

Rethink Athens: towards a new city centre

Mapping the archaeological resources and monuments along the axis of Panepistimiou Street

Contemporary Athens is built on top of the ancient city, in a way which at the same time enhances and conceals the split relationship between the ancient and the modern and which constitutes a challenge for the architect and the urban planner. The area of intervention of the architectural competition Re-think Athens has never been excavated in a systematic manner by the archaeological service. However many rescue excavations have been operated since the 19th century both in land plots and in the street and pavement area. Several sites were excavated under the pressure of modern needs for the creation of networks, the construction of infrastructures and buildings, thus permitting the sampling revelation of the ancient topography and also its potential restoration. The sites and description of a significant number of rescue excavations have been noted on the two attached maps. The information was made available by the 3rd Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities of the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports. On the same map the listed buildings, which were described in the initial volume of the competition, are also noted.

On the first map (scale 1:5000) the most important elements of the historical landscape found along the axis of Panepistimiou Street are recorded. The area of study consists of Patision Street from Aigyptou to Omonia Square, the zone between Stadiou and Akadimias Street and V. Amalias Avenue from Syntagma Square to its junction with Philellinon Street. The boundaries of the Archeological Site of Athens are noted with a pink line and those of the Historical Centre of Athens with a blue one. All excavations and constructions taking place in the above areas are controlled and supervised by the Ministries in charge. Listed buildings are noted with grey. According to the legislation pertaining to the architectural heritage, listed buildings cannot be demolished and all architectural interventions must be controlled by the responsible state directories. The open-air spaces which are noted with grey lining are also protected by the Ministries in charge because they constitute part of significant architectural complexes or because they are found in the area of listed buildings. At the end of this note, extracts of the legislation concerning the protection of the open spaces of the Trilogy are collected.

On the first map the sites of rescue excavations have also been noted (e.g. 'Site 4 - 59 Stadiou Street'). On the second map the distances from the surface of the street – when these are documented- are written (e.g. 'Site 4: 0,20M-1,24M'). For example at Site 4 the distance of the archaeological remains from the road surface is 0,20M-1,24M

The numeration of the sites refers to the table of the archaeological remains which consists of 7 columns, which contain the following information.

Number of site	Location of site	Property of land plot (if private)	Description of archaeological finds	Bibliography	Date of excavation	Depth of archaeological strata
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The abbreviation AD is used for the archaeological periodical 'Archaeologiko Deltio' ('Αρχαιολογικό Δελτίο' in Greek), in which all the excavations of the Ephorates of Antiquities of the Ministry of Culture have been published. It must be noted that the sites of the rescue excavations are random and that the archaeological strata most probably stretch under the entire surface of the area of the architectural competition.

Regarding its geophysical characteristics, the area of the architectural competition spreads from the north to the southeast of the centre of Athens along the foot of the hills of Strefi and Lycabettus. The lowest point of the zone of intervention is found near the National Archaeological Museum and the National Technical University of Athens. In this area until the 19th century, the axis of Patision was interrupted by a seasonal river, the Kyklovoros. To the north, towards Aigyptou Square, the level rises as we move towards the Tourkovounia hills. To the south and southeast of the National Archaeological Museum, the level rises again to reach the highest point of the axis of intervention in the area of the Parliament, which is constructed on a land rise on the foot of the Lycabettus. To the south and along Vassilissis Amalias avenue, the level of the ground steadily falls as we move towards the river bed of Ilissos. In front of the Trilogy, the level of Panepistimiou is found 4m above Stadiou Street and 3m below Akademia's Street. Before the construction of Stadiou Street in the first half of the 19th century, a current ran along its trace.

As a rule, through the centuries, the level of the lower areas of the Athenian basin has risen, because of sediments created by the seasonal currents. On the other hand, the soil of the higher areas has been washed off and unearthed for the construction of new urban districts. As a result the archaeological strata are found nearer to the surface of the axis of architectural competition along Panepistimiou Street from the Trilogy to Syntagma Square. Additionally it wasn't until the 19th century, after a hiatus of many centuries, that construction projects started to take place in the area of the architectural competition. Therefore the fill is mostly alluvial soil and not debris of the past.

All the sites of rescue excavations in the area of the architectural competition are found outside the Themistokleian fortification wall. The Hadrianic enceinte, which during the second century defined the boundaries of the east expansion of the city,

divides the area of the architectural competition and the sites of the rescue excavations in two, namely those which are found intra muros (to the south) and those which are found extra muros (to the north). The remains of the Valerian Wall cut diagonally through Stadiou and Voukourestiou Street near the 'Megaron of the Shares' Treasury of the Army' – today Attica Stores (4 Stadiou Street) and through Panepistimiou Street and V. Sophias Avenue near the Parliament. A section of the Roman wall is visible at Site 37.

Also at Site 37, north of fortification wall, a group of tombs of the 5th century was excavated, which belongs to a large cemetery located along Panepistimiou Street, outside the walls of the ancient city. To the north of the area of the architectural competition, the remains are related to the cemeteries of the Acharnic Gates and the burials located along the Acharnic Road. The cemeteries are the main characteristic of the archaeological landscape outside the walls and they are dated from the 5th century BC to the Late Roman Period.

As we reach Syntagma Square and we pass the trace of the Roman Walls, the range of archaeological remains significantly widens to include, apart from the tombs, baths (Sites 33, 36, 45, 50, 51, 55), water management infrastructure, sections of the Aqueduct of Peisistratos (42, 44, 51), the river bed of Heridanos, storage pits, furnaces and different types of building remains. In the south area of the architectural competition along V. Amalias Avenue, the chronological range of the archaeological remains also widens to include finds from for the Sub-Mycenaean Period to the Ottoman period.

Open air spaces of the Trilogy

Ministerial Decision 1794/10-2-1962 - ΦΕΚ 75/Β/5-3-1962

(Amendment of the Ministerial Decision 21980/27-2-1952 - ΦΕΚ 54/Β/5-3-52)

Designation of the Ophthalmiatric Clinic of Athens as requiring special protection together with the Academy and the University of Athens with all their surrounding spaces, as all the above constitute a continuous monumental complex.

Ministerial decision Α/Φ29/19316/2549/23-4-1977 - ΦΕΚ 413/Β/28-4-1977

- (a) Scheduling as monuments of the Catholic Church of Agios Dionysios, the Academy of Athens and the Ophthalmiatric Clinic of Athens and
- (b) Designation as an historic site of the area between Sina, Panepistimiou and Omirou streets.

Ministerial decision ΥΠΠΟ/ΔΙΛΑΠ/Β/4451/54143/16-10-2001 - ΦΕΚ 1350/Β/17-10-2001

Designation as works of art and historical monuments in situ of the sculptures of the Trilogy, the lamp-posts, the balustrades and the gardens in front of and behind the buildings. The above sculptures are:

1. The sculpture of Rigas Feraios, by Ioannis Kossos
2. The sculpture of the Patriarch Gregorios E', by Georgios Fytalis
3. The sculpture of Adamantios Korais by Ioannis Kossos
4. The sculpture of William Gladstone, by Georgios Vitalis
5. The sculpture of Ioannis Kapodistrias, by Georgios Vitalis
6. The Monument of Fallen Students (Angel), by Georgios Papagiannis
7. The Memorial Stele of the 18 Fallen Students during the First World War, by Georgios Papagiannis
8. The sculptures of Athena and Apollo of the Academy of Athens, by Leonidas Drossis
9. The sculptures of Socrates and Plato, by Leonidas Drossis
10. The sculpture of Panagis Vallianos in the Library, by Georgios Bonanos