

## Article

# The Modern Gaze of Foreign Architects Travelling to Interwar Greece: Urban Planning, Archaeology, Aegean Culture, and Tourism

Emilia Athanassiou \*, Vasiliki Dima \*, Konstantinia Karali \* and Panayotis Tournikiotis \*

School of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), Athens 10682, Greece

\* Correspondence: millie62@otenet.gr (E.A.); linadima@gmail.com (V.D.); tinakarali@yahoo.com (K.K.); ptournikiotis@arch.ntua.gr (P.T.)

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**Abstract:** This paper reflects on the embrace of the Ancient world in modernity and the journey to Greece as a vehicle for their reciprocal reshaping. In the interwar period, new visual narratives emerged in Western accounts, proposing alternative contexts for Greek cultural heritage and associating regional culture with the emergence of modernism. The article investigates the mobility of modern travellers in Greece as an essential factor for the new contextualization of the country's dominant cultural paradigm -Antiquity- as well as for the emergence of parallel narrations of the Mediterranean *genius loci* that examine the spatial imprint of heritage and tourism on the Greek urban, archaeological and natural environment. Western intellectuals, engineers, architects and urban planners, supported by a highly mobile network of editors, travel agencies, tourist cruises, architectural or archaeological conferences and congresses, contributed to the promotion of modern architecture and urban infrastructure in Greece. Their yet to become *tourist gaze* embraced the Aegean tradition, the Greek landscape and the ancient ruins as equal collocutors, initiating at the same time Greece itself into modernity. This paper traces the encounters between foreign travellers and the divergent manifestations of the country's cultural identity in the pages of printed articles, books, travel accounts, photographic material and films. Following these documentations, the paper argues that tourism mobility gave rise to an alternative, southern modernism, whose emergence and development deviates significantly from mainstream narratives propounded by the continental historiography of modernity. Vice versa, the modern mobility networks of the South promoted the development of urban infrastructure and welfare facilities in Greece, as well as the establishment of early tourism policies, thus articulating the new national narrative of interwar Greece, based equally on classical heritage, regional culture and modern progress. The present paper is part of the research program *Voyage to Greece: Mobility and modern architecture in the interwar period*, where E. Athanassiou, V. Dima, V.; Karali, K. contribute as post-doctoral researchers, with P. Tournikiotis, Professor NTUA as scientific supervisor. The research is co-financed by the Greek State and the European Union.

**Keywords:** modern architecture; Mediterranean modernities; Athens urban development; Aegean islands; tourism; ancient heritage; interwar Greece

## 1. Introduction

Qu'attendiez-vous de la Grèce?

Je n'en attendais rien; j'en suis revenu autre.

Raymond Queneau (1934) [1]

In the interwar years, new visual narratives of Greece emerged in Western travellers' accounts. During that period, the perception of Greek antiquity moved from the realm of poetic imagination

towards a modern visual reality, which was formed by major technical projects, the modernization of the capital city of Athens and the emergence of tourism. In the 30s, a highly mobile cosmopolitan community of intellectuals, reaching Greece by steamboats, airplanes or fast automobiles, directed its investigative gaze towards manifestations of modernity in the arts, architecture and the long-anticipated by the Greek people societal reforms. This imported, modern perspective joined the new national, collective narrative, based on both classical heritage and progress, in adding cultural surplus to actual architectural evidence of materialized policies for urban and tourism development. Associating the encounter with ancient Greek civilization with a kind of religious idealism as a motivation for a pilgrimage to Greece appears to be a norm from the XVIII century onwards [2]. In the following centuries, travelling to Greece as an extension of the Grand Tour became “a social and a cultural necessity” [3]. It was constant in various forms until the interwar period, when the motivation of romantic pilgrim-travellers ceased to relate solely to their need to contemplate on their classical studies [4]. At the dawn of modernity, their journey to ancient Greek culture and the Greek landscape was often associated with an inner, existential search of self-awareness. In most cases, the boundaries between the two were inconspicuous and the motivations were multiple; swinging between enjoyment or recreation and self-knowledge or spiritual revelation [5].

During the 30s, the Greek local, self-centred perception of ancient heritage was integrated with the extroverted identity of the country as part of the modern world offered by the gaze of foreign travellers to Greece [6]. In John Urry and Jonas Larsen’s coherent tourism theory, the tourist gaze appears as a peculiar combination that took shape and meaning in the second half of the XIX century, by the emergence of the desire for a new kind of mobility, the development of the means of collective travel and the evolution of photographic technology, all of which were fundamental components of modernity [7]. Thus, this paper explores the voyage to Greece as part of a broader European network for mobility that emerged in the Interbellum, an era characterized by technological outbreak, social unrest, geopolitical instability, deepening social divides and great contradictions. After WWI, the Asia Minor defeat and the influx of more than one million refugees to Greece, the idealized visions of a mythical ancient past gave way to a pragmatic present by compromising the prevailing metaphors of a European atopian/utopian modernity with the dystopian situation of the Greek society. Greece underwent economic depression and political instability, along with a slow modernization nourished by both nationalist narratives and avant-garde agendas. As recorded in modernists’ travel journals and literary texts, the visit to the Greek land turned out to be both an apocalyptic confirmation of their expectations and a painful disappointment with the country’s plight.

This paper also argues that the connection between classical heritage and modernism took a twofold manifestation; on the one hand, Greek heritage—both antiquity and the Aegean/Mediterranean vernacular culture—was appropriated as matrix of western “prototypes” models, archetypes—of modernity. Mediterranean *home-types*, *types of needs* or *human-types* imparted new forms and meanings to the artistic or architectural work of many European modernists, foreshadowing the establishment and expansion of modern architecture and urbanism [8]. Modern gazes of the antiquity and the Greek vernacular culture appeared in the pages of printed articles, books, travel accounts and photographic material, encouraging visual analogies between the present and the past. Setting the past into modern perspective led to the evocative pictorialization of the late 30s and its scenographic version, which reached its peak with the emergence of the tourism phenomenon. On the other hand, coupling antiquity with modernity as two sides of the same coin altered society’s understanding of heritage that acquired fresh meaning through the experience of the present, thus fuelling technological advancement and tourism development. Mythical landscapes, archaeological sites and the city of Athens moved beyond their traditional role as repositories of universal values and were transformed into vital economic assets in a newly developed geopolitical and cultural network, intended for tourist consumption. Tourism policies represent par excellence the ideological shift that took place in the 30s, implying the emergence of a *critical* or *post-modern* attitude towards heritage [9].

## 2. The Parthenon Effect and the City's Urban Rush

Ancient Greek heritage was a heavy load when Stamatios Kleanthis and his colleague at the Bauakademie in Berlin Eduard Schaubert undertook, in 1832, the design of the city of Athens, as the capital of the newly established Greek state. The fundamental idea of their master plan was to “bear in mind the greatness and the beauty of the Ancient City.” In the Interbellum, the Parthenon—the par excellence monument of ancient greatness and beauty—was rendered into an instrument for the aesthetic and moral legitimization of modernity. Parthenon elicited varied responses, ranging from Marinetti's provocative assault to Le Corbusier's “machine à émouvoir” [10]. The eternal monument had condensed and transmuted the surplus value of antiquity, by inspiring reactions that expressed both the Apollonian and the Dionysian spirit of Greek culture. The normative model of interwar travellers was that of appreciation toward the Apollonian element, which was identified with the Greek light and the way it elicits new modes of viewing. The ideal depiction of Apollonian Greece lies in the work of the famous photographer George Hoyningen-Huene, whose stay in Greece in the 30s marked his work determinatively:

“When I first saw the Parthenon I was so overwhelmed that I didn't even dare to take a photograph; but I did return the next year, being haunted by the poetic beauty of Greece.” [11]

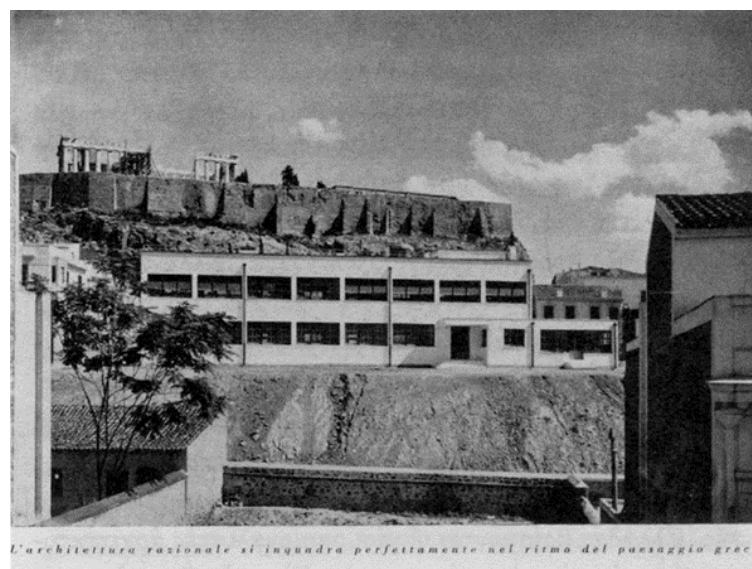
However, despite the idealization of the ancient ruins and the creation of a transcendental world in the modern representation of Greece's reality that mark his work, a threat lurks that this tranquillity will not hold forever. Woolf, in *Jacob's Room*, provides an eloquent description of the abovementioned disillusionment. Her second visit to Greece took place in April 1932. After a long journey by rail from London to Venice, she boarded the *S/S Tevere* to Piraeus. Aboard was Greece's PM Eleftherios Venizelos, returning from his trip to Geneva, where, in a historic speech, he practically declared the country bankrupt [12]. Venizelos had just presented to his European interlocutors Greece's financial difficulties and asked for a 5-year suspension of the repayment of the old loans and an additional loan. The final negative decision was made by the Council of the LN in Geneva, in April 1932. Jacob, Woolf's main character, can be construed as a metaphor for Europe's condition after WWI, Greece's plight and the moral discouragement of the European youth. Woolf leads Jacob's steps up to the Acropolis, where, pondering upon the desolate country, he realizes the great loss suffered in the war and acknowledges in the ancient marbles an inexhaustible source of spiritual life and hope for the future:

“Greece was over; the Parthenon in ruins; yet there he was. [ ... ] the Parthenon is really astonishing in its silent composure; which so vigorous that, far from being decayed, the Parthenon appears, on the contrary, likely to outlast the entire world.” [13]

At the same time, the Parthenon, as a material remnant of the past, came under fire from the futurists and other radicals, who wished to break with tradition, by accusing it for the horrors of the war and an uncertain future. The idea of demolishing the old world made an ideal manifesto for Filippo Marinetti. His second trip to Greece, early in 1933, part of a broader tour that he took all over Europe on a mission by Mussolini, aimed to strengthen the ties between the Italian fascist regime and the Greek government [14]. Marinetti arrived at Piraeus on Sunday January 29, 1933, on board the Lloyd Triestino Liner *S/S Wien*. During his ten-day stay, he inaugurated an exhibition of Airpainting Art at the *Studio Roc Gallery* and gave four speeches and recitals of futuristic poetry. Marinetti's legacy [15] was a speech scheduled to appear in the newspaper *Eleftheron Vima* after his departure from Greece, entitled “Raise your flag. Manifesto to the Youth of Greece” [16]. There, he gave Parthenon the voice of “an ecclesiastical organ overflowed by myriads of crickets and bees” that encouraged Greek students to “leave from my ancient pipes, get out like a thrilling and unexpected melody! Leave fast between my pillars, for I am the prison of vain wisdom.” Furthermore, he described the Parthenon as the “fallen majestic radiator of Greece. [...] A valuable but useless radiator.” Finally, in tune with the nationalistic narrative of the times, he invited young Greeks to partake in the futurist advance:

“I prefer the blue and white flag of lively Greece to the Parthenon. [...] Raise it fast as a flag of futuristic art on the restored metope! Dear Greek students, turn your back on the Acropolis [...] and embrace the noble work of images, words, sounds, clay, cement and light!”

Marinetti’s legacy and his praise of cement and light is a direct reference to modern architecture in general and the urban rush of contemporary Athens in particular. Despite the popular rhetoric that kept feeding the connection between the ancient and the modern world, many European modernists were sceptical about the city’s interwar transition to a modern metropolis, which blurred their original views and preconceptions of antiquity. The proximity between modern Athens and its ancient ruins appeared in various accounts as occasionally unexpected and awkward. René Puaux (1878–1937), French historian and correspondent of the Parisian *Le Temps*, on his last trip to Greece in 1930, portrays the city’s problems as terrifying, unresolvable in the near time [17]. In 1931, Erich Mendelsohn visited Athens after an invitation from the head of the German Archaeological Institute [DAI] Georg Karo (1872–1963). During his stay he published a series of articles as correspondent for the *Berliner Tageblatt* and gave a lecture at the National Technical University of Athens as part of the initiative of the Technical Chamber of Greece to promote modern architecture. In May 1931, in his article “Neu-Athen” [New Athens] he is utterly critical and expresses his disappointment with the contrast between the old and the new elements of the Greek metropolis –former “mother of Europe”– and its unregulated modern transformation, lacking any kind of rules, technical knowledge or any apparent attempt toward contemporary urban planning [18–20]. However, most of interwar travellers continue to emphasize the merits of the Parthenon, the ancient landscape and its long-lasting impact on the ambience of the city. Italian journalist Pietro Maria Bardi’s report for *Quadrante* (September 1933) also appeared ambiguous about the Athenian development, describing it as the “most inspired building anarchy” [21]. In spite of the ambivalent attitude, various publications praised the transformations and the aesthetic uproar of modern Athens [22–26]. Heinrich Lauterbach, in his 1932 account from his travel to Greece in *Die Form*, the official journal of the Deutscher Werkbund, highlights the work of modern Greek architects and the impressive development of contemporary architecture in Athens [27]. He draws a parallel between Omonoia square in the heart of Athens and Potsdamer Platz in Berlin and emphasizes the role of Aeolus Str. that leads to the Acropolis, implying an immaterial and symbolic connection between ancient and modern Athens. Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Pietro Maria Bardi, *Cronaca di viaggio*, *Quadrante*, no.5, 1933, p. 37. Patroklos Karantinos’ modernist primary school in Makrygianni (1932), part of a large-scale state-run project to upgrade the country’s obsolete educational infrastructure, with the Acropolis and the Parthenon in the background.

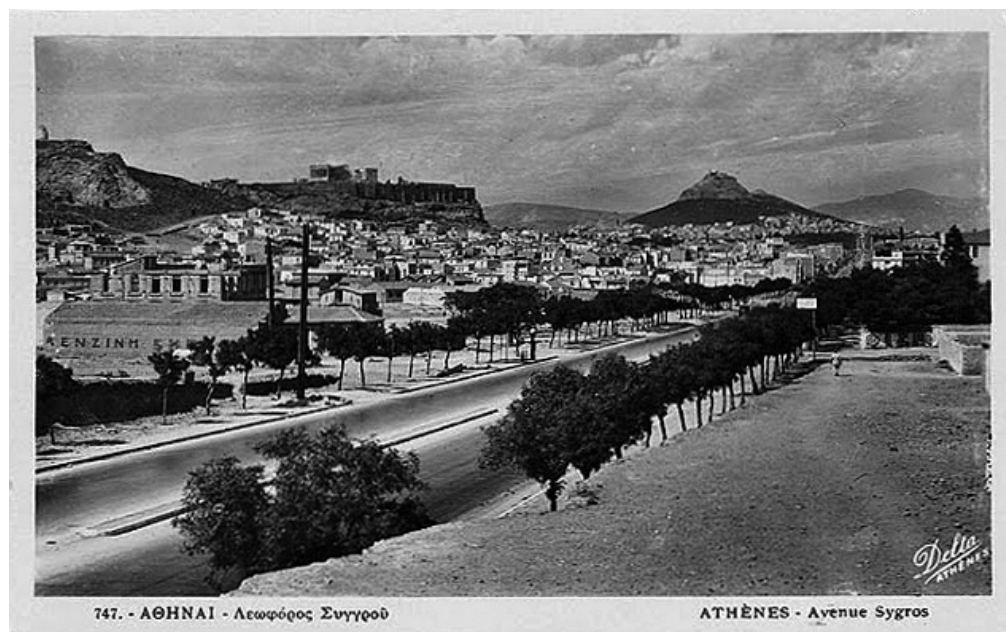
The city of Athens welcomed the 30s by celebrating a centenary from the founding of the modern Greek State in 1830. By the late 20s, many attempts toward contemporary town planning were made in order to deal with the unconstrained and continuous expansion of the city in combination with the emergence of new archaeological sites. It was a process of great reforms and transitions to a –yet vaguely defined– modernity, with the technological achievements of the time shaping the new framework of ideas. As depicted by Yiorgos Theotokas (1906–1966), representative par excellence of the Generation of the '30s, the technological frenzy of the times, jazz music and the airplane balanced the muddled chaos and pandemonium of the Athenian developmental rush, all inclined to the transformation of the Greek capital into a modern metropolis [28]. In this context, Athens was described as an enormous construction site in the process of imminent change [29], synchronized to the popular anticipation of an ambiguously approaching modernism [30]. For example, the construction of the Marathon barrack, which modernized the water supply system of Athens, lasted from 1928 to 1931. The great new station of the electric train [ΗΣΑΠ] at Piraeus was constructed in the same period (1926–1929), while in January 1928 started the construction of the subway station at Omonoia square that was inaugurated on July 21, 1930 by the PM Eleftherios Venizelos. These projects were linked to the technological promise of the modernization of the capital around the 1930s as opposed to slam housing in extended low-density areas, due to the demographic eruption and the overpopulation after 1922 [31].

The city seemed overwhelmed by the high speeds of accelerating automobiles, trams and buses. The new Syggrou Avenue, a straight line that connected Athens to Faliron Bay, is acknowledged by Greek poet George Seferis (1900–1971) as the futuristic symbol of the technocratic ideology, rationality and modernity [32]. Figure 2. Five years later, Seferis's expectations have been defeated and on November 25, 1935, day of the restoration of the monarchy regime, he writes the poem *Syggrou Avenue B*. It seems that Athens provided the Western intelligentsia with a par excellence topos of “intersecting significant mobilities,” which generated a modernisation process that affected the city's social life, its built environment and its cultural forms [33]. Vice versa, the emerging aesthetic cosmopolitanism could be construed as the indisputable proof of the existence of “extensive patterns of mobility and openness to others and an ability to reflect upon and judge aesthetically between different [ ... ] physical and social environments” [34]. Furthermore, as Urry comments, the tourist gaze towards the ancient or folklore heritage produced by certain patterns of mobility provided evidence of a clear case of reflexive modernization. It could be argued that this is the case with many Greek writers, poets and modern architects of the times, who used their work as a vehicle for reflection on the ways the Greek interwar society rendered the past as part of a viable and promising future for the country and its people.

In this spirit of general optimism, two important international conferences with prominent participants that were held in Athens associated the city with two modern, scientific agreements placing her at the epicentre of international interest by the archaeological and technical communities. Initially, the *First International Congress of Architects and Technicians on the Conservation of Cultural and Historical Monuments* was held from October 21 to 30, 1931, under the aegis of the League of Nations, with the main focus on the evaluation and on-site observation of the completion of the restoration work on the Acropolis by Nikolaos Balanos (1860–1942). Foreign archaeological schools at Athens contributed to the Congress, in which the Italian Gustavo Giovannoni and the Greek Nikolaos Balanos played a key role [35]. However, Balanos' work was severely criticized after the war because of the use of reinforced concrete, iron plates and glue that caused extensive damages to the monument in the long run. As a result, the *1931 Charter of Athens* was adopted as the first international agreement on the protection of monuments. The congress program included visits to archaeological sites—mainly Balanos' *anastylosis* of the Acropolis—and a cruise to the Aegean islands (e.g., Delos) and places of interest along coastal Greece (e.g., Mycenae); a prefiguration of their future potential as tourist attractions. The establishment of the conservation of monuments as an essential and unavoidable process was expected to buttress the fundamental components of the modern nation-states of the times.



According to Leonard Barkan, one could argue that what gives the archaeological discovery a strong identity is a set of pre-dispositions, a *mundus significans* that makes them worthy of national and international attention. One can also argue that the restoration process can be seen as a reconstruction, an ideological or imaginary construct. As Barkan underscores, “even not reconstructing antiquities is an activity of reconstruction: it merely transfers the arena of possibilities from the material realm to the imagination” [36].



**Figure 2.** Postcard showing Sygrou Avenue during the Interbellum.

Two years later, in 1933, some of the most outstanding modern architects decided to organize the fourth *Congrès Internationaux d' Architecture Moderne* (CIAM IV) on board the *SS/Patris II*, sailing from Marseille to Piraeus, including events at the National Technical University of Athens. The proceedings of this conference served as the basis of the famous *Charter of Athens*, widely acknowledged as the manifesto of modern urbanism, published by Le Corbusier in the midst of WWII [37]. As Bardi argued, the CIAM IV has revived the hopes for a solution to the multiple problems of the Greek capital through modern design, promoting Athens as the symbolic centre of modern urbanism. The Charter of Athens of 1933, due to the international appeal of the conference, linked the hopes for the city's urban consolidation with modernism [21]. This meeting, besides its scientific, urban and architectural interest, also presented an opportunity for vacations, since it took place during the summer and included tourist activities in Athens, excursions to the Peloponnese and a cruise to the Cyclades [38,39].

CIAM's journey to Greece exemplifies how ancient heritage, vernacular culture and modern architecture interrelated with the congress' efforts to set out the guidelines of new urbanism. Athens, where ancient past and modern present interweaved in the urban fabric, appears to be the ideal backdrop for this. Their modern gaze, though, forecasted not only a new modern school of urbanistic fieldwork, but also an emerging tourist gaze of modernity. In 1933, the technological ideal of a new world was clearly uttered by the occasion of CIAM IV. It was during this congress, that the most avant-garde modern architects examined extensively the idea of “The Functional City,” by analysing 34 case studies of cities internationally. On March 9, 1933, the Hungarian Bauhäusler Fred Forbát (1897-1972), arrived in Athens from Moscow—where the congress was supposed to take place originally [40] to play rather accidentally a key role in selecting the Greek capital as host city of the CIAM IV. Forbát had visited Greece before, at the end of 1924, as representative for the Sommerfeld-Dehatege company. Back then, he stayed in Thessaloniki until 1925, in order to undertake

the construction of the new temporary dwellings for the Greek-Orthodox refugees, who were forced to leave Turkey at the population exchange, as a consequence of the Treaty of Lausanne [41]. In his memoirs, he recalls gazing at the Parthenon from the foot of the hill during his first walk around the Acropolis, before finally “daring” to climb up a week later, accompanied by Greek architect Ioannis Despotopoulos and his wife. He observed closely the progress of Balanos’ restorations since his last visit, in the 1925, marvelling at the restored monument. While on the Acropolis, Forbát couldn’t have missed the opportunity to contemplate on the changing urban landscape of the city below. He commends, after spending a whole day on the hill, that:

“It was great to see how his impression of the buildings was changing with the diminishing light, as the sun, seen from Niki’s Temple, was disappearing in the glittering sea of Faliron.” [40]

Forbát enjoyed the same spectacle of colors at Cape Sounion, at the Temple of Poseidon, where “the sun set [ . . . ] bloody red, in a violet mist” [40]. In 1933, he also climbed up the Acropolis of Corinth and spent some time in Olympia, working for the famous German architect and archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld (1853–1940). Siegfried Giedion recalls in his turn visiting the Acropolis of Athens in 1933 with László Moholy-Nagy, where they silently “absorbed the totality of this sacred area.” He cites the exact words of Moholy:

“I never realized how deeply we are still moved by the Greek world, though in a totally different, more fundamental, way than was the nineteenth century.” [42]

German architect Bruno Taut, during his fleeing to Japan from the Nazis in April 1933, made a stopover in Athens and recorded in detail his experiences from the Greek capital in his travel diary [43]. Arriving on Sunday, April 2, he boarded the electric railway train from Piraeus to the city centre of Athens, which reminded him of the Berlin U-Bahn. The city appeared to him unexpectedly vibrant from the moving frame of the train’s window. In his eyes, Greek houses were simple and poor, squared and not *kitsch* [sic], built on dry soil, with small gardens, whereas the centre of Athens is described as not beautiful, but charmingly unassuming. Climbing up the Acropolis hill, he was rewarded with an overall view of the city from above, a pleasant image in its grey mass uniformity. Interestingly, Taut distinguishes the presence of colour on the mass of buildings, such as light blue, red and yellow [44], exalting the mountainous forms, their green slopes and the clusters of houses, scattered in the urban landscape. He also distinguishes certain modern buildings, which he found not at all “snobbish” and totally integrated into the cityscape. While passing through the Propylaea and approaching the Parthenon, the ancient complex of buildings stroke him with its purity and precision, parallel to modern machine engineering [45]. According to Taut’s notebook, it was not until his steamship sailed away, that the true essence of the city’s layout with its acropolis was revealed to him. In the imaginary axis that linked the port of Piraeus, the Acropolis with the Parthenon’s marble pediment and the peak of mount Pendelikon, he envisaged a line that connected antiquity to the rest of the world. In his book *Die Stadtkrone*, Taut outlines a new urban concept for city planning, prefiguring the trends of modern urbanism of the interwar years and uses a photograph of the Athenian Acropolis as an example of an ancient city crown [46]. In 1935, members of the Greek CIAM group, together with other Greek architects, offered to work voluntarily on a new general plan of Athens. Despotopoulos (1903–1992) and Alexandros Dragoumis (1891–1977) took active part in this initiative. Considering their lack of experience in urban planning, they expressed Forbát the need for a foreigner expert, to act as consultant for the new plan of Athens. Forbát, in turn, recommended Martin Wagner (1885–1957), the former chief city planner of Berlin [47]. However, by the time the new Athens Office of City Planning was finally organized, Wagner was already employed in Istanbul since May 1935, as the city’s consultant planner. Therefore, the mayor of Athens Konstantinos Kotzias (1892–1951) instead of employing Wagner, he invited him to give a public lecture [48] that took place in December 1935. In his speech, the German architect associated urban development with the economy and the general cost of

living, underlining the interrelation between the individual and the collective and citing the Acropolis as the ultimate example of collective creation. Wagner's ideas for the Athenian lecture originated from his former article "Städtebau als Wirtschaftsbaue und Lebensbau" in the journal *Die neue Stadt* [49]. According to Wagner, the Parthenon, situated on top of the city, acts as a constant reminder to the Athenians of the need to place the common good and public benefit ahead of their personal interests. During his visit, Wagner climbed up to the "city crown of Athens," accompanied by Dragoumis, where he had the opportunity to simultaneously gaze at the city's past and present. His remarks could take one by surprise. Instead of comparing the ancient city to modern Athens, instead of imagining reforms and improvements, Wagner asked a simple question: "How much does this city cost?" [48]. Underlining the inevitable economic factor of urban planning, Wagner's question called for a rather literal evaluation of the city's worth and cost of upkeep. One may argue that Wagner was looking at Athens not only as an expert, but as a tourist as well, unintentionally signposting the way toward the modern *tourist gaze* that would provide viable answers to the economic and cultural value of Athens.

### 3. Tourism and the Western Gaze

In 1929, Venizelos' government founded the first Greek Tourism Organisation [GTO], a political decision that facilitated the development of tourism, which gradually emerged as a sustainable prospect of economic growth in the 30s. The leisure industry appeared in Greece as a vehicle to strengthen financial and cultural links with foreign countries, as well as to stimulate the local economy. Moreover, as Angelos Vlachos argues, before WWII the Greek state used tourism as a vehicle for reshaping and promoting the country's national identity, based on its cultural capital, namely its archaeological resources and its privileged loci and geomorphology. In addition, tourism provided the toolset for promoting Greece's modern culture, by developing and advertising, apart from the country's historical and ancient assets, its up-to-date and modernized profile as well [50]. The Greek diaspora photographer Nelly's among others, eloquently shaped the country's new tourist identity with her work. In 1924, having just returned from her studies in Dresden, she became "the vehicle of introducing the western gaze in Greece" [51]. When Eva Palmer and Angelos Sikelianos organised the first Delphic Festival in 1927, it became clear that both Athens and the archaeological treasures of the country, combined with the revival of ancient drama, could turn into a powerful agent for attracting tourists. Nelly's photo shoots from the second Delphic Festival in 1930, circulated around the globe by *National Geographic's* publication, invigorated international interest in the Greek landscape and rural Greeks [52]. Her images—reproduced in Ioannis Metaxas regime's official tourist periodical *In Greece/En Grèce/In Griechenland*—construct eloquent visual analogies by juxtaposing the past and the present reality of Greece (i.e. the portrait of an old Greek shepherd with a close-up on the face of Artemision Zeus or the portrait of a peasant girl from Hypate with a young Laphite from the west pediment of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia) [53]. Figure 3. These same images formed the main iconography of the Greek Pavilion at the 1937 Expo in New York, successfully supporting the Metaxas regime's questionable official narrative of an uninterrupted and continuous presence of the Greek race in history [54,55]. As Hamilakis points out, the processes that incorporated antiquities in the Hellenic national imagination but also in European consciousness were initiated by Greek intellectuals and the European administrators and scholars [56]. This approach—theorised under the term *crypto-colonialism*—describes cases of peripheral, developing cultures, where nationalism and colonizing modernity intersect.





**Figure 3.** M. Doris. “The Race.” *Greece/En Grèce/In Griechenland*, May–July 1937, No.1, pp. 16 & 17. Illustrating the counter-utopia of the nationalistic narrative.

A key figure for the state effort to promote tourism was Heracles Ioannides, also known as Petros Afthoniatis (1897–1950), an exuberant personality, director of Neptos Shipping Company (owned by Leonidas Empeirikos, minister in 1917 Venizelos’ Government) [57] and official representative of GTO in Paris. Ioannides, as launcher of Neptos Mediterranean recreational cruises, promoted the idea of the journey to Greece, as a highly cultural and aesthetic experience. Between 1934 and 1939 he released the tourist magazine *Le Voyage en Grèce*, which systematically promoted a privileged correlation between modern architecture, archaeology, art and tourism [58]. In an interview in *20ème Siècle* magazine, he highlights the connection between modern architecture and urban planning and the tourism phenomenon, regarding it from a socio-political aspect as a pivot for the development of the Greek tertiary sector [59]. In this respect, the country’s urban renewal is associated with tourism development, since both road networks and sea transport facilitated tourist mobility, establishing Athens and the port of Piraeus as an important node between Central Europe and the Orient. Corroborating these views, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* published a tribute to Greece showcasing two aerial photographs of Athens, where the thriving building activity of the capital appeared as mainstream “tourist attraction.” The article, under the title *Grèce*, stresses the relationship between Athens’ reconstruction, tourism and modern architecture, suggesting urban planning as an inevitable priority. Figure 4. As Paul Sirvin, the author of the article, remarked, “Greece’s special geographical morphology, the pleasantness and variety of its climate, provoked, during the recent years, tourism and commercial development” [60]. Moreover, the article was illustrated by an extensive selection of modern buildings, suggesting that urban infrastructure and tourism played a key role to the country’s modernisation on an equal basis, in conjunction with the already prominent public welfare sectors (education, health, refugee housing, etc.), road infrastructure networks, and industry. Figure 5.



Figure 4. *L'Architecture d' Aujourd'hui* 1938, No.10, front cover & p. 59.

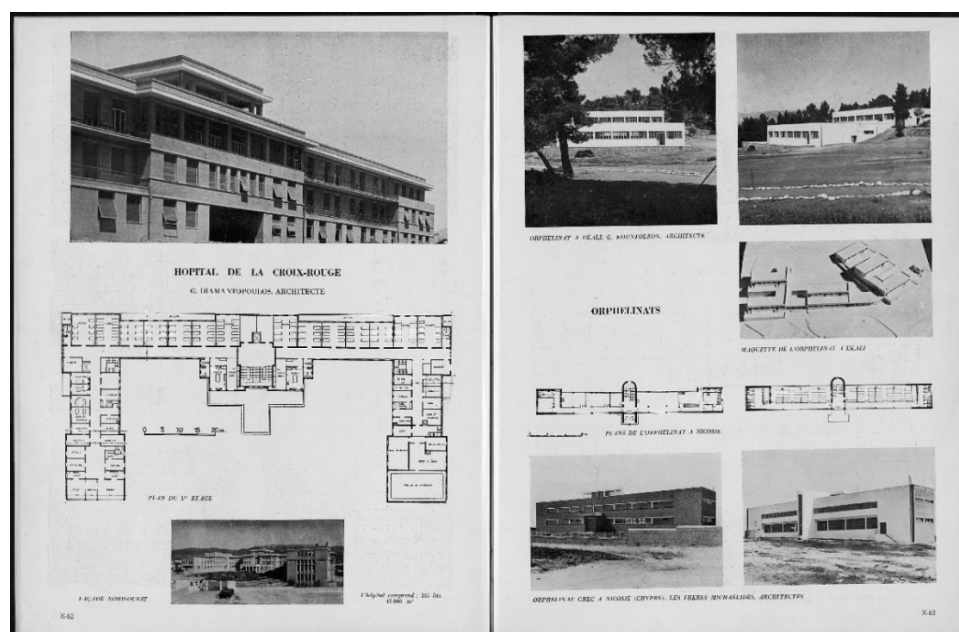


Figure 5. *L'Architecture d' Aujourd'hui* 1938, No.10, pp. 62–63. A characteristic spread from the publication, showcasing a newly built hospitals and orphanages in Greece and Cyprus.

Greek modern sculptor Michel Tombros, transcribing the tourism ideal of Ioannides, comments that, for the Greek state, tourism's role in the 30s was not limited solely to the economic aspect of the phenomenon, but functioned as the main shaping apparatus of the national urban and spatial planning policies. Figure 6. As Tombros contemplates:

“What’s left to do for the countries that have been privileged with territorial beauties and the interest of foreign tourists? What should their attitude towards their historical culture be; [They should] embrace Art - and its modern application—while keeping true to the natural backbone of their history. [ . . . ] Only by calculated actions toward functional solutions

provided by the state with the responsible cooperation of tourism will Athens regain its privileged position in the Mediterranean that the city held in antiquity.” [61]

In the same way, the country’s urban renewal could be considered as an outcome of tourism development. According to architect Yiannis Lyghizos:

“That’s why both in Athens and in the countryside new types of buildings emerged very quickly [...] hotels for travellers, churches, hospitals, factories, private homes and, thus, the Greek architects enjoy a remarkable activity.” [62]



**Figure 6.** Publisher Christian Zervos (left), sculptor and publisher Michel Tombros (middle) and tourist agent Heracles Ioannides—aka “Afthoniatis” (right), 20<sup>05</sup> *Αιώνας* [20<sup>ème</sup> *Siècle*] 1934, no.2, p. 38.

During this time, the gaze of international modernists towards the Greek antiquities and the natural landscape was restricted to their symbolic interconnection with the ecumenism of modernism, as documented in various chronicles and travel accounts. During Puaux’s last trip to Greece in 1930, while attending the celebrations for the Centenary of the Greek State and the Second Delphic Festival, organised by the Greek poet Angelos Sikelianos and his wife Eva Palmer, he had the opportunity to witness the emerging tourist profile of the capital:

“Large cars are loading or unloading spring tourists of all nationalities, among them certain English, [...] who show off their colonial hats [...]. For them, Athens is the Orient.” [17]

Philhellenist Puaux perceives—in contrast to many Europeans—the British attitude towards Athens as humiliating and considers that the orientalization of Athens is artificial and largely factitious. Several relevant publications corroborate the all-pervasive feeling that Athens was following the path of modernisation. In 1927, the famous American adventurer Richard Halliburton (1900–1939) re-enacts Ulysses’ journey back to Ithaca [63], while two years later, in 1929, his compatriot and popular travel writer Harry A. Franck (1881–1962) publishes his impressions of 1925 Greece [64]. In 1932, the first *Guide Bleu* for Greece appeared, written by the archaeologist Yves Bequignon (1899–1990), nineteen years after the circulation of the last travel guide on Greece, the *Guide Joanne* by Gustave



Fougères (1863–1927) archaeologist, member of the French School at Athens, and Professor at the Sorbonne. In the same year, the album *En Grèce* by the archaeologist and photographer Antoine Bon (1901–1972) was released, containing photos from his tours in Greece with his colleague and traveling partner Fernand Chapouthier (1899–1953). This was followed by the sequel *Retour en Grèce* in 1934. Following their footsteps, the Swiss archaeologist and photographer Paul Collart (1902–1981) created a remarkable photo-account from his tours in Greece that began in 1926 and stopped in 1938. Moreover, in 1936 the American cinematographer and painter Jerome Hill (1905–1972) publishes his work under the title *Trip to Greece*, while in 1937, photographer George Hoyningen-Huene (1900–1968), during his visit to Greece, produces a series of photographs of the ancient monuments, marked by a distinctive, uncanny absence of human presence [65]. His companion, German photographer Herbert List (1903–1975), in his “fotografia metafisica” also immortalized ancient and modern Greece, with rich shades of grey and high contrasts, ideally representing the contradictory decade of the 30s and instrumentalising the concept of ancient Greece [66]. As Urry notes, the medium of photography was since the mid-XIX century the most important technology for developing and extending the tourist gaze, “a gaze that was constructed materially and discursively and vice versa”. Modern mobility boosted the evolution of the art of photography, while the constantly increasing circulation of photographs reinforced the then emerging tourism phenomenon. At the same time, various aspects of the ancient Greek culture were eloquently developed in Edith Hamilton’s (1867–1963) book *The Greek Way* (1930), which radically changed the way foreigners appreciated ancient Greek legacy [67]. By that time, the British Evelyn Waugh (1903–1966) had already declared the country as a “fully labelled” tourist destination [68]. That was confirmed by the March 5, 1934 tribute to Greece of the *Atlantis* travel magazine, published by the Swiss publisher, photographer and traveller Martin Hürlimann (1897–1984).

#### 4. The Aegean Vernacular

In the 30s, in addition to the antiquity-oriented narrative, yet another collateral myth emerged that traced the origins of modernism to the Greek classicist ideal, one that considers modern architecture as direct descendant of the Mediterranean and specifically the Aegean vernacular tradition. Associating the dwellings of the Greek archipelago with modern architecture was one of the most emblematic ideas expressed in the CIAM IV. Anastasios Orlandos, Dean of the School of Architecture, in his welcome speech on August 2, 1933 traces the origins of modern architecture in the building tradition of the Greek islands. According to Orlandos, the cubic shapes of the houses on the islands provided the archetypal forms of modern architecture:

“When [ ... ] you will be visiting our joyful Aegean islands, you will be amazed by [ ... ] the absolute simplicity, the logic of the arrangement, the sacred lines of the ancient houses of Delos, but above all, by the fascinating sight of the houses on the surrounding islands [ ... ] And you will be no less surprised when you recognize in those humble dwellings the combinations of those outlines, recesses and extrusions and the successful meeting of the planes that a modern architect would only have wished for in his compositions [...] encounters that [ ... ] were produced [ ... ] as a result of the perfect harmonization of form and function. [ ... ] You will notice [ ... ] the absolute absence of ornament [ ... ]; a great realism that sacrifices the detail to the essential.” [69]

Orlandos was by no means the first to legitimise the forms of modern architecture by associating it with the building tradition of the Cycladic islands. Forbát, while in Greece in 1933, reports to Giedion that the state of Modern Greek architecture was exceptional. Amongst other remarks, he comments that in Greece, “it is favourable that there are no evident formal differences between traditional and modern architecture”, considering the traditional architecture of the islands as examples of cubist and constructivist works that use local construction techniques [70].

Other European avant-garde artists seem to entertain the same idea around 1930. Lauterbach illustrates his above-mentioned article in *Die Form* [27] with five pictures of Santorini—the



most photogenic Greek island—juxtaposing them with pictures of modern projects, using the exact same *dispositif* of legitimization: Aegean vernacular building tradition through the lens of modern architecture. Figure 7. The cubist architecture of Santorini appears in many variations in the press of the 30s. In January 1934, Christian Zervos, the Greek-born publisher of the celebrated magazine *Cahiers d' Art*, dedicates a triple issue to Greece, where shots of Santorini, taken by Greek modern architect Panos-Nikolis Djelepy, also documented the affinity between modern architecture and Greek tradition. To this end, Giedion's pictures of Pyrgos village in the isle of Santorini, appeared in the same issue in order to highlight visual similarities between Aegean vernacular and modern architecture [71]. *Cahiers d' Art* through its aggressive policies in terms of archeological photographic documentation and its avant-garde agenda, has significantly contributed to the interconnection of modern architecture and the Greek cultural heritage. Among the countless artefacts and monuments of Greek heritage, modernity highlighted those that best represented the visual archetypical rule [canon] of creativity, anticipating the mass production of XX century. Yet, if for the European avant-garde visual analogies between classicism and modernity were aimed at the consolidation of modernism, for the natives of the southern Balkan Peninsula, these similarities intended to validate the continuity of Greek civilization. Modernism and antiquity were at the time irrevocably associated, pledging the continuity of Greek civilization—the lasting dominant national narrative. As Tziovas argues, an overoptimistic *spiritualism* emerged after 1922 as counterbalance to the defeat of the *Megali Idea* [Great Idea], the economic and political compromise of geopolitical aspirations of Greece. In the interwar years, antiquity was used as a critical confirmation of the nation's spiritual greatness [9].



Figure 7. H. Lauterbach. “Notizen von einer Reise in Griechenland,” *Die Form* 11, 1932, pp. 336 & 347.

The rough scenery of Santorini—and in particular the village of Emporio—offered Jean-Paul Sartre, during his 1937 summer vacations to Greece, inspiration—visual and conceptual—for the setting and the key idea of his play *Les Mouches*, an outlandish, existential version of the drama of the house of Atreus. Sartre had visited Greece together with Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) and Jacques-Laurent Bost (1916–1990). In July 1937, they boarded *S/S City of Cairo* from Marseilles to Piraeus.

They returned with the *M/S Théophile Gautier*. They visited Athens, Mykonos, Delos, Syros, Santorini, Delphi, the Peloponnese, Aegina and Thessaloniki and they left with mostly unpleasant images from the everyday life of the Greeks. As de Beauvoir recounts:

“By the time we reached Emporio, where we intended to have lunch, we were all three pretty well exhausted. [ ... ] We eventually found a café, thick with buzzing flies, where they produced a tomato salad for us. The tomatoes were dotted with dead flies and swimming in an even more nauseous oil than the stuff we were offered at Tarifa.” [72]

The play *The Flies* thematises the collective guilt of French society for its silence and social inertia against the crimes committed during the German occupation and the Vichy administration. Sartre intended to awaken his compatriots and it was the image of compromised Greece in a fatal state of tragedy, poverty and resignation that prompted him to voice his grave concerns in 1941 France.

Parisian avant-garde appears to maintain a key role in establishing the link between modernity and the palimpsest of Greek heritage. Among the first to document this link is, once again, Zervos and his project that experimented with the most pioneering field of artistic creativity of the period, the moving image. The lost film *Voyage aux Cyclades* brought together a creative team that involved director Jacques Brunius, script-writer Roger Vitrac, director of cinematography Eli Lotar and Le Corbusier's brother, music composer Albert Jeanneret. The film was shot in the spring of 1931 aboard *S/S Patris II*. The objective was to produce a documentary or rather a poetic, experimental film, on the Cycladic complex and despite its avant-gardist proclamations, was strongly influenced by the XIX century romantic literary tradition. An interview by Vitrac in a 1932 issue of the *Pour Vous* [73] magazine enlightens us about the nature of the project. Vitrac presents a synopsis of the film and describes Lotar's arrangement of the edited scenes for different shooting locations: for example, skiing on Mount Olympus succeeds a re-enactment scene with Ernest Renan on the Acropolis [74] reciting his famous prayer. In addition, spliced shots of the modern statue of Rupert Brooke by Greek sculptor Tombros solidify the link between modernity and the Greek a-chronical palimpsest [75]. The film was screened once, in March 1932, in the cinema *Les Miracles*, for the Parisian artistic and literary avant-garde. Although there was no follow-up on the première, a letter by Brunius to Zervos, dated February 5th, 1933, testifies to a vivid interest towards the *Cyclades* [76]. This is confirmed by a brief, unsigned editorial—apparently by Zervos—on the film, which appeared in 1932 in *Cahiers d' Art* and confirms the inherent relevance between modernity, Greek nature and vernacular tradition. The author claims that such was the impact of the Greek landscape and natural light that the three creators, upon their arrival, decided to refrain from the excessive use of an overly experimental, expressive vocabulary and succumbed to the sunshine, the whitewashed dwellings and the local people.

“The three co-authors left Paris with the intention to shoot a film in the Cyclades according to the most contemporary means of the cinematographic art, as an affirmation of its modernity. But, the measure and clarity of Greece soon alerted them. As soon as they arrived in Athens, it was made apparent that [ ... ] a nature so noble is sufficient in itself and never requires calculated procedures, where emotion is lost. Therefore, the *Cyclades* film does not follow any system. [ ... ] Its creators refrained from using sensational or redundant expressions, their attachment to this model made them realize that the more natural the expression is, cohesive and simple, the more discretely it touches but with an incontestable vigour.” [77]

The affinity between *Voyage aux Cyclades* and Moholy-Nagy's *Architektur Kongress*, an experimental film about the CIAM IV, shot in 1933, is apparent. This should not come as a surprise, since Zervos' avant-garde circles were behind both projects. The congress of CIAM IV in Athens was, in fact, a milestone in the historiography of modern travel to Greece, thanks to Zervos' acquaintances with Ioannides [78], Giedion and Le Corbusier. The idea to host the event on a ship is attributed, according to Giedion, to Marcel Breuer [42], who did not finally join the trip, although Greek painter Nikos

Chatzikyriakos-Gkikas, Le Corbusier's close friend, recalls the story somehow differently and claims the ownership of the idea [79]. Gkikas recounts a discussion meeting with Le Corbusier in 1933, where he suggested the possibility of selecting Athens as the host-city of CIAM IV instead of Moscow. Moholy met with Giedion and his wife Carola in Zürich, where they started their trip to Greece by crossing the Alps and the Provence. It is very enlightening how Giedion interpreted their visit to Greece as having a multifaceted impact on the congress delegates. In an account of the event, he denies that organizing the CIAM IV in Greece was an attempt "to escape from the chaos threatening Europe" [42]. According to him, Greece gave the delegates an opportunity to develop "the purely functional tendencies in [modern] architecture" by including "other elements, aesthetic, social and biologic." He claims that:

"The full evaluation of this new, independent platform had been helped immeasurably through the contact with the past and our Hellenic heritage." [42]

One cannot avoid noticing, that Giedion considers the Hellenic heritage as "ours," acknowledging ancient Greek culture as the cradle of European culture. Moholy had suggested ten years earlier, in his article in *Der Sturm* [80], that modern architecture assimilates and utilizes the classical spirit, by "a dynamic interpretation that makes it universal." Two more *Bauhäusler* visited the Cyclades in 1934: Marcel Breuer and Herbert Bayer. An unknown photographer captured them sitting on the mosaic floor of a house at the archaeological site of Delos. Neither Breuer nor Bayer had participated in the CIAM IV. According to their correspondence, though, Breuer had been influenced by Giedion's accounts of Greece. Breuer writes to Bayer about their forthcoming trip: "Greece. This must be, according to Giedion, much more interesting than anything else" [81]. This can be considered as typical of the architects who made the trip to Greece during CIAM IV; a productive encounter between the mythical contours of ancient Greece and modernity, that acquired sharpness and geometrical clarity in modernists western architects' work, as it is documented in their accounts of the land and its people. These two discourses, triggered by the mobility of the trans-national networks of European modernists, were reflected in their corpus of work either as assimilation of and reflective contemplation on the ancient Greek geographical, archaeological and intellectual topographies or as a counter-utopia of the nationalist narrative.

In 1936, due to the Metaxas' regime and the wider European conservative turn, a change of guard at the National Technical Chamber of Greece [NTC] brought new officials and novel priorities. However, both in *Technical Chronicles*, NTC's official journal and in the construction domain, the vision for an urban renewal and technical reformation was still vivid. In the context of an increasingly anti-urban awareness, a 1938 article by German architect Hermann Hampe (1904–1970) adopts an opposite stance to Athens' modernization, accusing it for an impertinent replacement of the old classical order with the chaotic image of a grotesque city that antagonizes western metropolises [82]. His explicit admiration for the Greek islands reveals a new anti-modern Western attitude towards Greek tradition. According to Hampe, the vernacular building tradition was not appreciated adequately for its architectural building ethos, useful for the functional city of tomorrow. Instead, the Greek rural landscape was utilized as a telling paradigm of a "healthy growth of the art of building, reinforced by the image of ideal perfection." Similarly, in the same issue of *Technical Chronicles*, an article by Alexandros Dragoumis and a translated excerpt from Lewis Mumford's *The Culture of Cities*, denounce the unhealthy noisy city spectacle and propagandize the rehabilitation of the urban landscape with consideration towards nature, the archaeological ruins and vernacular tradition. In the same way, the tourist magazine *Le Voyage en Grèce* (1934–1946), which was launched by Ioannides during the 1930s, makes also part of the same intrusive interaction between modern architecture and Greek insular architecture. Especially the summer 1939 issue, which illustrates village life and architecture, offers a great example of the "inherent modernity" of Greek vernacular, which was rather supported by Metaxas's regime. All of the above became reservoirs of ideological reference that reflected the contradictions of the new national narrative, which shaped the country's tourism rebranding, an exportable product aiming to appeal to international audiences. The work of Greek

architects Dimitris and Alexandra Moretis, employees of the Technical Service of Expositions and Fairs of the GTO, who designed the pavilions for the official Greek participations to international expos, constitutes an exemplary case of instrumentalizing the antiquity, folklore and modernity in an unorthodox assemblage that represented Greece abroad. Their work, in tune with the general ambience of the times, interlinked folklore culture, archaic scenery and urban civilization in a modern context.

## 5. Conclusions

In the above described context of an emerging modernization, the transformation of Athens into a modern city of the future, boosted by the ancient ruins by virtue of their symbolic and timeless surplus value [83], furthered the perpetual dialogue between *les anciens et les modernes* into the XX century. As discussed in this paper, the foreign gaze of the 30s functioned as a catalyst for a constant re-appropriation and revision of modern ideas for many peripheral Mediterranean cities which were held captive of stereotypical narratives of the past. On the eve of WWII, Athens begins to capitalize on the antiquities and on the Greek natural landscape, using the emerging tourism trends as a vehicle for economic and urban development, thus forging a strong and clear national image, both for domestic and international use. The gaze of modern western intelligentsia towards Greece, previously focused mainly to the ancient world, is redirected to the contemporary city of Athens and its recent urban development, claiming a position on the map of Europe as a modern metropolis, as well as to the Aegean islands. During the 30s, classical monuments and idealized landscapes helped reinforcing the peoples' morale and built a shared new vision for the future, by forming a new Mediterranean, cosmopolitan-modern identity. This signposted the way towards acknowledging *multiple modernities*, beyond the *authentic modernities* of the West [84,85]. This vision was buttressed by new national institutions, such as the GTO, that maintained existing and created new international mobility networks by providing modern hospitality and transportation infrastructure. This paper demonstrated that associating imported/western with traditional cultural models led to the re-evaluation of the material and imaginative ancient heritage that cleared the path for a post-war *reflexive modernization* [86,87]. Although the Interbellum in Greece was a difficult, contradictory and challenging era, rich in political failures and national tragedies, it was also characterized by an extensive and unprecedented modernization, which, in the eyes of foreign travellers –architects or intellectuals– made the trip to Greece a reciprocal modern experience. Their gaze formed a new visual narrative, exporting Greek culture in the name of tourism development, which eventually, in the post WWII era, would challenge previous forms of modern subjectivity.

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