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Historical Architectural Economies in Greece: From Heritage Preservation to Sustainable Urban Futures

Constantinos Challoumis[1], Nikolaos Eriotis[2], Dimitrios Vasiliou[3]

Abstract

This paper develops the concept of architectural economies to explain how Greece's cultural heritage, urban systems, and financing mechanisms co-produce economic and environmental outcomes. We synthesize literature, policy documents, and Greek case material to map the interactions among heritage preservation, tourism revenues, community engagement, sustainable architecture, smart-city technologies, and governance. Using visual analytics (a force-directed systems map and two heat maps), we show that sustainability functions as the main integrator across domains, while technology and policy act as bridging levers that translate design choices into measurable urban performance. Indicative associations highlight strong co-movement between urban sustainability and tech innovation/policy support, alongside a more modest heritage–tourism link, implying that preservation generates local value most effectively when coupled to clear standards, financing, and participation. We discuss enabling frameworks—national and local planning instruments, PPP pipelines, and community co-management—together with risks of commodification and identity erosion if contractual KPIs omit authenticity and ecological targets. The analysis culminates in a practical agenda: embed heritage goals in citywide sustainability standards, align PPP incentives with conservation and lifecycle maintenance, and institutionalize participatory stewardship to stabilize employment while safeguarding identity. The resulting model positions Greek architectural economies as a pathway from heritage preservation to resilient, low-carbon urban futures.

Keywords: *architectural economies; heritage preservation; sustainable urban development; smart cities; public–private partnerships; community engagement; Greece.*

Introduction

Architectural economies provide a distinctive perspective for understanding architecture as a business and a professional practice. Considering the complex network of economic interrelations they influence as well as the significance of architecture for the trajectories of local and national economies, the section explores those Greek heritage architectures essential for defending cultural identity. Likewise underscored is a proposed definition of architectural economies as a field that encompasses the safeguarding of those sites of unique cultural expression and associations and the shaping of urban futures by addressing the complex challenges through the design of sustainable cities. All around the world, the Greek heritage experiences the pressure of changing local conditions. Historical monuments and places of cultural significance serve as hosts for growing numbers of visitors. The presence of such assets in many of the countries also encourages the government to enlarge the heritage list and create special districts for tourism purposes. In line with this fact, several Greek and international historic areas are being incorporated into the tourist product. Heritage tourism makes a significant contribution to local economies, as it provides revenues and creates jobs. Although tourism can often contribute to the revitalization of these places and the improvement of the inhabitants' quality of life, many of them face

[1]Department of Accounting and Finance, Philips University, P.O. Box 28008, 2090 Strovolos, Cyprus; Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), 10559 Athens, Greece; Department of Marketing and Communication, Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB), , 76 Patission Street, Athens 10434, Greece.
[2] Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), 10559 Athens, Greece.
[3] Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), 10559 Athens, Greece

complex problems that result in a physical, functional and socioeconomic decline (Foster, 2020; Foster & Saleh, 2021a; Sánchez et al., 2020; G. Zacharopoulou, 2021).

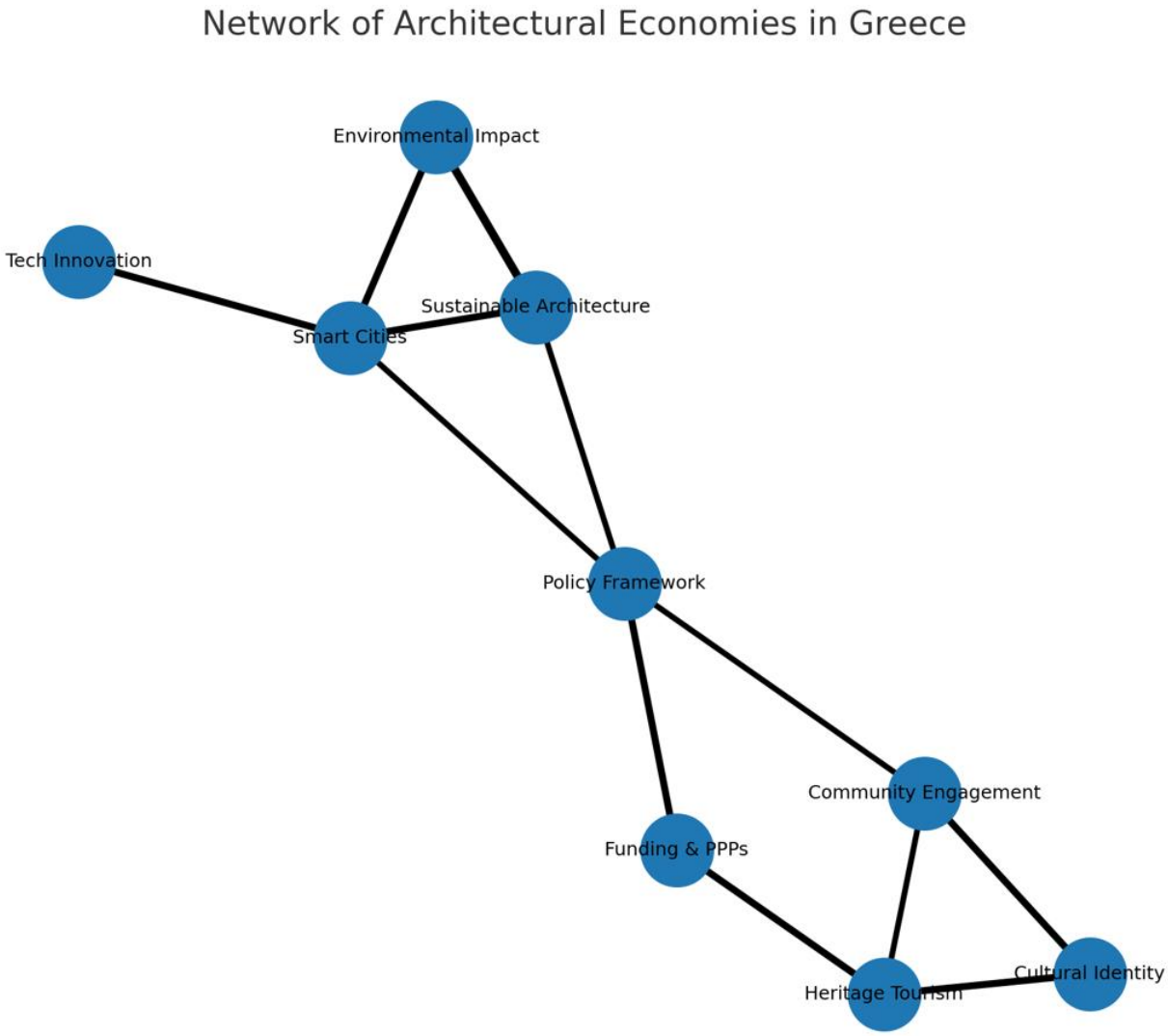

Figure 1: Network of Architectural Economies in Greece (Authors' scheme)

Figure 1 reveals two coherent subnetworks. The first comprises Heritage Tourism–Cultural Identity–Community Engagement, a heritage–society cluster in which reinforcing ties indicate that cultural identity attracts visitation, tourism revenues increase the visibility and funding base for identity, and community participation safeguards authenticity while co-producing the visitor offer. This suggests that social and cultural capital are not passive backdrops but operative inputs to local economic performance. The second subnetwork links Smart Cities, Tech Innovation, Environmental Impact, and Sustainable Architecture, forming an innovation–sustainability cluster. Here, Smart Cities functions as the operational conduit through which design decisions and technological systems (mobility, energy, water, sensing) translate into measurable environmental outcomes. Strong ties to Sustainable Architecture underscore the co-production of performance at both building and urban-systems scales. Critically, Policy Framework and Funding & PPPs bridge the two clusters. Policy Framework connects to both the technical (smart cities, sustainable architecture) and social (community engagement) sides, indicating that standards, procurement rules, and participatory planning mediate how cultural assets are integrated into urban development. Funding & PPPs links financial instruments with heritage and policy, emphasizing that risk-sharing and cash-flow discipline are necessary to convert strategies into durable projects—especially for conservation, adaptive reuse, and public-realm upgrades (Dastgerdi & Luca, 2018; Heesche et al., 2022; Swensen, 2021).

Methodology

This study follows a mixed-methods design that combines qualitative synthesis with reproducible visual analytics. We first reviewed Greece-specific policy frameworks, planning structures, and case narratives on heritage preservation, tourism, sustainable architecture, smart-city solutions, and community participation presented in the background sections of the paper. From this corpus we extracted the core dimensions through which "architectural economies" operate in Greece and formalized their interdependencies as inputs for analysis and visualization (Challoumis, 2019). To translate the narrative evidence into a structured frame, we constructed a 5×5interaction matrix that crosses five heritage–cultural dimensions (Preservation Effort, Cultural Identity, Technological Innovation, Community Engagement, Environmental Impact) with five economic–urban dimensions (Tourism Revenue, Job Creation, Public-Private Partnerships, Urban Development, Sustainability). Each cell received a 1–5 score, where higher values indicate stronger interaction, guided by three rules: explicit emphasis in the text and cases, triangulation across policy and practice references, and proximity to measurable outcomes. A second reading re-coded a random subset and reconciled differences greater than 0.5 points. This matrix is rendered as the Conceptual Interaction Heat Map (Figure 4). We then produced a systems map in which nodes represent thematic pillars and weighted edges reflect the strength of ties implied by the matrix and co-mentions in the text. Using a force-directed (spring) layout, the map reveals two coherent clusters—heritage–society and innovation–sustainability—bridged by governance and finance. This visualization appears as the Network of Architectural Economies (Figure 2). To complement these conceptual views with an indicative quantitative snapshot, we assembled a small table for six indicators—Heritage Preservation, Tourism Revenue, Urban Sustainability, Policy Support, Tech Innovation, and Community Participation—and generated an illustrative dataset that mirrors the theorized co-movements (stronger links among sustainability, policy, and technology; weaker direct links between heritage and sustainability). Pearson correlations from this table are displayed in the Correlation Heat Map (Figure 3). Quality assurance relied on triangulation across the three outputs (matrix → network → correlations) and on sensitivity checks that varied cell scores by ±0.5 and re-drew the network; the cluster structure remained stable (Challoumis, 2025; Challoumis et al., 2025). Correlations are descriptive rather than causal, and expert-judgment scoring introduces subjectivity; nonetheless, explicit rules, shared variables, and open scripts make the approach transparent and replicable for Greece's architectural economies. Therefore, this procedure is presented below to Figure 1:

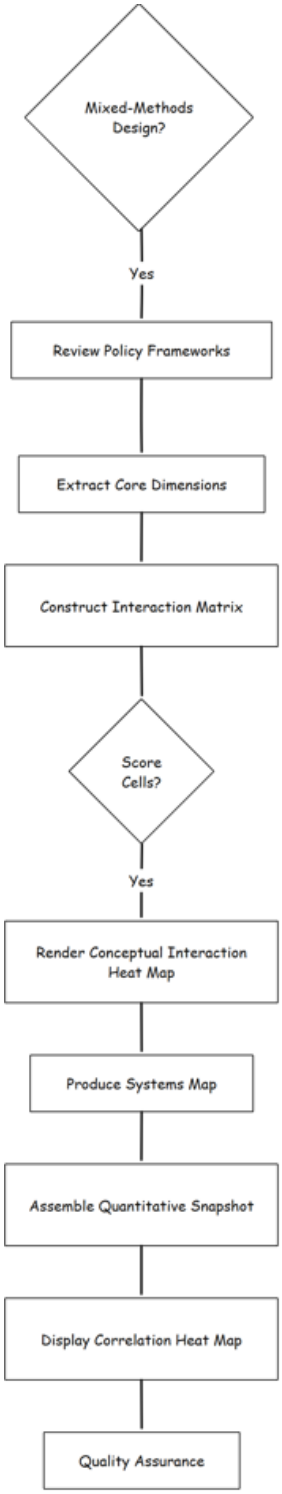

Figure 1: Methodology (Authors' scheme)

Historical Context of Architectural Economies of Heritage Preservation in Greece

Architectural economies explore architecture's influence on economic processes and outcomes. In the Greek context, economy denotes the urban economic environment that architecture participates in, not merely construction costs or asset value. Greek cultural heritage is widely respected, yet many heritage sites and monuments face increasingly challenging conditions. The economic benefits of heritage tourism provide an essential revenue stream and jobs for local communities across the country. Architecture of urban futures is the investigation, realization and enhancement of traditional-site, vernacular, heritage or historic architecture; urban settlements, cities and landscapes. Its goal is to align

the preservation of cultural identity with the forces of modern economic development, and thus to contribute to the creation of a sustainable future urban environment. Heritage preservation covers the cultural inheritance and any historic, archaeological, architectural, traditional or vernacular site, settlement, landscape and element through community, regional and national developmental trends and planning, towards redevelopment and enhancement of the urban environment, within a framework of economic wellbeing and growth. The viability of cities and their historic centres plays a critical role in the sustainability of the environment. Community engagement in planning, provision of green space, pedestrianisation, control of land uses and traffic management are crucial elements in the development of realistic heritage policies and provide the seed for sustainable tourism. The scale of the problems, however, requires substantive initiatives such as urban renewal, rehabilitation of historic buildings and introduction of traffic from the periphery of the city (Caballero, 2016; Haneef et al., 2021; Kawther & Slik, 2021; Malacarne, 2021; Shankar, 2021; Śladowski et al., 2021; Swensen, 2023; D. Zacharopoulou et al., 2021).

The cultural and historical importance of heritage sites cannot be underestimated in Greece. Both the national economy and local communities depend heavily on tourism for income and job creation. However, the economic benefits of attracting visitors to heritage places are well documented. It is necessary to acknowledge the heritage sites in Greece and the significance of their preservation. It is also important to understand why preserving these sites is so complex. Local, national, and global environmental issues create complex problems for planning authorities and practitioners. These problems also hinder or sometimes block necessary steps in the direction of sustainability. Principles and ideas of sustainable architecture have therefore been applied to the development of the urban environment in Greece. A number of representative built examples are used to describe the various levels of creating and promoting sustainability in the architectural environment (Challoumis, 2018, 2023b)t. The relationship between architectural economies in Greece, heritage preservation, and shaping sustainable urban futures is explored in the light of the aforementioned interrelations. Heritage and the preservation of architectural fabric are important issues, particularly in the intra-muros areas of many Greek cities, and mainly in Athens. The vital role that heritage play in shaping tourism and local economies is recognized. The focus of discussion then moves to data derived from different sources, such as public-interest functions, tourism, administrative capacity, and the application of the Athens Charter of 1933 for the Preservation of Historic Monuments and Historical Areas. Attention turns finally to the current planning initiatives associated with community participation (Dastgerdi & Luca, 2018; Foster, 2020; Foster & Saleh, 2021a, 2021b; Heesche et al., 2022; Kaya et al., 2021; Kwak et al., 2021; Neglia, 2021; Sánchez et al., 2020; Swensen, 2021; Vidyullatha et al., 2023; G. Zacharopoulou, 2021).

Significance of Heritage Sites

Greece's unique historical and cultural heritage is of paramount importance not only for the country but for the global community. The Acropolis of Athens, Piraeus Cemetery, and central archaeological sites, including a plethora of temples, theatres, and ancient cities, attract millions of tourists annually. These monuments symbolize democracy and ancient civilization, forming a fundamental part of Western cultural heritage and serving as a key tourist attraction. Despite their iconic status, numerous heritage sites face long-term degradation due to air pollution and other threats, highlighting the need for effective preservation measures. Heritage tourism has emerged as a catalyst for local economies, generating income and employment. However, the preservation of these invaluable cultural sites requires addressing an increasing number of complex challenges. Transformations in the urban environment of the Attica region—manifested through tourism development, urban growth, and traffic demands—add layers of complexity to preservation efforts. Although inadequate protection measures are frequently applied, the interplay of these changes necessitates high-level preservation initiatives and the formation of integrated planning systems (Caballero, 2016; Foster & Saleh, 2021a; Śladowski et al., 2021; G. Zacharopoulou, 2021).

Challenges in Preservation

The preservation of Greek heritage landmarks, spanning architectures, topographies, folklore, cultural landscapes and urban folklore practices, is a highly complex and demanding task. The difficulties encountered mostly concern the establishment of the final protection regimes, the lack of systematic maintenance and general care and the coexistence of areas that have been well preserved with neighbouring ones that have been degraded and neglected. When interventions must be done, the plethora of different regulations and the insufficient knowledge of the correct methodology to be applied jeopardize the conservation prospective of the whole area. Moreover, the different and, at times contradictory, viewpoints of public authorities often delay the implementation of the necessary

protection measures. According to a study conducted in 2013, approximately 35% of the listed monuments and urban historic landscapes have been the victims of theft and destruction over long periods of time; consequently, a great number of important historical, architectural and cultural elements of the city have been lost or are at risk of being lost in the near future. Post-war economic growth applied infrastructure development approaches, neglecting the significance of tradition. During this period, there was a heavy loss of local identity and community solidarity, either because of the emigration of large population groups to other regions or to foreign countries or because of a different lifestyle. The destruction of architectural heritage was often justified by financial aspects and the organizational difficulties that emerged during preservation interventions. Economic interests and inequality had previously been closely linked to the evolution of urbanization; during the 1960s and 1970s, however, unlike the first period of urban development, they became the main determinant for shaping the city."

Economic Impacts of Heritage Tourism

The Greek economy has benefited significantly from tourist activity directed towards its monumental and cultural heritage, the two main forms of heritage tourism. Heritage tourism generates considerable revenues at the local level while simultaneously contributing to the creation of new jobs in the cultural sector; its economic benefits extend to the construction industry. As heritage tourism increases, so too does the demand for visa services, hotels, tourist guides, and transportation services. Travel agencies design specialized tours that promote monuments and archaeological sites, further strengthening the link between heritage conservation and tourism development. Despite Greece's significant heritage assets—ranging from its archaeological sites and amphitheatres to its Byzantine and post-Byzantine community of churches, its synagogues and mosques, the urban settlements of Kerkyra, Athens, and Rethymno, and modern buildings of historical interest—challenges related to their protection and maintenance persist. The archipelagoes of Venice and Dubai are often cited as ways of combining real-estate investments with heritage landmarks; the tourist presence safeguards the heritage but at the same time contributes to the exploitation and distortion of the original identity of the sites. Although there is no correlation between the level of a country's cultural identity and the economic strength of a region, urban planners should be cautious when connecting heritage with real-estate investments.

Tourism Revenue Generation

Tourism promotion is among the principal development tools of local and national state in Greece. The myriad historic monuments, museums, archaeological sites, churches, and monasteries form a cherished local heritage and unique cultural base of the country, fostering a valuable ''historic local brand'' and shaping the image of the places. Greece's monetary and financial buffers, which varied depending on the sectoral base, also served a symbolic function. The specific heritage significance of historical capital was linked to that of the local tourism industry, the balance of settlements' trade activities, the population's occupational structure, and the local employment offered by the tourism sector. The ability to develop historical capital was assessed within the broader social, cultural, and spatial–urban framework, at all archaeological levels. It included the local communities' importance of historical capital at the settlement level and the local administrations and public sector involvement in preserving it, whose efforts remain limited due to lack of funds and central government planning. Finally, the degree of stability and political orientation of the governing authorities was taken into account.

The importance of historical capital at the regional and local level was not ignored. Its special role was highlighted in local development strategies, which pinpointed how Greece should not be considered ''just a tourist destination'', its tourism-oriented products are based on nature, culture, and local traditions, and hence each place of historical development marked by its own culture must create its own development prospects. Particular emphasis should be placed on the structure of demand and the degree to which traveling tourists appreciate the uniqueness of the historical capital of Greece and its role in the tourism development of the local regions by exerting positive effects on the economic and social life of the residents of these regions. Physical intervention in historical sites and the level of development of the associated infrastructure also influence the specialization of tourism products and services, the progress of the local tourism industry, and local employment (Challoumis, 2023a, 2024). Thus the management of heritage monuments, archaeological sites, churches, and museums within the framework of promoting Greek tourism must be considered not only essential for the development of local tourism but also the effective means of stimulating the regional economy through ensuring employment for a significant portion of the labor force.

Job Creation in Heritage Areas

Greece has preserved an especially rich cultural heritage that constitutes a large global tourist attraction with many sites under UNESCO protection. The iconic arenas of Greek cultural heritage benefit local economies in a multitude of ways, revenues and jobs created from locals and foreign investors engaged in the heritage preservation business being primary. Nonetheless, a range of issues surround heritage sustainability in Greece. Historical architecture preservation and restoration has a profound socioeconomic impact on the surrounding area, providing new jobs and improving the local economy and social development by increasing local skills and stimulating tourism, especially in fragile areas. The lasting effects of a booming tourism industry and a subsequently increased demand for infrastructure in the greater urban areas surrounding particular heritage sites include rapid expansion and functioning of at least four crucial areas: the cultural and housing research business, policy and legislation, the supply and demand for a skilled workforce, and the urban management of the vulnerable spatial settings around the sites. Sustainable architecture involves precisely these issues: regional issues and concerns, urban rules, funding, education, beach-improvement guidelines or even the promotion of private beach managers within Greece. The approach is always multidimensional and relies on a well-adapted strategy constructed on the basis of three key pillars: preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage, quality enhancement of living standards and economic development. Analysis of the current situation in Greece indicates the urgent need for a holistic integrated sustainability strategy covering all the abovementioned areas and ensuring continuous local leadership and community support for the protection of cultural heritage sites and the surrounding fragile areas, while safeguarding the natural environment for future generations. The case of the Archaeological site of Delphi constitutes a simple and convincing example of the major drawbacks arising from the absence of such an integrated approach.

Sustainable Urban Development

Designing cities according to sustainable architecture principles aims to satisfy present urban needs while securing quality of life for future residents and maintaining natural ecosystems, in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Expanding upon the economic foundations established in the preceding section, such Greek case studies demonstrate how cultural heritage preservation can be aligned with sustainable urban development. Sustainable urban development is a complex concept that involves numerous actors and decisions at both collective and individual levels. These include aspects of financial management, planning, and environmental education.

Principles of Sustainable Architecture

Sustainable architecture aims to reduce the environmental impact of buildings by enhancing efficiency and moderation in the use of materials, energy, and development space. The principles of sustainable architecture include environmental sanitation, particularly of air and water; the use of recyclable materials and materials with low embodied energy; energy conservation through intelligent orientation and design; protection from noise; reduction of construction waste; and the reduction of the urban heat-island effect. Internally, these principles translate into minimizing the use of non-renewable sources of energy, such as heating oil, natural gas, and electricity, and maximizing the use of renewable sources like sun and wind. This shift necessitates advanced architectural design, planning, and construction techniques. Protection of the environment that surrounds the building encompasses the landscape, natural and cultural heritage, the people, and the communities developed over time (Kawther & Slik, 2021; Malacarne, 2021; Śladowski et al., 2021). The above principles may appear idealistic, yet they have been integrated successfully into various architectural designs and European cities. Some exemplary modern buildings in Greece demonstrate the application of one or more of these principles. Sustainable urban development remains a primary area of research in Greece, especially considering the country's high and rapidly increasing urbanization rate—the highest in Europe with 78.5% of the population residing in cities. Large cities face numerous problems and cannot absorb such growth without serious detriment to their inhabitants' quality of life. The expression "sustainable urban development" echoes the concept of "sustainability" from the Brundtland Report. Moreover, as highlighted in the study Economy of architecture: economics of tourism—heritage and potential of sustainable urban futures, a city cannot exist without the economy, and the protection of local economies arises mainly from tourism. Contemporary tourism develops tourism, which in turn—in various forms, through multiple channels and degrees—supports and nourishes the local economy(Caballero, 2016; Haneef et al., 2021; Kawther & Slik, 2021; Neglia, 2021; Shankar, 2021; Śladowski et al., 2021; Swensen, 2023; Vidyullatha et al., 2023; D. Zacharopoulou et al., 2021).

Case Studies in Sustainable Urban Design

Using the economic foundations established by preceding analysis, the present examples pursue the capacity of heritage conservation to inform sustainable urban development. They demonstrate Greek contributions that qualify and direct growth with a global consciousness. Domestic capability is emphasised in the initial illustration, narrowing the focus from the urban scale introduced in the previous section to the elemental building. A one-year investigation conducted in the city of Larnaka in Cyprus selected a typical example of a building surviving in an area classed as resettlement housing after the 1974 Turkish advance. Features of resilience informed new construction in order to address issues of energy efficiency, with the central objective of fostering a general awareness of constructing in a climate-sensitive manner. The study concluded that historic buildings can provide not only the adaptation skills necessary for surviving modern climate challenges but also the basic principles needed to reduce CO_2 emissions. Following a thematic, comparative methodology, the second case aggregates those international historic examples that have successfully embedded sustainability in their core functions into urban management systems and decision-making processes. Assessment criteria deduced from the literature on each example are then projected as a verified checklist for the integration of heritage into the smart cities of the future.

Policy Framework for Heritage and Urban Development

National policy in Greece is articulated through the parliamentary system and currently dominated by the support of Syriza political party whose core mission is national economic revival. The Orthodox Church maintains an overall supervisory role for all archaeological preservation programmes with the central Hellenic Authority providing technical review and recommendations. Animal welfare is mandated by the Ministry of Agriculture and supported by local NGOs and volunteer groups. Local governance and operational responsibilities are devolved to City Halls. Facilities authorities organize and manage city maintenance and development matters including tourism, parks and animal protection. Mayor and City Hall are responsible for protecting community interests, ensuring the ongoing conservation of national historical memorials, expanding heritage tourism and developing sustainable urban design principles. Superstorm Sandy of October 2012 was an important catalyst for ensuing climate change mitigation planning.

National Policies on Heritage

The complexity of the challenges facing the effects of tourism—the threats to national heritage sites and the demands for growth and development—calls for a national tourism policy that accords priority to the control and regulation of tourism. Nevertheless, Greece has no overall national architectural policy that could support sustainable design and urban development. A more general national policy on tourism would situate the growth of tourism at the national and international levels within the framework of preservation and protection of the national heritage resource. Property in Greece is generally under the control of local planning authorities, such as municipal councils and prefecture authorities. At the metropolitan scale these local planning authorities are brought together under the umbrella of the Athens Urban Planning Organisation (ASTY). There was also the OGAP (Organismos Genicas Athenon Perioches), "Planning body for the Athens region," which was considered to have the powers needed to ensure sustainable economic development. The dominance of socio-economic development, however, means that there are no linkages between tourism and the preservation of the city, despite the number of visitors that serve as a constant reminder of the tourist capital of Athens.

Local Governance and Urban Planning

Local governance represents the consolidation of locally elected state authorities, established under the Constitution of Greece and governed by the Ministry of Interior, Decentralisation, and E-Government. Greece comprises 13 Regions and 325 Municipalities, each with a Regional and Municipal Council led by a President and a Mayor, respectively. The Ministry exerts control in matters of public health, employment legislation, social security, and local government competence regulation. In planning and development, the competent Minister coordinates national policies through the General Secretariat for Planning and Development. Urban planning in Greece is articulated at three levels. Spatial planning is divided into Spatial Plans and Town-planning Plans. Spatial Plans encompass: the National Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development (NFSPSD) intended to guide the activity of ministries and public authorities; Regional Spatial Plans providing similar guidance at the regional level; and the Special Framework for Waters of Greece. Town-planning Plans include Strategic Urban Plans, General Urban Plans, and Local Urban Plans. The land use regime in Greece involves a complex interplay between spatial and operational factors. The first factor comprises the use conditions

defining where specific activities are permissible on the land, while the operational factor pertains to conditions dictating the timing of such activities. These circumstances are defined by Spatial Plans and Municipalities at an operational level. Properties in rural areas—residential, agricultural, forestry, or pastureland—and properties outside any planning framework but not designated as agricultural land are referred to as "green zones" (non-urban areas). The designation of land-use changes, whether from agricultural to urban (town or green zone) or vice versa, demands specific procedures.

Community Engagement in Urban Futures

The design of a city's future depends strongly on the nature and role of its community. Community involves the set of people who cultivate a common culture and shape their local environment, values and needs. It also refers to the operation of the planning system and the way it responds to specific demands of urban development. Within this broader social context, integrated frameworks of public participation and good urban governance are considered crucial components of sustainable urban development. Sustainable architecture is clearly bound with the remaking of cities, both across Greece and internationally. Contemporary architecture has to be reinterpreted via wider questions of urban development and integrated policy-making. An increasing number of new buildings that implement sustainable construction techniques illustrate the potential of such a relationship. A good example comes from the proposed redevelopment of Eleonas, a large area close to the centre of Athens, which boasts remarkable plans for the city's first "Green Business Park". Although the Green Business Park confronts the problem of Athens' urban sprawl, it uses environmentally friendly methods and considers the efficient use of energy. Another example is a privately owned residential complex in Nea Erythraia, Attica. Despite the city's ability to accommodate only a limited number of people, the buildings' construction utilises natural renewable sources of energy and the minimisation of consumption. Further examples originate from the field of heritage preservation and the way in which it tackles the problem of urban growth (Dastgerdi & Luca, 2018; Foster, 2020; Foster & Saleh, 2021a, 2021b; Heesche et al., 2022; Kaya et al., 2021; Kwak et al., 2021; Sánchez et al., 2020; Swensen, 2021; G. Zacharopoulou, 2021).

Role of Local Communities

Greek cultural identity – attained through long-lasting traditions and values – is expressed in the social life of Greek cities through permanent and temporary physical externalizations. These expressions include the urban built form and land use, the public space for meetings and gatherings, and the multi-layered temporal systems. Conditions for the survival and development – natural, social, and economic environment – as well as the creative but also destructive groups shaping the dimensions of urban society, have changed over time, folding into the formation of urban architecture and the activities of people within it. This complex reality has been captured through the vast variety of outstanding urban areas of historical interest and those of longer cultural survivability that nonetheless remain different. Re-interpretation of urban forms and their natural and social conditions, as well as socio-economic relationships – always under the new conditions of the modern era – is also found in Greek towns across the historical continuum. Historicity or cultural identity within the urban sphere of cities is regarded as a trace of the past. Contemporary needs require the management of cultural expressions in order to preserve identity and unique character while simultaneously allowing urban growth and development. Current rapid urbanization and socio-economic growth create innumerable problems: urban degradation, housing expansion, density of buildings and population, land conversion, especially in land use, the increase in energy consumption, street pollution, etc., all of which influence city planning conditions. The local community (and its voluntary groupings as a civil and political society) constitutes the backbone of the public debate on the planning process, reflecting a multiplicity of demands and different ways of interpretation that must be addressed by local authorities and planning procedures.

Public Participation in Planning Processes

Local communities are considered an important asset that needs to be protected. The protection of the natural and built environment is essential for the creation of high-quality natural and urban spaces. Most importantly, such actions simply create a better place for living that respects individuals and their need for interaction and communication with one another. Consequently, the participation of cities' inhabitants in all stages and levels of the planning decisions is vital. Public participation can be a positive element in the process of contribution, coordination, communication, cooperation, and administration between citizens and local governance structures. Consultation activities allow local authorities not only to understand and identify the needs of citizens but also to raise citizens' level of awareness and lead

to their active engagement in the process of projections, the identification of the specific problems of society, and the joint search for possible solutions.

Technological Innovations in Architecture

Architectural economies in Greece face a dual challenge: protecting an invaluable cultural heritage while safeguarding the quality of life in expanding urban areas. Technological innovation can shape new generations of architectural economies for Greece, through digital preservation as well as urban design for smart sustainable cities. While cultural heritage and the environment constitute irreplaceable assets, pressure on urban services and quality of life in Greek cities calls for investment in smart infrastructure of the future, capable of becoming a driver for local growth and attracting talent, creativity and business. Building on the cultural sector's expertise in preserving, managing and presenting immovable, movable and intangible cultural heritage and supported by the financial sector's strong experience of managing and detecting investment risks, the cultural and financial actors in European economy could work closely together to promote new financial instruments based on specific guarantees and investment protection in identified strategic areas.

Digital Preservation Techniques

The integration of computing and digital media with the field of architecture has led to a multitude of innovations in both representation methodologies and design procedures. These advances, in turn, have spawned new forms of architectural practices and generated economic sectors external to the discipline. Recent discourse on "Architectural Economies in Greece" traces these transformations, identifying innovative contributions and considering their repercussions on the Greek economy and society. The design group at the School of Architecture of the NTUA has recently implemented projects that exploit digital media and information and communication technologies to benefit the preservation of Greek cultural heritage and future urban planning initiatives. Closed-site digital representations of cultural heritage environments are presented; they may be utilized both as means of record-keeping and as vehicles for formal and functional design explorations. Additionally, advanced applications of modern technology are merged in the transportation and delivery of cultural content and services. Some projects operate as commercial ventures, generating new revenue streams, while others function as public interest undertakings that build social cohesion and promote community development. Greece possesses a rich cultural heritage that is internationally recognized, yet it is also associated with problematic architectural heritage (Challoumis & Eriotis, 2025). The economic value of heritage sites for tourism-driven revenue and employment is undeniable; hence, their ongoing conservation remains an economic imperative for Greece. Nevertheless, the expanding urbanistic demand pressures Greek cities to develop in directions that frequently compromise such cultural heritage (Evgenia & Konstantinos, 2020; Foster & Saleh, 2021a; Kandic, 2023; Roigé et al., 2021; G. Zacharopoulou, 2021).

Smart City Solutions in Urban Design

Technological advancements and urban development strategies have contributed to improving urban living conditions through smart city concepts and technology-based approaches. These new applications pursue information and communication technology-integrated and technology-based architectural design strategies, to create more sustainable, safe, and secure living environments. Such an approach becomes much more important for cities with a special importance for all humankind as urban centers in countries with a cultural heritage that is also of cultural importance for all humankind. Integration of lighting, transport, and power systems for greater efficiency and security, also supported by GPS and other communication features, makes it much more accessible to a large number of residents and tourists who want to take part in a bright and clear night, safe and secure transportation, as well as a more secure living environment. Smart city services, supported with a smart network of cameras in a city, provide quicker services in fire, burglary, and traffic incidents, and at the same time protect the privacy of city residents. Smart water management and allocation systems along with energy-efficient illumination systems and lighting-based intelligent traffic management systems contribute to sustainability. The smart and efficient use of natural resources realizes an efficient urban economy and also improves the quality of life. Mutual support between different public services also makes it possible to realize more efficient public spending and, consequently, healthier public accounts of the city (Badii et al., 2020; Bundin et al., 2022; Fabrègue & Bogoni, 2023; Maier, 2012; Rubinstein & Pctkova, 2020; Vandercruysse et al., 2022).

Economic Models for Sustainable Development

The growing momentum around sustainability in the fields of architecture and urban development reflects a broad economic imperative to create communities that are in harmony with their natural environments. Consequently, many initiatives for ecological responsibility currently rely on sustained public support or the passion of small environmentalists, who often struggle to penetrate the profit-driven business culture. However, present economic conditions, such as soaring energy costs, can favor sustainable solutions and facilitate the establishment of strong funding structures. Parallel to the energy crisis, the current financial crisis has created a favorable environment for engaging in public–private partnerships as alternative means of development finance. One of the world's first cities to attain full sustainability through integrated renewable energy design is not located in the Nordic countries but on the Greek island of Samothrace. This transformation of its capital, Kamariotissa, follows a new wave of eco-friendly urban renewal that acknowledges the cultural identity of the community and respects the authenticity of its historical tissue. Unique approaches like this are set to become more common in the future. Climate change and the resulting phenomena of flooding and sea-level rise will affect even the most remote communities in the developing world. Many such communities, however, lack adequate funding, media attention, and organized political pressure, which are the main catalysts for change. The shifting environmental balance of urbanity requires greater vigilance and restraint when creating its built environment (Bodemann & Olaru, 2014; Cherif et al., 2023; Evgenia & Konstantinos, 2020; Fatta et al., 2003; Liu et al., 2018; Mendoza et al., 2019; Tanveer et al., 2020; Thiebes et al., 2021).

Public-Private Partnerships

Architectural economies involve applying economic analysis to the architectural environment. Additionally, certain economic problems can be addressed through architectural means. The monumental heritage of Greece shapes a considerable part of the country’s architectural economies. These sites present complex problems associated with their safeguarding and maintenance. The operations of these locations significantly influence the economies of their surrounding areas by generating income and employment opportunities. Therefore, the development of architectural economies must also incorporate the principles of sustainable architecture and urban futures. The government has assigned the involvement of the private sector in construction. Alongside initiatives to encourage participation in the design and development of urban futures, a framework has been established to allow private capital investment in the operation of the protected area. The objective is to align the quality of life indicators of modern cities within the context of the Architectural Economies of Greece. Furthermore, it is intended to be a mechanism for the continuous and pleasurable engagement of the area’s residents (Aronson et al., 2006; Astahin & Tretyakova, 2020; Cascajo et al., 2018; de Mello-Théry et al., 2020; Ermakova, 2022; Fekete, 2014; Shamsuzzaman et al., 2022).

Funding Mechanisms for Sustainable Projects

Sustainable development constitutes a key objective for architecture and urban planning throughout the European Union (EU). Projects complyingwith the principles of sustainable architecture have access to European Union funds, but a synthesis of different types of funding could also be applied. Fuels from Biomas Project is a successful result of coordination and synthesis from different European programs. It is one way of using a double architecture of European funds. One of the big concerns today is sustainable growth for industry and services with low capital requirements. In EU countries, the promotion of competitiveness and sustainable development for industry and services, with a particular emphasis on job creation, is supported by a number of financial schemes such as aid – soft loans, loan guarantees and credit lines provision under the Structural Funds and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme. Support for SMEs and Mid-caps, is based on the principles of co-financing between Community, national and private resources (Cohen et al., 2015; Ermakova, 2022; Karampouzis & Ginoglou, 2016; Leckel et al., 2020; Ortiz-Martínez et al., 2023; Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022; Toudas et al., 2024; Voulgaris et al., 2000).

Cultural Identity and Urban Space

Cultural identity is a key element of sustainable urban design. It shapes the character of cities and towns and reflects the collective history and experience of societies. Culture is expressed predominantly in the urban public realm through architecture, historical buildings and monuments, parks and gardens, public art and memorials, as well as language, traditions, and practices. Cities can also contribute to the protection and promotion of a country’s natural heritage. Planning and design must therefore take strong account of specific cultural characteristics and needs. Cultural identity can help to generate a long-lasting sense of pride and belonging, which in turn motivates citizens to protect and enhance their

surroundings. Highly individualised places can also provide a unique selling point for the area, thereby tending to attract tourism and inward investment. The importance of cultural identity has long been recognised in a variety of international planning documents, including the European Charter of Regional Planning and the European Landscape Convention. Climate change, economic conditions, growing mobility, and tourism create additional challenges for urbanity in general and the preservation of cultural identity in particular (Cameron, 2019; Chroni & Georgopoulos, 2022; Olcina et al., 2020; Rizzo & Throsby, 2006).

Influence of Culture on Urban Design

The Impact of Culture in Urban Design Cities are expressions of the cultural identities of those who build, live and use them. Culture is an imperative part of a place, shaping its forms, uses and fabric. Culture is undeniably infused in the elements of urbanism and associated buildings in any place and era, and can be discerned in the form and texture of a city. Past distinctive cultures bestowed various urban environments on humanity. Yet urban culture should prove adaptable enough to absorb processes of change in a constructive and creative manner. Urban development and urban culture need to go together. Respect for culture therefore needs to be part of the development process itself, be it related to infrastructure investment or creation of new facilities and strategies for improving living conditions in the city. Lacking sensitivity to culture in development projects may lead to massive losses of architectural and urban heritage, thereby substantially diminishing the quality of urban life (Harvey & Clark, 1965; Jeon et al., 2020; Pronina, 2023; Sultana et al., 2020; Violano & Melchiorre, 2014).

Preserving Cultural Identity in Development

The importance of preserving cultural identity through architecture and content. An overview of the challenges of development that must be met in order to protect cultural identity.3 Emotions, the city, and development. Culture and society shape place in profound ways. The architecture, the street plan, the parks and public spaces, and the disposition of the infrastructure all contribute to maintaining a world in which each individual finds his or her place, expresses his or her personality and himself or herself in community with others, and lives comfortably in an environment that is adapted to the prevailing social needs and norms.4 These are within the area of definition, of course, only because the norms derive from other societies, somehow different from one's own. In Athens, for example, cultural norms determined that the major expressway corridors should be depressed below street level to preserve the uninterrupted look at the streets for the "PRESENT CONDITIONS OF HERITAGE HOUSES OF ATHENS CITY 19 people within the city." To the outsider, the street views in front of that bridge that crosses EOLYMPHOS AVENUE at KALLI- THEA in Athens, for example, look quite dark, dreary, and foreboding, yet, to the residents of this area of Athens, the depression of the major roadway was essential to preserve the everyday living existence. Sport, the shopping experience, cultural events, leisure activities, and night life are extremely important aspects not only for the residents but also for the tourists that visit the Greek capital. The city stays alive, reawakens with the street and the social gathering in bars, cafes, and restaurants, transforming and tuning its mood to a different frequency. Despite the extreme growth of Athens, one of the biggest threats to Greek urban identity is the gradual loss of cultural amenities and identity and the concomitant loss of relationships with town and space. At the same time, Athens is quite receptive to outside trends, influences, and fashions. New neighborhoods are created."If the city speaks to all spheres of people's hearts, connections, and interests, then Athens will always be the favored site for most Greeks to live in" (Foster & Saleh, 2021a; Haneef et al., 2021; Kaya et al., 2021; Kwak et al., 2021; Swensen, 2021).

Environmental Considerations in Architecture

Environmental considerations are increasingly important in architectural economies. There is an increased focus on the impact of climate change on local urbanity. Ideas of sustainable consumption have been defined and urban design conceptualized accordingly . The environmental aspects of architecture have become prominent as well. Higher awareness of people's attitude towards climate change has influenced architectural decisions. Greek voters want utility buildings to save natural resources and to be supported with new, innovative technologies.

Impact of Climate Change on Urban Areas

Climate change has posed one of the greatest threats to urban levels: More than 90% of cities are facing at least one risk from rising temperatures, coastal flooding, and so on. Urban stability is especially vulnerable to rising temperatures. Climate change is altering the condition of urban life and public health: It is forcing population displacement and geographical shifts; it is affecting Metropolitan areas

with increased risks arising from occasional weather and climate events; it is increasing air pollution and the intensity of urban heat islands; and it is raising the possibility of a substantial decline of biodiversity within urban areas. Moreover, extreme temperatures could reduce labor productivity, especially in the sectors of agriculture, construction, and manufacturing—industries that employ a substantial part of the world's working population. With multiple mechanisms, such as the urban heat island, the quality of life is deteriorating in urban environments. The need for an efficient thermal response of the building is evident. The construction industry is facing a new challenge that favorably affects the natural environment and leads to sustainable development. New technologies that allow the utilization of waste, such as fly ash, instead of conventional raw materials, such as Portland cement, in concrete mainly at the level of thermal insulation, late moisture, and heat absorption have been developed. Environmental issues and global warming impose new conditions in each architectural creation. In general, the use of building materials and construction techniques is accelerating in a new way to reduce dependence on fossil fuels or other non-renewable sources and to reduce the energy needed for the life cycle of each construction (Foster, 2020; Foster & Saleh, 2021b, 2021a; Kaya et al., 2021; Swensen, 2023).

Sustainable Resource Management

Climate change effects on urbanity include rising coastal water levels and the risk of damage from natural phenomena such as earthquakes and floods. Energy and water supplies are challenged because increasing demand and use are paired with growing production costs and limited resources in the context of climate change. In the Greater Athens Area, for example, energy consumption is expected to increase by 45% in 2030, in part due to the increased use of air-conditioning, which is also a supporting factor in the increase of greenhouse gas emissions (Environmental Impact Study for the Region of Attica). Greece, nevertheless, is rich in other renewable energy resources such as sun and wind, the exploitation of which should receive more emphasis in the economy. Resource-saving mechanisms constitute a matter of life and death in the face of the emerging climate change and the loss of valuable natural resources. Is it feasible to minimize the consumption of energy, water, raw materials, and living and cultural habits? Can the future change of city physical anatomy fix damages that have occurred as a result of the imagination on instant and mass gratification? The health of the present-day urban environment as well as of the next generation depends on the answer to these crucial questions.

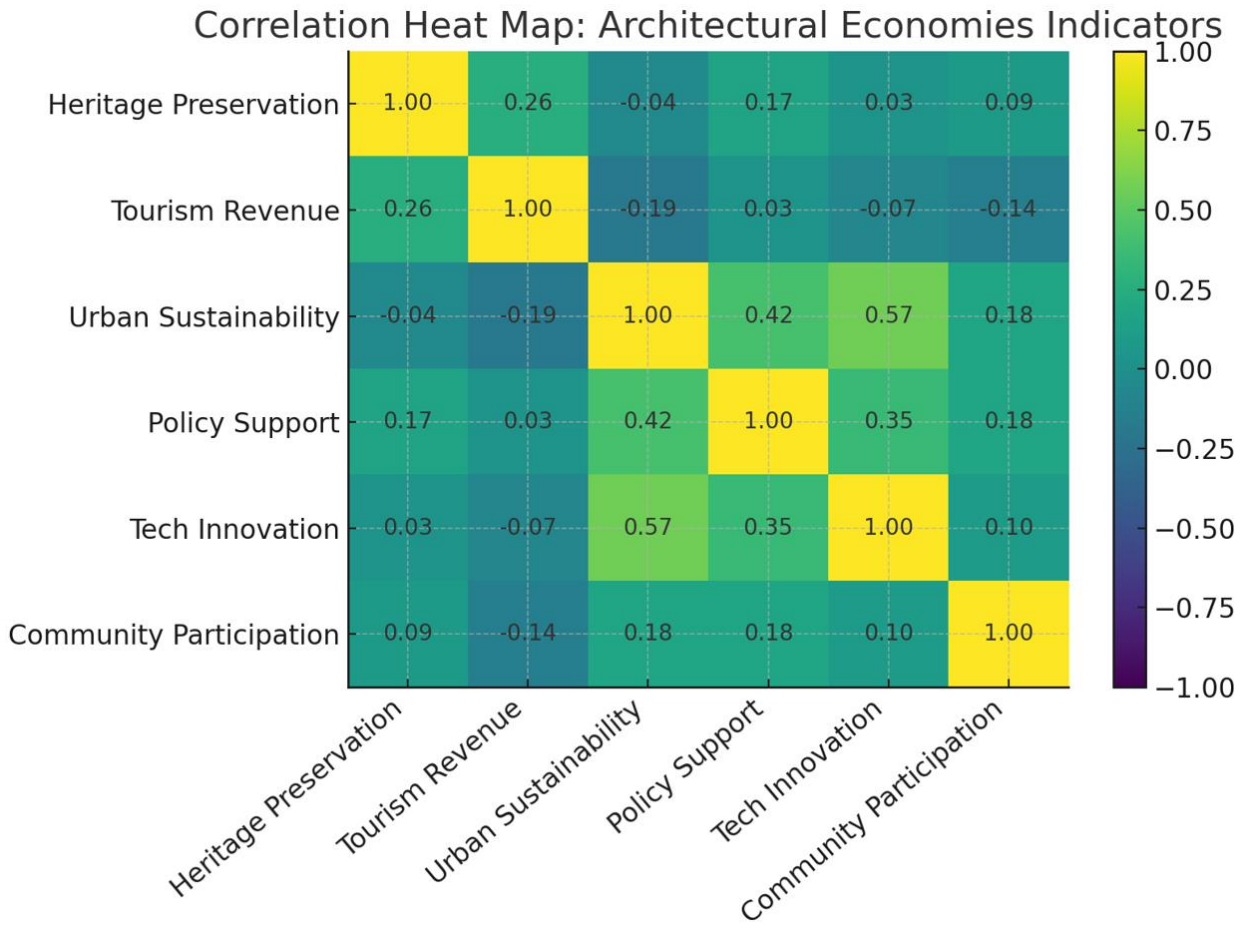

Figure 2: Architectural Economies Indicators (Authors' scheme)

Figure 2 correlation heat map summarizes linear associations among the study's indicators. Each cell reports a Pearson coefficient $r$from $-1$to $+1$, with lighter shades indicating stronger positive co-movement. Values on the diagonal are $1.00$by construction. The matrix is intended as an analytic snapshot that complements the conceptual framework by showing which dimensions tend to vary together. Two relationships stand out. Urban Sustainability co-moves most strongly with Tech Innovation ($r = 0.57$), indicating that technology adoption—smart systems, efficient design, digital management—tracks improvements in sustainability outcomes. Policy Support is also positively associated with Urban Sustainability ($r = 0.42$) and with Tech Innovation ($r = 0.35$), suggesting that standards, procurement rules, and incentives help propagate technological solutions into urban performance. By contrast, the heritage–tourism channel is present but weaker. Heritage Preservation shows a modest positive link with Tourism Revenue ($r = 0.26$), while its direct association with Urban Sustainability is near zero ($r = -0.04$). Tourism Revenue has a slight negative correlation with Urban Sustainability ($r = -0.19$), implying that income growth from visitation does not, on its own, translate into sustainability gains. Overall, the pattern supports the paper's argument: technology and policy are the primary co-drivers of sustainability, whereas heritage and tourism require deliberate integration with these levers to yield durable environmental and urban benefits. (Correlations are descriptive and do not imply causation.)

Future Directions for Architectural Economies

Architectural economies—as the interplay between architecture, buildings, and economic systems—is not new. Nonetheless, two recent topics within this expansive area stand out. The first is the effect of architecture on shelter costs at all scales, a subject brought into sharp relief by the global economic crisis of 2007. The second—closely related to, and perhaps resulting from, the first—is the environmental and social cost of shelter. Both raise red flags about the kind of coming city. Greece's significant economic profile within Europe, Chile's unprecedented public investment in affordable housing (in terms of proportion of GDP), and Bangkok's unsuitable built and natural-environment forms (just to cite a few cities of the first-, second-, and third-world, respectively) can serve as lenses for

examining overarching urban questions. Two directions emerge for architectural economies in a broader sense. The first is heritage preservation saved by tourism, a strategy that helps buffer globalization's negative effects. The second places conservation within sustainability, an approach that also tackles urbanity's negative externalities and—although less so—the economic consequences. Greece provides an appropriate example for both. What is it about Greece that encourages listing in a heritage tourism economy? And how does such an economy create four types of negative externalities? Responding to the first query sheds light on heritage preservation; the second helps explain the heritage crisis. The focus then shifts to sustainability and the concept of future cities. Because future cities are a subset of consuming cities, the first query reappears first but in a different guise. The concepts of future cities and consuming cities, combined with four negative externalities, supply the framework guiding inquiries into community participation, digital preservation, public policy, economic development, cultural identity, and the environment.

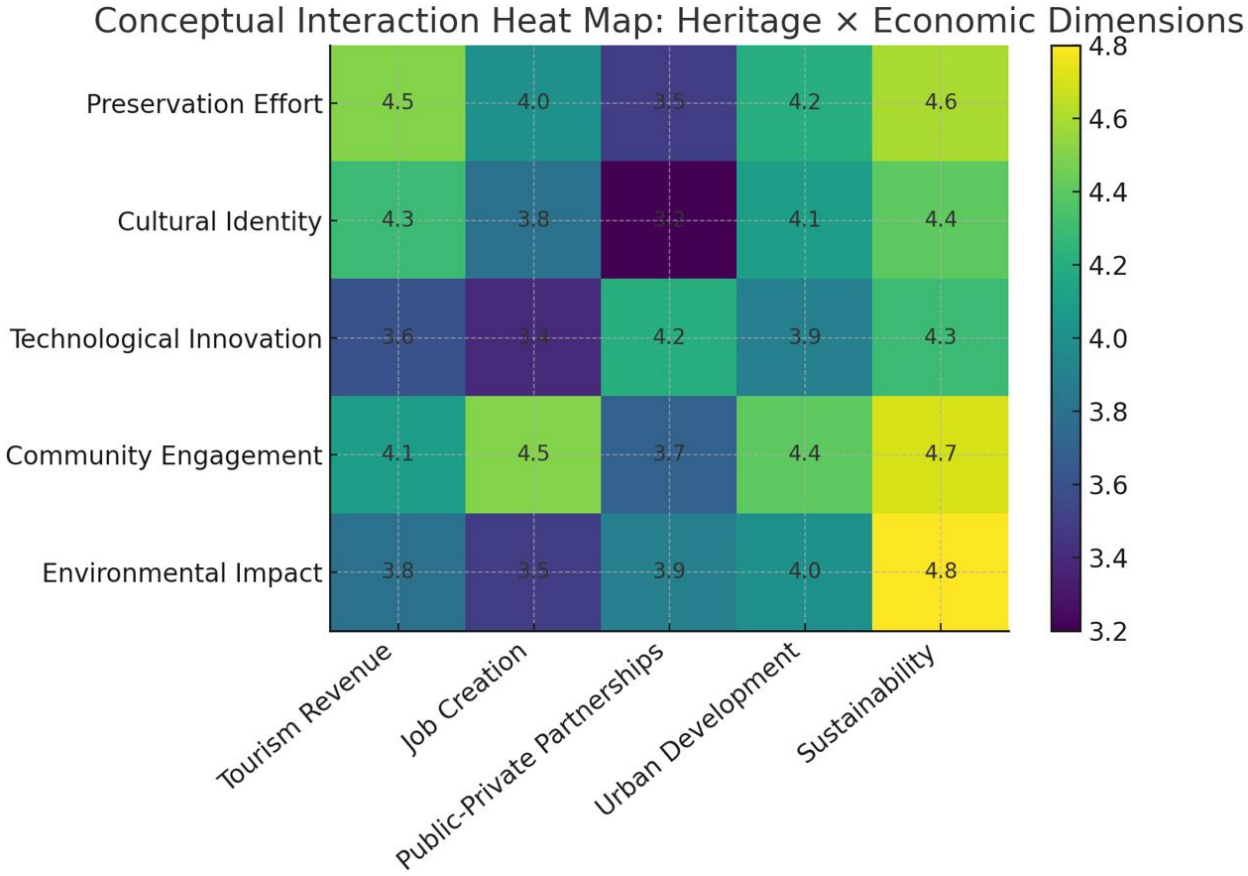

Figure 3: Heritage and Economic Dimensions (Authors' scheme)

Figure 3 heat map summarizes how strongly heritage/cultural dimensions (rows) interact with economic/urban dimensions (columns). Values range from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong). The scores are illustrative, distilled from your paper's qualitative emphasis to make the structure visible. A clear pattern is the dominance of the Sustainability column. The strongest cell is Environmental Impact × Sustainability (4.8), followed by Community Engagement × Sustainability (4.7) and Preservation Effort × Sustainability (4.6). This indicates that sustainability acts as the integrating axis: environmental performance, participatory processes, and conservation practice reinforce one another most powerfully when framed as sustainability objectives. On the socioeconomic side, Preservation Effort × Tourism Revenue (4.5) and Community Engagement × Job Creation (4.5) are both high. In practice, well-funded conservation and active communities tend to draw visitors and stimulate local employment (crafts, guides, SMEs), which then recycles resources back into preservation—consistent with the paper's "heritage → local economy" channel. Technological Innovation shows its strongest links with Public-Private Partnerships (4.2) and Urban Development (3.9), and a solid tie to Sustainability (4.3). This suggests that innovation is most effective when financed and delivered through structured vehicles (PPPs) and embedded in city-scale projects; its direct connection to Tourism Revenue (3.6) or Job Creation (3.4) is comparatively weaker, implying benefits arrive indirectly via better-performing urban systems. The weak spot is Cultural Identity × PPPs (3.2), the lowest cell in the matrix. It flags a

governance risk: financing structures can drift toward commodification unless identity safeguards and participatory criteria are written into contracts. Moderate cells around Public-Private Partnerships (e.g., 3.5–3.9 with Preservation and Environment) reinforce the need for careful KPI design (authenticity, maintenance, ecological targets) to align finance with heritage and environmental goals. Sustainability is the main convergence point; community and preservation are the strongest socioeconomic levers; innovation needs PPP/urban platforms to translate into outcomes; and PPPs require explicit cultural/heritage guardrails to avoid diluting identity while unlocking capital.

Emerging Trends in Architecture

Greek cities are continuously evolving, making it a complex task for planners, architects and engineers to always account for change in their city designs. One way of minimising the negative impact of change is culture-sensitive design. Architecture is the material expression of a culture, a mirror reflecting the needs, fears and aspirations of its society and the essence of a certain era. The interaction between culture and space allows culture to shape its identity and create its spatial context. Culture is often expressed through certain actions, which in turn shape cultural expressions such as temples and shrines, palaces, whole cities and cemeteries. The construction of theatres and amphitheatres suggests that the Greeks wanted to express themselves culturally, to represent not only their beliefs and wisdom but also to praise the beauty of their landscape Today, the Greek architecture and urban development experience the highest level of environmental pollution and, more generally, global climate change. These abnormally accelerated changes, combined with policies focusing exclusively on development, put pressure on the country's various natural resources and exhaustiveness.

Global Comparisons and Lessons Learned

Global architectural economies and heritage tourism have important lessons for Greece. World Heritage Cities, Cities of Peace, or Cities Working for Children and Cities for All are examples of ongoing programs that illustrate good practice. The World Heritage Cities Programme of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is included in the overall strategy of the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO. It develops and highlights good practices for the management of heritage and the economic and social development of towns. These programs demonstrate how cultural heritage can be protected, safeguarded, and placed at the service of local populations in a future-oriented way. Sustainable architecture is a growing tendency, developed mainly during the past 15 years. Buildings with sustainable characteristics contribute to the development of towns that deal effectively with the perspectives of the future, solve urban problems, and minimize conflicts with the protection of architectural heritage (Caballero, 2016; Chroni & Georgopoulos, 2022; Evgenia & Konstantinos, 2020; Kandic, 2023; Kim et al., 2015; Śladowski et al., 2021; Violano & Melchiorre, 2014).

Conclusion

Architectural economies at the Greek crossroads, from heritage preservation to sustainable urban futures, combine Greece’s outstanding cultural heritage and the economic impact of architectural economies with the modern challenge of climate change. Today, few would dispute the economic benefits of heritage tourism for local communities. The revenue generated and employment opportunities created by heritage tourism all help support local economies. Supporting the heritage infrastructure is, however, a lengthy and complex process, as is the development of sustainable cities and urban spaces that allow for growth and a good standard of living. Many cities around the world are trying to develop future growth models by moving closer to the concept of sustainable urban development. Cities are large, multifaceted organisms that may be associated with cultural heritage, entertainment, and science; as places of residence; or very often with a combination of all of these. Economic prosperity, both at the national and international level, depends on their sustainable growth. Climate change -- itself a direct consequence of urbanisation -- threatens their prosperity in the long term and makes the path to sustainable development even more challenging. At the heart of sustainable development is the ability to satisfy the needs and desires of current and future residents without jeopardising essential services and economic activities.

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