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**GREEK POLICY ON TOURISM & CULTURAL TOURISM:**

**Case study:**

**Culture as development leverage for quality tourism in the South Aegean**

**I.HISTORICAL REVIEW**

Greece, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has been a place of attracting visitors from all over the lengths and widths of the planet, due to its geophysical location and comparative advantages, its unparalleled natural beauty, its rich cultural heritage and the temperament of its inhabitants, with their spirit of hospitality and respect for diversity.

The first organized effort of a Greek state structure for the management of tourism took place in 1914 in the form of the independent Office (article 15 law 241/1914), which however, due to the First World War, did not operate until 1918 when it was reactivated under the law 1698/1919 as the Independent Office of Foreign Affairs and Exhibitions. In 1929, the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) was established as an independent public legal entity under the supervision of the Ministry of National Finance. Its legislatively defined purpose was to strengthen and promote the coordination of the actions of any public, municipal or community authority, private bodies and businesses in tourism, both within and outside Greece. In 1935, a Supreme Council of Tourism was established until 1950, when it was abolished. Since its inception, the GNTO has undergone several stages: abolition (M.L. 45/1936) and replacement by the **Sub Ministry of Press and Tourism** (which was abolished in 1941 and its responsibilities were transferred to the Ministry of

National Economy under the L.D. 19/1941) and in 1952 the first systematic program for the development of Greek tourism is drawn up within the framework of the Marshall Plan. The Ministry of Press and Tourism was re-established in 1950 (M.L. 1565/1950) and the GNTO's supervision was entrusted initially to the Ministry of Finance once again and then to other ministries such as the Ministry of Coordination (1968), the Ministry of the Government's Presidency (1974) and the Ministry of National Finance (1985). In 1989, an independent Ministry of Tourism (Law 1835/1989 (Government Gazette 76/A)) was established that had the GNTO's supervision until the abolition of the Ministry in 1991 (PD 417/1991 (Government Gazette 153/A), when the Ministry of Finance took over its supervision once again. The Ministry of Tourism was re-established in 1993 (PD 459/1993 (Government Gazette 193/A)) and re-delegated the GNTO's supervision and in 1996 the GNTO's supervision was transferred to the Ministry of Development, which was created from the merge of the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Energy and the Ministry of Technology and Trade (PD 27/1996 (Government Gazette 19/A)), while in 2000 the General Secretariat for Tourism (L.2837/2000, Government Gazette 178/A) was established at the Ministry of Development. The Ministry of Tourism was again restored with the PD 122/2004 (Government Gazette 85/A), with the responsibilities of the GS for Tourism of the Ministry of Development, and subsequently the Ministry of Tourism Development is established with the Law 3270/04 (Government Gazette 187/A) and the GNTO's supervision was transferred to it. (D.Milonopoulos, A.Kontoudaki, pg 207-209)

In 2009 the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was created with the merger of the Ministries of Culture and Tourism Development (PD 186/2009 (Government Gazette 213/A)) and in 2010 the General Secretariat for Tourism was established in the new Ministry (PD 15/2010 (Government Gazette 35/A)). The Ministry of Culture and Tourism was abolished in 2012 (PD 85/2012 (Government Gazette 141/A)), following the re-establishment of the Ministry of Tourism. In 2015, the Ministry of Tourism merged with the Ministry of Development and Competitiveness, with the Ministry of Shipping and the Aegean Sea and with the Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks creating the Ministry of Finance, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism (PD

25/2015 (Government Gazette 181/A)). Finally, in November 2016, the Ministry of Tourism was re-established by all the Departments that belonged to the Ministry of Finance, Development and Tourism (PD 123/2016 (Government Gazette 208/A)).

From the above brief historical review of the operation of both the GNTO since its establishment and the competent Ministry for Tourism, it becomes clear that there has been, over time, a “come and go” of competences on the one hand, as far as GNTO’s supervision is concerned, and on the other hand a situation reminiscent of the Greek legend for the "bridge of Arta" (it was built every day only to be found broken down every night) regarding the establishment of a Ministry of Tourism in Greece.

However, there are also other actors, apart from the GNTO and the relevant ministries/sub ministries for tourism, that are complementary to the implementation of tourism policy, such as Local and Regional Authorities (municipalities, prefectures, regions), professional bodies such as the Hellenic Hoteliers Federation, the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE), the Hellenic Association of Travel and Tourist Agencies (HATTA), etc.

## **II. STAGES OF THE ELABORATION OF TOURISM IN GREECE**

It is of course very interesting to highlight the types of demand that were developed in the early phase of tourism in Greece, when we mainly come across sightseeing tourism, while during the period 1950-1965 cultural tourism also emerges in combination with sightseeing tourism, as many of the foreign visitors that arrive in Athens depart from there to visit archaeological sites (e.g. Delphi, Peloponnese, Attica, etc.)

Along the way, due to the internationalization of demand, the situation changed and mass tourism was developed, especially after the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "in the period 1965-1985 we have the development of organized tourism, numerical increase and spatial expansion of tourist infrastructure in our country. And since

1985, we enter the period of industrialized mass tourism, with the unplanned growth and the segmentation of tourism demand". (Tsartas, p. 18-22)

In Greece, tourism is now a timeless value, as the image of the country has been identified with tourism in the international system and clearly its use as a tool for building a strong National Brand, based on the country's comparative advantages. According to the tourism demand trends, the standards developed over time in Greece are categorized in the following main categories: mass organized tourism, covering the bulk of the tourist market and linked to the development of hotel units and tourist accommodation of various types and addressed to tourists that do not want to do anything other than enjoy the Sun and the Sea and relax. This standard was essentially interconnected with tour operators and with the all inclusive policy.

### **III. DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM**

Culture creates significant and measurable external economies in tourism-related activities, primarily related to the hospitality and alimentation of visitors to tourist destinations, but also more broadly with a wide range of services ranging from transportation to trade. At the same time, culture has a distinct role as a "catalyst for creativity" as it improves the attractiveness and brand name of a country, its regions and cities; it encourages research and innovation within the knowledge society and the new economy and ultimately creates more and better jobs, especially for young people.

Undoubtedly, cultural tourism is one of the fastest and most dynamic sectors in the tourism industry (Wang et al., 2008) and its demand in Europe has increased significantly over the last 50 years, as a new middle class society with relatively high levels of income and education has emerged.

**Culture and cultural heritage** are a **Strategic Opportunity** at a local, national and European level which supports innovative business initiatives with an emphasis on sustainable management and resource utilization. The results of the implementation of coordinated and active policies in the field of culture, through a balanced

combination of "hard" and "soft" highly specialized actions, are not confined to the economic strand but they acquire a wider development dimension that includes education and excellence and has a direct and tangible impact on improving the environment and quality of life.

It is also a key driver for the development of special and alternative forms of tourism beyond cultural tourism, such as religious tourism, gastronomic, hiking tourism, etc. which ensures the sustainability of resources, while it has a high added value as it relates to the Economy of Experiences.

Undoubtedly, over the years, the comparative advantage that highlights Greece's image in international affairs is its culture due to its long history, tradition and culture. Culture in Greece is interwoven with the history of the country as the country's centuries-long, intercultural journey has left its mark on every corner of the Greek territory. The high-value archaeological finds and monuments, the rich tradition and the customs of each region, the folklore and the myths combined with modern culture and various cultural events, create a unique canvas for the visitors that want to get to know Greece through its culture.

**The development of a type of tourism that promotes diachronic Greek values and is directly connected to the culture of Greece, which guarantees its product the high added value of Greek culture in its evolution over time, was expressed in the national tourism policy during 2009-2012 with the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. However, despite the importance of the newly created ministry, which came from the merger of the Ministry of Tourism with the Ministry of Culture, it was treated with caution by the representatives of the tourist bodies, who expressed their fears that this way the development contribution of tourism to the national economy might be overridden (Stathis Kousounis, kathimerini, 2009). It was abolished by the next government in 2102.**

**The very important Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2009-2012) was the Greek state body whose task was to protect, rescue and promote the cultural heritage, as**

**well as to develop the arts in general in Greece.** The General Secretariat for Sport, responsible for the administration and management of issues regarding Greek sport in general, was included in the structure of the Ministry. The Ministry's decentralized services consisted of Antiquities Services, newer monuments Services and museums, forming a wide network throughout the Greek territory. It was also responsible for all aspects of tourism development in the country.

It is interesting to note that both the tourism bodies and the administration have unilaterally turned their interest in achieving the numerical target related to the volume of arrivals and overnight stays, without any substantial reflection on the development of this political choice in the economy, as numbers can be impressively large but the per capita income is disproportionate, as well as in the environment itself and the bearing capacity of the destinations.

With this paper we will not look into the reasons for this increase nor will we evaluate this political choice of the government, as it is in itself a special section, but we underline it as it is a major chapter of Greece's tourism strategy in the medium and long term. The added value of tourism in our country, i.e. the **“cost-benefit”** logic of the final outcome of this growth process and the long-term viability of destinations, should be included into the public debate.

Therefore, the development and enhancement of specific forms of tourism is a classic answer to the question regarding destination viability, since the **“specific”** comes to heal the disease of the **“massive”**.

Hereon, in this paper, we focus on the benefits of Cultural Tourism as it has all the qualitative features required to attract visitors with high standards. As a case study we use the South Aegean, a predominantly polynesian region with 48 inhabited islands, many of which are internationally recognized as the most popular destinations (such as Rhodes, Kos, Mykonos, Santorini, Naxos etc).

#### **IV. CASE STUDY: THE ISLAND REGION OF SOUTH AEGEAN**

South Aegean: A popular destination, with dynamics but also presenting challenges

The most important sector of the South Aegean economy, **accounting for 78.48%** of the total regional employment, is the tertiary sector, with Tourism acting as the promotional activity of the overall economy. The dynamism of the tourism industry is such that places the South Aegean Region, along with the Regions of Crete, the Ionian Islands and Central Macedonia, among the four "tourist Regions" of the country. In terms of employment, "dynamism" and prominent activity, the South Aegean Region can be described as a single "tourist zone" at national, European and international level. The distinct areas with almost exclusively tourist use are mainly found in some islands such as Rhodes, Kos, Mykonos, Santorini, Syros and secondarily in Naxos, Ios, Karpathos and Andros, while on the other islands this use is mixed and operates with the permanent or holiday residence (Regional Operational Programme for the Spatial Unit of Crete - Aegean Islands 2007-2013).

However, Tourism also suffers from the effects of Insularity; problems related to the interconnection of the islands (intra-regional communication), the lack of suitable and adequate infrastructures for interconnecting them, shortages in health care when dealing with emergencies in health and the absence of specialist doctors: all of them largely affect tourism and its specific forms, with the problem growing particularly in the small islands. Also, the small size of most islands limits the potential for the development of scale economies, increasing the cost and timing of dealing with problems arising in relation to tourism activity. The lack of specialized personnel in the tourism professions, mainly in the smaller islands and in specific sectors (hotel staff, chefs, marketing specialists, etc.), and especially in those related to the design and implementation of actions for special forms of tourism (mountain guides, lifeguards, diving instructors, etc.), are serious issues for tourism in the islands of South Aegean.

A major problem with tourism in the South Aegean is the seasonality effect, as high demand is limited mainly to summer months, resulting in higher unemployment and declining population in the winter months. Indeed, in recent years seasonality has considerably increased, since the 6 month tourist season has shrunk to only include the summer months.

The strong points of tourism in the South Aegean are: the world's recognition of South Aegean as a tourist destination, the existence of important cultural resources of national and international scope (archaeological sites, museums, monuments and elements of urban and rural cultural heritage), adequate and high-quality hotel infrastructure in the big islands, etc. Its weaknesses include the spatial overconcentration of tourist flow and activity, the seasonality of tourism (and seasonal unemployment), the limited exploitation of cultural resources and of innovative actions to promote them, inadequate link between tourism and the other sectors of the economy (primary sector, manufacturing), the lack of high-quality hotel services in smaller islands and the inadequate use of ICT in the tourism sector. (D. Skiadas, 2016).

Apart from the inherent weaknesses and challenges faced by the South Aegean islands, a major problem presented during the implementation of tourism policy is, on one hand, the lack of a decentralized government model with the delegation of substantial responsibilities on tourism policy to the regions and municipalities and on the other, the lack of specialized structures and monitoring mechanisms for the tourist product, such as, for example, the Destination Management and Marketing Organization (DMMO), the operation of the Sustainable Tourism Observatory, the Regional Tourism Council.

Today, the municipalities and regions created with the “Kallikratis Law” (law 3852/2010) are involved in promotional and communication actions under the guidelines of the Ministry of Tourism where the responsibilities of the municipalities are reflected in Article 75 of the Code of Municipalities and Communities, as it was supplemented by Article 94 of Law 3852/2010, and the responsibilities of the regions in Article 186 of the same law.

Any attempt by local bodies to create structures (DMO, Observatory), such as the Municipality of Thira, fell into the absence of a supportive institutional framework.



Moreover, the lack of continued operation of structures or successful policies implemented by previous local/regional authorities creates additional problems for the development of tourism. Also, the case of the Sustainable Tourism Observatory in the South Aegean, which operated in 2014 and was funded with ESF resources - the first in Greece under the auspices of the World Tourism Organization (WTO)- and whose operation was interrupted when the local government changed, is typical.

In conclusion, increasing the powers of local actors and developing cooperation networks can facilitate the development of tourism at regional and local level. The need to decentralize decisions in relation to crisis management in the tourism sector is particularly great. It is important for tourism to take into account the concept of locality, the "local affair", as it is something that varies from region to region and is indissolubly linked with the characteristics of each place.

➤ **CULTURE AS DEVELOPMENT LEVERAGE FOR QUALITY TOURISM IN THE SOUTH AEGEAN: "2014: Year of Culture", the philosophy of the thematic year**

The Strategic Development Option of the South Aegean Region for the 2007-2013 programming period was "Quality in Tourism and Cultural Product in Sustainable Conditions, Modern Research Area and High Technology Investment" in order for the South Aegean to become a competitive Region of Greece.

**The Thematic Year of Culture** (El. Ftaklaki, 2014, pg 22-26), as a Strategic Plan for the development of Cultural tourism in S.Aegean region, had as its main objective the promotion of the South Aegean islands not only through the diptych "Sea and Sun" but through the South Aegean islands' richness of tradition, cultural heritage and culture in general, highlighting the identity of the Region as an Archipelagos of Culture, giving tourism a new development course by exploiting the cultural wealth of our homeland.

The promotion and capitalization of the South Aegean islands' culture from classical antiquity to modern artistic creation and the connection between Culture and

Tourism were and should continue to be our goal over time in order to create a strong and unique **island identity** in each island.

**The building of the island identity** is based on those natural, financial, social and other characteristics that have left their mark strongly in the territory (material) and in the local communities (intangible). A typical classification of the South Aegean islands is based on: 1) Islands with "Naval tradition": islands that due to their geomorphology (few natural resources), their position and/or their inhabitants were distinguished in activities related to the sea e.g. Kalymnos, Kassos, 2) Islands with "mining activities" (islands whose production was based on the utilization of natural raw material: Paros, Tinos, Serifos, Milos, Nisyros, Naxos, Santorini), 3) Islands with remarkable geological formations and resources (thermal): Milos, Nisyros, Kythnos, Rhodes, Santorini, 4) Islands with a strong "Agrarian tradition": Naxos, Santorini, Paros, Kea, Kythnos, Milos, Kos, Rhodes, 5) The islands of exile: Anafi, Makronisos, Giaros, Leros 6) Islands with significant flora and fauna, 7) Islands with strong features of more historical periods, crossroads of civilizations, cosmopolitan islands: Rhodes, Syros, 8) Islands with a strong presence of "Arts and Sciences": Andros, Tinos, Paros, Kos, etc. More detailed data can be found in the study conducted by the University of the Aegean under professor Yiannis Spilanis, in 2014.

By classifying islands and creating island identities using modern methods of communication and branding, the Region aims, on one hand, at identifying each destination individually and, on the other hand, at **creating Island Networks with similar strong features or monuments as well as the development of Cultural Routes** and activities to highlight the natural, cultural and productive features of the islands and to push to modern cultural (artistic) and creative production.

## **V.IN CONCLUSION...**

In the cultural sector, the disadvantages caused by insularity can be addressed by targeted actions aimed at: a) promoting the identity of each island more effectively according to its different cultural and developmental characteristics (based on different "tourism development speeds"), b) the use of innovative means of

promoting cultural resources (the creation of innovative museums or applications and theme parks), c) the enhancement of modern cultural creation by the establishment or the improvement of existing arts schools d) the promotion of alternative forms of tourism based on naturalism and culture by developing and strengthening the "green" archaeological routes and parks and f) improving the networking between islands for the promotion of cultural resources and their actions (cultural routes, large-scale events network, museum network). But culture also provides the foundation for the development of business fields, which contribute decisively to income and employment creation and the provision of quality cultural services to the general public.

Moreover, culture also provides the foundation for the development of business activity fields, which contribute decisively to income and employment creation and the provision of quality cultural services to the general public. It is imperative to prioritize actions aiming at: a) the promotion and enhancement of the Cultural Heritage (e.g. protection and promotion of archaeological sites and monuments, facilitation of tourists visiting sites, monuments and museums by creating and enhancing insular maritime archaeological and tourist routes etc.) b) supporting the Cultural and Creative Industries and Contemporary Culture (cinema, audiovisual media, publishing, design, decorative arts, visual arts -music, dance, theater, etc.), c) supporting contemporary Greek creation through encouraging young artists to take professional initiatives in the visual and performing arts.

At the same time, the contribution of the Cultural Heritage -of the timeless and Modern Greek Civilization- as well as that of the modern cultural institutions to the enrichment and diversification of the tourist product, was highlighted through actions concerning the protection and promotion of monuments and archaeological sites selected according to strict criteria such as: a) the archaeological and historical significance of the site or the monument, b) their proclamation as World Heritage Monuments by UNESCO (such as the Asklepieion of Kos) c) their operation as visitor attractions, d) their integration into larger projects to upgrade urban areas or areas of environmental significance, etc.

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