



## Contribution from Paxos



Dear fellow villagers of Europe,

It is with great joy that I see the continuation of the friendly climate which exists between the representatives of the eleven villages. I am optimistic about the broadening of our efforts and believe whole-heartedly that they will have positive results

The main element in the development of modern communities worldwide is characterized by all types of construction and the provision of a solid infrastructure, which together constitute one of the strongest sectors of the economy

Over the centuries the perceptions of architects, engineers and technicians regarding the shape, usage, type of materials ... has changed greatly, but what remains constant is the demand for structures which provide effective solutions to human requirements

Until recently, human "works" were of a size and shape which rarely altered the natural balance of the land. Modern technical developments radically changed this equilibrium with the sheer scale of new construction appearing to shrink our world

Special problems have appeared in areas, which we can classify as "sensitive". Geographic, social and historic principles are, of course, defining factors in construction together with human sensitivity to the impact of building activity on a particular area. Restricted living space, delicately balanced ecosystems, financial cost and traditional architectural forms all act as natural restraints in new construction. So we are constantly referring to limits, restrictions, laws and regulations coupled with prohibitions

Dear friends, how much better our world would be if legislators and the state could solve all problems through law making

Unfortunately either law is never implemented, rapid progress renders new legislation invalid, or regulations are enforced in an incorrect or unjust manner

We believe that a satisfactory framework already in Europe exists for satisfying construction needs whilst at the same time protecting the environment. What is required however, is the intelligent and effective implementation of the existing framework and adaptation to suit local requirements

Ours is a small island in the Ionian just south of Corfu in western Greece. It is a verdant island covered by olive trees, cypresses, grapevines and to her vegetation. Continuous gentle folds and pleats in the land have resulted in beautiful coves and beaches with crystal clear water.

Interesting geological formations and sea caves can be found on the west coast of the island. It was therefore natural for construction to be in harmony with this sensitive environment. Until a few

decades ago, all buildings were small in size and made of traditional materials such as stone, thus blending easily into the landscape

However, over the past two decades, our area has seen a substantial increase in building activity (mainly housing and tourist accommodation) without the simultaneous provision of the necessary infrastructure

Frequently there are cases of illegal construction with negative results both in terms of impact on the natural environment and in lack of attention to traditional architectural forms

The sad lack of structured land planning and the failure to provide guidelines for specific land usage have also been encumbering factors in the sometimes unwanted changes that have taken place

In retrospect we have made the following observations :

- The movement of settlements from inland areas to the coast
- Enlargement of all buildings
- Replacement of traditional local materials like stone and wood with contemporary ones (cement, brick, iron...)
- The absence (luckily to a small extent) of many elements of our traditional architectural style

- Works carried out to the infrastructure of the island which are of poor quality or disproportionate to the size of the area and the real needs

- Saturation of certain areas due to over concentration of activities

Fellow villagers of Europe,

In mentioning some of the negative impacts of construction practices that we have followed to date we should not overlook the beneficial results for our economy in the creation of employment and the rise in the standard of living. We must nevertheless, learn from our mistakes and try to minimize them as much as possible. For this reason I will try to define briefly the essential factors in policy-making with regard to construction in sensitive areas

Next, the needs of the area must be prioritised together with an evaluation of each work's consequences/implications. For this to be possible the organization and implementation of land planning, layout and design at minimizing any negative impact. Decisive factors in the planning of any construction work in a particular region include assessing the area to be developed, its natural resources and the possibility of replacing them, as well as the balance and peculiarities of the local ecosystem

Infrastructure must be planned long term to meet real needs, taking into account all the parameters mentioned above

A vital role will be played in the future by state induced incentives to protect traditional buildings, with the state itself setting the example, on the one hand by upgrading the quality of public works and buildings and on the other, by passing laws and providing specifications which will meet enormous, colorless buildings naturally have no place in our small traditional villages

Friends,

Construction in its many forms is an intrinsic part of human nature. Therefore, through continuous exchanges of ideas and efforts we must attempt to find those solutions which will offer functional, aesthetic results at the smallest cost possible to the environment, whilst retaining the traditional appearance of our communities and satisfying our human needs