

*Living Ruins, Value Conflicts*, Argyro Loukaki. 2008 Ashgate: Aldershot. 395 pages, ISBN978-0-7546-7228-9, £65.00 (Hardback).

Cities depend on monuments to reflect local, regional and national identities, and the use of monuments helps in consolidating the formation of identities. Monuments not only provide an aesthetic value to cityscapes, they also represent an element of myth which can be found in many large European countries and cities. Argyro Loukaki's *Living Ruins, Value Conflicts* exemplifies broad concepts of symbolic, ideological, geographical and aesthetic importance through classical Greek iconography and monuments which are used as a reference in which western modernism is measured. Loukaki's main purpose is to "address the issues of the transformation of monumental spaces, landscapes and cityscapes and of aesthetic, theoretical and practical issues of restoration and urban or regional planning" (p3). Loukaki divides the book in two parts: part one (chapters one to three) provides a theoretical understanding on the issues of the conflicts of Greece's past and present social climate coexisting in the same landscape. Here, Loukaki includes important discussions on topics such as symbolism, authenticity, aesthetics and landscape transformation. Part two (chapters five to conclusion) ties empirical issues around local and global Greek heritage and the development of monument restoration policies with an analysis of nation building.

The first chapter offers an introduction to the social importance of architecture in Ancient and modern Greece. Here Loukaki discusses the concepts of the *genius loci* – 'the spirit of place' and *genius mundi* – the global claim of the motif, in both western and Greek culture. In this chapter Loukaki draws upon the aesthetic and cultural values that classical and neoclassical Greek imagery - specifically art and architecture - has in Europe. Loukaki argues that western spectators are fascinated by and with Greece because of the romantic belief that "ancient Greece was, and still is seen as a model of perfection in time" (p29). This suggests that the value of perfection associated with Ancient Greece makes it an attractive trait, synonymous with high culture

and sublime aesthetics. Loukaki's overall reading of Greek heritage in relation to the monuments is significant, as monuments have a very powerful political and psychological value. For example the pulling down of the forty-foot statue of Saddam Hussein marked the end of Saddam's rule and the 2003 Battle of Baghdad. However, what Loukaki fails to mention is that the monuments have stereotyped Greece's brand image in terms of tourism. Shugart (2002) has argued that 'civilization' and culture' in Greece are mutually exclusive. Writing in light of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, Shugart argues that there is no precise definition of Greek culture, and that Greek culture automatically refers to ancient Greece. I feel that this book has fallen into this trap, as there is a strong correlation between ancient monuments and Greek identity. The monuments have romanticized Greek culture in Europe and North America, positioning Greece as all about the Parthenon and ancient ruins.

Chapter two goes on to discuss the social constructions of monumentality. In the context of this book, monumentality is defined as "a social construct that corresponds to the very basic needs for symbolism and abstraction, stimulation of the imagination of social agents, narrativization of human experience and mythopoesis" (p47). Here Loukaki reflects on the various symbolic meanings associated with monuments, and that social awareness surrounding monuments is both spatial and temporal. For instance, Loukaki uses the example of old monuments, which characterize a city and are rooted deeply to the formation of civilization. I think that this argument can be applied virtually anywhere and is not new. For example, Vancouver, British Columbia is branded with the use of Aboriginal aesthetics, primarily totem poles, as a part of its place promotion strategy. Loukaki argues that old monuments are used alongside new monuments in modern Athens to highlight the 'high brow' architecture of the newer monuments. The older monuments, especially the classical ones, are connected to the abstraction of the representation of 'Greekeness', as is the case with the Parthenon in Athens which is deeply embedded in Greek national identity. Loukaki concludes by stating that "classical architecture has been appropriated by

various social movements and thought. This, then leads to wars of taste and class...”.

In these first chapters Loukaki illustrates the complex process of restoring and enhancing monuments due to the different restoration and development policies in place. In chapter three Loukaki analyses aspects of aesthetics in terms of beauty and a claim for social participation. Drawing on the works of Kant, Marx and Bourdieu, she discusses the role of Greek monuments in a western classical discourse in constant communication, rather than isolated from it. Using the lens of various charters and poetry Loukaki emphasizes that architectural protection is a complex and time-specific process. Following on from this, chapter four discusses the landscaping of urban archaeological spaces. Though this is a relatively short chapter, I found this to be the most interesting, as Loukaki explains and describes the process through which the Ancient monuments have become a part of the modern Greek landscape. Here she argues that archaeological spaces should be accommodated in the urban planning process, and should be juxtaposed next to ‘natural’ or primary sector activities, thus representing classical ruins as a paradise. This is fine but fails to account for possible tensions between expansion in urban development and the discovery of future archaeological sites.

In the second half of the book Loukaki links together theoretical and empirical dimensions, pursuing an “in depth analysis of the relationship between state and nation building around classical and other kinds of later monumentality through the discussion of the role therein of state bureaucracy and foreign archaeological schools” (p10). Notably Loukaki links the expansion of the knowledge base of Greek civilization in numerous disciplines with the establishment of foreign schools in Greece which has allowed for more money to be invested in research.

The book also provides an insight into how the organization of ancient heritage protection policies has changed over time. Original protection policies were set up in 1827 for two main purposes: to meet the objectives of the defense of state’s internal ideological capital and to meet foreign expectations.

Complexities in monument protection policies arise as there are three primary stakeholders involved: the Greek state, the private sector and the international sector. Though the three are in constant communication, the meanings and values of the ancient ruins vary between the three: for the Greek state for example, the ruins represent a strong social bond, whereas for scholars the ruins have become a source of ideological movement.

Chapter six theorises the complex role of monumentality in development issues with particular attention to values and bureaucratic interest. Chapter seven then works these theories and materials through using a case study inquiry of the Athenian Acropolis. Here Loukaki examines the restorations occurring on the Acropolis Plateau before going on to examine the differences between the American and Greek gardens of the Acropolis and its representations of Greekness.

Loukaki concludes by stating that classical heritage protection and its social impacts is an extremely complex process. Its complexities lie in the relationships of foreign and native powers, relative and absolute values, and foreign and local expertise. The case for heritage protection is theorized as important because the classical ruins play a crucial role in establishing both a regional and national identity and culture. According to Loukaki the Greeks do not want to follow a modern western-type development model, which Loukaki describes as largely a technical matter. Rather she argues that for Greece the issue of preservation is an economic, political and cultural trajectory, where culture is a predominant feature. Loukaki believes that the Greek model demonstrates that the Greeks are able to “handle some of the complicated problems of preservation and coexistence of urban times” (p 307). Ultimately Loukaki appears to argue that the Western world has only recently begun to incorporate cultural politics into long term urban development. However cultural politics have had a prominent role in the development of cities such as Vancouver for a long time, exemplified by the representation of various Aboriginal monuments around the city such as the totem poles in Stanley Park, and Aboriginal artist Bill Reed’s sculpture of the Haida Gwaii at Vancouver International Airport.

Overall, *Living Ruins, Value Conflicts* is a well written and interesting book that makes a valuable contribution to the cultural geography literature and would appeal to any scholar interested in arguments of aesthetics, planning and culture. However Loukakai is perhaps guilty of homogenising particular ways of seeing in favor of making the Greek case stand out by using the Acropolis and the Parthenon as a focus point, reproducing the stereotype that this is what Greek culture and heritage is about.

Priya Vadi

Simon Fraser University