

TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENTS IN GREECE AND THE PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

It is well known that the traditional settlements are under a lot of pressure from anthropogenic activities and from serving the housing needs of the local population. The result of these pressures is the degradation of both the natural and cultural environments, which means that they affect the overall quality of these areas as well as the quality of the inhabitants' life.

This study focuses on the traditional settlements in Greece, the problems they face as well as the measures that have been taken for the protection of natural and cultural environment. Initially, the survey attempts a typology for traditional settlements and then it focuses on the impact of human activities and the measures that have been taken to protect them. Statistics and legislative texts for the protection of traditional settlement have been used for this survey.

The results have shown that the measures that have been taken at times, have greatly contributed to the protection of traditional settlements, but they are not sufficient. Not only the participation of residents in the implementation of protection measures is necessary but also additional measures for the protection of both the natural and cultural environments.

Keywords: *Traditional settlements, protection of natural and cultural environment.*

Introduction

Today, the traditional settlements in Greece, in other words, the settlements that have retained their image of the past as well as their local character, are of special importance due to their essential element of cultural heritage (CS,2014). Their evaluation and identification are indicated only by presidential decree (CS,1998), (CS,1998a). The characterization of them as "traditional" and the determination of special terms and restrictions on construction, aim to preserve and enhance them without altering or degrading their character. Also, the provisions of the Presidential Decree must not be less favorable than those previously being in force (CS,2003). In addition to this, many traditional settlements are of natural beauty and many of them are tourist destinations (Fig. 1).

This study is based on reflections of the current situation of traditional settlements in Greece, at the main problems they face today and at the measures that have been taken to address the various problems. For the purposes of the survey, the legal framework that has been developed so far to protect the traditional character of the settlements has been taken into

account. For the recording and the processing of the data, the Geographic Information Systems are used.

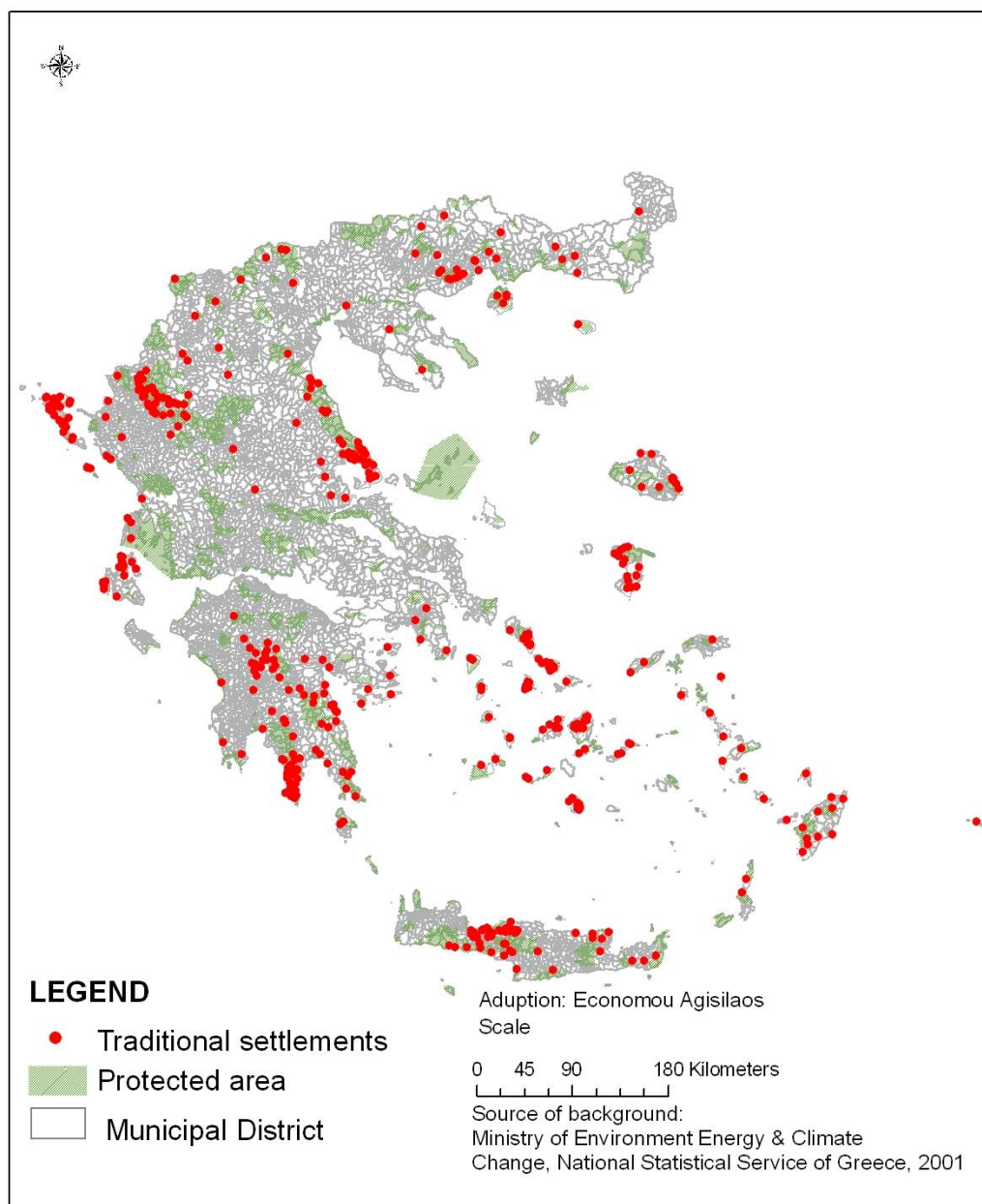


Figure 1 Map of Traditional Settlements and Protected Areas in Greece

Traditional Settlements - Typography

Initially, a recording of the traditional settlements on the basis of geographical identification at regional and local level is attempted. Then, according to the population characteristics, the typology of the traditional settlements is formed in order to record the percentage of settlements that have small populations and are indangered of abandoning.

In the regional level, the areas with the largest number of traditional settlements are the Peloponnese, South Aegean, Crete and Ionian Islands, Thessaly, North Aegean, Epirus, followed by the regions of Eastern Macedonia, Thrace, Attica, Central Macedonia and Western Greece. (Fig. 2).

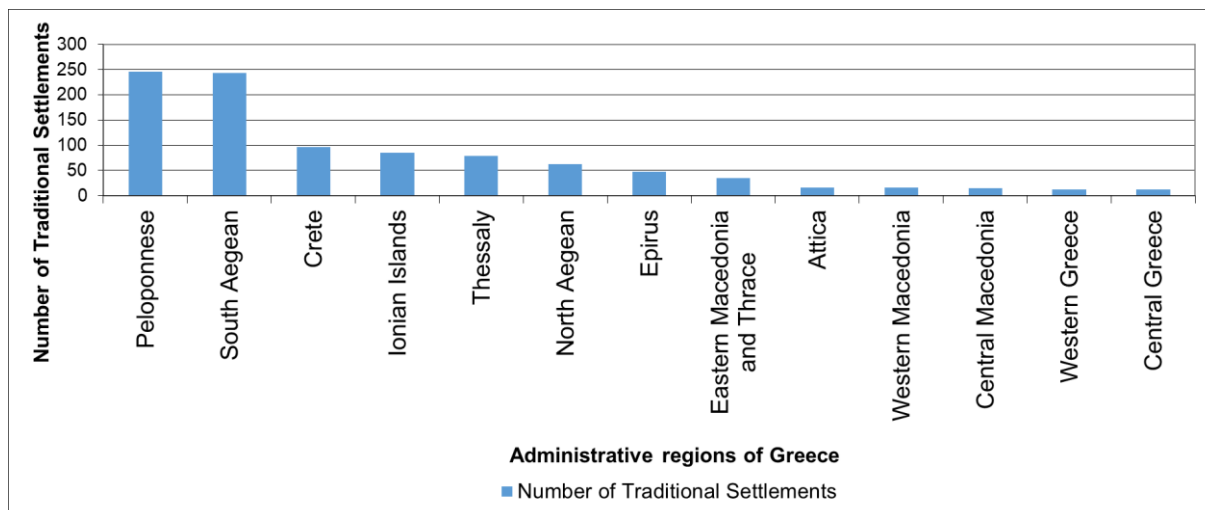


Figure 2 Number of traditional settlements at regional level (Processing is ours)

In local level, the greatest number of traditional settlements is found in Laconia and it is followed by the Cyclades, the Dodecanese, Rethymnon, Magnesia, Arcadia, Corfu, Lesbos, Ioannina, Kefallinia, Kavala, Messinia and Chios. The rest of the areas have a small number of traditional settlements (Fig. 3).

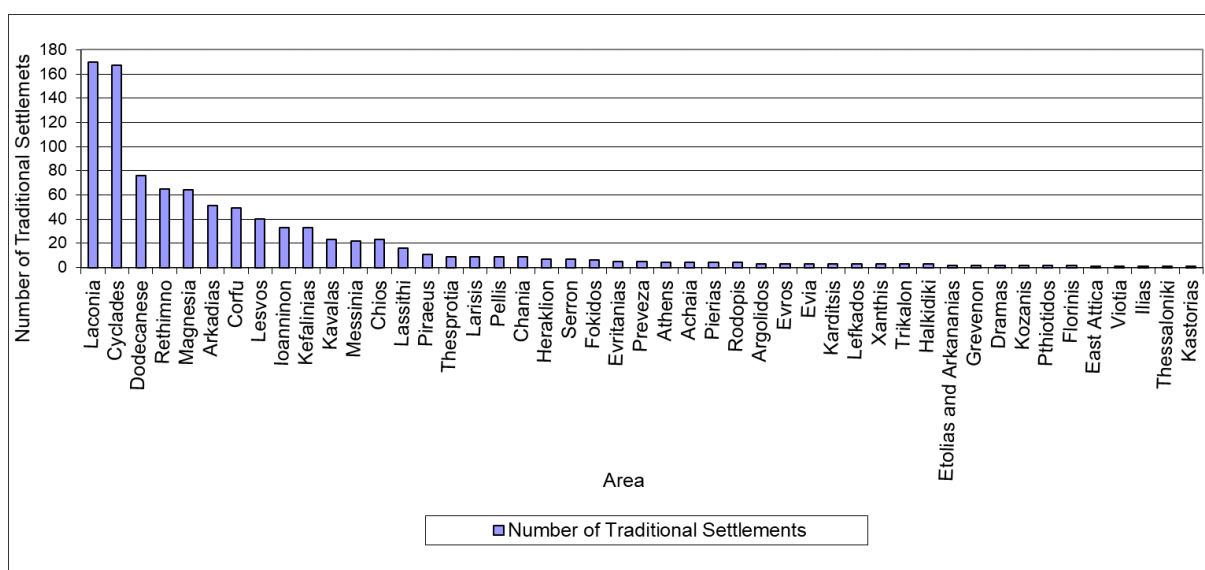


Figure 3 Number of traditional settlements in local level (MEECC, 2016) (Processing is ours)

Most of the traditional settlements (36.23%) have a population of 100-497, 15.53% of the traditional settlements have a population of 50-99, 14.29% have a population of 500-997, 13.25% have a population of 20-29, 14.66% have a population of 11-19 inhabitants and they followed by settlements of 1-9 inhabitants (2.07%) and finally the settlements with no population (0.83%). The settlements that have a population below 50 inhabitants, reach 20.81% (corresponding to 127 settlements) (Table 1).

Table 1 Number of traditional settlements and population (Processing is ours) (HSAG, 2011)

Population	Number of traditional settlements	%
745514-8558	26	2.69
7410-3037	22	2.28
2803-2025	23	2.38
1990-1000	56	5.80
997-500	138	14.29
497-100	350	36.23
99-50	150	15.53
49-20	128	13.25
19-11	45	4.66
9-1	20	2.07
0	8	0.83
Total	966	100.00

The first settlements characterized as traditional were in 1978. From 1978 to 2005, the number of traditional settlements reached 966 (Fig. 4).

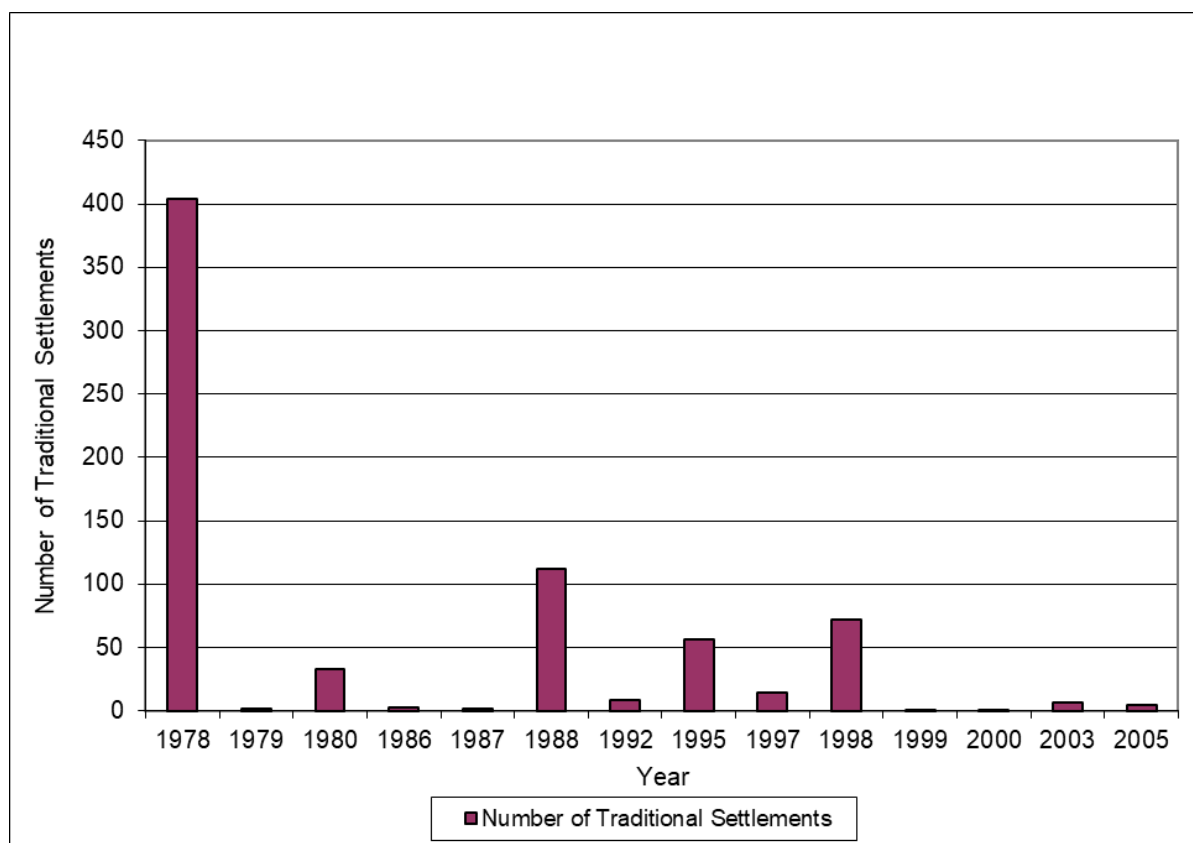


Figure 4 Characterising of traditional settlements during a year (Processing is ours)

According to the analysis of the data shows that the urban characteristics of traditional settlements vary geographical area. For example, the settlements in Zagorochoria (OJHR, 1979) have a minimum face of 10-12 meters, a minimum depth of 15-18 meters, a minimum area of 200-300 square meters, a maximum coverage of land (40% -60%) , building

coefficient (0.8-1), maximum permitted number of floors 2 and maximum building height (7-7.5 m) in contrast to traditional settlements in Pelion (OJHR, 1980) that have a minimum face of 20 m, minimum 30 m depth, minimum area 1000 sqm, building coefficient 0.8, maximum permitted number of three floors and a maximum building height of 10 m (Table 2).

The minimum level of protection of all traditional settlements in the country was the terms and restrictions of construction that has been applied by Presidential Degree 594/78 (OJHR,1978). According to them a settlement is being characterized as traditional. After 1978, the new traditional settlements were characterized by new building restrictions that vary in each region, for more effective protection of the settlement or even modification in order to give incentives for the development and using of the abandoned settlements.

The terms and limitations of constructions the traditional settlements refer not only to the protection of the natural environment but also to its preservation, the promotion of its particular urban, aesthetic, historical, folklore and architectural character (OJHR,1985).

It is pointed out that the settlements, parts of towns or separate sets of settlement can be characterized as traditional spaces, landscapes, areas of particular natural beauty, natural formations that accompany or surround buildings and elements of architectural heritage may be considered as protected zones of traditional groups (OJHR, 2000).

Table 2 Building terms in the traditional settlements in Zagorochoria and Pelion

	Settlements				
	Zagorochoria				Pelion
	Sector A	Sector B			
Year	1979	1979	1986	1987	1980
Building terms for plots					
minimum face (m)	10	12	10	10	20
minimum depth (m)	15	18	15		30
minimum area (sq.m)	200	300	300	300	1000
maximum coverage of land (%)	60	50	40	60	60
building coefficient	1	0.8	PD 1978	0.8	0.8
maximum permitted number of floors	2	2	2	2	3
maximum building height (m)	7*	7*	7.5**	7.5**	10

*due to the slope of the ground

**Due to slope of the ground

**8.5 in case slope of ground 20%

PD: President Degree

Problems facing traditional settlement today

The Survey has shown that traditional settlements face many problems concerned the protection of the anthropogenic and natural environment.

The problems associated with protecting the anthropogenic environment focus on preserving traditional buildings. Financing maintenance and repair programs are the key factors in maintaining the traditional settlements properly. Taking into account that many traditional settlements today present maintenance and upgrading problems due to insufficient funding.

Unemployment, accessibility of traditional settlements and the high rates of eldest also play an important role in maintaining of the local population. Settlements that are located at high altitudes with inadequate road network and low work potential show a significant decrease in population reaching the complete abandonment of settlements. The statistical analysis of the data, show that 8 traditional settlements (0.83% of the total) are already abandoned. It is also found that 693 traditional settlements (71.74% of the total) have a population less than 500 inhabitants. Most of the mountainous traditional settlements have a greater downward population trend due to the aging of the population and the abandonment of young people due to lack of work.

On the other hand, the natural resources, in traditional settlements with high tourism, receive high pressure from human activities and are threatened with degradation. There are many settlements that, during the summer, face many problems with solid waste management because of their high tourist moving.

Also, many traditional settlements do not have sufficient income and funding to support wastewater treatment plants, resulting into facing problems with water pollution.

At the same time, many interventions in the traditional settlements result into the degradation of the landscape and physiognomy of the area. For example, in Antiparos island (Traditional Settlement), there are power stations on the main road of the settlement (Fig. 5).



Figure 5 Electricity transmission station on the main road of Antiparos settlement
(Source: Personal file).

Regarding renewable energy (RES) photovoltaic systems and wind turbines. In many cases they appear in traditional settlements. It is point out that they should be positioned in areas that they do not degrade the physiognomy of traditional settlements.

Finally, many traditional settlements have problems with waste management. These problems being specifically acuted in the islands due to the limited space and the reactions of the residents about to the spatialing of landfill.

Measures to protect traditional settlements

Common measures and building terms that apply to all traditional settlements are listed below:

Urban restrictions and measures in traditional settlements

With regard to the placement of the building in the traditional settlements, the location of the building on the plot is approved by the Planning and Architectural Planning Committee (EPEE) which it may impose additional restrictions on the form and volume of buildings so that:

- The urban fabric of the settlements to not be destroyed.
- The view of public area to being protected
- The view of adjacent plots to being protected as far as possible
- Do not form degraded spaces between adjacent properties
- The spaces between adjacent properties not being demolished.

They have also been taken measures for protection of traditional settlements from interventions that would endanger or alter the traditional form of the settlement. These are:

Measures on the shape and characteristics of the openings

- The facades, doors and windows are arranged in vertical axes and it is necessary they follow the traditional standards.
- The windows and doors of the openings are wooden and openable?
- The openings of shops and auxiliary buildings may be of iron.
- If semi-open spaces are constructed, their depth may not exceed half of their opening.

Restrictions on the use of materials and the coloring of materials and facades of buildings

- The use of iron railing is permitted.
- Aluminum constructions of any kind are prohibited.
- Exterior railing can be wooden or iron.
- All exterior frames of buildings must be uniformly colored.
- The colors follow the tones of the dominant colors of each settlement according to its traditional patterns or the natural color of the wood.
- The exterior surfaces of the walls of the facades of buildings are constructed to the full height with any building material and are coated with mortar plaster. Except the cases where the Architectural Approval Committee, due to the shape of the adjacent buildings, imposes stonework. In the case of constructing of exterior wall by stonework, it may remain without coating.
- The fences of the buildings are made by stone and it reaches at 1.80m high above the level of the surrounding public space, after the approval of the Architectural Approval Committee.

Prohibitions and conditions for inscriptions that do not affect the traditional character of the area

- Solar water heaters and water storage containers are positioned on the roof of the building without protruding from it, or placed in space of the plot in a way that are not visible from the common area.
- Light signs and ads are not allowed. They are placed on the facades of small-size signage shops that do not alter the shape of the building. The inscriptions are written in Greek. The translation of the inscription into a foreign language should not exceed half the size of the Greek one.
- Inscriptions on the roofs, at balconies, at staircases, at scaffolding of the buildings and at common areas of the settlement, are not permitted.

Measures to integrate public utility infrastructures into traditional settlements

- The construction of prefabricated settlements and pilotis are prohibited.
- The infrastructure projects of the Public Utilities (Public Power Corporation, PPC, Hellenic Telecommunications Organization and others) are constructed underground. The mentioned Organizations are obliged to undertake the cost of the refurbishment and improvement of the facilities so as the environment is not degraded. They are also obliged to undertake the rehabilitation of the streets and public areas of the settlement where they intervened to install their networks.
- Installation of electricity meters and others as well as any other utilities, should be located in spaces that are not seen from public areas.
- In coastal settlements or parts of them, depending on the conditions and restrictions of construction the buildings are located at distance from 30m. up to 60m from the coast line (For example, the Traditional Settlements of Kalymnos Municipality) (OJHR, 1980).

According to General Spatial Planning Framework (OJHR, 2008) the lack of integrated spatial planning results to the fact that the traditional settlements are adequately protected in practice due to the strong pressures of residential development and financial interests.

In the special context of spatial planning and sustainable development, measures are proposed to strengthen and protect traditional settlements (OJHR, 2009). Specifically:

- Creating a mechanism for monitoring land use and the intensity of tourism activity.
- Developing stricter rules for the morphology of new buildings and enhancing actions to restore shells of the buildings. Especially for abandoned and declining settlements it is suggested to promote initiatives for their revitalization.
- Checking the terms of construction that are out of the plan of the town and checking the settlement boundaries and extension in such a way as to protect its traditional character.

- For abandoned mountainous settlements that have an architectural interest, it is recommended utilizing of the buildings by converting them into accommodations or increasing up to 40% of the existing structured area by new investments.
- It is also proposed to develop local actions for quality of the area beyond the building regulations.

Conclusions

It is showed that today the traditional settlements come to face with many environmental and economic challenges. The need of holiday homes, the search for better quality of life in the countryside, have a result into pushing the traditional settlements for new extensions and new interventions in traditional buildings. To address these problems an integrated environmental policy is needed. The competent authorities are called to protect the cultural heritage through various actions and taking new measures.

This study has shown that not only the involvement of the competent authorities is necessary, the contribution of the local population. Traditional settlements, which have a low population, unemployment and high rates of aging population, are of particular importance because they are in danger of being abandoned in the future. These settlements require more drastic development measures and more funding to maintain buildings and develop local actions such as, supporting traditional products, and enhancing cultural events, traditional dances, exhibitions and others.

It is point out that the great importance of traditional settlements is not only caused by the number of buildings and quality of these building, but also the behaviour of the residents. The protection of traditional settlements is achieved to a greater extent when its residents comply with the restrictions, the terms and environmental commitments that are defined by law.

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