

Historic buildings and urban area revitalisation through placemaking: A case study

Samir M. Bagiouk^{1*}, Evina Sofianou²

^{1,2}School of Civil Engineering, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 54124, Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract: Urban areas of historical value are spatial structures that express the evolution of the local society and local identity. Urban regeneration strategies are encouraged by local authorities to attract people. The transformation of historic urban buildings and their wider environment through reconstruction and aesthetic investments are some of the regeneration strategies for revenue-generating potential and more sustainable urban forms. Contemporary urban regeneration projects aim to create vital spaces by reintegrating historic complexes and buildings in the city urban fabric and to highlight decayed urban areas and the sense-of-a place. Place-making is an inherently collaborative and inclusive planning approach compared to the envisaged planning model. As a concept it refers to the process of place production aiming to advance the living quality of a space. People are attracted to places which can become focal points of economic, social activity and attractiveness including various functions.

The present paper faces an important challenge in the field of sustainable urban heritage regeneration. The paper focuses on a listed building of Xanthi, an urban centre in Northern Greece with rich built heritage. The case study building is the Hadjidakis residence (former Garrison Headquarters). The paper explores a series of issues associated with the regeneration and rehabilitation of abandoned historical buildings and their reintegration in the urban fabric through place-making strategies. The main goal is to provide a holistic methodology for a community-based regeneration scheme and new aspects of urban historic building upgrade through new creative uses.

Keywords: building regeneration; cultural heritage; listed buildings; placemaking; sustainability; urban revitalization.

I. INTRODUCTION

Heritage is one of the important elements which create character, identity and image of the city concerning the past, present and future. Built cultural heritage is a dominant component and an important means of historical, economic and social development. The urban building stock with its connotative meanings is an important part of the city as historical and cultural evidence. However, technology, demographic and economic changes and lack of systematic assessment methodologies for adequate consideration of the divergence between sustainable urban development and the protection of cultural heritage, have put pressures on the built urban assets. Viable strategies combined with architectural intervention and conservation methods of built heritage are needed for the reintegration of such assets in the city and the improvement of living conditions and microclimate.

Today there is an increasing interest towards more sustainable city forms and local community participation in policy making. When a person or group links a space to their own personal experiences, cultural values and social meanings, it is transformed into a place for them (Hunziker et al., 2007). The increased participation of citizens is important for the integration of cultural assets into urban development strategies. Place-making tends to be used to refer to a specific approach to 'revitalising, planning, designing and managing public spaces' (Stewart, 2010). Placemaking is the process of place production and a collective process of space arrangement with the aim to advance the usage and living quality of a space.

Xanthi, a medium sized urban centre of Northern Greece, has a rich built heritage, large part of it still untapped. The paper aims to explore the regeneration potentials of listed buildings through citizen participation and placemaking. Structurally, the paper consists of four parts. Using empirical data from the area and through structured planning methods at the first part are investigated the factors that hinder or promote sustainable development planning strategies, with a focus on placemaking. The paper continues with a holistic methodology to cover the gap between sustainable development and reuse of historical built resources. The case study is the Garrison Headquarters building, known Hadjidaki's residence, named after the famous Greek composer who was born in Xanthi. The regeneration and rehabilitation planning methods of the case study building are presented analytically at the last part followed by concluding remarks.

2. NEW CULTURE-BASED URBAN MODELS AND BUILT HERITAGE

Culture can be regarded as a way of producing and reproducing tested knowledge about the world (Ponzini, 2009). One of sustainable development's principals is the protection and promotion of cultural heritage and conservation of identity. Each place has a meaning, mostly defined by the environment and human activity. Heritage conservation processes can contribute to building a consensus on the value of the societies' identity and creating a sense of belonging in the respect of their diversity.

The definition UNESCO provides for cultural heritage is: 'the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations' (European Parliament, 2018). Cultural heritage is referenced in the international agenda for sustainability and for its role in defining the distinctiveness of cities and improving their competitiveness. And vice versa urban competitiveness regards culture as capital, so it is important to consider heritage as an essential resource of the urban ecosystem. Urban conservation is now considered as a dynamic process within an urban system aimed at enhancing cultural values and managing change (United Nations, 2015).

Cultural heritage will be key in the success of sustainable development policies, as driver and enabler of development and people-centered societies, and a holistic and integrated approach to development needs to take creativity, heritage, knowledge and diversity into account (Duxbury et al., 2012). Urban areas and building stock of historical significance are spatial structures that express the evolution of local society and its cultural identity. These areas consist of tangible (urban and architectural elements, open air spaces, buildings and landmarks) and intangible elements (functions, activities, memories, traditions). They are an integral part of a broader natural or manmade context and the two must be considered as inseparable.

Cultural heritage and its values play an important role in historic areas and modern city changes, benefiting the social and economic dynamics. Safeguarding and promoting culture at the local level is a way to develop endogenous resources and create conditions for sustainable revenue generation (United Nations, 2015). More specifically, conserving and reusing the disused buildings and revitalizing decayed areas, can play an important role in the regeneration process and can contribute to meeting the growing need for new buildings (Ijla & Broström, 2015). New job opportunities and local businesses could increase local income and economic activities within the wider area. In addition to the benefits above, cultural assets are important for touristic development, as 'history, culture and religion are elements that attract tourism' (Coccosis, 2008). Consequently, it is fundamental to consider heritage as an essential resource, as part of the urban ecosystem (ICOMOS, 2012), and the restoration of historic buildings and urban areas is a lever for sustainable development.

The cultural built heritage includes and encloses the historical, ideological, architectural, artistic and material identity of a city and consequently any conservation, restoration or rehabilitation intervention must respect, as much as possible, the authenticity and compatibility with the original (Vicente, et al., 2018). Historic buildings' (as built cultural heritage) and their wider area conservation carries benefits in many areas of the urban environment (Vicente, *et al.*, 2015). Historic buildings are considered as buildings or structures of 'historic value', and people connected to these structures and their past in various ways. Among the main types of historical buildings are sacred buildings, museums, mansion buildings, castles, residential buildings, public buildings e.tc. Historic significance is the importance of a property to the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture of a community, region or nation, and in selecting a building, particular attention should be paid to:

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- Association with events, activities or patterns;
- association with important persons;
- distinctive physical characteristics of design, construction or form, representing work of a master;
- potential to yield important information such as illustrating social, economic history, such as railway stations, town halls, clubs, markets, water works, etc;
- technological innovations such as dams, bridges, etc.

(Gupta & Prakash, 2018).

However, the protection and reintegration of architectural heritage into modern urban landscape is a complex procedure with many aspects. The continuous decay of the urban environment and the emerging problems caused during the last decades, are the major menace of historic centers and monuments. The term regeneration also includes the sense of transformation, in this case of a place with specific or mixed uses, i.e. residential, commercial, educational, open air space, that through time and mainly due to lack of political initiatives, presents signs of degradation (social, economic and environmental and can affect specific or wider areas of the city). Urban area and building regeneration ‘aims to renew areas in decline’ (Bassett, 2013), and this decline could be in the form of physical, social and/or economic functions in the urban fabric (Chohan & Ki, 2005). Furthermore, old buildings based on old construction standards are energy-intensive and their energy upgrade combined with a study of reuse, could result in environmental and economic benefits.

For a city to be sustainable, economic and social benefits need to be maximized in order to enhance living standards as far as the city target is sustainable in terms of environmental limitations and socioeconomic equity (Mori & Yamashita, 2015). Although conservation focused on individual monuments, the last decades the interest ‘has been extended gradually from individual buildings to the building stock’ (ICOMOS, 2012). Upgrading the built environment, social fabric and urban spaces within the historical urban structure contributes in increasing their adoption as places for public congregation and activity, consequently increasing social interaction and cohesion between citizens (Elnokaly & Elseragy, 2011).

3. PLACEMAKING AND URBAN REVITALISATION

3.1 The notion of placemaking: a brief overview

For cities seeking to enhance their competitive position, the use of heritage as a driver for urban economic growth is now an established feature of the policy agenda. In addition to generating income and employment, their tendency to cluster within rundown inner city districts often provides the catalyst for area revitalization and regeneration (Bayliss, 2007). The instrumental use of heritage in regeneration is a global phenomenon, often linked into both strategies seeking to develop so-called cultural industries and a process of ‘placemaking’, a term variously used by urban designers in establishing attractive physical locales as part of the backdrop of successful social space and, more critically, to be synonymous with place-branding (Pendlebury & Porfyriou, 2017).

Creating place is as old as human civilization and placemaking is based in the idea that ‘place can be created’ (Salzman & Yerace, 2018). The placemaking process is defined by the recognition that when it comes to public spaces, the community is the expert and follows that strong local partnerships are essential to the process of creating dynamic, healthy public spaces that serve citizens. Many placemaking efforts address specific neighborhoods, including downtowns and residential and industrial areas that offer under-utilized private and public capacity ripe for human ingenuity (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010).

Placemaking can trace its roots back to the seminal works of urban thinkers who, beginning in the 1960s, espoused a new way to understand, design and program public spaces by putting people and communities ahead of efficiency and aesthetics (Silberberg, *et al.*, 2013). Urban author and visionary Jane Jacobs (as cited in Baeker & Millier, 2013) sums up much of the logic of creative placemaking with the phrase: “New ideas need old buildings”. The world-wide advent of placemaking is closely connected with multiple factors in action. One of the first developments that laid the groundwork for placemaking was increased citizen participation in the planning process, which Laundry in his seminal “The Creative City” linked to decentralization of (planning) powers, encouraging people to have a say in the running of their neighborhoods (Pak, 2018).

Placemaking serves livability and social cohesion through heightened public safety, local identity, and environmental protection initiatives. It results in a place where the community feels ownership and engagement, and where design serves function. Placemaking generates economic returns in multiple ways as cultural investments help a locality capture a higher share of local expenditures from income. Furthermore, instead of traveling elsewhere for entertainment and culture, residents spend more on local venues, money that re-circulates at a higher rate in the local economy.

3.2 Placemaking and urban built heritage regeneration

In modern economies appears the ‘cultural turn’ in the positioning and marketing of towns and cities, as a response to the profound implications for how cities work and survive (Rodwell, 2013). Cultural resources, amenities, facilities etc, are considered nowadays as strategic tools for the new economy. The ability of cities to integrate the conservation of urban resources and to monitor impacts of development requires the recognition of heritage values (e.g. historic, social, economic) and heritage-designated attributes (tangible and intangible). As cities find themselves engulfed in inter-urban competition, they concentrate on developing a broad range of cultural activities to catalyze private development, increase consumption by residents and tourists, improve the city image, and enhance the local quality of life. Culture is considered to be the city’s leading high-growth sector, therefore creating conditions for developing clusters within cities has become very popular (Landry, 2008).

Urban conservation is now considered as a dynamic process within an urban system aimed at enhancing cultural values and managing change (United Nations, 2015). Urban regeneration aims to renew areas in decline (Bassett, 2013), and this decline could be in the form of physical, social and/or economic functions in the urban fabric (Chohan & Ki, 2005). According to Porfyriou and Sepe (as mentioned in Pendlebury & Porfyriou, 2017) the instrumental use of heritage in regeneration is a global phenomenon, often linked into both strategies seeking to develop so-called cultural industries and a process of ‘place-making’, a term variously used by urban designers in establishing attractive physical locales as part of the backdrop of successful social space and, more critically, to be synonymous with place-branding.

Municipalities and urban planners have realized throughout human history that city space has functioned as an important meeting place (Furlan, Petruccioli, & Jamaledin, 2019). Placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local businesses viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). As far as it concerns the building stock, the physical atmosphere of historic buildings contributes to placemaking at the site scale. Retaining original features of the buildings serves as a physical reminder of what the building once was, making the space unique in comparison to newly constructed spaces (Chan, 2011). In this way, preservation at the urban scale contributes also to the environmental preconditions of a successful creative community.

Restoration and rehabilitation of traditional buildings can favor the accommodation of various uses. By using vacant and underutilized land, buildings and infrastructure investments increase their contribution to the public good and private sector productivity. Sales, income, and property tax revenues paid to local governments rise enabling better maintenance and additions to public infrastructure. Also, additional jobs and incomes are generated in construction, retail businesses, and arts and cultural production (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010).

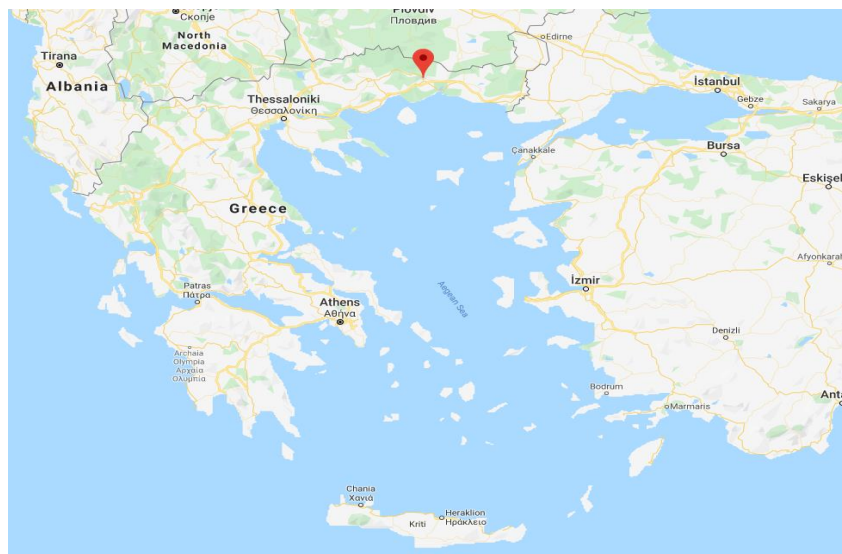
4. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF XANTHI’S URBAN DEVELOPMENT: XANTHI’S OLD TOWN BUILT HERITAGE

4.1 Xanthi’s urban development

The wider geographical area, to which the present paper refers, extends around the Mediterranean basin and the Black Sea region, spanning three continents. The Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace is one of the thirteen administrative regions of Greece. The Region was established within the 1987 administrative reform, while according to the reform “Kallikratis Plan”, Law 3852/2010, it consists of five Regional Units, among which, is the Xanthi Regional Unit with the city of Xanthi as its capital. It is situated in the north-eastern part of Greece in an altitude of 60-145m. Today, there are 65.133 inhabitants in the Municipality of Xanthi (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2011). The city extends to the foothills of Rhodope mountain range and stands out in the wider area of Thrace due to its rich natural resources.

Xanthi appeared as a walled settlement near ancient Via Egnatia and Kossinthos river – still flowing through part of the modern city. It remained under the Ottoman domination for a long period and inevitably developed as an oriental urban center. The center served as governmental agency with restricted jurisdiction and economic autonomy.

Since the 1930s, after the Minor Asia catastrophe, new populations settled around the center in areas following the Hippodamian system, with small rectangular squares, low-rise houses with neighborhood public spaces. The city's substantial development took place in the 1970s due to social, economic and cultural flourishing, caused by variable factors. Infrastructure projects were intensified and the establishment of the Democritus University of Thrace gave impetus to the development of the whole wider area of Thrace. Xanthi was one out of two Northern Greek cities where was designed an Urban Control Zone, as one of the first Greek examples of modern and bioclimatic urban areas.



Map 1: Location of Xanthi in Greece, Google Maps.

The city developed without a town plan until the early 20th century. However, a first spatial plan followed the existing patterns with the narrow, labyrinth roads and blocks and the lack of public spaces which served only as an extension of private space. Nowadays, the city presents a modern image based on international standards. However, the lack of spatial planning until recently – the latest General Urban Plan of Xanthi was published in 2010 (Government Gazette 529/9-12-2010) – the urban restrictions in many inner city areas, traffic problems and absence of integrated housing plan causing informal settlements with high rise buildings overlapping blocks, are some of the city's main problems. Open air spaces, bioclimatic planning, provision for new establishments, expansions and allocation of land uses, are some of the main objectives of this modern city.

4.2 Old Town of Xanthi: Cultural heritage and prospects of sustainable inner-city revitalization

Xanthi presents unique tangible and intangible cultural resources. There are numerous historic monuments, traditional buildings representing folk architecture and art of the wider area, modern landmarks and open air spaces of significant value. There are also exquisite neoclassical buildings, most of them built as residences of the wealthy society during the late 19th century.

The Old Town of Xanthi is a characteristic example of built heritage conservation. In 1976, the area was designated as listed (decision 31/52459/6006/17.2.1977 of Ministry of Culture), because of its traditional, architectural and historical value. As a result, there are specific measures of planning in this district, which differs from the modern city's image. Xanthi's Old Town constitutes the urban fabric created mainly during 1870-1910, while today it constitutes the northern boundary of Xanthi, westwards of river Kossinthos. The area was formed after the establishment of residents of smaller centres, were they were forced to move after the earthquake of 1829. This old town has managed to prevail over the years. It is interesting that most of the ancestral physical and occupational characteristics of this old town have not changed through time: streets and alley layout, traditional commercial activity, with little shops and taverns.

Built Heritage in Old Town of Xanthi



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| 1. Museum of folk art-Townhouse Koujoumtzoglou (19th cent.) | 6. International Institution of Democritus |
| 2. Townhouse Karadimoglou-Ministry of Foreign Affairs (20th cent.) | 7. Residences in old town |
| 3. Municipal Art Gallery C. Pavlidis (18th cent.) | 8. Merchand's residence-Municipal Cultural Center |
| 4. Ecclesiastical Library of the Holy Metropolis of Xanthi | 9. Residences in old town |
| 5. Townhouse Kaloudis-Koujoumtzoglou (19th cent.) | 10. Townhouse Chasirtzoglou-Old Post (19th cent.) |

Fig. 1: Aspects of Xanthi's Old Town built heritage (authors' archive)

Neoclassical buildings and modern houses are the main architectural elements of the area. It is characterized by small, usually two-storey residences that have also a small private open air space. In some cases the streets are very narrow prohibiting vehicles, but the low houses permit even in those cases natural solar access and ventilation. The owners of the buildings are obliged to maintain the form of their properties and only small scale interventions are allowed after permission. Also, some buildings have been restored and house municipal facilities and services, such as the local folk art museum, the old town hall, the municipal art gallery e.tc. They are used for recreation, leisure and service facilities and this initiative is very important as the revival and reuse of buildings and monuments is a proper solution to avoid constructing new buildings in the constricted urban built space. There are signs with map segments and 'walking route proposals of Cultural, Religious and Architectural Interests', or signs with a QR code to get instantly information about each building.

The Old town of Xanthi is a significant example of cultural heritage protection and urban revival because the building-monument is involved in a perpetual dialogue with the space and the visitor. It is a place of traditions, cultures, specific activities, which can be preserved and enhanced, through actions for sustainability. There are also exhibitions, events and attractions by the municipality or local associations, culminating in the festival of the old town and the carnival festival.

5. REGENERATION OF INNER CITY AREAS: THE HADJIDAKIS RESIDENCE (FORMER GARRISON HEADQUARTERS)

5.1 Regeneration of Hadjidakis residence towards urban revitalisation

Nowadays, many buildings and ensembles need a major overhaul or restoration due to many causes, such as, the human activity, aging of the constructions, environmental conditions e.tc. The restoration of architectural monuments is a very difficult task as they are imposed with restrictions by Cultural and Historical Monument Protection Committees. These restrictions limit the technology of an overhaul or a reconstruction and give a preservation obligation to the internal and external appearance of the historical building (Kareeva & Glazkova, 2017).

Except of the complicated legislative framework, the identification of the pathology of a listed building is a very complicated issue that includes several uncertainties such as the identification of its structure system, of the code/practice/materials used, combined with its poor maintenance, atmospheric pollutants etc (Alexoudi, 2018). Buildings and monuments officially protected as part of a designated environment or because of their special architectural or historic merit, where compliance with the requirements would unacceptably alter their character or appearance (Lidelöw, et al., 2019).



Map 2: Location and view of Hadjidaki's residence in Xanthi's Old Town (Google Maps)

Garrison Headquarters is located in the Old town of Xanthi, near the city's central square. It was built in 1897 by the Jewish tobacco merchant Isaak Daniel. In 1932 and after Daniel's death, it became property of the Greek State. However, his descendants continued to demand the ownership of the building. According to historical testimonies, in 1930 the second floor was rented by Georgios Hadjidakis, father of the musician Manos Hadjidakis. The building housed national economic services during the period 1932-1941 and it was named as "House of Public Finances". From 1941 to 1944 remained under German and Bulgarian possession and after the war housed the Greek Army Garrison. The fire of 1957 destroyed large part of its internal. In 1995 it was listed and characterized by the Ministry of Culture as 'historical preservable monument' and 'work of art' (Greek Government Gazette 165b/10-3-1995). In 2000 it became property of Xanthi Prefecture.



Fig. 2: Aspects of the Hadjidakis residence (METE SYSM S.A.)

According to the technical survey conducted by the IV Army Corps, the building covers an area of 1076 sq.m. in a land of 1317,91 sq.m. and is situated in the corner of Venizelou and St Vlasios str. It contains the Garrison building consisted of three levels of 488 sq.m. each, a basement of 488 sq.m. and a two-storey building of total 540 sq.m. that housed the officers' families. There were also some more recent structures behind the main building and a small playground. In the wider area there are residences, small shops and the church of St. Vlasios. The streets in the area are of paving stone, narrow and with low traffic, while there are no parking slots. It is classified in the neoclassic architecture with eclectic characteristics (typology, symmetry of facades, decoration).



Fig. 3- 2: Morphological characteristics (METE SYSM S.A.)

In 2004, an architectural survey of METE SYSM. S.A. was conducted as part of a preparatory study in an architectural competition, in response to the Xanthi Municipality expression of interest for the building's restoration. The main aim was to prevent the building's and its wider area's further degrade. According to the survey, the building is a characteristic example of a bourgeois residence of its period, and due to the services which were housed there, it became important for the city's history and social life. It is classified in the neoclassic architecture with intense eclectic characteristics (typology, symmetry of facades, decoration). The building was restored in 2016 and operates now as a 'multifunctional space of arts and thinking'.

5.2 Methodological approach of the regeneration and rehabilitation proposal

The main aim of the present proposal was the regeneration of this cultural asset and reintegration into the urban fabric, with respect to its typology. The presented methodology aims to serve as a tool for guiding restoration planning and interventions, focusing on the protection of the building stock from further decay and with respect to the typology and architecture. Furthermore, the proposed plan aims in the secure rehabilitation of the building through the reconstruction and reinforcement of the load-bearing structure. All the interventions are formed to integrate to the building's current structure with respect to its historical character, and according to the legal framework of listed buildings protection.

At the first stage, an analytical survey of the current situation about the building and the wider area was conducted, using mostly historical testimonies and plans, and on site survey. The preliminary report was the main product of this stage including the technical reports and plans of the current situation, the building's condition and a risk assessment. Through this analysis, a qualitative and quantitative characterization of several elements and aspects of the building were recorded (second stage). These two initial steps were the basis of the process, in order to acknowledge all variables and sensibilities involved.

Furthermore, the restoration and rehabilitation proposal focused on sustainable architecture principals such as:

- provision of quality of life and conditions of comfort to the residents;
- materials, where applicable, that are compatible with their environment;
- understanding of ‘the sense of the place’ and blocking interference in it;
- acoustic isolation and thermal isolation of the building, with respect to the morphology and typology;
- proper lighting and design of openings;
- the proposed atrium facilitates natural lighting of the ground floor;
- the architectural proposed codes pay attention to precedents, in the recovery of the building’s layouts and the careful adaptive reuse of this historical house.

Special attention was paid to the restoration of the building’s décor as an element of historical and architectural significance. The damage of the floors and the collapse of parts of the roof causing detachment of parts of the ceilings, were key elements of the restoration programme. In addition, interventions of environmental character were another important goal of the project. The facilitation of enough solar access and physical ventilation was obtained through detailed planning (i.e. the 1st floor atrium) and the choice of adequate materials and frames.



Fig. 3-6: Interior décor (METE SYSM S.A.)

The main aim of the project was the regeneration of this cultural asset and reintegration into the urban fabric, as a node of social expression and interaction. The third stage proposed uses which focused on cultural actions and creativeness with respect to the building and the wider area. All the information, observed and recorded for the building and the neighborhood in the formed database, is a tool to promote the development of future rehabilitation projects, in point interventions or in a larger scale (city block projects).

According to the principles of placemaking, vacant buildings are aimed to house uses connected to arts and social interaction based on local culture and identity. Taking into consideration the building’s history, typology, size and structure of spaces, its main phases and the surrounding area’s characteristics, was proposed the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the building as a multifunctional cultural space in the memory of M. Hadjidakis. The main aim was to highlight his work through the promotion of the musical education and creativity, as well as through other expressions of art on local and national level.

Among the main uses proposed by the project are:

- creative laboratories for children for the cultivation of musical education (music, speech, instruments, dance, painting, constructions e.tc.) with potentials of musical education through new technologies;
- installations for a new radio station and recording studio;
- spaces for choruses of members of various ages and spaces for events;
- a library for music (musical research, focus on the work of M. Hadjidakis, rooms for exercising, musical laboratory and a book store);
- a coffee theatre as a liveable space of art and expression;
- a ‘space of memory’ of M. Hadjidakis;
- a space of music survey.



Fig.7: Ground floor plan proposed uses (METE SYSM S.A.)

Hadjidakis created the coffee theatre ‘Politropon’, an innovative space of socialisation in the context of music for his times. He wanted to create a liveable space of art (of quality music, theatrical acts, painting, interconnection and flow of ideas). A space of this kind is proposed on the first floor aimed to become a place of meet and expression of the city’s intellectual human dynamic. Also, on the second floor, where M. Chatzidakis live his childhood, is proposed to be house a ‘space of memory’, a space of music survey for the promotion of music. This use follows the principles of placemaking as

the main purpose is to create a space in and outside the building for socialization and cultural expression. The citizens will play an important role in the building’s regeneration and protection, with respect to its history and to their identity.

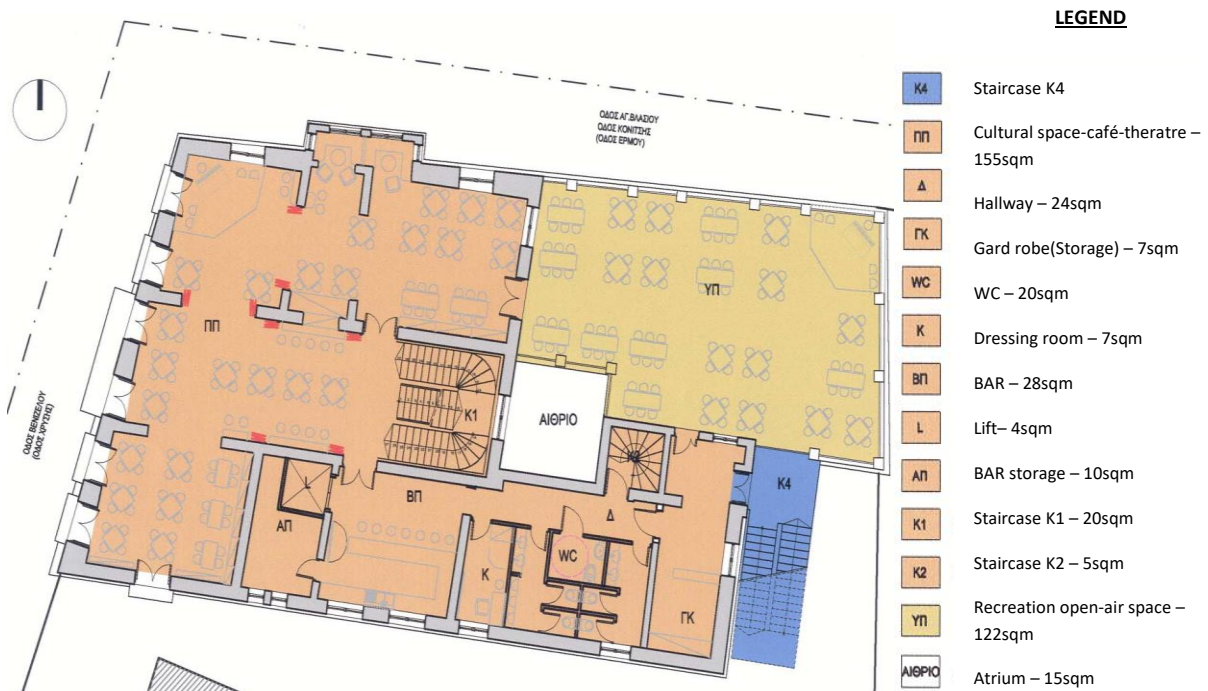


Fig. 8: 1st floor plan (METE SYSM S.A.)

6. CONCLUSIONS

Cultural heritage invests local communities with a powerful reason to protect their local environment and to improve the quality of their lives in terms of sustainability. Local communities feel a strong sense of connection with their local surroundings through heritage, which is not provided through the new building stock. Historic buildings are cultural icons and their preservation impacts on community well-being, sense of place and therefore social sustainability (Bullen & Love, 2011). Progressive cultural strategies seek to widen access to and participation in the arts, support local cultural production, and strengthen community identity and to revitalize neighborhoods. Towards this aim, public participation in the creation of common spaces can truly great places come into being (Project for Public Spaces, 2012). Placemaking is a geographically targeted urban revitalization strategy (Forman & Creighton, 2012). Evidence has demonstrated that placemaking strategies resulted in a wide range of positive outcomes, including strengthening networks and building social capital and community capacity, among others (Baeker & Millier, 2013). Viable placemaking strategies combined with architectural intervention and conservation methods of urban built heritage are needed for the reintegration of such assets in the modern urban core and the revival of their wider area.

Building on uniqueness of place and community practices is a strong predictor of success (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). Xanthi, with a rich cultural built heritage, should prioritize the coexistence of building regeneration with local community development and economic benefits. The restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings is not only an important end in its own right. Each building can provide a stimulus and focal point for regeneration schemes creating more jobs. Governments have developed programs to fund arts, education, turn vacant properties into community cultural centers, and stimulate interest in local heritage and culture (Kratke, 2011).

A number of buildings that are vacant and/or lost their original use is increasingly being converted into useful and vibrant spaces and the adaptive re-use of historic buildings is helping to revitalize neighbourhoods and old cities. The wider study area, Xanthi’s Old Town, is a significant example of cultural heritage protection and urban revival, because of its importance within the modern urban fabric. It is a place of traditions, cultures and activities and can be preserved and enhanced, through targeted action. Xanthi Old Town’s urban fabric and the structure of its buildings, skills on appropriate traditional refurbishment and restoration methods are crucial as upgrade examples of inner city areas. Any conservation,

restoration and rehabilitation interventions must make prevail as much as possible the authenticity and compatibility with the original. Hadjidakis building regeneration plan, was an innovative project. The present proposal's main aim was to create a space of social interaction, where the locals will play the main role, with respect to the building's history and characteristics and to local identity. As an example of inner-city regeneration using sustainable planning methods, the main scope was to promote the area's tradition and to create a local and regional pole of cultural heritage significance.

The case of this building's renovation proposed plan creates opportunities to showcase placemaking as a key goal for the sustainable rehabilitation of historic buildings. The case study offers a picture of what's possible when heritage regeneration policies take advantage of their central role in communities. The aim of this paper is to highlight the possibility of strengthening public participation and increasing local residents' sense of belonging through the built heritage. Retaining original features of the buildings serves as a physical reminder of what the building once was, making the space unique in comparison to newly constructed spaces. In this case, the past comes alive for locals in the new spaces, as they get in touch with the building's and the city's history on a daily basis. The proposed methodology aims to highlight the revival of a previously neglected meaningful space, which stimulates the public to interact to make memorable places. The form of the suggested revival project is designed to be implemented in various heritage regeneration cases. The project's results demonstrate the power of regeneration projects to bring communities together with their heritage and identity through creative uses based on sustainability principals.

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