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EDUCATING A NEW GENERATION OF TOUR GUIDES FOR THE FORTHCOMING ERA, AT THE ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

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The year 2012 proved to be of great significance for the history of tourism education in Greece. The prevailing system of 'State Schools for Tour Guides' was to be paused by the Greek State, after, almost, sixty years of continuous presence. The government's decision to invite the university in initiating a new program of educating tour guides by hosting the "Intensive Courses for Professional Guides" has, arguably, greatly endorsed both the tour-guide's profile and their achieved services. According to the new ministerial decision No. 18062/20.12.2012 (Φ.Ε.Κ. 3401 Β'), it is only graduates who have read archaeology, history, art history, ethnology and social anthropology, that are eligible to attend the course, and following its completion, start working as official state tour-guides. The background of the candidate is seen as crucial for the service they will be providing. Accessing contemporary cultural theories, visitor-oriented approaches and current museological practices and tools, as well as further educational methods and skills, they are building up on their former training, eventually becoming able to deliver new interpretations of the past. They are, therefore, given the opportunity to revisit and redefine the final product they come to communicate with their work, trained to approach the tangible and intangible aspects of Greek heritage from another angle. As Greece has a strong presence in the area of cultural tourism, a rapidly growing segment of the total tourist market, the newly established university program comes to provide an ideal professional expertise for guides to deliver fully updated experiential narratives. A smart tourism market willing to develop and improve its impact on economy should embody such a professional branch as a tool for a qualitatively profitable effect.

Keywords: Arts and Humanities Graduates - Tour Guides, Interpretation of Tangible and Intangible Culture/Heritage, Experiential Narratives, Constructivist Model, Cultural Tourism, Cultural Heritage Communicator.

The paper aims to address the key role that the graduates of the program in question could hold, introducing new forms of heritage narrative. Tour guides should not be considered as a trivial factor in the huge global mass market. They are potentially connected with the creation of an invaluable tourism product, the *experiential narrative*, widely accepted as a necessary tool in a story-driven market (Richards, 2011, p.15).

As Richards marks: “The narratives and images attached to the destination become an important determinant of the value of places to the consumers and therefore their decision-making in terms of destinations and willingness to pay” (Richards, 2011, p.3). So, as a dynamic part of tourism industry, having a discreet though catalytic impact on the consumers’ attitude, tour guides are directly connected with economy numbers.

The paper focuses on the philosophy, methodology and scientific instruments, enlisted at the Interuniversity Postgraduate Program “Museology-Cultural Management” Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in order to broaden the perspectives of a tour-guide in Greece: a *cultural heritage communicator*, combining a solid knowledge not only of cultural and tourism products but also of the audience - visitors to perceive them.

Tour Guides’ Education in Greece: Then and now

Following the German Occupation and the dramatic consequences of the Second World War, Greece, a wrecked exhausted economy, seeks financial help setting out to join the political and economical arena of post-war Europe. Widely regarded as aspects of a culture eminent for the political and philosophical utterance it produced, Greek antiquities could now serve as symbols for such an enterprise to be initiated. Within the rapidly developing field of tourism, the profession of the ‘tour-guide’ begins to emerge, gradually serving as an ‘ambassador’ for Greek culture that eventually comes to endorse the understanding of antiquities worldwide.

At this point, it would be useful to briefly outline the profile of a tour guide in the early decades of the emergence of this brand new professional, in the fifties and sixties, when tourism industry in Greece was still in its infancy. The first State School for Tour Guides, based in Athens, operated under the umbrella of the first government-run organization for tourism education, called School of Tourism Professions, established in 1937. Later on, the School (2002) was renamed to ‘Organization for Tourism Professions’. For more than fifty years in row, ‘State Schools for Tour Guides’ served as a ‘vocational training’ setting, that eventually provided its graduates with a license of a state tour-guide. The basic defined

attendance requirements for the candidates were entry exams (through national exams) for high-school graduates in four topics: foreign languages, essay, Greek history, geography of Greece. State Schools for Tour Guides ran also in Thessaloniki, Corfu, Lesbos, Rhodes, and Crete. Guiding in Greece has been exclusively connected with the educational program as implemented in the frame of State Schools (Legislative framework: N. 710/1977, ΦΕΚ 1375/2002, N. 3105/2003).

Reflecting the era it was originally founded, the curriculum of the School was initially compiled by a scientific committee that consisted of academics, obviously oriented to history and archaeology, the two disciplines that at the time exemplified the core of knowledge that a Greek tour-guide who intended to be professionally activated was expected to present. The Program Course of Study included lessons as Greek History and Archaeology, History of Art, History of Modern Architecture, History of Theatre, History of Greek Literature, Folk and Traditional Greek Culture, Geography, Archaeological and Touristic Legislation, Travel Agencies & Hotel Issues, Tourist Psychology, First Aid, Speech Training, Tour Guiding Techniques, Bus-touring. Attendance was compulsory and lasted two and a half years, while the educational schedule included lectures, visits on sites and outdoor excursions all around Greece. Applicants, who had previously earned a degree in history and archaeology, could enter the State Schools without having to undergo exams in the subjects of History and Essay, as they had already done so during their early University Examinations. However, they were obliged to fully attend and sit on exams in History and Archaeology during the semesters. In addition, other topics such as history of religion, legislation, theatre, ecology, geology, tourist psychology, tour-guiding techniques etc, contributed to attaining spherical knowledge, concerning a variety of topics, questions and challenges that tour-guides confront in their everyday working reality.

Due to a variety of reasons (political, social, financial) relevant at least partly, to the advent of the so-called Greek crisis, in 2012, the Greek State decided to -temporarily- pause the traditional State Schools for Tour Guides, after approximately 60 years of unceasing operation. Moreover, the Greek government highlighted an

interesting scientific issue, originating within a theoretical discourse touched on current literature about the role of public archaeology (Merriman, 2004a, p. 3-5). This, in turn, leads us to consider the profile of the professional appointed to communicate heritage narratives to audiences in the country. This reflection, moreover, brings about also a neglected aspect of the role that historians and archaeologists could furthermore embrace. That is, communicating their work to the public.

The philosophy of tour-guide education during its first period could not correspond to this demand; a top priority was given to producing a new generation of professionals. Via a political decision [No. 4093/2012, Medium - Term Fiscal Strategy 2012-2015], imposed by the European institutions and the IMF that supervises the administration and economy of the country, graduates such as archaeologists, historians, archaeologists-historians, art historians, ethnologists, social anthropologists etc, are only eligible for becoming officially licensed tour guides, after having successfully attended the “Intensive Courses for Professional Guides”.

The theoretical and practical aspects of knowledge, as basic instruments, represent just a plain challenge for a tour-guide. The most intriguing part of the venture is the involvement of audience. Nowadays, the relationship between the one who communicates culture and the recipient constitutes a crucial scientific issue, largely suggestive of previously established theories of culture that the area of humanities has only now begun to exploit, including communication theory and theoretical frameworks introduced by cultural management and the newly-realized discipline of museology (Kelly, 2008), (Kelly, 2006), (Housen, 1987), (Cross, 2002), (Σκαλτσά, 1999).

Before elaborating any further on this questioning, it is necessary to refer to the changes that occurred concerning tour guides’ education since 2012. Attending intensive 300hours lessons and practical seminars, exclusively organized, scheduled and implemented by academics, largely experienced in the interpretation and presentation of Greek culture and civilization, the candidates are given a great opportunity to orient their former academic background towards a new direction. They get acquainted with the crucial aspect of building and performing tour narratives,

concentrating on the fundamental relationship between cultural/tourism products and their audiences/consumers.

Before presenting the content of the “Intensive Courses for Professional Guides”, it is important to mention that the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was the first to run this Program in 2013 (May-July) and then successively for the next two academic years, 2014 (February to April) and 2015 (March to May). The assignment of “Intensive Courses for Professional Guides” to the Interuniversity Postgraduate Program (IPP) “Museology-Cultural Management”, proved to be the most appropriate one for running the task. In fact, it was a great opportunity for an academic program to run a course that could be an autonomous Masters itself, as a branch of museology. Furthermore, museology provides the suitable scientific infrastructure that sets the basic principles for the implementation of the Course.

Highly informed by contemporary approaches and theories of culture, museology is a discipline greatly concerned with preserving, interpreting and presenting the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage, and with the literal and constructed social environment wherein the relationship between man and the object, as well as that developing between man and the museum come to form. Besides the great number of actual recontextualized objects that museums for long have held and displayed, museology now comes to consider as such, that is ‘objects’, monuments, archaeological and historical sites, natural settings of physical and architectural interest (Schörer, M., Bellaigue, M., 1997, p. 6-7).

As stressed by the coauthor¹, any attempt of interpreting the past inevitably entails a mediating process of rejoining past and present. Largely investing on a narrative-interpretative guiding discourse and its museological deployment/rendering in

¹ Νίτσιου, Π., (2011). Μουσειολογική θεωρία και ιδεολογική της χρήση σε αφηγήματα μουσείων: Εφαρμογή σε τρία παραδείγματα. Διδακτορική διατριβή, Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, Πολυτεχνική Σχολή, Τμήμα Αρχιτεκτόνων (Nitsiou, P., Tracing Museological Theories and their Ideological Deployment on Museum Narratives in Greek contemporary museum practice: three illustrative case studies, Doctoral Thesis, 2011, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering (forthcoming publication by the Masters Program in Museology-Cultural Management)

museological terms, contemporary Museology approaches monuments along the historical and social processes these bear, by providing points of reference the public can easily follow thus ultimately inviting varied interpretations. For this to happen, the guide enlists familiar values, behaviors, understandings, easily accessible by the audience, thus facilitating their relationship with the past.

The “Intensive Courses for Professional Guides” Program What kind of tour guides? The Philosophy

According to the current theories of culture, public archaeology, museology etc, *tangible and intangible elements/aspects of culture/heritage* (historical places and sites, monuments and museums, traditions, morals and customs, songs and music) is a communicative medium, involved in social practice, being a social product itself. Culture is, in fact, ‘speech’ incorporating messages, that are built through microrelations and macrorelations between signs. (Tilley, 1994, 69-70).

So, if culture products constitute a communication system, it is obvious that the need for *meaning making* is present. To this point the conversation goes much further, including terms as: *interpretation, presentation, interpreter, visitor*. (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999, 35-36).

As Thompson marks (Copeland, 2004, p.132), *interpretation* is in part an *educational function*, requiring a clear distinction between *information* and *understanding*. This latter notion, “*understanding*”, as the ideal for communicating cultural heritage, brings to light an unstudied scientific issue.

Until today tour guiding has followed a positivist approach where the public was told what to see in a linear way instead of being inspired through the *polysemy* of interpretation (Tilley, 1994, p.72). However, the constructivist perspective could be particularly appropriate to exploring the nature of interpretation and presentation of culture to the public. A constructivist approach is congruent with the notion that interpretation must connect the topic or place “*to something within the personality or experience of the visitor*”

(Merriman, 2004a,p. 10,11), (Copeland, 2004, p.133,135), (Hein, 1999 p.73-80), (Hein, 1998). As Von Glasersfeld marks “*What we make of experience constitutes the only world we consciously live in*”. (Copeland, 2004, 134).

Current theories of museum education emphasize non-linear, self-directed ‘learning’, where proximity to ‘truth’ is not the ultimate goal. According to Thomas “*people are less ready to accept the “authorized” view of the past, preferring to choose for themselves what kind of past they wish to believe in*” (Thomas, 2004, p. 191). The basic principle here is that museums and cultural environments in general, should perform themselves in such a way so as to stimulate feelings like wonder, awe, mystery, nostalgia (Richards, 2003), “otherness” etc, that is a creative, poetic, anti-rational approach revealing the individual *aura* of objects and notions (Merriman, 2004b, 101).

In any procedure, related to cultural products’ reception, individuals are constantly constructing and reconstructing meanings through the interaction of senses, perceptions, memories of previous experiences and cognitive processes, which shape understandings and events. In any activity such as a tour guiding, they create experience and meaning to a form of personal construction of the world. Touring Cultural Heritage is a negotiation, an interaction between visitors’ carried patterns and the presentation parameters. (Copeland, 2004, 135-137).

The *constructivist model* of presenting tour guiding obeys in specific methods, widely accepted by all specialists, related to the management of cultural heritage audiences. (Copeland, 2004, p.140-142), (Ham, 1999, p.161-164), (EdCom, 2001). Building cultural narratives and presentations is not at all an easy task. In fact it is a combination of a strictly scientific field comprising accuracy and communicating structure. It constitutes a conceptual framework, demanding precise methodological steps.

There should be rules involving terms like; story format, plot structure, theme and topic, feedback-loop, vehicles with which the narrative is to be developed and a solid analogy between introduction, body, conclusion (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999, p. 35), (Ham, 1999, p.165). A lot of theoretical work, concerning the core of information to be shared and the audience-receiver of it, has to be

done before the practice on the field (museum, archaeological site, historical place etc).

A crucial factor in reference to *meaning making* is the social dimension of it (Copeland, 2004, p.140), (Richards, 2003). Individuals involve themselves in *touring*, not only for the sake of history, knowledge, learning etc. Above all they pursue social contact. People like to interfere and interact with each other, using culture products as a pretext for doing so. This challenging balance between individuals, objects, interpretations and the interactions between them, needs an animator - facilitator to orchestrate the procedure through a two-way traffic of ideas and responsiveness. In fact, the encouragement of a “dialogue” (Copeland, 2004 p. 142), might be a suitable term to describe the process.

Constructing *communication* along with creating *meaning* is a dual challenge, involving the term ‘*polysensuality*’ (Merriman, 2004a, 10). As more and more people are relying on their feelings and emotions in their everyday lives, meaning and value might need different means to be produced.

Merriman uses the term ‘*informed imagination*’ (Merriman, 2004b, 103) to describe a poetic approach to the produced narrative or activity taking place during an interpretative procedure, like a guiding tour. Such a product is an emotional, *experiential narrative* which draws on poetry and fiction, inviting visitors to construct their own stories.

The role that *the arts and humanities graduates - tour guides* could serve in such a procedure of presenting heritage to the public is really catalytic. Having a deep knowledge of the proper scientific instruments and methodologies they are in the position to *animate* and *inspire* the creation of *cognitive dissonance* (Copeland, 2004, p.134) as an “artistic” activity which aims at revealing meanings and relationships behind objects, monuments, notions, audiences and narratives.

Another important contribution of the graduates of the program is their understanding of the political nature of History, Archaeology, Anthropology, Arts etc. Many archaeological sites, historical places, personalities, notions and objects are strongly debated, as directly connected with national affairs. A guide, with a theoretical academic background, can certainly handle issues of high national importance in the most accurate and integrated way. It is

crucial to have in mind that tour guiding as part of public archaeology is a serious matter of ethics. (Merriman, 2004a, p.13). (Χαμηλάκης, 2007), (Damaskos, 2010).

Also, the new generation of tour guides regards museums and cultural spaces as “constructed sites”/“theatrical places”. Consequently, they are in a position to introduce the inner part of them. In this frame, they can perform guided tours behind the scene revealing how to use the aspects of cultural products in the best way. In addition, they can sufficiently deal with topics like museum architecture (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999, p.41), management, politics, code of ethics dealing with preservation, conservation, presentation of the cultural heritage etc.

Digital technology, material in store, debates about the ethics of collecting, disposal etc could also form part of the presentations so that the visitors have the great, fascinating chance to question the fundamentals of what, why, how archaeologists, curators, museologists and related specialties, do.

Also, a Human Study graduate - tour guide considers audio, visual, tactile interpretation techniques and other representation formats as necessary means for being effective. Above all though, the main priority should be to engage visitors’ emotions, if they are to make a lasting impression and create true value.

It is important to mention here -no matter how utopian it may sound- the key role that the new guides could play as tour operators, designing and producing narratives for alternative destinations that should have been in the touristic agenda a long time ago. The potentials for building a new touristic map in the country are infinite, as during the last fifteen years a body of notably important monuments, museums and sites were added to the cultural fund of the country. The discussion about the contribution those new guides could have in the improvement of the touristic product could be really interesting. Having on the one hand a new cultural infrastructure consisted of monuments and, on the other hand, consisted of human resources we could really optimize the whole venture of tourism creating a new starting point for the forthcoming decades.

They represent a great combination of well grounded skills and qualifications that form a top kind of a professional facilitator. They

can effectively distinguish instruction from provocation, information from inspiration, experiential from procedural, when organizing a guiding for a wide demographic profile of their audiences.

The decision of giving graduates with a background in the arts and humanities the opportunity to become professional tour guides, proves to be really challenging. They constitute a new form of tourism professionals (*cultural heritage communicators*) properly qualified to fill in the gap of a tour guide model, corresponding to the demands of a nowadays tourist market. In fact they can exploit all the basic principles of the current museological theory, related to the culture and the public in the most solid, effective way. It is exactly this prospect that determined the whole philosophy of “Intensive Courses for Professional Guides” at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

The “Intensive Courses for Professional Guides” Program The Methodology

It is obvious that this new generation of tour guides, as described above, have already conquered a great deal of profound theoretical knowledge, concerning culture and civilization, during their academic training. Also, they have participated in many days' educational activities and excursions all around Greece, South Italy and Sicily as part of their compulsory and voluntary outdoor archaeological and excavating courses.

So, the question arising is what their training should include, in order to complete an already integrated, qualitative level of knowledge, related to Cultural Heritage. The challenge here would be a path for the connection between culture and visitors, which, in fact, reflects the need to project the “touristic face” of archaeology, museology, anthropology, ethnology, as academic disciplines.

The Program was scheduled according to the notion that all necessary fields for tour guide experts should fit in 300 hours. The prevailing priority was to combine a basic theoretical approach with all the practical aspects of a professional training. All the three years of implementation included nine thematic fields, as follows:

- Tourism and Sustainable Development Principles
- Tourism Legislation. Archaeological Legislation
- Geography - Natural and Human Made Environment
- Cultural Heritage Management
- Interpretation - Presentation of Tangible / Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Guiding and Museum Education
- Tour Guiding Techniques
- Orthophony - Speech Training
- First Aid

The Program also included four educational trips that functioned as a simulation of the real field work. The candidates, themselves, were asked to fully organize the whole trip; narrative

body, points of interest, stops, bus-touring during the travel, visual material, cooperation with the Travel Agency etc.

A closer examination of the thematic fields would be useful to comprehend the methodological steps, adopted in scheduling the Program. The first field, “Tourism and Sustainable Development Principles” deals with topics such as; Tourism Industry, Greek and International Tourism Market, Types of Tourism, Alternative Tourism, Tourism and Sustainability, National Parks, Natural Heritage, Obligations of Travel Agents and Tour Operators, Consumer Rights of Tourists”.

This field also includes topics such as “Psychology and Tourism. Social Psychology of Tourist Behavior”, “The Public; treatment methods”. Dealing with issues, related to *audiences* and *visitors*, the field “Psychology and Tourism Behavior” provides candidates with a different point of view, as it broadens the typical discussion about the “general public”, at least as it is known in the frame of museology.

The second field, Tourism and Archaeological Legislation is necessary for all professionals of cultural heritage, especially tour guides who deal with the everyday experience of it. Given that the majority of Greek monuments are directly connected with classical antiquity, Archaeological Legislation is a field that the candidates attending the program should be fully aware of. On the other hand, Greece constitutes a typical tourist destination, demanding deep knowledge of Tourism Legislation on the behalf of all those working on the area of Tourism Market.

The fourth thematic field, Cultural Heritage Management defines and presents tangible heritage and the scientific methods for its preservation and presentation to the public. The introductory part sets the frame, the basic principles and the International Guidelines - Code of Ethics on Conservation, Restoration, Preservation, Presentation of Sites and Monuments.

The field also includes topics of great importance for guiding, such as: History of Museums, Museums and Monuments in Contemporary Greece, Museum Collections, Contemporary Art in Greece, Archaeological Sites, Traditional Settlements and Communities, Historic Cities, Industrial Heritage, Science and Technology Parks, Cultural Centres.

As it is clear, almost all aspects of Cultural Heritage are embodied in the Course, so that the variety of Greek culture is highlighted, setting the challenge for a touristic approach of places and monuments that, until today, remained unexploited.

The fifth field, Interpretation - Presentation of Tangible / Intangible Cultural Heritage refers to the core of the philosophy the Course follows. As shown above, *interactive interpretation* illustrates the scientific tool for a *constructivist model* of tour guiding, where the public actively participates in an experiential dialogue among objects, people and narratives.

At this point it is necessary to underline the great importance of embodying interpretation theories to an extroverted field of public speech about culture and monuments, like tour guiding. Although, at least initially, one could consider those two topics as entirely irrelevant, their combination could be revolutionary for the production of tour narratives. This latter ascertainment is also of great importance for the purely scientific part of the discussion. As part of Public Archaeology tour guiding will be sometime in the near future an issue in the scientific agenda of Museology, Pedagogy etc.

The field “Interpretation - Presentation of Tangible / Intangible Cultural Heritage” contains crucial theoretical approaches of great interest, such as: Contemporary Economical and Social Issues, Modern History, Politics, Regime, Historical Consciousness, Contemporary Theories for the Interpretation of the Past.

Furthermore, two courses of this specific field are directly related to the subject “tour guiding”. The first deals with “Techniques for organizing interpretative and interdisciplinary guiding activities” while the second covers the practical aspect of the procedure under the title: “Designing visual methodological tools for tour guiding”.

Also, the field “Interpretation - Presentation of Tangible / Intangible Cultural Heritage”, included two weeks of outdoor practice, where candidates scheduled and organized their own narratives, according to the interpretative core of guiding. The whole experience resulted in a corpus of urban tours that constitute integrated -ready to sell- tourism products themselves.

Equally renovative was the idea of connecting Guiding with Museum Education. Museums, particularly the archaeological ones, hold a large portion of tour guiding in Greece. As we have already discussed, there is a whole body of knowledge concerning Museum Communication, Museum Education, Museum Audiences, Museum Exhibitions, Museum Narratives etc, that is clearly related to tour guiding. For the first time in the history of Tourism Education in Greece, the participants of the program were taught and were asked to practice Museum Education as an integral part of guiding speech.

Apart from theoretical approaches in the classroom, the candidates are taught methods for organizing guiding tours, adapting to diverse audiences, like children, teenagers, adults, minorities, elderly and disabled people.

The next thematic topic, “Tour Guiding Techniques”, constitutes the applied field of tour guiding in all aspects. Practical subjects like: various kinds of tour guiding (private, groups, land tours, cruises etc), means for delivering and communicating tour narratives, design and management of digital technology in museums and archaeological sites, cooperation with tour operators and travel agents, methods, tools and means for organizing bus-touring, designing tour narratives for specific destinations, the role of tour guide in the frame of a specific audience, basic principles and ethics of public speaking (Andrews, Andrews, Williams, 2002, p. 10-25) etc are examined in the frame of the topic.

In fact the field “Tour Guiding Techniques” is the most crucial of the Course as it completes the solid, academic knowledge of the candidates in a practical orientation. It is worth mentioning the importance of providing a combination of academic with a professional training, especially in reference to the fields: Interpretation - Presentation of Tangible / Intangible Cultural Heritage, Guiding and Museum Education, Tour Guiding Techniques. Those three fields deal with the same topics from an entirely different point of view. They set the same questions, suggesting methodological tools around a common correlation of concepts: museums, monuments, culture, audiences/visitors.

Last but not least, the course entails six introductory hours to Orthophony and Speech Training. The candidates have the chance to comprehend the importance of using their voice, an invaluable expressive means, in a proper way so as to become attractive

speakers. In the short duration of six hours they are taught exercises that can perform and practice alone afterwards, improving their appealing to audience senses (Andrews, Andrews, Williams, 2002, p. 257-278, 281-306).

Originated from an academic environment most of Human Studies graduates are not familiarized with being exposed to the audiences. On the contrary, until recently they have not treated their relationship with the public as something which merited their scientific attention. Especially archaeologists must come to terms with the idea that communication is a specialized field with its own disciplinary framework, directly connected with the interpretative nature of Heritage.

However, the role of a facilitator, “transmitter”, docent and so on (Βελένη, Γεωργάκη, Ξανθοπούλου, 2010, σ. 203) is inherently incorporated into the scientific identity of archaeologists, anthropologists, art historians, curators, museologists etc. The “Intensive Courses for Professional Guides”, is the means of converting academic information, concepts and theories into intelligible words, images, experiences as a “popular” aspect of Cultural Heritage, existing anyway in its profound nature.

A basic contribution of “Intensive Courses for Professional Guides” to Tourism Education and, by extension, to tourism market, is exactly the opportunity for Human Studies scientists to expand their communicating skills for the sake of monuments, research, audiences and the quality of life itself.

The academic frame of the Interuniversity Postgraduate Program (IPP) “Museology-Cultural Management” can provide all the validated scientific methodological tools for educating the new tourism professional, a *Cultural Heritage communicator*.

The “Intensive Courses for Professional Guides” Program

The new generation of Tour Guides and Cultural Tourism

This new professional branch described as a *cultural heritage communicator* fulfills an emerging tourism trend defined as “cultural tourism” (ICOMOS, 1999) or “cultural routes” in the best way for the country. *Cultural tourism* is considered a high level

leisure activity, taking place especially in Mediterranean and Southern Europe.

According to the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) there is a range of trends, identified as prevailing preferences by cultural tourists: art exhibitions, organized museum tours, industrial heritage sites, sites of memory, architecture sites, historic parks, local celebrations etc.

Cultural tourism is a rapidly growing segment of the total tourist market, considered as a high spending tourism, consumed by highly educated individuals, who search for special cultural experiences in the destination. With its roots in the Grand Tour (Richards, 2003) it is one of the forms of tourism that most policy makers seem to be betting on for the future. According the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *Cultural Tourism* accounted for 37% of global tourism and forecast that it would grow at a rate of 15% per year. In addition, the number of people visiting cultural attractions has also grown. According to the European Heritage Group (European Commission 1998) attendance at museums, historical monuments and archaeological sites has doubled between 1977 and 1997. Also, the attendance at museums and monuments across Europe grew by about 25%.

In a general perspective, *cultural tourism* is widely viewed as a grown market. At the same time it is important to underline the growth of cultural attractions by over 100% in the past 20 years in Europe, outstripping the growth of demand. In addition, in five years, between 2004-2009, there were around 375 million international cultural trips. (Richards, 2003), (Richards, 2011).

In the current experience economy of tourism, where ideas and feelings are tourism products, story-telling proves to be the ultimate tour service for the forthcoming era. Self-actualization is now the greatest need. As Richards marks: "*Story-telling will become one of the major drivers of the dream economy in the future*" (Richards, 2011). Indisputably, value creation in tourism market is about stories, narratives, feelings, ideas, experiences, not anymore pre-packaged, but co-created with the tourist.

So, what is needed is "*a shift from the simple provision of information and services towards the creative co-creation of experiences, narratives and dreams*" (Richards, 2011) in other

words a shift from static museums and monuments towards interactive experiences and intriguing, imaginative narratives.

As Richards ascertains, apart from the cultural fund a “producer of creativity” is needed as a co-creator of knowledge, innovations and spiritual experiences (Richards, 2011). In the same vein, the academically cultivated ability of this new branch of professionals to schedule and organize narratives, stories, destinations (place-making) is more than an interesting perspective. The graduates of the program in question can perform *cultural tourism* “not as a passive activity but as a means of creating places” (Richards, 2011).

As mentioned above, this new generation of tour guides represents a new kind of high-potential tour operators that could change the map of Greek *cultural tourism*. This new scientific professional team could set new destinations and “sell” new culture brands by projecting a monumental fund, remaining so far unexploited. In a growing market the design of competitive products is a great challenge that could lead us far beyond the typical tourist scenery: Acropolis, Olympia, Delphi and Crete, etc.

During the last decades Greece has been embellished with a number of renovated archaeological sites, museums and places of historical interest that could become a great chance to renew the repertoire of the tourist product. In the frame of the current conjuncture such a policy could be of crucial importance for improving the quality of Greek *cultural tourism*.

Conclusion

The inauguration of the “Intensive Courses for Professional Guides” university program has endorsed the educational and professional perspectives of tour guides in Greece. Since 2012 a new generation of professionals has emerged in the field of tourism in the country, endowed with a great deal of skills and potentialities, yet not fully realized. Representing different disciplines, the successful candidates can be transformed to animators, entertainers, infotainers etc, able to produce *experiential narratives* that broaden the approach to cultural heritage, represent an entirely different profile for tour guides. Sharing a solid background of knowledge on

cultural heritage, they provide a new qualitative service in the tourism industry, addressed to special audiences that pursue more than plain information. The course aims to complete and update the already conquered body of awareness through strengthening the communicative, extroverted part of candidates' qualifications.

The basic core of the educational process exploits the *Constructivist Model* of cognitive comprehension. In this frame "learning" and "knowledge" are built gradually via an experiential procedure based on dialogue, mutual communication and socializing with the catalytic contribution of emotions and senses. In this "synergy" between objects, monuments, stories, history, people, emotions etc, the tour guide, a "primus inter pares", holds a key role, as the person who is called to orchestrate an accurate balance.

In this new educational aspect, three thematic fields, for the first time simultaneously delivered, make the difference: Interpretation - Presentation of Tangible / Intangible Cultural Heritage, Museum Education, Guiding Techniques. The academic origins of the two of those (Interpretation, Museum Education), along with the practical field of Techniques, together provide a great context for obtaining a pioneering contemporary training for tour guides in a Tourism Market update.

Accessing contemporary cultural theories, visitor-oriented approaches and current museological practices and tools, besides further educational methods and skills, this new generation of professionals delivers new interpretations of the past, comprehending the intrinsic *aura* of objects, monuments, stories in their contexts.

A tour guide completing the course in question is a professional who not only informs, but provokes and enlightens, not only shows but performs, not only transfers but inspires, not only speaks but narrates, not only addresses but communicates, not only explains but stimulates and initiates, always following validated scientific museological methods.

A smart tourism market willing to develop and improve its impact upon economy should embody such a professional branch as an alternative tool for a qualitatively profitable effect. A great deal of national monumental fund stands infertile. It is more than crucial to staff and vitalize those monuments with the proper professionals, while bearing in mind the changes the tourism anthropogeography

has been subjected to, during the last decades. Visitors, their interests and demandings, their financial possibilities, have rapidly changed. Naturally, tour guides should follow.

UNWTO projects a positive 2016 for Tourism in Greece and forecasts that the country will maintain a powerful image worldwide as a major tourism destination, consolidating its growth in 2016, as shown by booking trends. Also, according to the forecast issued by UNWTO international tourist arrivals are expected to increase in a long-term forecast by 3.8% a year for the period 2010 to 2020². The diversification of the touristic offer and the development of new destinations, among other priorities, could directly involve this new body of professionals in an effort to broaden the offered services, concerning cultural tourism in Greece.

A balanced, healthy market should provide a variety of possibilities for different kind of interests. In fact, all kinds of professionals are absolutely needed and there is enough space for anyone who wants to tackle. Diversity in tourism products and professionals, who produce and deliver them, is the key for the much anticipated development.

There couldn't be a more favorable environment than the current one, for this new generation of tour guides to emerge, exploiting their qualifications for the sake of Greek tourism, identified with the sake of Greek economy.

² See UNWTO Press Release. Retrieved from: <http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2015-07-08/international-tourist-arrivals-4-first-four-months-2015>. Accessed the 18th of March 2016, at 16:40.

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