

## LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON URBAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN GREECE

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### **Abstract**

*During the past few years, the role of Local Governance in Greece has advanced in such a way that got able to influence local development, motivate local communities and arrange courses of action that may significantly contribute to the promotion of urban tourism.*

*The institutional framework of Local Government Organizations (L.G.O.) can be of determinative influence on the formation of the uprising phenomenon of tourism urbanization. This was made clear through the ability held by such organizations to implement development programs, to found and create tourism resorts or establishments of tourism infrastructure and to satisfy local administrators of tourism services and information offices. Such potential can draw attention to the tourism resources of cities and strengthen the local productive and consumerist processes that contribute to the balanced and sustained promotion of city tourism activity.*

*In Greece there are several examples of isolated interference of the L.G.O. in tourism development of Greek cities. However, the attempt in its whole is fairly uncoordinated, since a frame of political measures and strategies that will enforce the local growth initiatives of the L.G.O. as well as of the private business activity towards an advancement of urban tourism is still lacking. The authorities assigned through the existing institutional and regulative L.G.O. functioning framework alone are inadequate for supporting such initiatives in the Local Tourism Development Programs, without the funding of basic projects of special tourism infrastructure and substructure. A new institutional and functional framework that will stably enforce the local development initiatives promoting urban tourism is necessary.*

**Key words:** *City or Urban Tourism, Tourism Urbanization, Consumption of Pleasure, Local Government Organizations (L.G.O.), Local Tourism Development Programs.*

### **1. Introduction**

Urban Tourism is a special form of tourism, the main feature of which involves the travelers' tours around a city for a few days. These tours are directly linked to various cultural events taking place in a city, as well as to other forms of tourism such as congress, exhibition, religious, time-sharing, thematic, educational and social tourism. Moreover, urban tourism is mostly attracted by night-life, entertainment, shopping, interesting excursions and pleasant natural environment.

Local authorities take action on various urban matters. Through these actions, it is able to effectively contribute to the creation of appropriate circumstances for the gradual and effective confrontation of tourism problems as well as to the promotion of urban tourism.

The aim of this article is to conduct a research over the planning and development potential of urban tourism by Local Government Organizations (L.G.O), which through their action can diversify the economic and social basis of cities by incorporating and linking the features of the cities to the specialized forms of tourism that can be developed. As development authorities, the

L.G.O. can contribute to the formation of the uprising phenomenon of Tourism Urbanization that offers great opportunities for local tourism activity and whose cornerstone is the mass Consumption of Pleasure.

It should be noted here that the subject of urban tourism has not been sufficiently covered in the international bibliography. The various studies (Ashworth 1989, Pearce 1991, Law 1992, 1996, Grabler, Klaus et al. 1997, Richards 1996, Robinson & Picard 2006) that have seen the light of publicity only serve as an initial approach to the subject. In order to successfully conduct our research, an initial approach is made towards the concept of city tourism, highlighting tourism urbanization. In another section, the context of tourism urbanization and the typology of urban tourism are presented. Finally, the role of L.G.O. is delineated and their course of action in tourism development initiatives is depicted through a reference to the Greek experience.

## 2. The concept of urban tourism

The functions of cities can be understood through different models of urban growth such as the concentric zones of Burges, the radial sectors of Homer Hoyt and the multiple nuclei of Harris and Ullman. These models are static and give a restricted interpretation to the general urban structure in its whole, as well as to the outline of residential areas.

Today, the image of the city is complex since a series of contradictory processes make it hard to plan its future in such a way that it will not oppose to the changing ground of the social structure that composes it (Hayllar -. Griffin – Edwards 2008).

The definition of the reasons why tourists choose to visit cities can be a starting point for understanding this phenomenon. The detailed examination of the causes that lead tourists to prefer to visit certain geographical sites presupposes the analysis of tourism behavior, the identification of tourism motives (Pearce 1993) and the analysis of theoretical approaches for the definition of tourism needs (Veal 1994:7-17). This is a subject of Social Psychology. Nevertheless, on a theoretical basis, cities are viewed as a site of attraction for tourists due to the large scale of social infrastructures, the specialized functions that exist, the variety of services, as well as the availability of cultural goods offered. Shaw and Williams (1994:201) claim that urban regions are receivers of tourism flux and have a geographical concentration of basic functions and spaces for entertainment that satisfy the needs of both their permanent residents and their tourists. Thus, these areas present a concentric urban polarity that is often traced in large urban centers (i.e. Paris, London, Rome, Athens, etc.), which become receivers of international tourist motion (Lozato–Giotart 1996:197). Similarly, through the help of international tour operators, these tourism locations are given a leading role as “transit centers” to neighboring cities or areas of tourism interest, which, in their turn, play a secondary role to the main urban tourism pole of attraction.

In order to comprehend the uniqueness and trace the similarities of every tourism location, researchers tend to examine them according to three different ways:

- First, as heterogeneous territorial sections, meaning that they are different and diversified as far as their size, their geographical location, their appearance, their history and the functions that they have are concerned.
- Second, as urban areas of a large scale, in which the different functions offered at the same time cause them to be multifunctional and obscure.
- Third, as functions of urban tourism which are rarely produced or consumed only by tourists, but are instead utilized by a vast number of people.

More specifically, within the frame of the latter approach, the phenomenon of *tourism urbanization* is formed. This phenomenon constitutes a new territorial pattern of urban development and concentrates the interest of scientists on a worldwide scale. Its interpretation and

the course of its development, as well as the potential it gives in order to support a new model of sustainable urban tourism development provide a subject of international intrigue.

The approaches noted above are not complete. They demand a reformulation of developmental goals for modern cities in terms of context and of scale. In the whole of Europe, the competition between cities for the attraction of financial activities and investments of a high ranking scale is increasing. Cities are called to offer a more appealing quality of life and compete in offering a good ambient, conforming to the demands of specific sectors of financial activity and adjusting their form (McKercher 2008). In relation to this, it is noted that the past few years, the medium cities of the European Union presented an important increase in their population number and were able to promote their local economy as well as the number of employment posts. These cities could provide an example for the kind of development politics that should be followed by other less prosperous cities (CE 1995:109, Exarhos – Karagiannis 2004:177-187, Konsola & Karachalis 2009). For this reason, the spectrum of theoretical dimensions, as well as the practice of tourism urbanization should be further examined.

### **3. The context of tourism urbanization**

Through the term "tourism urbanization" we imply the concentration of tourism activity in an urban center (capital, city, village) that has the appropriate tourism infrastructure and substructure as well as the natural, historical and cultural elements that render the location a site of tourism attraction and which cover specific tourism needs (Lagos 2001:126 Selby 2004).

The phenomenon of tourism urbanization is based on the Consumption of Pleasure in an organized and systematic way and mainly appears in evolved tourism regions (cities) which are, or can become, urban consumerist centres.

Tourism urbanization is a new discernible territorial form related to a complex productive and consumerist system.

In relation to tourism urbanization, Mullins (1991:326) claims that "tourism cities constitute a new and exceptional form of urbanization since they have been created for consumption". This view is opposite to the principle of industrialized cities of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the basic urban functions involved industrial production, commerce and residences. Mullin's view allows us to better understand the way in which cities evolve through the presence of tourism, since the consumption of goods and services in tourism resorts and urban regions does not constitute a permanent characteristic, but a transitional function that does not directly relate to basic human needs but to the search for entertainment, rest and wandering. These human needs are described as the highest form of consumption within the hierarchy of needs of A. Maslow (1954), since traveling for holidays is a luxury good.

Stanback (1985) observes that in the USA the centers of consumption (including tourism cities) present higher rates of urban growth, highlighting thus the significance of this phenomenon.

The term "consumption" is used to define the use made by people of goods and services that are usually produced and sold for the covering of social needs and aim towards business profit. The development of services for non basic needs is set off in parallel to the expansion of products of mass consumption. Mass consumption of goods and services is related to the post-war model of development of collective consumption.

In Western communities, during the post-war period, social welfare is characterized by mass production and consumption of goods and this is why these societies are called "societies of abundance and excessive consumerism" (Van Der Berg, et al. 1995). This situation was different in the economies of the Eastern Block.

The capitalistic development model also provided the grounds for the evolution of the organized mass tourism model, which was based on the logic of goods and services consumption by tourists.

In tourism research, during the past few years, the concept of tourism consumption had been used on an international level as a methodological framework for the scientific examination and appreciation of economic repercussions of tourism and for its incorporation within the national account system as a specific analytical category of national economy (Zacharatos 1986, Lagos 2005).

The question posed is: why the development of recreation services can facilitate tourism urbanization?

It is widely accepted that the post-war increase of leave benefits, free time and personal income contributed to the increase of demand for consumerist goods and services. Tourism provides a characteristic example since the increase in the number of privately held automobiles contributed to the increase of travel while the appearance of package tours helped in the broadening of international tourism. Since the 1970s, the changes in employment and industrial organization regime led to important changes in the rate of production and consumption, as a result of important changes taking place in the accumulation of capital for the development of new forms of productive activities in the economies of the free market. The recent course of development in the theory of entertainment by Doyal and Gough (1991) along with the expansion of the theory of universal human needs reveal that the structural changes in society were accompanied by processes that gave shape to public tourism offer and to the increase and development of entertaining activities through private initiative. This kind of evolution provides a definition for the transposition from the model of mass consumption and intense devotion, towards social welfare and the systemic plan of capital agglomeration in which new specialized forms of consumption develop.

All the aforementioned offer a theoretical approach to the post-war model of development of international tourism which was based on organized mass tourism and worked within the frame of the capitalistic development model.

Under the line of approach of Tourism Urbanization described above, the following typology of urban tourism has been outlined (Page 1995:16).

- Capital cities of countries (i.e. London, Paris and New York) and cultural capitals.
- Metropolitan centers and historical centers with ancient walls (i.e. Canterbury and York) and small town fortresses.
- Large historical cities (i.e. Oxford, Cambridge and Venice).
- Internal areas of cities (i.e. Manchester).
- Upgraded coastal and riverside areas (i.e. London Docklands and Sydney Darling Harbor).
- Industrial cities (i.e. 19<sup>th</sup> century Bradford).
- Seaside resorts and winter sports resorts (i.e. Lillehammer).
- Purpose-built resorts.
- Tourism entertainment complexes (i.e. Disneyland και Las Vegas).
- Centers of specialized tourism services (i.e. spas and shrines).
- Cultural cities (i.e. Florence).

The classification above represents only one side of the phenomenon of tourism urbanization based on observations and trends from the international tourism industry.

#### 4. The planning and development authorities of urban tourism by the local authorities on urban in Greece

In Greece, the institutional reformation introduced by Law 2218/94, created four interdependent administrative levels.

- The *first administrative level* is the central state that has an executive role, determining the basic developmental directions and departmental options. The central state takes action in major development programs and projects and coordinates the wider national effort for socioeconomic development.
- The *second administrative level* is the Periphery which constitutes the meeting point and center of collaboration of the central state with the administrative bodies of the two ranks (Prefectural Administration and L.G.O). Today, the role of programming of the Region has advanced while its executive authorities have begun to evolve significantly. The role of the Region is to plan and regulate developmental initiatives in its wider natural anthropogeographic sections, namely among regions and prefectures.
- The *third administrative level* is the Local Government (local authorities) (L.A.) which makes up the only level with substantial authority for decision making on issues regarding the Prefecture and holding an important role in the field of democratic programming.
- The *fourth administrative level* is the first rank of Local Government expressed by the L.G.O. and which plans and materializes courses of action and projects for the development on a local level.

According to the Law 2539/97 "I. Kapodistrias" has brought an important spatial and administrative reformation of the primary Local Government through a concentration of authorities to the new Municipalities and the undertaking of initiatives by its collective instruments. Thus, the Municipality role has been strengthened and new structures and upgraded functions have been created within the relations between the citizen and the Local Government.

Finally, the Law 3852/2010 «Kallikratis» which comes as a following-up of the Law "Kapodistrias", introduces a big administrative revolution in the existing model of public administration of Greece. The Region (Prefecture) that was –up to now- a secondary administration level is becoming now a powerful institution of formation and implementation of local policies and is now named "elected Region". Hence, 370 new municipalities are created based on social, economic, geographic, functional and planning criteria, 13 Αιπετές Regions are incorporated as Departments current provinces (prefectures) και 7 General Administrations. In this framework of reform, several Legal and Municipal Entities are abolished and financial resources are saved, due to the new infrastructures that are created and the economies of scale that are succeeded through the merges and abolishment of prefectural authorities. The character of the new administrative organization is in favour of development and it is expected to improve administrative and economic efficiency of public administration. This is because a significant number of responsibilities are transferred from Central Government to the elected regional administration. Municipalities have now new responsibilities, such as the issuing of building permits, the maintenance and improvement of road infrastructure, traffic studies, Departments of first Aid Health Services, the construction of school buildings, the agriculture and fishery works, the wastes management, etc. On the other hand, new elected Regions will be in charge of the management of Regional Entrepreneurship Programs (PEE) and of the funds of Public Investment Programs, the supervision of small and medium enterprises, the approval of environmental terms for industrial activities, the permits for the selling of oil products, the construction and maintenance of road infrastructures and the supervision of works of political protection. All above means that the planning of regional development, passes from central Ministries to the Elected Regional Administration.

Consequently, the role of Local Government is essential for the planning and materialization of local development, since local authorities and administrators are expected to contribute to the development of their prefecture.

The aim of Local Government Organizations (L.G.O.) is, among others, the planning and programming of the wider developmental process of their region. In order to fulfill this aim:

- They organize annual development programs.
- They organize annual development programs.
- They participate in the organizing process of annual rural programs of development according to their proposals.

The activity of development planning and, as such, of tourism planning constitutes one of the fields of action for Local Government Organizations.

The interventions of the Local Government Organizations in the formation of tourism development are determined by:

- The natural, geographical, historical, social and cultural characteristics of each region.
- The stage of development of tourism activity in the region such as subordinate infrastructures and substructures, entrepreneurial initiatives, level of organization of tourism activity, etc.
- The availability of human resources in the region.
- The degree of skills and knowledge of the available work force.

Based on the experience we have up to this day for the activity of the Local Government Organizations in tourism, the political directions on a national and regional level for tourism as well as the subordinate national and communal financial means may define the line of action of the Local Government towards the advancement of tourism initiatives at an urban level.

#### ***a. Participation in the planning of local tourism development***

The participation of L.G.O. in the planning of local tourism development is necessary (Michalena, 2009), especially in Prefectures where tourism activity develops in an irregular manner or is completely underdeveloped and, in such a way, demands a certain amount of research regarding its developmental potential as well as a mapping out of tourism business plans for its promotion. In these prefectures, the creation of tourism infrastructure at an urban level is necessary in order to be able to receive the tourism flux and effectively use the available tourism resources.

#### ***b. Potential of development of sustainable forms of tourism***

Organizations of local Administrations can establish development agencies/ companies for the undertaking and support of special forms of tourism that pertain to the carrying capacity of a tourists' hosting location. These authorities contribute to qualitative improvement of the tourism product, the protection of the environment as well as to better distribution of tourism activity in space and time.

#### ***c. Support of small and medium tourism enterprises***

This type of support may either take place through the supply of information concerning the financial means available and the way these can be used in the best possible way, or through information regarding the processes necessary, or through the supply of technical help during the undertaking of local tourism business initiatives etc., or even through their connection to inter-European information networks.

#### ***d. Collaboration with collective administrators, entrepreneurs or employees within the tourism sector***

This type of collaboration can take place through Hotel Chambers, Travel Offices and syndicates of the tourism sector with the purpose of creating guidelines of tourism policies, the

publication of instructions, the supply of technical assistance, the use of communal finances through the submitting and materializing of proposals regarding community programs and initiatives.

***e. Protection of the natural and man-made environment***

The destruction of elements of the ambient space of a tourism location through uncontrolled tourism activity may bring about negative consequences to the development of the area. The L.G.O. are able to effectively confront environmental issues by inducing actions such as traffic control, the building of sidewalk areas, parks, parking spaces, the control of sound pollution, the cleaning of beaches, the eradication of illegal hotels etc., which are directly linked to the quality of tourism and can offer protection to the structured environment.

The intervention of Local Government for the protection of the natural and man-made urban environment is necessary, especially in developed tourism locations that are submerged by mass tourism and where so much the natural as the cultural and architectural heritage are threatened. This intervention is related to the carrying capacity for the development of each area that ensures the balanced use of local resources and contributes to the sustainable development of tourism for a long period of time.

Furthermore, the determination of land uses constitutes a basic precondition for the confrontation of the issue of tourism capacity and a fundamental parameter for the planning of tourism.

***f. Collaboration with central administrative authorities for the molding of the wider framework of tourism politics***

The support of tourism politics aims towards the improvement of quality, the enrichment and diversification of the tourism product and also towards the taking of appropriate measures for the achievement of strategic goals of tourism development. This presupposes the collaboration of all administrative authorities- central and peripheral, public and private. Since the L.G.O. take action on a local level and have direct contact with and knowledge of the conditions they can also provide suggestions and take on initiatives, mainly related to the control of tourism activity, the improvement of the tourism circuit, the diversification of tourism supply and the improvement of the quality of the tourism product being offered.

***g. Professional training of manpower***

The role of manpower in tourism receiving countries is of great importance. The first priority is taking initiatives for professional training, which aims at the development of a professional conscience for employees in the various sectors of tourism activity, as well as the sensitization of residents towards cultural heritage and the protection of the environment; in those fields should emphasize the L.G.O. In order to achieve this, the L.G.O. may utilize the subordinate institutional framework.

***h. Tourism promotion and advertising***

The advertising and promotion of tourism involves activities such as the planning of meetings for the media, the publication of tour guides and brochures and the foundation and operation of tourist information offices. These activities can be planned and organized by the Local Government Organizations with great success and in such a way contribute to the projection and development of tourism in their region.

## **5. Greek experience of urban tourism development**

The principal aim for the activation of the L.G.O. through the line of action described above is the discovery of methods and strategies for a more efficient intervention regarding the confrontation of the tourism problems faced in their region, in order to promote tourism activity in a balanced way that does not contravene with other financial and social activities.

The Dodecanese and especially Rhodes constitute a characteristic case of collaboration between local administrators of the private sector and L.G.O. for the development of tourism business initiatives and for the confrontation of tourism problems concerning the area.

More specifically, the Local Government is involved in the formation of the local tourism development process of the city of Rhodes as follows (Logothetis 1997:61-63, Konsola & Karachalis 2009):

- The Intermunicipal Construction Enterprise of the Municipalities of Rhodes and Chalki was assigned to refurbish traditional houses and turn them into guest-houses and to construct and utilize a series of bars operating on public beaches and parks.
- The Municipal Hotel Enterprise of the Municipality of Rhodes was assigned to restore the traditional "Hotel des Roses".
- The Municipal Tourism Enterprise of the Municipality of Nisiros, which was formed in order to modernize the Public Guesthouse and the Public Spa Complex.
- The Municipality of Rhodes collaborates with the Union of Hotel Owners of Rhodes and with other tourism and commercial Organizations of the island (Union of Tourist Agents, Chamber of the Dodecanese) under the supervision of the Municipal Tourism Committee in programs of projection and advertising of Rhodes that are self funded by the L.G.O. and the tourism commercial organizations.

Similar instances exist in almost all large Greek cities that receive tourists. This is evidence for the dynamism of Local Government as well as for the new uprising tendency for tourism urbanization that has also started forming a territorial model for the Greek terrain in various cities of different scales.

The aforementioned example provides a characteristic sample for the involvement of the L.G.O. within the tourism circuit, as well as for their ability to develop creative initiatives for the confrontation of tourism problems and for the promotion of urban tourism development.

## **6. Conclusive remarks**

Urban Tourism is a special form of tourism that has recently started developing swiftly on an international level. The special functions at work in cities in combination with the agglomeration economies that develop due to the existing social infrastructures and substructures, the variety of cultural goods, as well as the great mass supply of recreation services on a low cost contribute to the creation of favourable preconditions for tourism urbanization. This often renders cities of different scales, points of attraction and sites for the development of multiple entertainment activities which satisfy the contemporary consumerist needs of tourists in a concentrated and organized manner. Tour operators contribute towards this direction by promoting this special form of tourism through their package tours.

Consequently, the formation of this new phenomenon in tourism is obvious. Urbanization may become the source of many financial, social and environmental negative consequences if the appropriate political measures are not taken. This creates new demands for tourism infrastructure and substructure for the covering of complementary special forms of tourism that return a great added value to business activity and can significantly contribute to the development of urban tourism.



The tourism intervention of the L.G.O. in the operative net of cities must take place based on the principles of sustainable local tourism development. In such a way they will be able to ensure the sustained development of systems of operation and management, as well as the formation of political regulations and social innovations that will allow for a different facing of the role and function of cities.

The planning of urban tourism development can become more efficient through the help of the L.G.O. who have now undertaken essential authority, according to the new law of "Kallikratis" and are aware of the local problems and the requisites and are thus able to arrange Local Tourism Development Programs that will meet the needs of the specialized urban tourism demand. There are several cases of intervention in tourism development from L.G.O.

The phenomenon of tourism urbanization is a new uprising territorial form of development for which no specific tourism politics, that will reinforce the action of the L.G.O., have been developed on a national or a regional level. Its development is dynamic and can mainly be defined by the forces of tourism supply and demand and according to the local initiatives taken by the L.G.O.

Tourism urbanization expresses the local politics of development which enforces the endogenous dynamics of cities and contributes to the sober planning of infrastructures, investments, as well as flows and activities of people. The fundamental requirement for its development is the utilization of the "bottom-up" strategy (Lagos 2007).

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