



Italian Policies in the Planning of a “New Town” and Agricultural Settlements in the Dodecanese Islands, Greece

Vassilis COLONAS, Prof.

University of Thessaly, School of Architecture, Greece
colonas@tellas.gr

Immediately after the Italians arrived in the Dodecanese announced the program of works the Italian authorities intended to undertake. They included undertaking archeological excavations, making surveys of and restoring medieval monuments, founding rural settlements, making urban planning interventions in the historical centers, and undertaking extensive construction of public buildings (Rhodes, Kos). Mario Lago, the first Italian governor, also took special measures for the reconstruction of Kos after the 1933 earthquake and founded the naval air base and the new town of Porto Lago on Leros.

The paper will focus on the planning activity of the Italian authorities and especially in the New Town of Porto Lago and the agricultural settlements, mostly in Rodos.

Porto Lago, today known as Lakki, was created in 1932 as an independent entity to meet the civilian needs of a military community and, in terms of both architecture and urban planning, is a rare example of rationalist architecture.

Mario Lago had determined that the architecture for the buildings of the new town should be in «modo razionale», in accordance with the regime's policy, which had chosen rationalist architecture as the official architecture for its public image. It was fortunate for the architecture of the Dodecanese that the designs for Porto Lago did not follow the “architecture of integration” the Italians adopted on Rhodes and Kos, but instead followed contemporary Italian trends influenced by the second exhibition of rationalist architecture. The absence of classical and medieval monuments prevented any Italian attempt to establish an ideological continuity in the island's architecture. R. Petracco and A. Bernabiti, planned an entire model town “beyond the borders” based on rationalist architecture and reestablishing the archetypal relation between modernism and the Aegean.

Unfortunately, this harmonious coexistence was not the same for the agricultural settlements the Italians built to house Italian settlers. These settlements remained foreign to the island landscape because they were clumsy reproductions of structures, types, and forms of a superficially interpreted Italian traditional architecture. Confused about what constituted tradition and what innovation, the Italian architects brazenly attempted to re-define the rural space and establish new points of reference in the island landscape.

KEY WORDS: Urban design, urban forms, Italy.