historical center of Thessaloniki.



**Figure 10.** Modern style buildings of the early 20th century in the historical center of Thessaloniki.

The interior of these buildings of the interwar period portrays itself as remarkable as their external forms and structure. Geometric forms or elements, curving forms and smooth polished surfaces are the most common characteristics in combination with exotic colorful oriental designs and patterns on walls and distinct colorful mosaic tile floors in a variety of patterns and colors. Many buildings of this period preserve their interior as it was formed during the time of their construction such as stucco decorations on the ceilings or on walls (Figure 11), decorative tiles (Figure 12), floors, staircases with plenty of natural lighting, old wooden entrance doors in apartments and remarkable doors in the main entrance of the buildings with wooden or stainless steel detailing [19].



**Figure 11.** Decoration on ceilings.



**Figure 12.** Buildings' interior of the early 20th century in Thessaloniki, Greece. Mosaic tile floors.

### 2.2.2. The Designation of 199 Buildings of the Early 20th Century at the Historical Centre of Thessaloniki

In 2014, with decisions of the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace, a study group was set up to preserve Thessaloniki's architectural identity during the interwar period (1920–1940). The aim was to begin a designation process to protect buildings of high architectural value at the historical center of the city and mandate their preservation and protection.

The study group, including architects, representatives of the Department of T. S. & L. B. and other specialized agencies of the city, conducted a research on buildings of special value and special historical or aesthetic interest or character, as part of its architectural heritage. Several meetings took place to review each building and whether it met the criteria for designation through a detailed presentation procedure. The provided material for evaluation was mainly based on:

- building surveys at each block of the urban web, recording of specific buildings, according to their architectural characteristics and their identification on a map; and
- registering of data (i.e., available architectural plans, existing literature, etc.) and record each building on file cards, etc.

Approximately 260 buildings were examined, and 204 of them were finally proposed for designation. The urban site that has been chosen for this research was the historical center of the city and its wide area, within the boundaries of the Byzantine City Walls (Figure 13) [19].



**Figure 13.** Map of the study area.

The designation criteria, as mentioned in Section 1, concerned architectural and historical criteria as well as the building use, the building place and the condition of each building. The official designation procedure took place according to the Greek law [4], including a series of actions:

- A detailed report was written concerning the designation proposal of 204 buildings in the wider area of the historical center of Thessaloniki (study area), including individual properties or part of blocks of market places, their descriptions, the reasons for protecting them and policies for their restoration and maintenance.
- This report was submitted to the Municipality of Thessaloniki to inform the owners of the following designation procedure and they had one month to submit written comments against the proposal designation.
- At the end of that period, about 80 appeals against that proposal were addressed to the Department concerning approximately 72 buildings.
- A procedure of examination of the appeals was followed, including building surveys inside, to better evaluate, their morphological, structural, and architectural characteristics and value. Moreover, an extensive discussion with their owners took place advising and informing them of the designation benefits.
- A detailed review of the designation proposal, as well as the reviews and hearings of the appeals, and detailed reports and presentations were provided to the Central Architectural Commission of Macedonia and Thrace in order for them to express an opinion to the relevant minister.
- The commissioners weighed carefully the testimony by citizens at the hearing and the detailed report by the staff and gave their advisory opinion to the Minister of Interior by voting on the proposed designations [19].

Finally, a Ministry decision was published in 2016, concerning the designation of 199 individual or groups of buildings of the early 20th century, including the imposition of special conditions and restrictions for the construction, protection and use of these buildings [19,20]. The designation included absolute protection for the 199 buildings of the interwar period in their entirety (both the exterior and the interior are protected) in order to avoid regulatory fragmentation. General principles and underlying assumptions were considered along the following lines:

- It was not possible to impose certain degrees of protection (e.g., protection of facades, building envelope, etc.), because it was not possible to access to their interior in many buildings and this could cause unequal treatment between citizens-owners.
- The practice of protecting only the facade (“facadism”) of the buildings and making possible to remove the core of the building stock does not constitute an appropriate mean of structural intervention. Designating the buildings in their entirety could better protect the historic nature of the city and secure the scale and character of the urban historic fabric.
- On the other hand, protecting the building as an entity gives the possibility to people (owners and landlords) to examine their benefits and possibilities to carry out or not (in the future) a study of larger or smaller renovations.
- However, for any proposed project in listed buildings, several intervention possibilities can be defined, which, according to the New Building Regulation Law, can be chosen separately for every building [5]. Maintenance, adaptation and reuse may allow the architectural heritage to yield aesthetic, environmental and economic benefits even where the original use may no longer be viable [19].

Today and after the recent designation decision, an important historical built environment of Thessaloniki’s architectural heritage dated during the interwar period is protected, contributing to the historic continuity of the city and its actual life.

### *2.3. The Administrative Protection of the Historical Centre of Ladadika*

Ladadika constitutes an important area of the distant past, which reveals the social history of Thessaloniki and presents historical, urban, architectural, traditional and social interest (Figure 14).

The word “Ladadika” literally means the shops that sell oil and its products. The whole area is located inside the city’s historical center and it was designated, in 1985, as a historical area under the

proposal of Minister of Culture. A unique historical complex of small shops, close to the port, turned out to be the center of wholesale market. It was also known as “Egyptian Market”. However, after the devastating fire of 1917, it gradually began to decline. In the 1980s, the buildings were abandoned in ruins (Figure 15).



**Figure 14.** The district of Ladadika (air view).



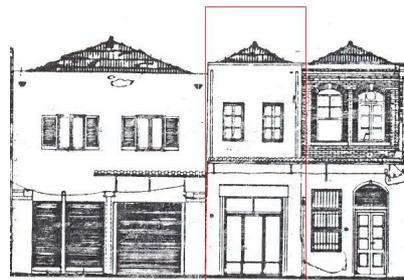
**Figure 15.** In the beginning of the 1980s, when the area was fully abandoned.

### 2.3.1. The Architectural Heritage of Ladadika

Today, Ladadika is divided into three building sections, which maintain the old urban historic fabric. The three types of buildings in the above-mentioned building blocks of Ladadika are:

#### Type A

- The narrow type: A single opening on the ground floor and two openings on the first floor (Figure 16).
- The cubic type: 2–3 openings on the ground floor and usually two internal arrays (Figure 17).
- The flatter type: It comes from the merging of neighboring stores (Figure 18).



**Figure 16.** The narrow type (Type A).



**Figure 17.** The cubic type (Type A).



**Figure 18.** The flatter type (Type A).

Type B: The special feature of these buildings is their large volume. Their facades are organized in a rhythmic repetition of rectangular openings—on horizontal and vertical axes (Figure 19).

Type C: The multi-story buildings belong to the interwar period of the area. They were built after the fire of 1917, by well-known architects, with significant morphological, structural, and architectural characteristics and value (Figure 20) [21].



**Figure 19.** Buildings of Type B.



**Figure 20.** Buildings of Type C.

### 2.3.2. The Ministry's Role on Preserving and Enhancing Ladadika's Special Historical, Urban, Architectural, Traditional, Social and Aesthetic Aspect

The Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace (Ma. & Th.) in cooperation with the Department of Environment and City-Planning of Central Macedonia, in an attempt to preserve Ladadika's architectural identity, decided to begin a designation process to prevent the demolition of these buildings of high historical and architectural value and mandate their preservation and protection. The whole plan of action took place from 1990 to 1997 as follows:

- 1993: All the buildings of the area were examined and 87 were proposed for designation and recorded on file cards.
- 1994: After a designation decision, 87 buildings with significant features were listed. The relevant decision by the Minister of Macedonia and Thrace took place in 1994 [22].
- 1997: The established street plan of the city in the historical area of Ladadika was amended to protect the oldest urban historic fabric of the area, which has existed since 1875, while also preventing the demolition of the valuable listed buildings of the area. The relevant decision by the Minister of Ma. Th. and the President of Democracy took place in 1997 [23].

In addition to the above framework of protection, the Department of Environment and City-Planning of Central Macedonia promoted a pilot project for the development and revitalization of "Ladadika", which was co-financed 75% by the Structural Fund of the European Community. Much construction took place in the area and, because of the above fiscal support, the streets of the old historic fabric were recreated and the entire area became a pedestrian area. A few public buildings were also reconstructed as far as their shell was concerned; however, the most important problem was the lack of extra financial support through the state for maintaining and restoring the 87 private buildings of the area, which were in very bad condition with many structural problems. During that time, the priority was to encourage the owners, through a continuous cooperation, to undertake the maintenance of their property by proposing them the possibility of new prosperous uses, especially recreational ones, for a better functional management of their property.

It is important to stress that this opportunity, for an adaptive reuse of their property prevented the demolition of these buildings. The owners cooperated with a group of architects from the Department of Environment and City-Planning of Central Macedonia and, under their instructions and practical support, proceeded to maintain their buildings at their own expense. Therefore, the whole plan of preserving the historic area of Ladadika achieved its main goals:

- Demolition of buildings of high historical and architectural value was prevented.
- Significant buildings were designated and protected.
- The urban historic fabric of the area was protected.
- Owners were encouraged to take part in preserving their buildings.
- Policies for a better functional management of the property, with several different new uses, especially recreational ones (taverns, bars and restaurants) were formulated.
- The property value was increased.
- The environment was protected and enhanced.
- The economy of the area was developed.

At present, after the above designation decisions and the preservation framework, Ladadika came back to life. Many bars, taverns and restaurants have opened and reoccupied the once abandoned and now renovated old buildings.

### 2.4. The Traditional District in the Municipality of Neapolis-Sikeon

The Municipality of Neapolis-Sikeon is a traditional neighborhood on the northwest of Thessaloniki's city, close to the boundaries of the Byzantine City Walls (Figure 21). It is significant for

its particular historical, urban and social interest, since it is a complex of one- or two-story houses that were inhabited by Greek refugees from Asia Minor, Pontus and Eastern Thrace.

The houses in this traditional district are characterized by folk architecture: based on the local needs and the availability of construction materials (Figure 22).



**Figure 21.** The traditional district.



**Figure 22.** Listed building in the traditional district, close to the Byzantine City Walls.

The Ministry of Ma. & Th., in an attempt to preserve the historical and architectural identity of this area, decided to begin a designation process to prevent the demolition of these buildings, save the urban fabric of the area and mandate their preservation and protection.

Therefore, in 2006, after a designation minister's decision, 48 buildings with significant features were listed as important ones to be preserved, for their morphological value, their integration potential into the urban fabric of the Municipality of Neapolis-Sikeon, social reasons [24]. Furthermore, in 2012, the whole area was designated as traditional district with the restriction of specific terms of construction or maintenance. The relevant Ministry decision took place in 2012 [25].

It is indeed very important for the state to be able to preserve the heritage memory stemming from the refugee's presence and their life, at that time. On the other hand, it is also important to encourage heritage owners not to abandon their realty and for the state to be able to undertake appropriate measures to foster and provide within its own political and administrative structure, more specific incentives, measures or viable solutions. The above framework encourages conservation interventions for strengthening the static loading, upgrading the technical equipment or carrying out interior alternations giving to listed buildings the opportunity to become viable and have facilities according to the demands of modern everyday life.

### 3. Discussion

Looking back on the past, it has to be noticed that policies formulated from the state to rescue buildings or districts of great value in the historical center of Thessaloniki, such as at the Ano Poli, Ladadika or the Municipality of Neapolis-Sikeon, has brought many positive results today as the scale and architectural style of these places have been preserved to a certain extent. For example, architectural ensembles of buildings were rescued and no widening of roads could be done that damaged the old web, demolished historic buildings or ensembles or destroyed the natural relief. Furthermore, despite the demolition actions that took place in the past, the above protected places represent a priceless wealth and an irreplaceable expression of the richness of the past, thus deserving our uttermost care for inheriting them to the future generations.

Over the past 40 years, many efforts have been made by competent bodies in Thessaloniki, the residents and owners of these regions, especially in the cases of Ano Poli and Ladadika, as well as organization such as the Cultural Capital Organization “Thessaloniki ’97” (which in Ano Poli carried out repairs of listed buildings) established an institutional framework for protection of the areas and the regulation of a series of laws and decisions. Meanwhile, the Greek State has adopted several regulations for the owners of listed buildings as the provisions of relevant laws and decisions about the protection of architectural heritage. Nowadays, some findings and necessary procedures could be mentioned for the protection of the traditional areas and listed buildings as follows.

The image of abandonment of designate buildings is noticed quite often. The major problem areas for citizens is the lack of significant financial or other motive on the part of the state, for restoration purposes or maintenance of the designated buildings, the complicated administrative procedure and the bureaucracy. To encourage heritage owners not to abandon their property, the Greek State should undertake more appropriate measures to foster and provide specific incentives and measures (e.g., financial, taxation, etc.), although it has adopted some urban and economic incentives and regulations, such as:

- (1) Subsidized expenditure for the modification of traditional or listed buildings into hotel units, according to the Investment Incentives Law 3908/2011: “*The investment plans which come under the provisions of the present law in application of the Block Exemption Regulation shall receive aid for a series of expenditure*” [26]. This measure increases the positive investment flow of private capital into architectural heritage buildings, ensuring both preservation of heritage and achievement of sustainable development goals.
- (2) Tax reductions for property transfer.
- (3) Fiscal incentives.
- (4) Priority in preservation of listed buildings as an entity, in cases it is expropriated for public benefit, for example if there is an established street plan, park area, etc. By this motive, the owner of a listed building can ensure that his property shall not be deprived by the state.
- (5) Encourage conservation interventions for strengthening the static loading, upgrading the technical equipment or carrying out interior alternations giving to listed buildings a new prosperous use to become viable and have facilities according to the demands of modern everyday life.
- (6) Possibility to transfer the floor area ratio (FAR) of a listed building to another area of the Country—where there is acceptability—when there is still the ability to exploit its maximum height limits [19].

In general, it has been noticed, that people do not seem aware enough of all the above motives. For this reason, the Department of T. S. & L. B. tries to hear and examine their objections during a designation process, emphasizing the principles of preventive maintenance in protecting the built cultural heritage.

Nowadays, some findings and necessary procedures could be mentioned for the protection of the traditional areas and listed buildings:

- Projects of works that take place in these areas or listed buildings (e.g., restoration works, works for the erection of new buildings on adjacent to listed buildings properties, the reconstruction of the preserved buildings, etc.) are a challenge that should be addressed with sensitivity taking under consideration the character of the traditional settlement and the protection and preservation of the architectural physiognomy on adjacent to them preserved buildings.
- Under this concept, the role of the engineer, the degree of sensitivity to the conservation of the traditional character of the settlement and the specialization in rehabilitation are of great importance.
- In addition, emphasis should be given on the collaboration between the staff of the department and the architect of the proposed project in advance of alterations or expansions works of any sort, which is likely to take place and affect the character of a listed building.
- Under the provisions of the decision concerned the designation of 199 buildings, owners of listed buildings may examine the most prosperous ways for a sustainable refurbishment or an adaptive reuse process for their property. On this point, a recent example for the modification of an industrial listed building into apartment units should be mentioned. The owners of the building, which is an old tobacco warehouse, are already in the process of submitting application requests for planning permissions.
- An Electronic Database of the archive of the Department of T. S. & L. B. has been developed and operated for all traditional settlements, listed buildings and the sites of particular natural beauty in Macedonia and Thrace, which are under the protection of the M. Int. - s. Ma. & Th., as well as monuments and historical places, which are under the protection of the Ministry of Culture. This database is constantly updated and supported by administration and computer system and includes information for protection subjects (e.g., as photographs, documents, decisions, etc.), whereas citizens through the ministry's website have access to basic information for each of the entries [27].
- A digital map has been developed by architects of the department. The map includes a wide range of cultural heritage data, listed buildings, and contemporary and ancient monuments located within the historical center of Thessaloniki. This map is a very useful tool for the staff of the department, citizens and other specialized agencies of the city.

#### 4. Conclusions

Through the efforts made, thus far, by the Department of T. S. & L. B. to protect the architectural heritage in the regions of Northern Greece, it has become clear that its protection is a positive development and upgrades the value of the settlement potential of the area. In this context, it is important to mobilize the competent bodies to exploit existing state and European funding programs, to repair and protect listed buildings.

The designation and protection processes, considering the traditional settlement of Ano Poli, the traditional district in the Municipality of Neapolis-Sikeon, and the historical area of Ladadika, which are of special interest for the holistic protection framework, alongside with the designation of 199 buildings in the historical center of Thessaloniki, are of great importance for the enhancement of the architectural, urban, and aesthetic character and multifaceted cultural identity of the city. Proper information on positive aspects of cultural heritage protection can raise awareness of the wider protection of the traditional architectural wealth of the city of Thessaloniki.

The provision of financial support or incentives for listed buildings helps the owners to take initiatives concerning the intervention process that has to be carried out. Furthermore, it can also be used for boosting adaptive reuse and complete refurbishment of existing listed buildings in Greece. It is important to encourage inhabitants to adopt appropriate management tools and utilize the available scientific forces towards a better protection of tangible as well as intangible heritage.

The protection of the architectural heritage in historical centers of our cities is of utmost importance for the history and the culture of every city. Under the relevant provisions of the Greek

law, the Department of the Ministry of Interior (s. Ma. & Th.), has protected a considerable part of the architectural and natural heritage of the city and has secured the scale and character of its urban historic fabric. The creative challenge is to find appropriate ways to satisfy the requirements of a structure for safety, durability and usefulness, in a way to retain its character and special interest. Carrying out the works on a listed building, under the scope of the preventive maintenance, seems likely to heighten general awareness and impart on the owners a duty to protect something that is of value to the society as a whole.

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