

Becoming Historical or Smart?

Reasoning the Modernity of the Residential Complex at Aspra Spitia (Άσπρα Σπίτια)

Abstract

This article explores the modernist residential complex of Aspra Spitia in Paralia Distomou, Greece, designed in the 1950s by Constantinos Doxiadis for the Pechiney aluminium company. It investigates how the settlement reflects and challenges modernist planning principles through phases of development—from its origins and forced expropriations to its vertical expansion, suburban growth, and recent transformation into a “smart city”. Combining architectural analysis with resident interviews, the study examines tensions between modernity, class stratification, and heritage preservation. Aspra Spitia emerges as both a legacy of industrial modernism and a living site of spatial, social, and technological negotiation.

Introduction

This study forms part of a broader investigation into the heterotopic configurations of the modernist landscape in Distomo (Δίστομο), Greece, exploring its intersections with the industrial culture, environmental dynamics, and societal configurations. Grounded in critical inquiry, the research examines the multiplicities of modernist traditions, questioning how these landscapes encapsulate the utopian formations, challenges, and realism of their time while offering possibilities for a contemporary reinvention and conservation of modernism today.

Within this framework, the article delves into the history of the Aspra Spitia (Άσπρα Σπίτια) settlement at Paralia Distomou (Παραλία Διστόμου), Greece, designed by the architect Constantinos Doxiadis during the 1950s for the French aluminium company *Pechiney*.¹ The planning reflects modernist principles while responding to their critiques and integrating local spatial identities. Today, it remains a privately owned, non-listed heritage site, raising critical questions about its condition, conservation, and historicity in the broader discourse on modernist legacy.

The Genealogy of a Modern Landscape

Located along the northern coastline of the Corinthian Gulf, approximately 5 km west of the present-day ALUMINIUM S.A. industrial complex and 10 km south of Distomo, the Aspra Spitia settlement has a precisely measurable geographic location. However, its spatial orientation extends beyond cartographic coordinates, engaging deeply with anthropological and historiographical narratives shaped by post-war urbanization strategies in Greece (Fig. 1).

The settlement emerges as a site of profound spatial and social transformation, marked by forced expropriations of prior inhabitants and migration flows of incoming workers, representing a transformative moment in this process and marking a transition from early modern industrial practices to the modernization of labor, economy, and living conditions. As a multi-scaled “event”² in the region’s historical continuum, Aspra Spitia not only redefines the industrial landscape but also embodies a vision for modernization, linking the area’s industrial past with its architectural and cultural

1 In 1960, the French aluminium company *Pechiney*, one of the top three producers and developers of aluminium products at the time, entered into a contract with the Greek government to establish the company *Aluminium of Greece S.A.* This contract was criticized by left-wing parties and organizations as a form of new French colonialism. Today, the company is under the ownership of *METLEN Energy & Metals*.

2 Michel Foucault, *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York 1972, pp. 3–6.



Fig. 1: Aspra Spitia settlement, Paralia Distomou, Greece, 2025

future. Thus, the act of naming, the designation “Aspra Spitia” (=White Houses), functions as more than a mere identifier, as it becomes a locus of contested meaning for the inhabitants, embodying tensions between displacement and rootedness, continuity and rupture, historicity and novelty, “tradition” and “modernity”, raising the critical issue of “belonging” to a land, of origins and place.

To critically examine how this “event” unfolded and evolved over time, Aspra Spitia is examined through different layers of time, tracing its configuration processes and emergence as a “modern landscape”. I use the term landscape as a primary concern for the act of urbanization processes which certainly affected the emergence of Aspra Spitia, human living, and the environmental impacts. Through this lens, five distinct phases can be discerned:

Pre-existing Phase – In-between Modernity

Understanding the pre-existing phase is crucial for interpreting how the concept of “modernity” was

constructed in the Aspra Spitia settlement. According to several archival maps, the settlement’s name derives from a nearby village that was renamed Αντίκυρα (Antikyra) in honor of the ancient city of the same name that once existed in the area.³ This renaming strategy not only created a distinct identity for each community but also sought to establish a sense of historical continuity. The master plan, designed by Doxiadis, required the demolition of the small pre-existing settlement (around 50 homes and stores nestled within expansive olive groves) known as the Coastline of Distomo, following forced expropriation.

Notable among these properties was the Villa Zouians which is now owned by the aluminium company. Today, traces of this era remain evident, while others, such as the old bauxite loading barge, once used to transport bauxite barrels onto boats, have been recently demolished.⁴ What is worth mentioning is that a natural barrier, an old canal forming a narrow strip of land locally referred to as “the private”,⁵ managed to evade expropriation (hence its name). This strip continues to demarcate a social division: between those

3 John Cam Hobhouse, *A journey through Albania and other provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia, to Constantinople, during the years 1809 and 1810*, e-book, London 1813, p. 217.

4 Δήμητρα Σκαύδη, *Τα Άσπρα Σπίτια στην Παραλία Διστόμου, Εθνογραφία μιας τεχνητής κοινότητας* [Dimitra Skavdi, *The White Houses on Distomo Beach, Ethnography of an Artificial Community*], Athens 2021, pp. 49–53 (Skavdi 2021).

5 Ibidem, p. 148.

who live and work in the settlement but are perceived as “strangers”,⁶ illustrating a Simmelian perspective on social boundaries; and those who feel a sense of belonging due to their ownership status.⁷

First Phase (1961) – The Creation of the Settlement

The Aspra Spitia settlement materializes Doxiadis’ broader vision for a cellular, human-centered urbanism, diverging from the “Functional City” principles of the Athens Charter (1933).⁸ Doxiadis’ design values were rooted in his theories of “ekistics”⁹ (the science of human settlement) and “ecumenopolis”¹⁰ (a vision of a global city).¹¹ As articulated by Panagiotis Tournikiotis,¹² Aspra Spitia represents a paradigmatic application of Doxiadis’ vision for the contemporary city, shaped between the 1930s and 1970s.¹³ A central figure in post-war architectural discourse, Doxiadis engaged in global debates on the future of cities, positioning his *ekistics* theory—an interdisciplinary and parametric framework for human settlements—in opposition to the rigid zoning principles of modernist urbanism. His methodology, integrating qualitative and quantitative data, can be considered a prologue to parametric design and smart urban technologies. His theories found expression in the *Delos Symposium*, where he engaged with figures like Sigfried Giedion, Richard Buckminster Fuller, and Christopher Alexander.¹⁴

The primary cell in *ekistics* theory (and Aspra Spitia, respectively) was the neighborhood unit, conceived as a scalable, walkable, and organically expanding urban fabric. In contrast to the concentric urban growth patterns of the time, Doxiadis’ model advocated a linear, network-based expansion, reinforcing pedestrian movement over vehicular circulation while prioritizing “visual richness”¹⁵ and human-scale spatial order. The settlement’s L-shaped plan, extending toward the neighboring village of Antikyra, exemplifies this principle.

Doxiadis’ *ekistics* describes the “*natural community of walking man*”,¹⁶ in which spatial organization fosters proximity-based interactions. However, contemporary observations reveal a shift from this original vision, as automobiles now dominate the settlement’s narrow streets, while abandoned masonry buildings have been repurposed into parking or storage spaces.

Originally conceived to accommodate a population of approximately 5,000 inhabitants, the settlement today sustains a reduced demographic presence, estimated between 2,000 and 2,500 residents.¹⁷ This demographic variance reveals a critical divergence between the initial planning imaginaries—which envisioned the settlement as a central node within the national territorial and administrative network, aspiring to acquire formal public designations (such as community or municipal status) and to follow the developmental rates of neighboring urban nodes¹⁸—and the enduring condition of

6 Georg Simmel, The stranger, in: Kurt H. Wolff (Ed.), The sociology of Georg Simmel, New York 1950, pp. 402–408.

7 Skavdi 2021, p. 148.

8 Alexandros-Andreas Kyrtis (Ed.), Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis: Texts, design, drawings, settlements, Athens 2006, p. 22 (Doxiadis 2006).

9 Ibidem, p. 18.

10 Ibidem, p. 66.

11 Based on interviews with residents, Doxiadis’ post-colonial urban planning designs in Islamabad and Baghdad emerge as pivotal reference points in shaping the perception of the “White Houses” urban model within their narratives. This interrelationship will be subjected to further analysis.

12 Professor of architectural theory and the director of the History and Theory Laboratory at the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), School of Architecture.

13 Panayiotis Tournikiotis, Revised text, in: Panayiotis Tournikiotis, Aspra Spitia or the Legacy of C. A. Doxiadis, in: Georgia Kazazi (Ed.), Ο Κωνσταντίνος Δοξιάδης και το Έργο του [Constantinos Doxiadis and His Work], Vol. 2, Athens 2009, p. 210.

14 Doxiadis 2006, pp. 159–163.

15 Andreas Simeon, Aspra Spitia. A feeling of tradition in a modern community plan concept, in: DA Review 1, Issue 4, 1965, p. 8 (Simeon 1965).

16 Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis, Introduction to the “human community”, in: Ekistics 33, Issue 199 (Building a better future: Research projects of the Athens Center of Ekistics), 1972, p. 489.

17 This estimation draws on fieldwork practice, including interviews—conducted by the author with residents of the “White Houses” settlement between October 2024 and January 2025—and discussions with local authorities.

18 Ελένη Καλαφάτη, Άσπρα Σπίτια Βοιωτίας: Ζήτημα σχεδιασμού μιας νέας πόλης, in: Β. Πετρίδου / Π. Πάγκαλος / Ν. Κυρκίτσου (Eds.), Εργάζομαι άρα κατοικώ. Η περίπτωση του συγκροτήματος κατοικιών των μεταλλείων Μπάρλου στο Δίστομο Βοιωτίας, Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών, Πάτρα 2012 [Eleni Kalafati, White Houses of Boeotia: The question of designing a new city, in: V. Petridou / P. Pangalos / N. Kyrkitsou (Eds.), I work, therefore I live. The case of the Barlou mines housing complex in Distomo, University of Patras, Patras 2012, pp. 22 ff.].

private land and property ownership that continues to characterize the settlement's identity.

This discrepancy, however, cannot be understood solely through legal-institutional frameworks. It is equally embedded within the broader architectonics of industrial modernity, marked by shifts in economic geography, transformations in modes of production, revaluations of labor, and the socio-spatial consequences of post-industrial transition.¹⁹ The lack of reliable, officially published data regarding the settlement's demographic evolution or current housing unit occupancy renders these changes difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, oral accounts from residents of the Aspra Spitia and the wider Distomo area suggest that under-occupancy has led to the leasing of residential units to subcontracted firms—signalling a reconfiguration of domestic space in response to contemporary industrial reconfiguring.

The settlement consists of 1,100 residential units of varying typologies: single- and double-storey dwellings, bachelor apartments, as well as commercial and communal infrastructure, including shops, a now-abandoned open-air cinema, a customs house, a school, and recreational facilities.²⁰ A notable omission is a cemetery, a reflection of the settlement's transitory circle: As a privately-owned company town, residency was linked to employment, most probably necessitating the departure of retired workers.

Second Phase (1971) – Vertical Expansion

By the 1970s, spatial and demographic pressures demanded reconfiguration of the master plan. The construction of additional dwellings, including four-storey residential buildings, an expanded public square by architect Christos Lempesis, and the Apollo Centre, responded to the growing workforce demands of the aluminium factory. This phase also sought to mediate class-based asymmetries in public life, introducing vertical stratification as a spatial response to evolving social dynamics.

A defining feature of this transformation was the construction of *The Tower*, an eight-storey building that



Fig. 2: Entering Aspra Spitia settlement, view of *The Tower*, 2024

punctuates the settlement's otherwise low-rise urban fabric. Erected during Greece's military dictatorship (1967–1974)—a period marked by relaxation of building height restrictions—*The Tower* evokes the feeling of a “*panopticon*,”²¹ reinforcing social hierarchies while simultaneously serving as a symbol in the new landscape. A scenographic statement that could resemble an old masonry tower and can be now “naturalized” aesthetically in-between the landscape (Fig. 2).

19 As discussed in Ηλίας Κουρλιούρος, *Διαδρομές στις Θεωρίες του Χώρου: Οικονομική Γεωγραφία της Παραγωγικής Αναδιάρθρωσης και της Άνισης Ανάπτυξης*, Αθήνα 2011 [Elias Kourliouros, *Pathways in Spatial Theories: Economic Geography of Productive Restructuring and Uneven Development*, Athens 2011].

20 https://www.doxiadis.org/Downloads/aspra_spitia.pdf (18.01.2025).

21 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York 1977, pp. 200–228.

Notably, this vertical expansion stands in contradiction to Doxiadis' own critiques of high-rise architecture. In a 1973 treatise written during the dictatorship, he denounced the impact of skyscrapers on the urban environment, arguing that "*high-rise buildings work against Nature by destroying the scale of the landscape*".²² This ideological dissonance underscores the tensions between Doxiadis' theoretical positions and the evolving realities of urban development in Aspra Spitia.

Third Phase (1984) – A new District

In 1977, architects Michalis Fotiadis and Pantelis Masouridis introduced a significant expansion of the Aspra Spitia settlement, integrating 162 new dwellings, two educational facilities, and a designated residence for the director of the aluminium industrial complex.²³ This intervention not only extended the spatial fabric of the settlement but also introduced an architectural language that, while maintaining formal consistency with the earlier phase, incorporated a more brutalist style and a wider range of apartment typologies. This shift signalled a broader socio-economic transformation within the settlement, as the new residences were designated primarily for middle- to upper-income tenants. Notably, 85% of the new units comprised three-bedroom apartments, 10% featured four bedrooms,²⁴ and many were strategically oriented to maximize "*freedom of view*",²⁵ a spatial privilege that reinforced socio-economic stratification within the working-class community.²⁶

This phase of expansion, responding once again to the factory's labor demands, can be conceptualized through the notion of "*reterritorialization*",²⁷ whereby urban development strategies impose new spatial and socio-political structures upon an existing landscape. This transformation effectively generated a suburban extension of the previous configuration, further entrenching distinctions in class and urban form.

The Current Phase – "Smart City"

The present state of Aspra Spitia is characterized by its transition towards a "smart city" model, incorporating energy-efficient infrastructures, digital monitoring applications, and automated systems that reframe contemporary urban living. This framework unveils parallels between modernity's abstract framework, technological optimism, and present-day perspectives on sustainability and digital urbanism. However, this shift also raises critical concerns if legislative frameworks fail to define stakeholder roles, risking a shift towards purely financial perspectives on the living conditions, sidelining the knowledge embedded in the heritage considerations.

As articulated in *Utopia Computer*: "*Smart houses or smart cities (...) collect and analyze private and public data, which is then used to generate behavioral predictions and gain knowledge about sustainable urban planning, enabling economic decision-making*".²⁸ Within this paradigm, the Aspra Spitia settlement, now framed as a "*model community*",²⁹ foregrounds financial imperatives as key determinants of sustainability and environmental awareness. The pilot smart city initiative (proposed by the *METLEN Energy and Metals* group) envisions:³⁰

- Smart homes equipped with interconnected IoT (Internet of Things) devices;
- Self-metering and net metering systems to optimize energy consumption;
- Extensive charging infrastructure for electric vehicles;
- The integration of photovoltaic parks within and around the settlement.

Despite these management plans, the intersection between modernization and heritage conservation remains unresolved. In 2019, the environmental impact assessment of the proposed expansion included a de-

22 Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis, The great urban crimes that we permit by law, Articles paper for the World Conference on World Peace Through Law, August 1973, p. 3.

23 Άσπρη Πολιτεία, Διμηνιαίο Περιοδικό, εκδ. Αλουμίνιον της Ελλάδος, αριθμός φύλλου 12, Φθινόπωρο 1992, σελ. 11 [White State, Bi-monthly Magazine, published by Aluminium of Greece, issue 12, 1992, p. 11] (White State 1992).

24 <https://www.photiadis.gr/aspra-spitia-housing-groups-beotia-aluminium-of-greece-company-town/> (25.01.2025).

25 White State 1992, p. 11.

26 As discussed in Max Horkheimer, Eclipse of reason, New York 1947.

27 Gilles Deleuze / Félix Guattari, A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis 1987, p. 195.

28 Chris Dähne / Frederike Lausch, Introduction, in: Nathalie Bredella / Chris Dähne / Frederike Lausch (Eds.), Utopia computer, The "new" in architecture? Forum Architekturwissenschaft, Vol. 6, Berlin 2023, p. 15.

29 <https://www.metlengroup.com/what-we-do/metallurgy-sector/aspra-spitia-model-community/> (25.01.2025).

30 https://www.metlengroup.com/media/mk4g5gys/sustainable_development_report_2023_eng.pdf (25.01.2025).



Fig. 3: Unoccupied stone masonry dwellings, 2024

dedicated section on cultural heritage strategies, recommending an investigation into designating Aspra Spitia as a “protected” settlement due to its architectural and historical value.³¹ However, discussions between key stakeholders ultimately stalled, reinforcing the inherently political nature of heritage listing processes. The protection of cultural landscapes is not merely a matter of juridical recognition or epistemological legitimacy but is shaped by power dynamics and competing economic imperatives.

At present, the only consistent conservation measure applied to the settlement is the periodic whitewashing of facades, while maintenance of architectural elements such as wooden doors and windows remains the financial responsibility of individual tenants. More pressing, however, is the threat of abandonment: As automation reduces labour demand, a sizeable number of buildings remain unoccupied, underscoring the precarious balance between conservation and obsolescence in the evolving industrial landscape (Fig. 3).

Narratives, Myths, and Architectural Memory

An analysis of interviews with ten residents of the settlement reveals a complex interplay between architectural heritage, lived experience, and evolving urban cultures. The interviews illuminate the persistence of modern myths, the shifting perceptions of modernist design, and the impact of contemporary urban transformations, including technological interventions and economic restructuring. The resident narratives expose a tension between the historical significance of the settlement and its ongoing adaptation, raising a critical question in the context of utopian formations, challenges, and realism: Is the settlement best understood as a historical object, a fixed relic of post-war urbanism, or an ever-transferable³² entity engaged in continuous socio-spatial “negotiation”?³³

This tension mirrors the conceptual dialectic within Doxiadis’ urban theories, particularly his notion of “*entopia*”,³⁴ which straddles the line between utopian aspiration and pragmatic urban realities. Much like the settlement’s residents, Doxiadis recognized the limitations of rigid urban paradigms, advocating for a parametric methodology that dynamically engaged with socio-spatial realities. The settlement thus becomes a microcosm of his broader theories on *ekistics* and *ecumenopolis*, a site where the negotiation between tradition, modernity, and social stratification plays out at an architectural and experiential level.

Building upon Bruno Latour’s conceptualization of myths and modernism(s),³⁵ the settlement emerges as a discursive field where narratives of progress, nostalgia, and socio-spatial stratification merge. However, this discursive field is not merely theoretical but deeply materialized in spatial practices that reflect Doxiadis’ formal principles. These principles, in turn, are embedded within broader urbanization processes and network

31 ΜΥΤΙΛΗΝΑΙΟΣ Α.Ε., Μελέτη Περιβαλλοντικών επιπτώσεων για την ανάπτυξη και λειτουργία νέου σταθμού παραγωγής Ηλεκτρικής Ενέργειας στο υφιστάμενο ενεργειακό κέντρο Αγίου Νικολάου Βοιωτίας [MYTILINEOS S.A., Environmental Impact Study for the development and operation of a new power plant at the existing energy center in Agios Nikolaos, Boeotia], 2019, p. 62.

32 I use the term “transferable” as an abstracted expression of transformation, denoting a relational condition that binds time, object, and subject within a shared informational field. This condition, I suggest, resonates with the juridical and epistemological structure of the “contract” as elaborated by Michel Serres; cf. Michel Serres, *The natural contract*, trans. Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson, Ann Arbor 1995, p. 77: “Perhaps we have nothing but law to transform time into history, or to canonize the former in the latter. Better still, history does not so much unfold by trials as act as a permanent tribunal itself.”

33 “Negotiation” constitutes a key term in Bruno Latour’s theory and philosophy of networks. As a mode of connectedness, negotiation arises with inherent political significance, particularly within the domain of science; cf. Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the new climatic regime*, Cambridge MA 2018; Bruno Latour, *Politics of nature: How to bring the sciences into democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge MA 2004.

34 Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis, *Building entopia*, Athens 1975, pp. 49–54.

35 Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern*, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge MA 1993.

systems—what Doxiadis conceptualized as “invisible geometry”;³⁶ a structuring framework through which urban cohesion and individual agency are dynamically negotiated. The unfolding of modernity within the Aspra Spitia settlement is thus articulated through a series of critical inquiries, as reflected below in the responses of its residents. Every inquiry tries to mirror a certain category, which I value as critical for the evaluation of Modern heritage.

1) Modern myths and the awareness of architectural intent—What do you know about the architecture of the settlement or the architect himself?

When questioned about their knowledge of the settlement’s architectural origins, residents demonstrated general awareness of Doxiadis as its architect, yet displayed limited engagement with his broader theoretical contributions. A recurring mythic narrative suggested that the settlement was initially designed for an African context, reflecting a perception of its typological design as being generic and culturally detached. This perception aligns with longstanding critiques of inter-war modernist planning which often privileged universal design principles over site-specific adaptation. However, within Doxiadis’ framework, this generic quality can be understood as an extension of his parametric methodology which sought to balance adaptive spatial planning with continental human-centred values.

The persistence of such myths signals a historical disjunction, a gap between architectural intent and the collective memory of its inhabitants. In his writings, Doxiadis recognized that the ideal city emerges not as an isolated utopian vision but as an iterative response to historical and environmental contingencies. As he asserted: “*The ideal city provides an escape from the social, physical, and aesthetic conditions in existing cities. Thus, the more man suffers in his city, the more he is interested in dreaming about new utopias: the cities that cannot be built.*”³⁷

1) Modernist planning, class stratification, and perceived discontinuities—How did you feel coming to a settlement with such disciplined and organized planning?

Residents who migrated from agrarian communities in northern Greece during the 1960s experienced the settlement as an embodiment of modernity, characterized by its rigorous planning and spatial discipline. While Doxiadis envisioned the settlement as a prototype for the modern Greek city, residents instead interpreted its ordered urbanism as European or globally modernist in nature. This can be observed while tracing similarities between the vernacular tradition of modern architecture and its trans-national paths, resulting in critically examining whether modernity is a path initiated from the rural to the centre, from south to north,³⁸ or the opposite. This perception underscores a fundamental paradox in the planning framework: While *ekistics* and *entopia* promoted a sense of belonging, the resultant social fabric did not necessarily align with its theoretical intent.

The hierarchical organization of labor within the industrial complex was directly transposed into the urban fabric, reinforcing socio-spatial stratification that shaped both housing allocation and settlement dynamics. Executives resided in villas, mid-level employees occupied larger apartments, and workers were relegated to smaller units. This stratification was further institutionalized through a points-based allocation system wherein workers accrued points relative to their professional standing, translating occupational hierarchy into spatial privilege, transforming the living subject into a “*productive subject*”.³⁹ As Georgios M. Sarigiannis observes,⁴⁰ this organizational model aligned Aspra Spitia with historical precedents of industrial settlements, reflecting Engels’ critique of class-segregated urban planning.⁴¹ However, the introduction of vertical housing typologies in the second phase, notably *The Tower* and apartment buildings, marked a shift in class representation, trans-moding social hierarchies into vertical spatial configurations. This adoption of

36 https://www.doxiadis.org/Downloads/aspra_spitia.pdf (18.01.2025).

37 Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis, Chapter 7, in: *Architecture in transition*, London 1963.

38 Jean-François Lejeune, *Built utopias in the countryside: The rural and the modern in Franco’s Spain*, Dissertation, Delft University of Technology 2019, <https://doi.org/10.4233/uuid:105f2bd0-e35f-4047-bb6a-bb14ff118e5e>.

39 Pierre Macherey, Φουκώ & Μαρξ Το παραγωγικό υποκείμενο, μεταφρ. Τάσος Μπέτζελος [Pierre Macherey, Foucault & Marx, *The productive Subject*], trans. Tasos Betzelos, Athens 2013.

40 Emeritus professor at NTUA.

41 Γεωργιος Μ.Σαρηγιάννης, Η Αριστερή Ιδεολογία στην Πολεοδομία στην Ελλάδα από το 1960 ως το 1990, Μέρος Β, Η αριστερή ιδεολογία στην Πολεοδομία στην «Άνοιξη του ’60» [Leftist Ideology in Urban Planning in the “Spring of ’60”, in: Georgios M. Sarigiannis (Ed.) *Leftist Ideology in Urban Planning in Greece from 1960 to 1990, Part B*, <https://www.greekarchitects.gr/gr/αρχιτεκτονικες-ματιες/η-αριστερή-ιδεολογία-στην-πολεοδομία-στην-ελλάδα-από-το-1960-ως-το-1990-μέρος-β-id6678> (18.01.2025).



Fig. 4: Left – View of the one-storey dwellings, first phase; Right – View of the transformation, 2025

polykatoikia, Greece's post-war vertical housing model, abstracted class distinctions into a modernist spatial logic, transforming socio-economic inequality into a verticalized form of stratification.

III) *“Functionality” and critique of space—Were the stone masonry buildings functional?*

A dominant theme in residents' critiques was the functional limitations of the settlement's spatial design. Complaints regarding insufficient kitchen space and inadequate sanitary facilities, particularly in two-storey dwellings, underscore the practical constraints of modernist “minimum space” principles. These critiques align with broader discourses on functionality as a class-inflected construct.⁴² Five rows of the settlement's small-scale stone masonry housing, originally conceived as efficient units, were ultimately demolished due to widespread dissatisfaction (becoming a park and a small football court), further illustrating the disjunction between theoretical functionalism and lived spatial realities (Fig. 4).

IV) *Conservation policies and the aestheticization of tradition—Are there any policies for conservation of the building fabric?*

Conservation policies within the settlement are minimal and largely symbolic, restricted to the maintenance of whitewashed walls and blue-painted timber

elements. While these measures reinforce a codified aesthetic identity, they fail to address deeper structural concerns, particularly regarding the deterioration of stone masonry buildings. It could be said that Doxiadis' urban scenography employed a scientific rationalization of tradition, aligning with Latour's theory that tradition functions not as a temporal relic but as a spatial reference system, a “laboratory process”⁴³ in which past elements are selectively recontextualized (Fig. 5).

The widespread application of whitewashed surfaces, often perceived as emblematic of Greek island aesthetics, further complicates this notion of tradition. The use of white can be dualistically interpreted: as a modernist abstraction, resonant with Le Corbusier's “Law of Ripolin”⁴⁴ and generic applications (such as the Weissenhof and Aspra Spitia model settlements) or as an institutionalized aesthetic, a prototype image rather than an authentic material.⁴⁵ This scenographic approach, akin to the state-driven aestheticization of Greek identity, reveals the paradox of modernist traditionalism: a selective “pastiche”⁴⁶ rather than a continuity of spatial practices.

V) *Housing mobility—Which buildings or apartments did you prefer?*

The settlement's points-based housing system wherein residents could upgrade their living conditions

42 Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and history of architecture*, New York 1980.

43 Bruno Latour / Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory life: The construction of scientific facts*, New Jersey 1986.

44 Le Corbusier, *The decorative art of today*, trans. James I. Dunnett, Cambridge MA 1987.

45 Ανδρέας Γιακουμακάτος, *Ο Νέος Αρχαιολογικός Νόμος και η Προστασία της Μοντέρνας Αρχιτεκτονικής* [Andreas Giakoumakatos, *The New Archaeological Law and the Protection of Modern Architecture*, in: Panagiotis Tournikiotis (Ed.), *Where is Modernism?*], Athens 2006, p. 114, <https://docomomo.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/tetradiamonternou01.pdf> (18.01.2025).

46 Fredric Jameson, *The cultural turn, Selected writings on the postmodern 1993–1998*, London – New York 1998, pp. 3–5.



Fig. 5: Model of a typical grouping of houses for Aspra Spitia by Constantinos Doxiadis

based on occupational status served as a mechanism of spatialized class distinction. Over time, older generations gravitated toward second- and third-phase apartments, citing their greater convenience, whereas younger residents expressed a renewed appreciation for the traditional aesthetics of the older stone masonry buildings.

This dynamic underscores a temporal shift in architectural valuation wherein spaces once deemed inadequate are later reinterpreted through a nostalgic lens. This paradox reflects broader debates on modernism's evolving legacy wherein functionalist paradigms are reassessed through the aesthetics of memory and cultural continuity.⁴⁷

VI) *Vacancy, automation, and the challenge of continuity—Why are so many buildings empty? Do you feel that you became rooted in this land and settlement?*

Increased automation of the factory has led to a shrinking workforce, resulting in a surplus of uninhabited residential units. Despite continued operation of the mine and aluminium plant, significant portions of the workers' settlement remain vacant and unmaintained. This spatial redundancy reflects the broader trajectory of industrial settlements in the post-Fordist era⁴⁸ where technological advancements render earlier urban typologies obsolete.

At the same time, residents' profound emotional and historical attachments to the settlement are increasingly destabilized by policies that disincentivize long-

term habitation. As one resident reflects, *"We lived, we worked, we grew up here, a lot of us got married in this settlement, so of course we feel connected."* Yet, the high post-retirement rental costs force many to relocate, severing intergenerational continuity and reinforcing the settlement's status as a transient urban entity. The absence of a cemetery in the planning schema further underscores its function as a temporary living space within a larger globalized urban network.

Conclusion – Becoming Historical?

The resident narratives illuminate a settlement suspended between the forces of historicization and the imperatives of productive/automated adaptation. While modernist principles remain embedded in its spatial organization, evolving economic structures, shifting paradigms of technological governance, and transformations in the social fabric increasingly destabilize its initial urban vision. The ontological status of the settlement, whether it is to be conceived as a fixed historical artefact or as an urban entity in perpetual formation, remains an unresolved inquiry, one that encapsulates broader tensions between architectural heritage, socio-economic restructuring, and the fluid nature of modernity itself, ultimately raising the question of what the entopia means for a new modern landscape beyond the need for an inventive continuum.

47 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*, London 1991, pp. 121–148.

48 David Harvey, *The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of cultural change*, Oxford 1989.