

The Environmental Impact of Tourism and their Effect on Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

The natural and cultural heritage, peculiar and living cultures are great tourist attraction. The intensive and inefficient management of tourism and the association with this development can damage the nature, integrity and the dominant characteristics of these. In this way the ecological structure, cultural features and life style of the host community can also be degraded, as is the experience of the visitor in this place. The architecture of tourism in Greece is "pressed" by overexploitation and the need to offer more and more benefits and amenities. It is therefore necessary to search for and formulate a new architectural example. An architecture that will look for the "less" form, the unintentional materiality and will aim at the minimal (environmental) footprint.

The purpose of this lecture is to underline that the relevant legislation for the protection of sites, buildings and residential complexes did not have the expected results. The architecture of tourism in Greece, the morphological integration of new buildings into traditional architectural ensembles, overexploitation of natural resources and the alteration of the environment lead to the distortion of the truth about the concept of authentic and truly traditional architecture. The subject approach will be made through the presentation of examples.

Keywords: Architecture, cultural heritage, environmental protection

1. Introduction

The cultural heritage of a place is a key component of cultural tourism and a valuable guarantee for the development prospects of settlements. As such, it contributes greatly to attracting tourists with an interest in culture and respect for the environment.

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) surveys, however, the majority of tourists today wish to visit areas of high environmental quality and strong local culture elements. In keeping with this organization, "the development of sustainable tourism responds to the needs of modern tourists and tourist areas while, at the same time, it protects and enriches the opportunities for tourism in the future. The sustainable tourism development leads to the management of all natural resources in a way that

satisfies the economic, aesthetic and social parameters and needs, and preserves cultural diversity, basic ecological processes, biodiversity and life support systems". [Tsamoutseli, 2009]

2. Tourism and Development

2.1. The Greek Space

In the Greek land, more and more regions have been orienting or basing their economy and their local labor market on tourism. This phenomenon has been steadily growing in recent decades, not only in Greece but also in the wider Mediterranean region. Tourism activity with elements that refer to the mass tourism model is, in many cases, highlighted as the key activity. [Panagiotatou, 1998] Based on the increasing the number of tourists and maximizing the short-term economic benefits, remarkable places with specificities are rapidly becoming impersonal receivers of the accommodation and catering services provision.

The current tourism development model, primarily, is based on mass and organized tourism. Already the uniformity of this tourism development model leaves little room for an individualization of the attitudes, preferences and desires of the potential tourists. Also tourism overconsumption and overexploitation alter and deplete the natural and cultural resources of our place, country planet including the traditional settlements. Thus, a great effort is needed to balance the two goods: the good of protection and the good of growth.

However, the lack of spatial planning that takes into account the place's carrying capacity, the continuous rebuilding through, the incentives of all Developmental Laws since the 1980s to the present day and the arrangements referring to the "off-plan construction" have undoubtedly contributed to the transformation of the place into a continuously expanding receptor of tourist accommodation with no limitation and control in terms of either number or character, type, form etc. [Klabatsea, 2009a]

Typically, one can point out some of the consequences of the tourist accommodation uncontrolled growth and the tourism seasonal expansion. Some of them are the

insufficiency of water and energy resources, the tendency for land-use change (agricultural land - residential pressures), the landscape alteration due to reconstruction, the widespread off-plan and often arbitrary construction, the lack of promotion and protection of architectural and cultural heritage, the deterioration of the settlements' traditional character, the primary sector contraction and the loss of local varieties in the agricultural and livestock sector, the lack of local population awareness about alternative forms of tourism and primary sector and many others.

The Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development (CFSPSD) for Tourism (2009), invoking the necessity of sustainable tourism development in the country, does not incorporate the notion of the environment's carrying capacity as a policy criterion. [Avgerinou-Kolonia, 2011] Thus producing "spaces" for tourism that are governed by the philosophy of intensifying the resources and areas use, with large and complex deployments, alteration of the destinations-places identities and the imposition of a new "image". At the same time, sustainable tourism development seems to be a recurrent goal, unrelated to the "place's identity". It is therefore viewed, first and foremost, as an economic prospect of the intervention areas and, secondarily, as a mechanism for the "preservation" of their identity.

2.2. *The current situation*

Intensive and inadequate tourism management and its related development may damage their nature, integrity and predominant characteristics. For example, in Koufonisi Island, the annual rate of building permit issuance for new tourist accommodation over the last decade is one of the highest in the country. It is a typical indication of how the island is treated as a "privileged place" of small or larger investments - redeeming its identity as "an alternative tourist destination of isolation and tranquility with an exceptional natural environment". [Klabatsea, 2006] Hypothetically speaking, the entire land stock on the island could be converted exclusively into tourist accommodation since there are no tools or mechanisms in place up till now to hinder such a development. In this way, the ecological structure, the cultural features and the lifestyle of the host community can also be degraded, as is the visitor's experience in this place. [Fragkou, 2017]

The same phenomenon happens in Santorini where the redemption of the sunset in Oia has made this settlement and the whole island an immense hotel, as well as in many other tourist destinations both in the islands and the mainland. The intense concentration in space and time has resulted in significant alterations in the natural and structured environment as well as in the local communities and economy. The pressures on the environment in tourist areas are strongly felt. Disproportionate residential development, illegal construction, alteration of the place's physiognomy and falsification of architectural-morphological

characteristics of buildings, violation of free spaces and habitats, pollution and lack of water resources, all undermine the viability of the tourist product itself. Crete, Rhodes, Mykonos and other places of reception and development of mass tourism have suffered the consequences of the uncontrolled influx of tourists.

3. **Conclusion**

The intense concentration in space and time brings significant alterations to the natural and structured environments as well as to local societies and the economy. The pressures on the environment in tourist areas are strongly felt. Unfavorable housing development, illegal construction, alteration of the site's physiognomy and falsification of architectural-morphological features of buildings, encroachment of free spaces and biotopes, pollution and lack of water resources undermine the viability of the tourist product itself. What is needed is a "safety net" in the form of a framework law, which "in addition to protection will allow us to think about what we have to do to protect, what is being authentic and to specify, dissuasively and persuasively, a compatible development plan for each place separately, respecting its peculiarity and special character".

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