4.2 Traditional Policy Tools and New Incentives
Built Heritage in Greece

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Ever since the Second World War Greece has had an inflated public sector which inevitably became bureaucratic and unproductive. In the period 1975-1985 this sector became involved in areas normally associated with private initiative — even in fields where the private sector was very active, e.g. trade — and eventually controlled more than half of the economy. This period had great significance for Greece. The fall of the dictatorship in 1974 was followed by a series of transformations, also in the political sphere. In 1981 the socialist party won the elections and — with a small interval — still governs the country. The policy followed in those years was in favour of the expansion of the public sector and against privatization. Traditional activities were in decline while a great number of factory buildings remained unused.

The general de-industrialisation of Greece in the late 1970s and early 1980s had a great social and economic impact. On areas with an industrial tradition (e.g. Volos and Larnion) it brought about radical breaches in the continuity of communal life.

Furthermore, in a process that might be called ‘socialisation’ the government took into the public sector a large number of private enterprises which faced the danger of being abandoned or shut down. 1982 saw the launch of a big programme to revive a number of so-called ‘problematic enterprises’, which consequently had negative effects on the economy.

With Greece’s accession to the European Union in 1981, international competition and technological developments led to the beginnings of reversing this trend. However, Greece did not experience the first tentative steps of privatization until the early 1990s. Gradually enterprises that could not survive were sold or returned to the private sector. Since 1989 33 state enterprises have changed ownership while five others are in the process of being sold under international competition and seven are administered by managers.

Criteria traditionally associated with private enterprise are now becoming more prevalent in the public sector. Privatization has come to the fore as part of an economic model of development. It is being implemented, however, with thrift and mainly in the field where the Greek state remains a strong partner (e.g. communications and energy). This happened partly as a result of establishing equal relations between Greece and the other Member States of the European Union, and partly because of the need to meet criteria for entering the European Monetary System. Private initiatives have not been encouraged by the Greek state to play a role in the sphere of the built heritage until very recently, and then only in a few cases, such as the renovation of buildings in order to host either cultural activities or public services and in some cases private enterprises.
The State’s Predominant Role in Preserving the Built Heritage

Greece is a country with a vast archaeological and monumental heritage and therefore it gives high priority to the protection and preservation of all types of monuments of archaeological and historical importance. There are three main categories of built heritage: 1. sites and monuments of archaeological significance (e.g. the archaeological site of Mycenae, the Acropolis); 2. vernacular settlements (e.g. Mt Pilio, on Chios island); and 3. monuments of the recent past (e.g. urban complexes, Neo-classical buildings and industrial buildings).

The maintenance of this heritage is primarily the responsibility of the state and managed mainly by the Ministry of Culture and its services. According to the Greek legal framework, influenced by the French law of 1899, the state has the sole, unlimited and eternal ownership of the antiquities in Greece, whether they are found on property that belongs to the state or to prefectures and municipalities, to monasteries or to individuals, in rivers, in lakes or at the bottom of the sea.

However, in some cases private ownership is recognised. The term refers mainly to movable ancient objects and has a broad meaning, involving the obligation to keep the object under state observation. Private owners have the right to transfer their ownership under conditions and limitations imposed by a framework and after special approval given by the Ministry of Culture, which acts on the advice of the Central Archaeological Council. Collectors are seen as a special category of private owners of antiquities and function under special permission, as a result of which the establishment and effective functioning of a number of private museums and collections became possible in Greece. Dealers in antiquities also function under special regulations.

In Greece excavations are carried out only by the state. However, permission to conduct excavations is given to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Greek scientific associations (e.g. the Greek Archaeological Society) and to foreign archaeological schools. The same permission is given to individuals under the surveillance of an official archaeologist. In some cases freelance archaeologists are appointed seasonally by the state and, since their number is increasing, they have established an association to represent their interests.

A New Bill for the Built Heritage

Since 1986 the Greek state has admitted private initiative in the field of culture in the form of patronage, sponsorship, and the market of users (entrance fees etc.). In that year OMEPO, a non-profit association for the promotion of the arts and culture under the influence of ABSA (Association For Business Sponsorship of the Arts) was established. Enterprises or individuals funding cultural activities enjoyed a tax exemption of up to 15%. From then on there was a more concrete policy as regards entrance fees to museums and monuments.

As the Ministry of Culture recognizes that the running of heritage facilities by private individuals or along the lines of trust or foundation structures requires more than simply handing over the heritage to the market, it has drafted two multifunctional bills. The first new bill, entitled ‘Institutions, measures and actions of cultural development’ was passed by parliament in December 1997, yet at the moment of writing (July 1998) there is no con-