

## CULTURAL HERITAGE, TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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### **Abstract**

*This paper refers to the contribution of the development of cultural heritage on tourism development and the risks that it creates.*

*Initially, all the impact on the environment from the use of cultural resources for tourism development and measures for their protection are recorded. Then, the relationship between tourism and cultural heritage and the natural environment is examined.*

*Specifically, the survey focuses on the traditional settlements, protected areas and tourism intensity in Greece at a level of municipality boroughs. Statistical data, legislative texts were used and use of geographic information systems was made while conducting the research.*

*On the one hand the survey showed that, the development of the cultural heritage of a country contributes to tourism development and on the other hand the improper management of cultural resources leads to degradation. Despite the fact that there is now an adequate legislative framework for cultural heritage protection, it is not sufficient for an integrated management, but more planning and new measures are required.*

**Key words:** *Cultural Heritage and Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Environment*

### **Introduction**

The subject matter of the current paper is to investigate the relationship between cultural heritage, tourism and the environment. Much of the current research shows that culture and tourism can be resources for the social and financial development of a place. Culture is becoming increasingly a significant factor in the design of national policy regarding tourism.

Tourist development that occurs in relation to cultural heritage can lay the foundations for a boom in tourism in central urban as well as remote peripheral areas. It is also the most rapidly developing type of tourism in recent times (Bachleitner & Zins, 1999).

Practice has shown that tourism may benefit local communities in many different ways. In personal terms, sociopolitical terms, economical as well as environmental terms. If the local community takes advantage of the available resources it can maximize their competitiveness. Along with the increase in the number of international and national visitors, the community's profits from tourism increase. (Dugulan et al, 2010).

However, there are certain dangers in the exploitation of cultural heritage. The lack of measures and necessary political action from the responsible bodies, not only allows but in fact often encourages the abusive exploitation of cultural property. This often results in the degradation and even destruction of traditional elements. Nowadays, the challenge is to develop a model for tourism with foundations on cultural heritage and protecting it at the same time, in order to conserve that cultural heritage in the multicultural context of contemporary societies (Huibin et al, 2012).

Protection of the environment is paramount when we address the issue of sustainability. Environmental degradation that occurs as a result of tourist development, may in fact destroy the

very cultural heritage that was the place's tourist advantage. Proper planning and management of cultural tourism, which entails the protection of the ecosystem and the overall special qualities of the destination, may have beneficial socio-economic effects and contribute to the sustainable conservation and protection of cultural resources.

## **1. Cultural heritage**

The UNESCO Convention of 1954 in Hague defines “cultural property” as “the moveable or immoveable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people”, such as monuments of architecture and groups of buildings. In the the World Heritage Convention of 1972 the concept of “cultural heritage” also includes architectural works, groups of buildings and sites (works of man or the combined works of nature and man) (Mitoula, 2001)

According to the Granada Convention of 1985 Cultural Heritage is defined as:

- All buildings and structures of conspicuous historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest, including their fixtures and fittings.
- Groups of buildings: Homogeneous groups of urban or rural buildings conspicuous for their historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest which are sufficiently coherent to form topographically definable units.
- Sites: the combined works of man and nature, being areas which are partially built upon and sufficiently distinctive and homogeneous to be topographically definable and are of conspicuous historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest. (article 1) (Scientific Conference in Sparta, 1994)

The text of the Granada Convention supplements the earlier definition of “historical monument” that was formulated during the Second International Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings in Venice (25 – 31 May 1964). According to the charter that was voted “the concept of an historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or an historic event. This applies not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time”. According to this text then a settlement or even a whole city may be defined as a monument and also define its physiognomy accordingly as a monument. (Mitoula, 2006)

At the same time, family models, folk art, customs, museums, monuments, historical constructions, works of art, natural history and even wildlife are all part of cultural heritage. In recent years the importance of cultural heritage has aroused great interest as a concept and has been adequately researched and defined.

Currently the term cultural property refers to anything that is considered part of the cultural heritage from a historical perspective. Creations and expressions that accumulate through the years. Nowadays, most countries pay a great deal of attention to cultural heritage and their policies prioritize its conservation over many other aspects of development that require urgent attention (Báez Montenegro et al., 2009).

## **2. Cultural Heritage and Tourism**

Culture contributes to the preservation of the historical past of an area. As already mentioned, it can be also employed as a tourist attraction that will increase the number of visitors in areas that have such heritage and, accordingly, function as a financial resource (Popescu & Corbos 2010) (Huibin et al, 2012). Current research and practice in recent years has shown that there is high demand for places with cultural heritage and places with such heritage have become much more competitive in the domain of tourism (Bowitz & Ibenholt, 2009).

Today, cultural heritage is increasingly becoming a lever for development while the competitiveness of entire countries is significantly boosted with the employment of cultural resources. The effective promotion and utilization of available cultural resources can help significantly increase the GDP as well as the number of jobs created by the tourism industry. (Dugulan et al, 2010).

Of course specific strategies need to be implemented in order to achieve a model of sustainable tourism that will protect the cultural resources, which will be passed on to the next generations (Sdrali & Chazapi, 2007). The same applies to environmental resources which are part of these cultural environments and are exploited for the benefit of tourism.

### ***2.1. Effects on Culture***

Whenever tourism promotes cultural heritage, the financial gains are immediate and visible. However, the social and cultural repercussions of tourist development are less obvious, take time to make themselves felt and are difficult to quantify. Whenever tourism is efficiently organized and respectful towards the (natural as well as human) environment it actually acts as a positive influence on the area. As such it also promotes the development and sustainability of the place and of culture.

However, exhaustive promotion of tourism in order to generate financial gain may have negative effects on cultural heritage and lead to problems such as commercialization of traditional folk festivals, illegal trade of historical artifacts, illegal archeological excavations, degradation (and in some cases elimination) of traditional crafts, dominance of “pseudo-culture” (Karagiannis, 2006).

In some countries, culture is used as a resource for tourism with a completely different approach. In these cases, culture, in addition to being the object of research and aesthetic admiration, becomes also a commodity to be promoted, sold and bought. The massification of tourism reinforces the tendency to commercialize and, accordingly, tourist development creates a market of commodities and services exclusive to visiting tourists. In this way, failed policies and actions may stifle local cultural development. The excessive use and commercialization of local culture for the benefit of tourism and the negative results it has have led to the current tendencies towards conservation and protection.

### ***2.2. Environmental Effects***

In addition to the negative effects of tourist development on culture, in areas with cultural heritage, the effects on the environment are occasionally equally grave. The uncontrolled consumption of natural resources, increases in transportation and building result in the increase pollution of the air and the sea as well as the degradation of the natural habitat.

The biggest problem is the decrease of natural areas in order to construct the infrastructure necessary for tourist development. In many cases the building of hotels, roads, shops etc extends in the natural habitat, which often results in the destruction of forests and farmlands which then become built environment. This transformation of natural environment into built environment and in turn into tourist resource, ultimately attracts tourists. Actions such as these have many negative effects and, ironically end up undermining the original intent of tourist development, since development in those terms affects the natural equilibrium (Tsartas, 1989) (Koltsidopoulos, 2000).

However, the existing research has shown that tourism may have also positive effects on local environment of a tourist area. That can be achieved through the conservation of significant natural resources, protection of archeological and historical sites, improvement of the infrastructure. Several researchers have observed that tourism may improve the appearance of a

community and lead to the creation of more parks and places of recreational function, improve the quality of roads and public facilities etc (McCool & Martin 1994) (Perdue et al, 1990) (Liu & Var 1986).

The negative results however are pointed out in many cases. These include but are not limited to the pollution of water and air, noise pollution, visual pollution, overcrowding and traffic congestion (Brunt & Courtney 1999) (Johnson et al 1994) (McCool & Martin 1994) (Perdue et al, 1990), accumulation of waste materials (Brunt & Courtney 1999), overcrowding in open-air recreational facilities (Johnson et al 1994), parking problems (Lindberg & Johnson, 1997), problems in land use, disturbance of ecological equilibrium, environmental dangers, destruction of historical and archeological sites.

### **3. Environmental Protection of Heritage Sites in Greece**

The Greek state has legislated extensively on the protection of cultural heritage. It has also provided laws for the protection of cultural heritage that are exclusively concerned with the natural environment.

The protection of cultural heritage is mentioned also in the statute on environmental studies. Specifically, it is mentioned in all the classifications of projects and activities, a) classification of projects and activities into categories (YA 69269/5387/1990), b) classification of public and private projects and activities into categories (Y.A. H.Π. 15393/2332/2002) and c) classification of public and private projects and activities into categories and subcategories (N.4014/21.09.2011).

In the first two classifications, protection of cultural heritage is mentioned in relation to cultural centers (cultural centers, museums etc), which are included in the grouping of Tourist facilities – Urban Planning Works. In the last classification, however, cultural centers are included in the grouping that includes tourist facilities as well as urban building development works, sports and recreation.

As far as the study of environmental effects is concerned, cultural resources are described in the studies of tourist facilities and in the certificates issued by the responsible Ephorate of Antiquities (Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Byzantine Antiquities) regarding the existence (or not) of an archeological site on the site of the project or the activity.

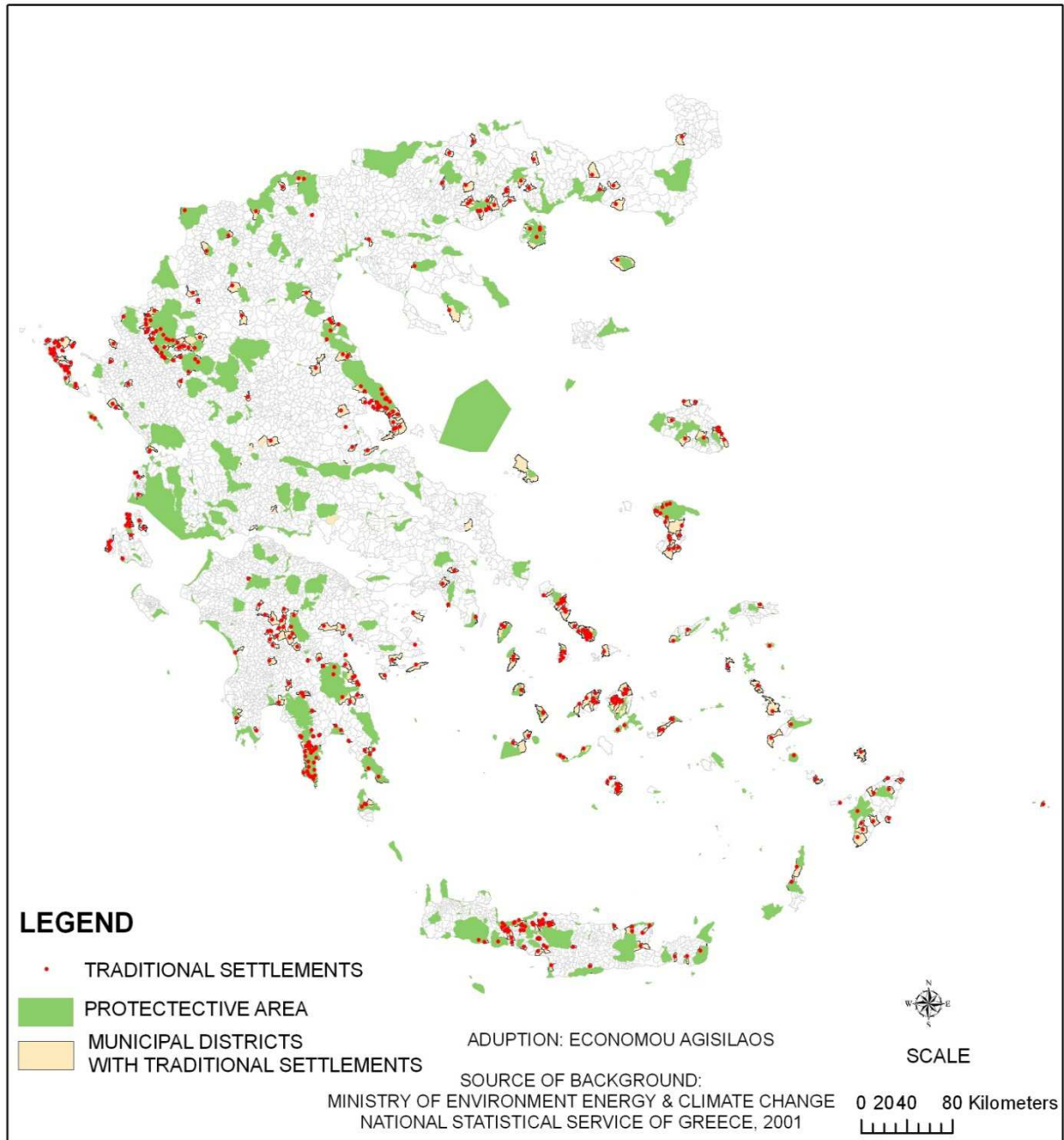
Also, according to the standards set by the Preliminary Environmental Assessment and Evaluation of the project, it is necessary to mention any potential effects on the cultural as well as human environment. In addition, In the new specifications on environmental effects (N.4014/21.09.2011), mention of cultural and archaeological heritage is included.

### **4. Traditional Communities, Natural Sites, Intensity of Tourist Activity**

In order to investigate the relationship between cultural heritage, tourism and the environment in Greece extensive research has been made on traditional communities. The aim of the research was : a) to investigate whether traditional communities are part of the protected natural environment and b) to investigate the relationship between traditional communities and the intensity of tourist activity in the the surrounding areas.

From the collected data (according to the Hellenic Ministry for the Environment) and the employment of Geographic Information Systems, it has been observed that a large part of these traditional communities coincides with the natural protected natural areas of Greece (map 1)

Map 1: Natural Environment and Traditional Settlements



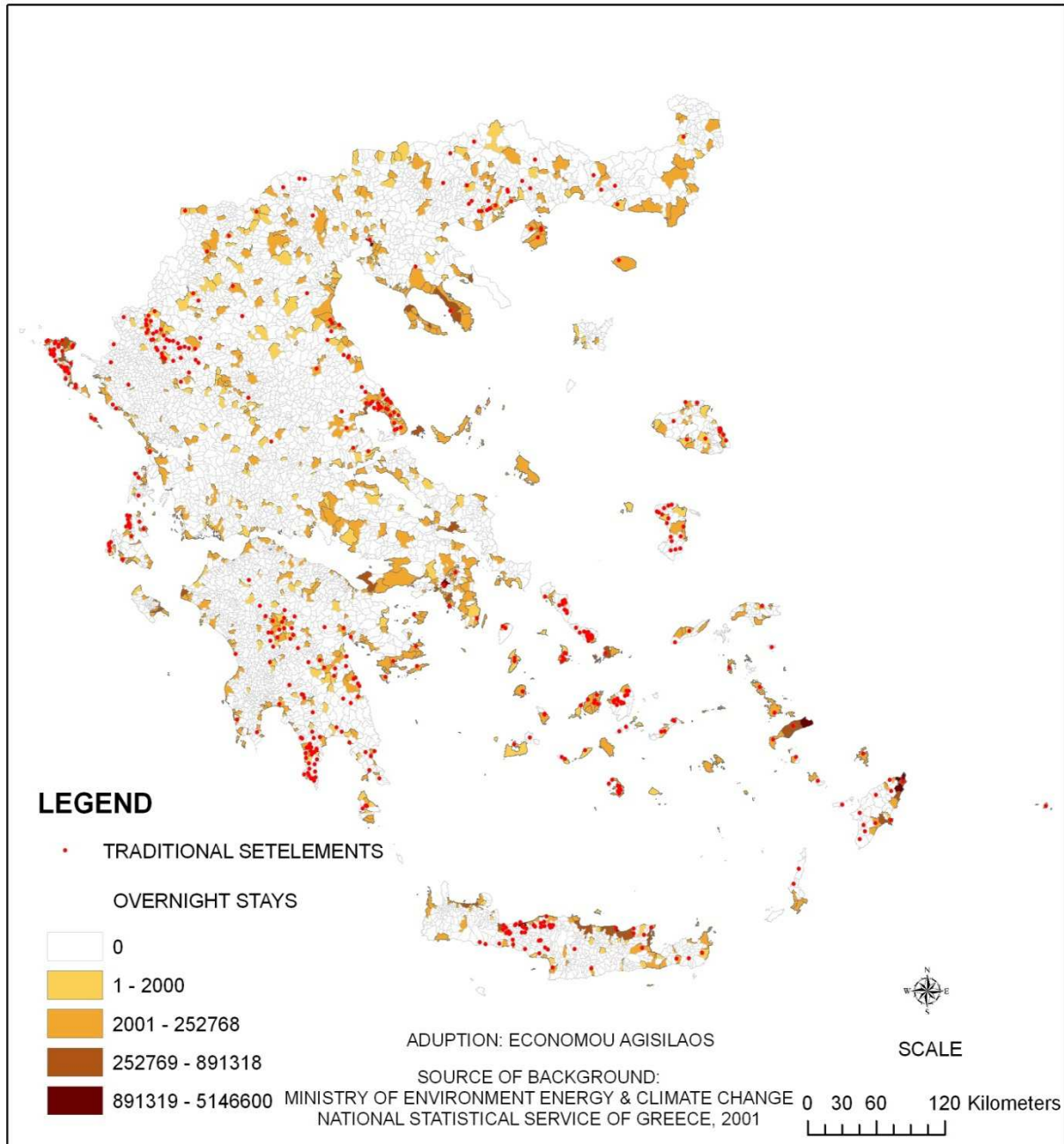
According to the aforementioned data it has been noted that the areas with the largest percentage of traditional communities are the areas of Cyclades (18.52%), Laconia (10.84%), Ioannina (8.23%), Rethymno (7.68%), Magnesia (6.86%), Dodekanisos (6.58%), Arkadia (5.90%), Corfu (5.76%), Kavala (2.74%), Hios (2.47%). Other areas follow with smaller percentages (table 1)

**Table 1: Areas in Greece with traditional communities**

AREAS WITH TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES	TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES	%	AREAS WITH TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES	TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES	%
CYCALDES	135	18.52	EURYTANIA	4	0.55
LACONIA	79	10.84	PIERIA	4	0.55
IOANNINA	60	8.23	PREVEZA	4	0.55
RETHYMNO	56	7.68	RODOPI	4	0.55
MAGNESIA	50	6.86	SAMOS	4	0.55
DODEKANISOS	48	6.58	EVROS	3	0.41
ARKADIA	43	5.90	KARDITSA	3	0.41
CORFU	42	5.76	TRIKALA	3	0.41
KEFALLINIA	30	4.12	EAST ATTIKA	2	0.27
KAVALA	20	2.74	BOEOTIA	2	0.27
HIOS	18	2.47	GREVENA	2	0.27
LASITHIO	13	1.78	DRAMA	2	0.27
LESVOS	12	1.65	EUBOIA	2	0.27
PIREUS	12	1.65	KOZANI	2	0.27
PELLI	8	1.10	KEFALLINIA	2	0.27
HERAKLION	6	0.82	FTHIOTIDA	2	0.27
THESPROTIA	6	0.82	FLORINA	2	0.27
LARISA	6	0.82	FOKIS	2	0.27
SERRES	6	0.82	HALKIDIKI	2	0.27
HANIA	6	0.82	AITOLIA & AKARNANIA	1	0.14
MESSINIA	5	0.69	ILEIAS	1	0.14
ATHENS	4	0.55	THESSALONIKI	1	0.14
ARGOLIDA	4	0.55	KASTORIA	1	0.14
ACHAIA	4	0.55	XANTHI	1	0.14
EURYTANIA	4	0.55	SUBTOTAL	729	100.00

In many cases, the sites of traditional communities coincide with the places with intense tourist activity (map 2). This means that traditional communities, as well as the natural environment that surrounds them, are the primary destinations for many tourists that want to escape from the urban setting and spend time close to nature and to experience, in many cases, the traditional way of life that is free from the problems of the large cities.

Map 2: Tourist activity (2001) – Traditional Settlements



## **Conclusion**

Investigation of relevant sources as well as everyday practical experience leads us to the conclusion that cultural heritage strengthens tourist competitive development in the areas that maintain it. Communities with cultural heritage have great potential to develop into tourist destinations and to grow their economy. Nowadays, culture constitutes a defining factor, especially for Greece, in planning tourist policies on a national level. There are many benefits but also many dangers that may hinder sustainability of cultural heritage and the environment of the host country.

In addition to the benefits of tourism, one must consider the negative and destructive effects it may have on monuments archeological sites and local culture in general. Primarily though the negative effects on the environment that occur due to the mismanagement and unchecked tourist development need to be addressed. Effective promotion and employment of cultural resources, combined with the protection of natural resources, may strengthen local tourist competitiveness and conserve in a sustainable manner the unique qualities of the specific place.

Current practice promotes the integrated management of cultural heritage and tourist development, which makes the most of the benefits of tourism in order to promote local economic development. Sustainable tourism means sustainable environment and sustainable cultural heritage.

In conclusion, before any strategy for the development of tourism is implemented in a place with cultural heritage, in addition to the financial parameters, there should be in-depth study of the evolving environmental parameters.

Our research has shown that: a) the scientific community has become aware and documented of the dangers that exist in the reckless exploitation of cultural tourism. b) The administrative organizations are also aware of the dangers and of the necessity to have sustainable cultural heritage and sustainable environment in order to have sustainable tourism. c) the legislative bodies have already created the necessary legal context for this to be achieved. d) Researchers and the Greek state have identified the traditional communities that require protection and e) there is an important relationship between traditional communities, tourism and natural sites. What remains to be done is to find the will and the strategies necessary for future planning.

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