# Cities Cultural Heritage Resilience versus the Urban Web Development. Case study: The city of Athens

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**ABSTRACT**

Tangible cultural heritage management is addressed to all planning levels starting from the building and ending up the city itself. Especially the management of cities cultural heritage has to take into account the urban space factors and conditions in an effort to ensure the cultural legacies resilience. Resilience, sustainability and cultural heritage are conceptually linked with the city space. Cultural heritage itself can be a cause and a starting point for enhancing the resilience and sustainability physiognomy of a city. Strengthening the resilience of urban heritage must refer to its integrated management, aiming at the protection, restoration and promotion of monuments, through conservation, adaptation and development. The city of Athens is a modern metropolis with a strong historical past and cultural background. The urban transformations that have taken place following important historical events have given the current form of the city in the whole of which there are many monuments and buildings of architectural interest. The problems that prevail in the urban public space as well as the environmental and socio-economic conditions make the cultural elements vulnerable, often threatening their integrity and generally their resilience. The urban heritage management of Athens must consider the city as a set of processes and systems. Based on the resilience concept they must aim not only at the cultural heritage preservation but also at the adaptation to each period data and challenges. The public space and the buildings located in the Athens area, are considered a direct means of communication for visitors and city residents, who are important both to interact with the space and participate in the cultural heritage management and use.

## 1. Introduction

Cultural heritage management is a major issue for any place attempting to plan a sustainable and resilient future. As the city is a complicated urban complex, it is important to clarify the factors, problems and involved bodies located in its area or related to the management of its cultural heritage. This paper aims to create a resilience strategy of the cultural heritage, adapted to the special conditions

that prevail in the area of Athens, as well as the possibilities and opportunities that stem from its historical and cultural wealth, against the development of its urban web.

Cities, according to Godschalk, [1], are complex and interdependent systems which, due to their physical characteristics and structures, become vulnerable to threats and pressures. A city is characterized as resilient if its natural systems, i.e. its built and natural environment along with its human communities, can withstand and function under extreme conditions of stress and the sustainability principles as well [2-3].

The study of a city's resilience is linked to the concept of urban resilience, which sometimes focuses on the entire urban space to deal with a specific threat such as the climate change and sometimes on achieving resilience to deal with all possible hazards [4-5]. Urban resilience refers to the ability of cities to cope with sudden and unexpected threats and chronic stresses through survival, adaptation and evolution [6]. Chelleri, [7], It emphasizes urban resilience should be based on the persistence of the system's existence, its transition and transformation, focusing to sustainability as the ultimate goal.

Cultural heritage in the city area is charged with the space scale characteristic resulting in the concept of "urban heritage" development. According to Hernández and Vaquero, [8], urban heritage can be the monumental character of the city and its special features, such as the historical buildings and archaeological remains, or even intangible cultural heritage features such as ceremonies, events, social and traditional architectural practices, as well. Also, urban heritage can refer to the entire city as a trait of culture, in relation to its urban form, urban centers and public open spaces [8], with typical examples of historical cities. Heritage, especially cultural heritage, requires preservation in order to pass it as a bequest from generation to generation.

The Venice Charter (1964), for the Restoration and Maintenance of Monuments and Monumental Ensembles, is a basic framework for the cultural heritage preservation, according to which the concept of historical monument does not only refer to the architectural work but also to the surrounding urban or natural space, which it is directly connected with. Conservation strategies must respect the form of the monuments and ensure their use in an efficient and profitable way for society. The restoration of monuments is an integral part of the preservation of cultural elements and must be based on traditional as well as modern techniques, following adapted additive or subtractive reconstruction methods. The urban heritage preservation is based on its historical values and is a decisive factor in ensuring safe, sustainable, resilient and inclusive cities [9-10]. In the field of historic cities, conservation focuses on the architectural basis of archaeology, architectural trends, building materials and techniques [11]. Beyond treating buildings and the built environment as a material resource, conservation must aim to create a sense of place offering residents and users experiential experiences while managing changes over time [12].

Cultural heritage is found in the city area through architecture, construction and design methods, building materials and color composition, street models and transportation systems. These characteristics of the urban space can contribute to strengthening the cities resilience, preventing potential risks and dealing with sudden disasters. As stated by D'Amico and Curra [13] a well-preserved natural and historical environment, based on traditional knowledge systems that are part of the cultural heritage, can play an important role in the prevention and mitigation of disasters and the implementation of communities' resilience. On the other hand, the cities resilience includes strategies and measures to protect their cultural heritage and identity, through the preservation of their monumental character, historical buildings and city centers.

Cultural heritage and its elements such as the built environment, historic buildings and traditional settlements are resources that sustainable development policy preserves and has to preserve. At the same time, the cities' cultural heritage can provide information for conservation, through the buildings decoding and traditional techniques [12]. It can also be an important source of tourism income, attracting a large number of visitors, contributing thus to economic growth and stability, being the basic goal of sustainable development.

**Fig. 1.** The Acropolis' monuments in the center of the city of Athens

As already mentioned, in this paper the development of the urban fabric of Athens is examined as a case study, against the durability of the cultural heritage of this historical city. Athens, as the capital of the newly established Greek state in the mid 19th century, is reflected on the architects Kleanthis's and Schaubert's urban plan, while protecting the cultural heritage of the city, with the Acropolis, as shown in Figure 1, and the Palaces as main points of reference. The first residential expansion of the city was imposed in 1922 with the Asia Minor disaster, during which the massive arrival of refugees in Greece created a major housing issue in the country.

During the first forty or so post-war years, the center of Athens flourished, changed aesthetically and functionally, but always being the navel of the economic and cultural life of the metropolis. But the heyday of downtown Athens was followed by a period of decline, with increasing intensity over the last thirty years or so. The high density of the center combined with the increase in car traffic and the lack of efficient public transport networks, especially before the construction of the metro, as well as the intensifying environmental degradation, forced the population once again to spread out of the city center.

## 2. Methodology

*2.1 Cultural Heritage Management Methodology in the Urban Web Development*

*2.1.1 Preservation and Reuse of Cultural Heritage*

Cultural heritage concept can be detected at the different scales of space, creating a wide spectrum for the study and planning of policies over its management. In the case of historic cities, the broader framework adopted by the historical approach to the urban environment emphasizes beyond the structure and constructions of cultural heritage, to economic, social and environmental processes. The city is perceived as a space of diverse physical and social transformations which must maintain its quality and ensure its sustainability, incorporating new models adapted to the needs and changes of the time [10]. In order to be profitable and effective, the conservation of cultural heritage must be addressed as a whole at the city level. In the context of urban heritage, integrated conservation refers to the protection of the built environment, open public spaces and alignment models, ultimately contributing to the preservation of the city's identity [14].

In fact, the historic buildings reuse, often adopting new functions, is considered an important strategy for the cultural heritage preservation, as it ensures human activity and the recording of actions. The reuse taking into account the surrounding space of the building is linked to urban regeneration, sustainability and the stimulation of the economy [15], while the adoption of functions and the use of

materials and energy it foresees, can and must be adapted in a manner compatible with the principles of sustainability and resilience [12].

Revitalization of areas includes improving their physical, economic and social aspects, emphasizing the location, history, image and identity of the area. In the case of historic cities, their revitalization includes physical intervention to upgrade the quality and image of the space by intervening both in the building and the surrounding area, thus making the historical environment sustainable and attractive to communities and visitors [15].

### 2.1.2 Management of the Historical City as a Tourist resourse

Proper management of cultural heritage can enhance functions and activities such as cultural tourism, contributing to the sustainability of cities. Accordingly, tourism can be a means of highlighting and promoting cultural heritage, while strengthening the economic development of historical areas. The creation of a commercial and competitive environment where the cultural heritage is preserved and the cultural space offers visitors, in addition to viewing remarkable buildings, activities that promote their participation and their connection with the values of the place, can increase tourist flows. (World Tourism Organization [WTO] & European Travel Commission [ETC], [16]).

The proper management of tourism can be based on the introduction of innovations for economic developmnet and the structure of the tourism sector. The local community should not aim to temporarily serve visitors with the sole objective of financial gain, without the existence of a general plan. The adoption of a sustainable economic tool where tourism itself favors sustainability is essential. In the context of the economic viability of the tourism product, it is appropriate to promote local goods and services as well as to enhance the sense of place and the awareness of visitors through an accessible historical environment [17].

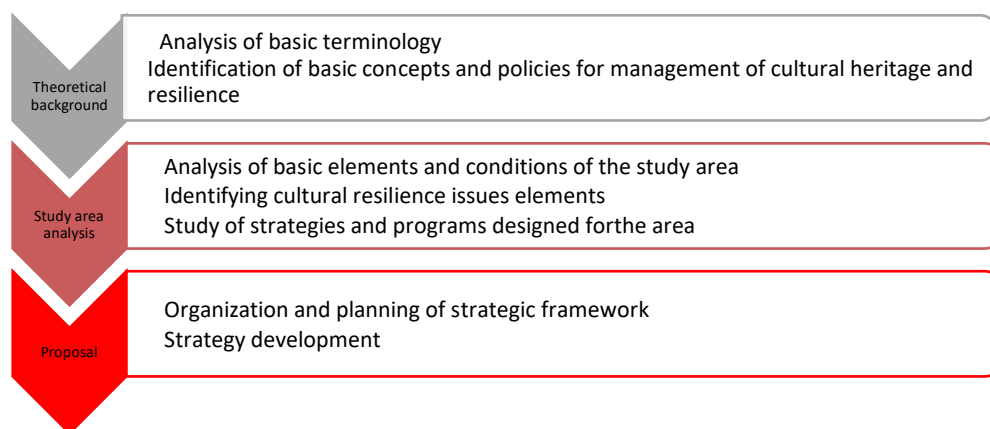### 2.1.3 Urban Renewal at the Neighborhood Level and the Role of Public Space in Promoting Cultural Heritage

Urban regeneration is a planning policy for the reuse of space and can be applied to historic cities, historic centers that are parts of modern areas and historic buildings. In particular, urban regeneration at the neighborhood level can ensure the human-centered character that is a key element in the development and preservation of the historic site. As reported by the Center for Livable Cities, [18] small-scale urban regeneration can have significant results in upgrading the quality of space and expanding opportunities for public participation in decision-making and planning for sustainable and resilient cities, alongside the cooperation of various stakeholders.

Urban intervention at the neighborhood level is important for the promotion of historical monuments referring to their surrounding public space. Public space consists of squares, streets and urban parks. The square has always been the gathering place for people, where they mingle, communicate and have fun [19]. The public space has long occupied urban and architectural planning in conjunction with the monumentality of buildings and the overall image of the city [20]. Historic buildings and their surrounding space represent the values and structure of society, while the the involvement of the public in cultural heritage is largely based on open public spaces, which are also the main way of access both to major monumental attractions, and on the natural continuity of the urban fabric [21].

## 2.2. Methodological Design Development

According to what was analyzed above, the basic conceptual connection of resilience, sustainability and cultural heritage emerges and the methodological framework for the study and management of cultural elements in the city is determined. The concept of sustainability refers to the balanced development of the economic, social and environmental dimensions and aims at primary long-term prosperity, taking into account the timelessness and proper management of resources and their reserves, for their preservation and transmission to future generations. Along with sustainability, the concept of resilience is developed which refers to the ability of a system to cope with sudden and chronic pressures, adopting frameworks, strategies and techniques that will ultimately contribute to future sustainability, based on processes of conservation, adaptation and evolution according to new data and its new needs. Conservation is therefore the key element linking both sustainability and resilience and to cultural heritage, the meaning of which includes the transfer and transmission of its elements as legacies, from generation to generation.

By placing the city as an object of analysis, sustainability, resilience and cultural heritage can acquire a common spatial reference and urban character. In the case of the city, the coexistence of the old and the modern in the urban space, brings cultural heritage face to face with modern developments and threats as the tangible cultural elements that structure it are part of the built environment. Therefore, in an effort to protect and manage the cultural heritage of the cities, it is appropriate to initially identify and record the basic elements that structure the space of the area being studied and within which the cultural elements fall, as you see in Figure 2. As well as to understand the key factors that positively influence and negatively the viability and resilience of the city and consequently the cultural heritage.



| Theoretical background | Analysis of basic terminology<br>Identification of basic concepts and policies for management of cultural heritage and resilience |
| Study area analysis | Analysis of basic elements and conditions of the study area<br>Identifying cultural resilience issues elements<br>Study of strategies and programs designed for the area |
| Proposal | Organization and planning of strategic framework<br>Strategy development |

**Fig. 2.** Methodological flow plan

The city space is a culture space where individual monuments, including their surroundings, ensembles and groups of historic buildings make up a historical and monumental environment. In addition, the whole city or its regions can be considered as historical monuments, as in the case of historical cities and cores. Therefore, the multidimensional space of the city with the different scales and the diverse nature of the cultural heritage make it necessary to identify and record the cultural elements, as well as their categorization depending on the case study, based on historical, chronological, morphological, etc., criteria. The analysis and full understanding of the elements that make up the cultural heritage can contribute to its protection and preservation, while it is important to take into account the weaknesses and problems which faces either due to the wider conditions (economic, social, environmental) that prevail in the city space or due to its endogenous characteristics and factors, such as its agencies, legislations and management policies.

Cultural heritage management can start from the level of the building and end up at the level of the city, thus creating different scales of intervention. In any case, it must always be taken into account that the cultural heritage is connected to the surrounding area and it is important to preserve its identity and its anthropocentric character. Thus, urban policies should focus on the neighborhood level, the connection of buildings with public space, the adoption of innovations and the involvement of society in decision-making.

## 3. Case Study: The city of Athens

### 3.1 City of Athens Historical Development (19th-20th Century)

Athens urban history began in the mid 19th century, as before it used to be a typical Ottoman city with anarchic construction and poor houses and extended under the northern side of the Acropolis rock so as to be protected from pirates. Athens as the new capital experienced rapid reconstruction in the first years of the new Greek state foundation and was developed according to the architects Kleanthis and Schaubert, following the most advanced ideas regarding the organization of the roads fabric. The monumental and hierarchical composition has as main references to the Acropolis, a symbol of the ideological prestige of Athens, and the Palace. At the end of the 19th century, the architectural modernization and urban development of Athens was completed, while at the same time, its cultural heritage was highlighted and protected, with the important monuments.

The Asia Minor refugees' arrival in 1922 created new residential zones on the outskirts of the city, with settlements in almost the entire basin and mainly in the western "industrial" districts. According to the 1928 census, 129,380 refugees settled in Athens, increasing its population by 40%, while in Piraeus 101,185 refugees significantly increased the local population by 74%. In fact, in the period 1925-1930, the phenomenon of land division took on greater dimensions and the construction of plots (legal and illegal) became generalized and marked the subsequent urban development of the city. During this period, the Greek bourgeoisie settled in exclusive districts, such as Kolonaki, near the Palace, but also in garden areas such as Psychiko, Kifissia, Filothei, etc.
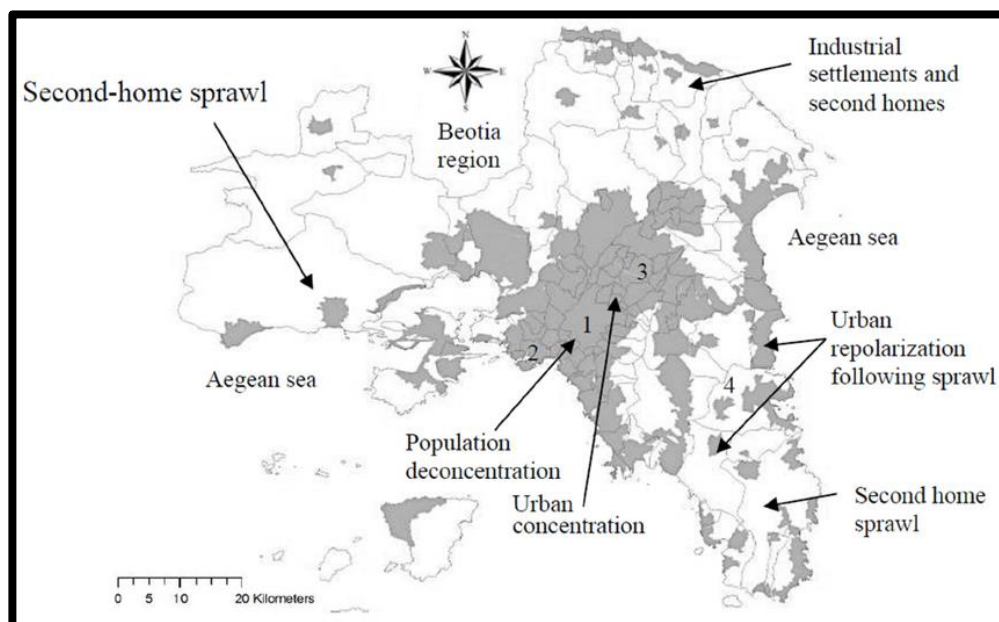


**Fig. 3.** Map of Athens' metropolitan region: uniform expansion of the urban fabric in all directions, municipal boundaries and urban footprint (in grey; 1: Athens; 2: Piraeus; 3: Maroussi; 4: Markopoulo Mesogaias).

In the interwar years, under the influence of the "modern movement" in architecture, the first apartment buildings were built, which for the first time offered the possibility of mass housing. The new high-rise buildings in Athens city, which "stood in a low height building city", and were characterized by a distinct aesthetic, contrary to the morphological features of neoclassicism, became dominant landmarks in the urban environment. They also had common spaces that fostered social relationships between tenants, in a more sophisticated variation of the traditional neighborhood.

The modern Athens physiognomy has its roots in the post-war years and is inextricably linked to the uncontrolled growth of its population. Increased internal migration to the capital and the practice of counter-provision paved the way for the massive construction of apartment buildings, which suddenly solved their pressing housing problem. The phenomenon of urbanism peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, promoting an anarchic, uniform expansion of the urban fabric in all directions, as shown in Figure 3, with main features being the speed of execution and, often, the lack of public spaces.

## 3.2 Legislation and Bodies for Historical – Cultural Heritage Management

The cultural heritage protection in the country territory and therefore in Athens area is ensured by the Law No. 3028/2002 Concerning the protection of Antiquities and in general, the Cultural Heritage. According to the law, cultural heritage is consisted, among others, of cultural goods, monuments, archaeological sites and historical sites. More specifically, according to the gazette publication of the law 153/28/6/2002, the monuments are divided into ancient ones until 1830 and modern ones in the case that they are later than 1830. The term archaeological site also means the surrounding free space of the monument which is decisive for its historicity, aesthetics and function. The historical places protection is deemed necessary due to their multi-level importance in society, art, culture, architecture and history. The main objective of the legislation is the historical heritage preservation and the upgrading of the cultural environment.

The basic principles and main points governing Law 3028/2002 on the protection and management of cultural heritage are the following:
  • identification, research, recording, documentation and study of cultural elements
  • preserving and preventing the destruction, alteration and any kind of damage to the cultural heritage
  • maintenance and, where appropriate, restoration of cultural elements
  • facilitating public access and communication with cultural heritage
  • promotion and inclusion of cultural heritage in modern social life
  • education, aesthetic education and raising citizens' awareness of cultural heritage

The Ministry of Culture has been designated as the country's cultural heritage management agency, which aims to strengthen and protect artistic and cultural creation as well as to protect and promote cultural heritage through corresponding legislative and institutional interventions. As cultural heritage is related to all scales of planning including individual elements such as buildings and monuments up to lands and entire ensembles, its management can be multi-level, while according to law 3028/2002 the protection of cultural heritage must be taken into account in every spatial, environmental, developmental and urban planning level.

## 3.3 Problems of The City of Athens Resilience and Cultural Heritage

Athens today is a vibrant city, with intense rhythms of life, characterized by its complexity and its multicultural and historical character. Its size and geographical location ensure significant opportunities and prospects for development, especially in the field of trade and tourism. A characteristic of the Athens urban fabric is the high building densities, especially in the historic center,

and the absence of open-free spaces and urban greenery, which negatively affects the area microclimate.



**Fig.4.** The Metropolitan area of Athens, Attica region of Greece

It is a fact that the natural phenomena and weather conditions prevailing in an area can be a threat to cultural elements, such as monuments and buildings located in an urban environment. The main disasters that can be caused by the nature elements action are floods, fires and earthquakes, respectively causing building materials corrosion due to the pressure of water and salts, static problems and partial or total destruction of the monument [22]. In addition, an important threat to the cultural heritage of cities is air pollution, which acts as a factor to accelerate the buildings material deterioration due to airborne particles combined with the action of the air [23].

Initially, the city of Athens was designed according to a European capital standards, with the Acropolis hill as a reference point including the monuments of the classical, Roman and Byzantine eras. Thus, in 1833, a decree was signed defining Athens as the capital of Greece and the plan drawn up by the architects Kleanthis and Schaubert was approved with only slight modifications. This plan, intended for a population of 40,000 people, foresees expropriations for roads opening, the free spaces creation, but also a large archaeological zone area around the Acropolis. The reactions to this plan, mainly due to the expropriations, lead the Government to draw up a new plan in 1834, which limited the streets width, the squares size and the archaeological zone extent. Despite this, it maintained a significant area around the Acropolis archaeological sites and green areas. However, the inability of the Government of the time to implement the expropriations foreseen in the previous plans lead it to include part of the area around the Acropolis city plan, drawing up a new plan in 1836, by Hansen - Schaubert, which is essentially the current one even today for the Plaka area [24].

The historical center of Athens, which constitutes the core of the city's development, experienced the most changes since the beginning of the Greek state birth, facing serious problems of durability. One of the biggest problems was the large refugee flows through Athens, which outnumbered its total population during 2015 – 2016 and increased pressure on social services, as shown in Figure 4. This influx greatly increased the demand pressure on social housing, as well as the waste management system. Nevertheless, refugees present a vital opportunity for the city.

In addition, austerity-induced budget cuts to local governments and consequently public works have exposed the city's aging infrastructure and the need to put in place robust maintenance programs and long-term integrated planning. For example, the 1999 Athens earthquake revealed the city's lack of preparedness. This is a significant challenge as Greece is considered a country that has the 6th

highest level of seismic activity in the world. A set of resilience-building actions addresses Athens' built environment in an integrated and proactive way, linking this vulnerability to projects of dynamic development and urban transformation [25].

Still, violence and political unrest have also changed the urban landscape during the socio-economic crisis, and there is a long-standing need for new perspectives that can keep the city safe. Finally, Athens' long-term problems directly related to urban planning, public transport and urban mobility, air quality and green and blue infrastructure are important for planning and implementing resilience at a metropolitan scale [25].

### 3.4 Athens Strategy Resilience

Like many cities in the world, Athens, in order to face the 21st century challenges, has been part of the 100 Resilient Cities network since 2014, which was created through the program of the same name as an initiative of the Rockefeller Foundation in 2013 [26]. The purpose of the program is to defend of the cities resilience, reducing their vulnerability and dealing with sudden threats as well as chronic pressures that exist and concern the economic, social and environmental dimension. The cities network creation aims in communication, cooperation and exchange of good practices between them, in order to face common problems which are intensified due to the contemporary climate change challenges, globalization and urbanization [6]. The plan for Athens resilience was drawn up in 2017, entitled "Athens Resilience Strategy for 2030 Redefining the city". The framework presented in the strategy is linked to the Athens vision to emerge as a sustainable, open and extroverted city, supporting its local economy and protecting its natural resources.

It is a fact that Athens has experienced major crises in the recent past, which have exposed the city's underlying weaknesses and long-term pressures. Also, the phenomenon of climate change increases the risk of extreme events, as there is insufficient protection of existing buildings from climate change, while the majority of public works and new constructions ignore local climate changes. The Athens 2030 Resilience Strategy plan [25], in collaboration with the "100 Resilient Cities" program marks an important moment in the city's history. Also, Athens' Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Action Plans, a result of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group collaboration, are a fundamental part of this Resilience Strategy. They describe concrete steps to improve cities life quality in the face of rising temperatures, flash floods and poor air quality.

However, the main socio-economic challenges for the resilience of Athens are the following:
• Sharp population decline
• Large influx of refugees
• Increasingly aging infrastructures
• Threat of earthquakes, violence and civil unrest



**Fig. 5.** The Athens' urban fabric development versus Cultural Heritage: the Acropolis monuments

Also, the cultural heritage is presented by the 100 RC program as another resource, which must be protected and safeguarded from possible risks and pressures, whether they are due to natural causes and phenomena or to anthropogenic activity, as shown in Figure 5. In each case, the importance of space is emphasized and the creation of resilience strategies that are adapted to the particular conditions and characteristics of each city. Many of the cities that are part of the 100RC network and have drawn up their resilience strategy, have relied on cultural heritage as a source of information and to derive techniques and ideas, while at the same time they have adopted initiatives in favor of the protection of built and natural heritage, cultural tourism, support cultural institutions and the creation of cultural hubs [6].

### 3.5 The Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens: A Cultural Heritage Promotion Strategy

Efforts to unify the archaeological sites of Athens go back to the first planning efforts of the new Greek capital and continue in the early 20th century. The Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens [24], a joint program of the Ministries of Culture and Environment, Spatial Planning - Public Works, is one of the most important and ambitious interventions for the upgrading of the City Historical Center and acquires particular importance hosting the Olympic Games by Greece.



**Fig. 6.** The Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens rout

It is now common knowledge that the greatest productive capital of Greece and specific of Athens is its cultural heritage and history. After decades of searching, the idea of the Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens, as shown in Figure 6, began to take shape. In July 1996, the Ministry of Culture commissioned the studies of the Overall Archaeological Sites of Kerameikos, Ancient Agora, Olympia, Roman Agora and Hadrian's Library, North and South Slopes of the Acropolis and Philopappos hill.

Overall, according to the objectives of the program, the consolidation zone will be part of a wider network, which will focus on the archaeological sites, but will also include the most important green spaces of Athens. The archaeological sites will be organically connected with shared and free spaces, community facilities, places for cultural activities and recreation. The area will be associated with routes of daily use by the Athenians combined with the functions of the shopping center, and will be

connected to existing and planned cultural functions. Due to the measures that will be taken for this intervention, an archaeological park 4 km long and 7,000 acres in area will be given to the residents of Athens, which will be an aesthetically, environmentally and culturally upgraded Historical Center, thus creating an oasis of life and culture in a human city.

Unification is understood as the creation of a zone in which, as much as possible, the natural continuity of the various archaeological sites and monuments will be restored. This continuity will include a connection of the archaeological sites, on the one hand with their greatest possible extension, on the other with the configuration of the space between them, so as to ensure continuity. The monuments of each historical period are respected, they are included in the overall configuration grid with their upgrading aesthetic and promotion, ensuring historical continuity.

The main objective of the program is to bring residents in contact with their cultural heritage and to create as a complete knowledge as possible of the city in which they live. A network of sidewalks in green areas and between archaeological sites and monuments will offer a pleasant walk. This

avoid excessively large white space borders network, at the same time, will be in close relation with the network of commercial functions of the city center, so that the passages through the zone of unified spaces arise not only after a conscious choice but also as an automatic consequence of the general use and traffic in the wider city center to cover these daily needs as well.

# 4. Results

Resilience, sustainability and cultural heritage are conceptually linked in the city space. Including in the management of the urban cultural heritage, methodologies, approaches and tools that agree with the sustainable development principles, it is possible to strengthen resilience, which in turn is a factor and at the same time a demand for sustainability. Cultural heritage itself can be a cause and a starting point for enhancing the resilience and sustainability of a city. Strengthening the urban heritage resilience must refer to its integrated management, aiming at the monuments protection, restoration and promotion, through conservation, adaptation and evolution. Urban heritage management must consider the city as a set of processes and systems. Based on the concept of resilience, it must aim not only to preserve but also to adapt the cultural heritage to the data and challenges of each period. The public space and the buildings located in it are a direct means of communication for visitors and city residents who are important to interact with the space and participate in the cultural heritage management and use. Every action to strengthen and empower the cultural heritage resilience must take into account the identity and users preservation of the geographical area to which it refers.

The city of Athens has a long history with intense political, population, urban planning and economic changes. Its position and history have rendered it a cultural crossroad, in which important architects, artists and other specialists were active, creating a rich cultural and monumental stock. For this reason, it is an interesting field of research and search for an appropriate strategy to strengthen its cultural heritage resilience. Its size and intense rhythms of life make it important to search for ways and tools through which the cultural heritage will be included in the citizens' daily routes and choices. The diversity of its cultural elements can allow the implementation of different and varied actions, while the coexistence of ancient monuments with later and modern urban buildings allows finding solutions that can be applied to the urban fabric. The demands of the city and the modern way of life impose on a region like Athens, the adaptation of the cultural heritage, into an upgraded tourist product that can provide safe, easy, modernized and qualitative access to culture. In the historical center of the Municipality of Athens, on which this paper focused, there are neighborhoods and places of cultural and historical interest, which were once focal points of everyday life.

However, in modern reality, the habits and needs associated with it, have brought negative results to the monuments and historical buildings that are located among the later buildings of the urban fabric. The connection of cultural elements, the safe and convenient access and visit to them and their

preservation are some of the issues that concern the cultural heritage of Athens and are linked to the wider problems of the city, such as traffic congestion and the transport network, the environmental conditions and weather phenomena, which may be intensified by the citizens' daily choices and energy consumption. Therefore, the problems resulting from the overall functioning of the city have a negative impact on its cultural heritage. Regarding the level of preservation of the monuments and historical buildings of the Municipality, this presents gradations depending on the type and the ownership status, with others having managed to be preserved and promoted, often receiving a new use, while others remain abandoned and unexploited.

The archaeological sites and the Byzantine monuments, which are mainly Christian churches, are maintained at a good level and can be visited. On the contrary, historical buildings such as listed buildings are the ones that face the main maintenance problem. Those that belong to the public sector, seem to have managed to be preserved and utilized by usually housing the services of the Municipality. However, the preserved properties that belong to private individuals are those that are not used beyond the public benefit and cannot be maintained due to the high costs of restoration. However, the implementation of the project " The Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens" was not only the promotion and preservation of its cultural heritage, but also a necessity and a life project for the city. In the archaeological sites amalgamation that exist in the center of the city in a single functional archaeological park, in which the monuments and ensembles will occupy the position dictated by their prominence, the upgrading of aesthetics, as well as the promotion of the city historical continuity. The creation attraction of poles for the Athenians, while simultaneously ensuring a better quality of life, in a culturally, aesthetically, environmentally and functionally upgraded area, will highlight the Athens historical character.

In particular, since February 2015, the Resilience and Sustainability Office of the Municipality of Athens, within the framework of the "Athens 2030 Resilience Strategy"[25], collaborated with 840 people and 140 agencies to identify 65 actions and 53 sub-actions for a more accessible and greener Athens, a proactive city that is preparing for the upcoming crises, an alive, innovative and creative city. The goal is for the resilient Athens of 2030 to adapt quickly and know how to take advantage of the conditions and difficulties it faces and produce sustainable solutions for its citizens.

The action plan specifically aims to:

• An accessible city that will be more 'transparent' and open to its citizens, more efficient in its actions and projects, and more active and institutional in its partnerships.

• A green city that integrates nature into the urban environment, becoming thus cleaner, cooler and more sustainable.

• A proactive city that prepares and is able to address critical challenges before they happen, planning for the future by engaging and empowering the citizens.

• And a vibrant city that nurtures and celebrates its creativity, entrepreneurship and cultural identity.

# 5. Conclusions

Athens is the capital and the largest city of Greece as it gathers 40% and more of its population. It is a city that, in its historical course, has preserved to this day the most important monuments, living witnesses of the culture of all periods of its life. The cultural space of Athens, composed of its archaeological sites, Byzantine monuments, neoclassical buildings, along with its nature and landscape, constitute a unique heritage for the development of the city and are concentrated in greater density in the historical center of the city.

However, the mass arrival of immigrants in 1922 from the Asia Minor disaster, as well as the subsequent internal post-war migration, changed its original urban character and structure. Indeed, when the phenomenon of urbanism peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, imposing an anarchic, uniform expansion of the urban fabric in all directions, Athens became a noisy, inhospitable city, with little

greenery, insufficient public spaces, severe traffic problems and mainly, polluted atmosphere, a consequence of the installation of the polluting industrial zone near the center. For these reasons, residents slowly began to leave the city center, which today is mostly inhabited by economic migrants.

Today, Athens, due to its important history, has to be a resilient and sustainable city. In fact, its cultural heritage itself will be the cause and the starting point for strengthening the urban built environment resilience. The program of "The Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens ", with the aim of protecting, managing and highlighting the cultural heritage of the city, in combination with the "Athens 2030 Resilience Strategy" action for a green and accessible city for its inhabitants, leads steadily to its resilience strengthening through a mosaic of cultures and peoples.

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