

LAND USE POLICY AND TOURISM: THE CASE OF GREECE

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Land use changes in Greece are the end product of social shifts and influences, historical developments and changes over time to the land which, combined with the effects of European, national and in particular sectoral policies, have brought about a complex and diverse land situation subject to a variety of continuing pressures. One such pressure is tourism, with various significant consequences for economic and social activities on the land and natural resources. The authors' objective is to explore and briefly analyze both in what ways spatial policies in Greece (including tourism policies) have had an impact on tourism and vice-versa how tourism activities have generally speaking affected land uses in Greece, especially over the last decades.

Keywords: *Tourism, land use changes, tourism land use policy, spatial planning, tourism policy*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a “polydynamic sector at an international level” (Galanos, 2009), with both positive and negative impacts on the economic and social activities of land, on its natural resources and amenities. The relationship between tourism and natural resources may be associated with changes to their character, considering that the impact of tourism is “the result of the complex interaction and coevolution between ecosystems and societies” (Aretano et al., 2013; Antrop, 2005)



and, indeed, the policies connecting them. As a driver of growth for the global economy it is a mainstay which is therefore promoted at every level. At a global, European and national level, the impact of tourism on the environment, society and the economy has been the subject of various investigations and studies. The aim of this overview was to explore and briefly analyse the impacts of tourism on land use and, more specifically how spatial policies in Greece (including tourism policies) have impacted tourism and how tourism and its related policies have in general affected land use in the country. Such a correlation, which to our knowledge has received little research interest to-date, may provide a basis for analysis of endogenous and exogenous factors affecting the impacts of the tourism sector on the land and more specifically the natural and cultural resources on which it depends for its continuation and sustenance. Each particular form of the interaction involves the diverse nature of the place and the social, political and cultural life of the people.

A Brief Overview of Greek Tourism

Greece features complex and multifunctional landscapes of rich ecological, biophysical, climatic and terrain diversity and value. Consequently it has been a magnet for humans (tourists and others) since antiquity. Confirmation of this fact is found in the study of the Observatory for Digital Greece (2007), which underlines that Greece ranks high in global tourism due to its strong relative advantages, with “...its rich heritage, natural beauty and established position as a key destination in Europe and the Mediterranean.”

In Greece, tourism developed during the post-war period and came to be based on the model of mass tourism. Issues and questions related to changes in land use as a consequence of tourism or other spatial (national or European) policy were identified. This was effected through an exhaustive literature review in the collaborative project VOLANTE under the European Commission’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) spanning recent decades. (www.volante-project.eu)

CONSEQUENCES OF TOURISM IMPACTS ON LAND USE IN GREECE

General Comments

The bibliographical survey results demonstrate the interdependence of tourism and land use. Moreover, this interdependence is complicated by the fact that as often has been reported “tourism is linked directly and indirectly to all areas of economic activity ... such as agriculture, construction, power generation, transportation, and all activities of the tertiary sector and is the fastest growing industry worldwide” (Dimitriadi & Kallia-Antoniou, 2012; Hellenic Association of Travel and Tourist Agents, 2012).

Tourism has been on the rise, during the post-war period, throughout Greece with emphasis on coastal and insular areas. Its promotion and geographical spread, however, has been markedly polarized, leading to serious regional growth disparities. Moreover, infrastructure thus created was, in many cases, unregulated and is not accounted for or incorporated in the particular development plan (Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises, 2010). Since the 1980s the tourism product in Greece has shown signs of “industrialization”, in many tourist destinations in the country, due to the “adoption of the model of mass tourism” (Dimitriadi & Kallia-Antoniou, 2012) with all the obvious attendant negative social and environmental impacts (Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises, 2010).

The unrestricted expansion of tourism facilities was accompanied by the failure of the State to create an organizational planning framework, i.e. a system to protect natural resources or a realistic plan for development and promotion of the tourism product. The result was pressures and adverse impacts on both the Greek tourism industry and on land uses in these areas (and especially on the natural environment) whether built on or not, in all of its elements, biotic, abiotic, historical etc.

Particularly in rural areas some of the main causes of pressure towards land use change were: the combination of a failed urban spatial policy from 1950 onwards, the increase in the number of secondary residences, urban sprawl, the ownership pattern which developed in Greece, non-compliance with building provisions for both planned and for off-plan areas (illegal construction), lack of a complete cadaster and the development of tourism.

Infrastructure and Human Activities

There is considerable inconsistency and variation among many destinations in their tourism development; e.g. a lack of common strategy and joint marketing and actions for the creation of new products and services and lack of transportation and links between the coastal areas and inland areas, as well as between islands and coastal islands. Furthermore “the physical interactions between land, sea and natural resources are complex and have equally complex legal consequences arising from the constant conflict between private and public rights, boundaries, responsibilities and management priorities” (Vittis, 2004). Conflicts over land use arose mainly in areas of high tourism development, due to the over-concentration there of tourism activities (Valavanidis & Vlachogianni, 2011; Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises, 2010). Major changes in land use have thus ensued in Greek coastal areas, especially in foreshore zones and beaches. Various structures both legal and illegal, as well as fencing-off for exclusive use, have weakened the institution of communality of the foreshore (Vittis, 2004).

The complexity of such conflicts over land use is exacerbated through the continuous expansion of tourism land coverage and conversion of traditional land uses such as farming to mixed or entirely tourism-oriented uses: not a simple change in use, but a complex phenomenon of interdependent processes and functions. As a result of tourism growth and expansion, in many parts of Greece, agricultural land was built on and land prices rose, rendering other uses prohibitively unprofitable. Furthermore, the resultant expansion of residential areas brought a need

for enforcement of town planning regulations. In these ways the burgeoning of tourist destinations brought about the abandonment or underdevelopment of various rural areas, growth of regional disparities and degradation of areas surrounding the great majority of the country's tourism destinations. Further supporting this is the finding that especially in coastal and insular areas the economy is "mostly based on tourism and services, but also on small scale, family agriculture" (Spilanis et al., 2009).

Finally, the creation of new transportation networks servicing destinations, both for tourists but also for supplying tourist facilities, apart from seasonal traffic congestion, led to the expansion of the existing infrastructure for tourism and other purposes, either legally or without the required authorization, resulting in the degradation of environmentally sensitive areas.

Environment and Climate

Human-induced causes, such as illegal, off-plan and unregulated construction, as well as the creation of large infrastructure projects exert great pressure on natural resources. The main problems which are found are those of "land use conflicts between tourism, agriculture, mining activity, fish farming, fishing; residential development in protected areas (NATURA areas, sites of outstanding natural beauty, CORINE biotopes, marine parks etc.); unauthorized building and traffic" (Angelidis & Oikonomou, 2005). Growth sectors, including transport, water works, energy production and tourism exert concomitant pressures, being both the cause of and subject to the effects of land use change.

Tourism further exacerbated or brought new pressures and changes in the environmental balance of these areas: pressures inside and outside urban areas both throughout the year (infrastructure construction, large-scale facilities, ports etc.) and also seasonal (resource consumption climate change and environmental effects such as reduction in biodiversity, desertification, etc.) (Chiotis&Coccosis, 2000;Beriatos, 2008).

The constant expansion of tourism facilities and the increase in accommodation requirements and other related business activities also placed strains on natural and forest resources. “Regions with high growth in their tourism accommodation in ex-urban areas show significant signs of deforestation” (Minetos&Polyzos, 2010). Areas for proposed tourism activities were not afforded the appropriate protection and suffered degradation. Especially in recent years, having lost their protected status, forest areas in Greece were opened up to tourism development. Trails and footpaths were not demarcated and/or the regulations concerning providing proper forest access and protection of already established access routes were not observed.

With regard to climate, according to the Hellenic Republic Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change in the 5th National Communication to the UNFCCC (2010) “The Greek tourism sector is closely connected to climate quality, as to the nature-based resources”. The climatic conditions prevalent in tourist attractions are a key factor in tourist demand. Bearing in mind the seasonality of the tourism product, changes in land use and in the tourism product brought about by climatic changes affect supply and demand, with both direct and indirect changes in environmental conditions and/or parameters, which may lead to environmental degradation (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, 2010). “Climate change is expected to impact spatial and seasonal tourist distribution, resulting in change to both coastal and inland tourist destinations and exacerbating the problems of regional disparities” (Mourmouri, 2010).

POLICIES, LAND USE AND TOURISM

Tourism Land Use Policy and Tourism Policy at the European Level

The European Union has promoted no specific legal spatial framework specific to tourism among its member states (in contrast to the case of agriculture with the CAP) and the concept of spatial planning

stems from the EU Treaty itself, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and the Territorial Agenda of the EU (2007). In the Territorial Agenda, the emphasis is on spatial relationships, rules and commitments between member states, at the national and regional levels. Additionally, tourism is becoming an EU objective and a declared aim, within the European Cohesion Policy and several other regional programmes, actions and regional policies.

Looking at the respective trends of the last decade at the EU level, European action in the field of tourism focuses on targeting tourist destination promotion. Nonetheless, the importance of the tourism sector is recognized both by the Treaty of Lisbon and by the priorities for action identified in the 2010 Communication on Tourism. These were concerned with stimulating competitiveness in the European tourism sector, with promoting development of sustainable tourism, with consolidating Europe as a collection of sustainable and high quality destinations and with maximizing the potential of European economic policies for tourism development.

The European Commission, mindful of the importance of the tourism factor, promotes actions and measures for its integration into other policies. This promotion was primarily carried out through programmes of Community support for tourism. Included among these instruments are various European Structural Funds (ERDF, ESF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) etc. For example “in the Fifth Environmental Action Programme of the EU tourism has been identified as one of the policy areas with priority for action” and in the sixth Environmental Action Programme “Tourism is recognized explicitly in the fifth priority axis of strategic action and mainly in the development of networks across tourist destinations with the aim to encourage the exchange of experience and good practice on sustainable forms of tourism and furthermore of the active participation for sustainable tourism” (Coccosis, Mexa, & Collovini, 2002). In Greece, the National Strategy Plan for Rural Development subsidizes rural tourism and ecotourism activities and encourages tourism activities through Axis 3 and Axis 4. Additionally,

sustainable alternative tourism activities receive subsidization, as part of the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 (NSRF) of the Operational Programme “Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship”.

Moreover, according to the Annual Tourism Report (2013), funding for the tourism sector in Greece has been instigated through the sectoral Operational Programme “Digital Convergence” for “actions that aim at the optimal promotion of the tourism product and at the management of the electronic Tourism Business Register”. Greece also actively promotes the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII) and the EU Strategy prepared and elaborated for the Adriatic and Ionian region. A horizontal priority of the Greek Presidency of the EU Council, the Integrated Maritime Policy, is supported by the Ministry of Tourism in the context of its wider aim of promoting "Blue Growth", the long-term initiative to better exploit the potential of Europe's oceans, seas and coasts, for sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors.

Tourism Land Use Policy and Tourism Policy in Greece

Sectoral European Land Use Policies in Greece

For the purposes of our analysis, the basic national policies resulting in land use changes are assumed to be spatial policies and, in particular, spatial planning for tourism. Secondly, with regard to tourism we also took into account land use impacts of other sectoral policies, such as the national maritime strategy and policy for protection from climatic changes etc., as these strategies and policies were affected by European guidelines and strategies especially in recent years.

As regards the role of policy, our research indicated that land use change is generally a result of the interplay among all European sectoral policies, in conjunction with national planning policy. Changes in the Greek legal framework, resulting from national policy and the integration of European directives, in tandem with natural and human drivers of change, as mentioned in the previous section, have significantly impacted land use.

As our study aims to elucidate, either as an activity or as policy, tourism both affects and is affected by existing policies and land uses.

In the agricultural sector, the 1980s witnessed an intensification of agriculture, an increase of yields, ecosystem degradation and soil erosion, followed, over the period 1980-2010, by uncontrolled urban expansion (Beriatos, 2008) and tourism development, due to the expansion of tourist destinations (following rising demand) and the lack of land use legislation and of development of tourism strategy. According to Minetos (2009), these changes occurred “from agricultural land to urban, forests and woodland to urban, from agricultural land to forest etc.” During the 1980s, farmers were encouraged to become entrepreneurs by changing their sources of their income, and turning more actively to land protection. The implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy has been shown to affect land use in many different ways, whether direct or indirect (Cosor et al., 2012), and this combined with other policies brought about the intensification of agriculture.

In the transport sector, the period 1980-2010 witnessed the modernization and expansion of infrastructure, e.g. the coastline highway servicing northern Crete, the Egnatia Motorway in northern Greece, etc. A key finding was the rampant change of roadside uses, with an emphasis on rural and large urban roadside land also constituting tourist attractions or service areas.

In the energy sector, EU directives on renewable energy, especially in recent years, have brought about changes, both at the legislative level and in land use, mainly through the construction of inland and coastal wind farms, the use of agricultural land for solar farms etc. The latter investment has had a positive impact on the tourism sector with regard to power supply, but also brought about significant and irreversible changes to the aesthetics of landscape as a tourist destination.

The environmental sector was perhaps the one that underwent the greatest impact, despite the transposition to Greek law in recent years of EU Directives on environmental and natural protection, with the creation of corresponding conservation areas and related measures (i.e. the drafting of forest maps, cadastre etc.). Unfortunately, these general

guidelines were then circumvented through specific or small-scale interventions, counter to the general legislation and through investment boosting efforts, under the justification of the economic crisis and purported sustainable development. This fact, combined with the non-implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy, the lack of funding for the management of protected areas, the occurrence of large forest fires, lack of full implementation of the Water Framework Directive and other factors, have led to land use transformation, with the results recorded above.

At all levels (urban, regional, sectoral and national) the mainstay was spatial planning, which, since the 1970s and 1980s, has promoted the creation of a framework for the implementation of land use policy in Greece. Indicative urban planning legislation, for 1971-72 was Legislative Decree (L.D.) 1003/71 Government Gazette (GG) 198A concerning active urban planning and L.D. 1262/72 (GG 194A) with reference to the master plans of urban areas etc.

National Land Use Policy and Tourism up to 2008

During the 1980s, attempts were made to change the planning philosophy, as spatial planning was being influenced by changing political and social conditions of life in Greece, and by the accession of Greece into the EC. However, such steps towards modernization unfortunately just covered up existing problematic circumstances, without solving underlying spatial problems such as illegal construction etc. The latter situation has only been tackled in the last four years, in an attempt to normalize the legal framework, as shown in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1 Legal Framework for Tackling Illegal Construction

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| Law (L.) 4178/2013 (GG 174A/8.8.13) | Tackling illegal building works, safeguarding environmental harmony and other provisions |
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| L. 4014/2011 | Environmental licensing of projects and activities, regulating illegal buildings in relation to creating environmental balance and other provisions within the competences of the Ministry of Environment |
| L. 3843/2010 | Electronic tagging of building, construction overruns and changes of use, metropolitan renovation and other provisions |

The multitude of laws and directives relating to issues of spatial organization and policy, combined with frequent changes in governmental structures during the past two decades has not brought about the desired results. Spatial planning was called upon on numerous occasions to incorporate and/or plan already existing situations, culminating in many cases in land use favouring tourism.

In Greece, various legal texts have acted as a starting point for spatial planning (Tables 2 and 3). The basic framework, however, was defined in Law 2742/2008 (GG 128/A/3.7.2008) of the General Framework of Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development. Despite the fact that this Framework was intended to “establish the fundamental principles ...(and) ensure the protection of the environment throughout the national territory and individual units thereof and reinforce the country’s position in the international and European context” under Article 2 of Law 2742/2008 (GG 128/3.7.2008), exceptions were made for site-specific areas of the framework, such as the Integrated Tourist Development Areas (ITDA), in accordance with the provisions of Law 2545/1997 (GG 254A).

The requirement for integrated national spatial tourism planning has been the subject of the Council of State, especially after the issuing of a Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD) on the delimitation of an Integrated Tourist Development Area in Messinia, despite the fact that this is an obligation under the Constitution and in particular Article 24. The result was that in Greece, Master Plans, Residential Control Zones, General Urban plans etc. have constituted spatial planning substitutes (Mathioudakis, 2013). Thus, a basic cause of many of the above issues is “beyond any doubt the far from clear delimitation of land uses” (Angelidis & Oikonomou, 2005) throughout the national territory, as well as “the lack of urban and regional planning or, where it does exist, its

ineffective implementation” (Angelidis & Economou, 2008). “No matter how these problems arise, the Greek legal framework and appropriate mechanisms of urban and regional planning prove seriously incapable of addressing them” (Cosor et al., 2012).

Table 2 Existing National / Regional Spatial Planning Legislation

| Name of Law | Summary |
|---|---|
| L. 2742/99 (GG 207A) | Spatial planning and sustainable development and other provisions. |
| L. 2941/01, article 2, par. 10 (GG 201A) | Environmental licensing – siting of renewable energy source (RES) stations – Special Framework. |
| Ministerial Decisions 25290/03 (GG 1487B), 25291/03 (GG 1486B), 25292/03 (GG 1484B), 25294/03 (GG 1485B), 25297/03 (GG 1470B), 25301/03 (GG 1451B), 26295/03 (GG 1472B), 26297/03 (GG 1473B), 26298/03 (GG 1469B), 29310/03 (GG 1471B) | Adoption of the Regional Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for the regions: Southern Aegean, Thessaly, Peloponnese, Western Greece, Epirus, Western Macedonia, Northern Aegean, Central Greece, Western Macedonia and Thrace respectively. |
| Ministerial Decisions 674/04 (GG 218B), 48976/04 (GG 56B) | Adoption of the Regional Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for the regions Central Macedonia and the Ionian Islands respectively. |
| Parliamentary Decision 6876/4871/08 (GG 128A) | “Adoption of the General Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development.” |
| Decision 49828/08 (GG 2464B) of the Government Policy Coordination Committee for the sector of Spatial Planning and Sustainable development | Adoption of the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Renewable Energy Sources and associated Strategic Environmental Impact Study. |
| Decision 11508/09 (GG 151AAII) of the Government Policy Coordination Committee for the sector of Spatial Planning and Sustainable development | Adoption of the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Industry and associated Strategic Environmental Impact Study. |

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| Decision 24208/09 (GG 1138B) of the Government Policy Coordination Committee for the sector of Spatial Planning and Sustainable development | Adoption of the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism and associated Strategic Environmental Impact Study. |
| Ministerial Decision 51949/10 (GG 1925B), MEECC | Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the General, Special and Regional Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development. |
| Decision 31722/4–11–2011 (GG 2505B) of the Government Policy Coordination Committee for the sector of Spatial Planning and Sustainable development | Adoption of the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Aquaculture and associated Strategic Environmental Impact Study. |
| Ministerial Decision 10106/11 (GG 45AII), MEECC | Adoption of specifications for the drawing up of the Regional Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development (specifications for evaluation, revision and specialization of Regional Frameworks). |
| L. 4002/11, article 14 (GG180A) | Questions of implementation of the Special Spatial Planning Framework for Tourism and other measures for the promotion of tourism investment: Amendment to the provisions of L. 2971/01, L. 3342/05 and L. 711/77. |
| Ministerial Decision 13390/12 (GG 811B), MEECC | Amendment to Ministerial Decision 51949/2010 “Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the General, Special and Regional Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development” (GG 1925B). |
| L. 4042/12, article 56 (GG 24A) | Harmonization of the Regional Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development with the River Basin Management Plans. |
| Ministerial Decision 18150/12 (GG 1341B), MEECC | Provisions for drafting plans for integrated urban intervention. |
| Decision 67580/13 (GG 3134B) of the Government Policy Coordination Committee for the sector of Spatial Planning and Sustainable development | Drafting of the General and Special Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development. |
| L. 4269/14 (GG 142A) | Spatialandurbanplanningreform Sustainabledevelopment. - |

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| L. 4277/14 (GG 156A) | NewMasterPlanforAthens, Attikiandotherprovisions. |
| L. 4280/14 (GG 159A) | Environment upgrade and private urban development – sustainable development of settlements –regulation of forest legislation and other provisions |

Table 3 Existing National / Regional Tourism Legislation and the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism

| Name of Law | Summary |
|---|--|
| L.2160/93 (GG 118A) | Tourismregulation and other provisions. |
| L. 4002/11 (GG 180A), L. 4014/11 (GG 209A), L.4070/12 (GG 82A), L.4093/A (GG 222A) | Laws 4002/2011, 4014/2011, 4070/2012 and 4093/2012 include provisions concerning the simplification of licensing procedures for hotels and other tourism businesses, environmental licenses and new types of tourism investments (Integrated Tourism Development Areas and tourism accommodation complexes). |
| Law 4002/11, article 14 (GG 180/A/2011) | Implementation issues relating to the Special Spatial Planning Framework for Tourism and other provisions for the promotion of tourism investment - amending provisions of Law 2971/01, Law 3342/05 and Law 711/77. |
| L.4070/2012 (GG 82A) | RegulationforElectronicCommunications, Transport, PublicWorksandotherprovisions. |
| JMD 170078/13 (GG 2507/B/2011) | Standard environmental commitments for the projects and activities of class B of group 6 “Tourist facilities and urban development projects in the building sector, sport and recreation”. |
| Law 4179/13 (GG 175/A/2013) | Simplification of procedures to enhance entrepreneurship in tourism, restructuring of the Greek Tourism Organization and other provisions. |
| Decision 65657/13 (GG 3156 B) of the Government Policy Coordination Committee for the sector of Spatial Planning and Sustainable | Adoption of the findings of the report on implementation of the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism. |

development.

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| Decision 67659/13 (GG 3155B) of the Government Policy Coordination Committee for the sector of Spatial Planning and Sustainable development | Adoption of the amendment to the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism and Strategic Environmental Impact Assessments. |
| L. 4256/14 (GG 92A) | Cruise ships and other provisions. |
| L. 4276/14 (GG 155A) | Simplification of operating procedures for tourism enterprises and infrastructure, special tourism types and other provisions. |

National Tourism Land Use Policy up to 2009

The year 2009 saw the publication of the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism JMD 24208/09 (GG 1138/B/2009): “Approval of the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism and Strategic Environmental Impact Study.” Its key objectives were to protect and enhance the natural and cultural environment and to improve the competitiveness of tourism, while ensuring the sustainability of resources and the development of a clearer framework for the underlying planning principles and processes. The framework took into account the existing conditions prevailing in Greece, identified the main features of tourism in the country, set conditions and restrictions (regulations specifying minimum areal extent for the main tourist accommodation structures etc.) and provided tourism strategies and guidelines for the spatial organization of tourism. Thus, it constituted an attempt to solve spatial conflicts between tourism and land uses stemming from other sectoral policies (whether already in practice or not), such as environmental, agricultural,

forestry, and other policies, (JMD 24208/09: GG 1138/B/2009), as indicatively recorded in the table below (Table 4).

Table 4 Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism (2009): Key Concerns and Proposed Strategies

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| Key concerns of Special Framework for Tourism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The growth of tourism activity. • The increased housing demand in organized tourism facilities. • New forms of management of tourist accommodation (e.g. condo hotels). • The lack of coherent common tourism policy within the EU, hindering planned tourism development in Greece. • The country's comparative advantages (e.g. cultural capital, climate, the large number of islands, length and quality of coastal natural environment, diversity and degree of alternation in the form and type of resources, density and variety of areas of outstanding natural beauty, etc. |
| Main characteristics of Greek tourism which were taken into account | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence of mass tourism, coupled with the limited development of other forms of tourism. • Environmental degradation in some destinations. • Strong seasonality, necessitating the enrichment of the tourist product with alternative and special-interest forms of tourism • Frequent limited accessibility of destinations. • Low degree of satisfaction with amenities. • The depreciation of a significant proportion of tourist accommodations, despite the attempted slow but steady qualitative upgrading of hotel capacity, based on new standards. • Dysfunctions and deficiencies in specific tourist infrastructures (congestion, lack of parking spaces, etc.), which exist in many tourist destinations, resulting in environmental degradation. |
| Proposed strategies and directions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The classification of areas according to their tourism development (developed, developing, less-favoured for tourism, metropolitan, coastal and island, mountainous, lowland and semi-mountainous areas, NATURA 2000 areas etc.). • Categorizing of tourism areas: mass, moderate and alternative tourism, island or non-island. • Promotion of various alternative and special-interest forms of |

tourism (conference, urban, marine, cultural, religious, etc.), directly linked to existing infrastructure.

The outcome of the implementation of this framework and tourism policy, in general, reflects not only the effort to protect and conserve resources, but points to the fact that “ultimately the logic which has prevailed is development through exceptions to protective regulations”, (Mathioudakis, 2013). This argument has also been supported by observations from the Hellenic Association of City and Regional Planners (2013). Specifically, certain consequent issues were identified such as that focusing on small-scale interventions does not reflect the integrated spatial approach on a large scale, despite the provision of incentives; moreover, the application and development of organized facilities for sited tourism activities may bring about adverse impacts and increase strains in already overburdened contexts with an emphasis on special protection areas and uninhabited islands. Further reference was made to the lack of carrying capacity assessment in the JMD text and to conflicting provisions between the General Spatial Framework and the Special Framework for Tourism, as, for example, in siting industrial units of medium and high nuisance in tourist areas (incompatible uses).

Generally speaking, the current situation of tourism, in terms of existing land use, in Greece, is the result of both the existing spatial policy that has been practiced over the past decades, and of its failure to address tourism issues, especially after the decades immediately after the end of the Greek civil war. Numerous irreversible and permanent land use changes came about from the adoption of the mass tourism model, aided by a number of factors: the geographical sprawl of tourist facilities in the country; the concentration and expansion of tourist poles without the application of a particular spatial development framework; the insufficient restriction of off-plan construction; the lack of interest in improving the features and “applicability” of mechanisms for organized siting of tourist activities; the lack of a system of priority zones, carrying

103

capacity assessments, and of operational criteria for siting within each zone of the different forms of tourism (especially organized and specific forms), etc. Thus, one of the basic results of the above is that a characteristic of tourism in Greece is “spatial dissipation” (Economic and Social Council of Greece, 2008), and furthermore the current spatial disorganization has “various consequences for development, spatial planning, residential/urban planning and the environment” (Economic and Social Council of Greece, 2008).

Organized forms of tourism activities, such as Integrated Tourist Development Areas (I.T.D.A.), Areas of Organization of Production Activities, and Areas under Special Zoning Regulation display weaknesses, especially as to their geographical siting, which may present constitutional problems. The incomplete institutionalization of measures to promote satisfactorily the financing of operations through development programmes, upon completion of a study, constitutes a major drawback resulting in inconsistency in effective inter-regional reinforcement of the tourism sector. Without specific protection regimes, urban planning policy, together with legislation for off-plan construction, was counterproductive as to the final form of the tourism product. Rather, it led to conflicts in urban and extra-urban areas and to environmental degradation. The development of roadside infrastructure, combined with the unmanaged and unplanned creation of mostly small tourist infrastructure (rented rooms) after qualification reports were issued by the Greek National Tourism Organization, did not take into account visual saturation standards and led to landscape deterioration of areas outside settlements.

National Land Use and Tourism Policy up to date - Recent Legislative Reform

Significant legislative changes in spatial planning have been instigated since 2010, in an attempt to reinforce and organize the legal framework of tourism. In 2010, Ministerial Decision (MD) 51949/10 of the MEECC was issued for “Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the

General, Special and Regional Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development” (amended in 2012). Combined with the provisions of L. 2742/1999 (GG 207A) and MD 10106/11 (GG 45AAII) on “Adoption of specifications for the drawing up of the Regional Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development (specifications for evaluation, revision and specialization of Regional Frameworks” (Table 2), it led to the drawing up of the Evaluation Reports for the Regional Frameworks applied to the 10 Greek regions, and to their (currently in progress) revision. As pointed out by Gemenetzi&Zaharos (2012), “the evaluation, revision and specialization of the Regional Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development of the regions of Greece raises for the first time the issue of the protection and management of landscape as a significant parameter in spatial and regional planning”.

Towards the end of 2013, the Government Policy Coordination Committee in the sector of Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development, with JMD 67659/13 (GG 3155/B/12-12-2013) adopted the amended Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism and Strategic Environmental Impact Assessments. Table 5 sets out the assessment carried out for the purposes of the amendment, as well as the new proposed strategies and directions.

Table 5 Amended Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism (2013): Key concerns and Proposed Strategies

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| Key concerns of the new Special Framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The upgrading of spatial planning within the framework of the European guidelines and policies through sustainable development and recognition by the European Commission of the significance of tourism for the Greek economy. • The country’s comparative advantages (e.g. cultural capital, climate, the multitude of islands, natural environment, density and variety of areas of outstanding natural beauty, etc. • Tourism’s contribution to employment and the trade balance (economic crisis). The Greek tourism product remains typically “Mediterranean”. • A feature of Greek tourism is low package cost associated with |
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| | <p>low foreign exchange earnings for the country of destination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The decline in internal tourism since 2010 due to the economic crisis and the low competitiveness of Greece, together with the development of new tourism destinations, e.g. Turkey & Croatia.• The development at national level of a long term strategy for tourism, taking into consideration the unsatisfactory level of services in many tourist destinations in Greece and the calculated expansion in tourism activity on a worldwide level. |
| Aims are to facilitate | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The promotion of sustainable and balanced development of tourism in the country.• The shift from a mass, undifferentiated and monothematic tourism to one which is high-quality, differentiated, multi-thematic, and with greater financial yields.• Reduction of the impact of seasonality of tourism through the promotion of high-quality tourist accommodation establishments, services and infrastructure, together with the upgrading of existing lower grade facilities.• The support of less-developed tourism areas, along with the exploitation of special / alternative forms of tourism and the broadening of the range of tourism products available, taking into consideration the natural, cultural, economic and social identity of each area.• The exploitation of the local natural and cultural features, and restriction of the sprawl of tourism facilities into off-plan areas.• The development and organization of the national territory for the tourism sector taking into consideration all provisions laid down for other sectors/industries & the exploitation for tourism, in the context of present guidelines, of state owned real estate. |
| Indicative Proposed strategies and directions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Categorizing of the national territory based on the following criteria: a) intensity and type of tourism development, b) geomorphological features and c) vulnerability of the resources in area categories. (Developed and developing tourism areas; areas deemed appropriate for development of special / alternative forms of tourism, metropolitan areas, islands and coastal areas, mountainous areas, lowland and semi-mountainous areas, areas belonging to the National System of Protected Areas, protected and deserted settlements, archeological sites, monuments and historical sites, and areas of particular interest.• Establishment of guidelines, measures and actions linked to tourism development, according to area category.• Strengthening of alternative forms of tourism through the promotion of new sectors (such as cruises and marinas)• Introduction of new forms of infrastructure such as “mixed use resorts” or “tourism accommodation complexes.” etc. |

- Priorities with regard to the type and form of tourism development in each area.
 - The promotion of incentives for the establishment of higher quality tourist accommodation establishments and the upgrading of existing tourist accommodation establishments to 4/5 star standard.
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Furthermore, besides the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism, various other pieces of legislation have sought to reinforce and organize the legal framework for tourism (Table 3). A recent example is Law 4179/13, aiming to boost enterprise by simplifying procedures and introducing new tourist products (such as condo hotels and youth hostels etc.) and attempting to regularize operationally the infrastructure of diverse tourist attractions. Despite the commendable intentions underlying them, Law 4179/13 on mixed use resorts, in combination with the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism, were unfavorably received by ecological organizations, who raised major concerns over such issues as the environmental strain of building in NATURA areas and changes to the terms of out-of-plan construction, so as to allow the siting of tourist accommodation facilities in forests etc.

Finally, the most recent relevant laws have been Law 4269/14 (GG 142/A/28-06-2014) “Spatial and urban planning reform–sustainable development” and Law 4280/14 (GG 159/A/08-08-2014, “Environmental upgrade and private urban development–sustainable development of settlements–regulation of forest legislation and other provisions”. As regards the spatial and urban planning reform, objections were raised in relation to the undermining of spatial planning at the national level with the promotion of the new concept of the governmental national spatial planning strategy and of national/regional spatial planning frameworks, while Law 4280/14 contains provisions regarded by ecological organizations as also increasing pressures on the Greek forest environment.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our exploration of the interdependences between spatial land-use policies and tourism in Greece points to a complex, tentative and circular chain of existing balances, based on partially causal relationships, with interplay between causes and effects. All policies impacting on land use and tourism pursued, particularly in recent decades, represent a barrage of efforts to resolve existing problems, namely the promotion of politically motivated programmes (often not fully worked out) and the servicing of special interests (local or otherwise). In addition, all sectoral spatial policies, and in particular those for tourism, create pressures on land, with both permanent and non-permanent effects, which in turn, inevitably result in the dependency of the tourism product on changing the conditions of tourism destinations.

In Greece, as we have seen, there are significant land-use conflicts between tourism, agriculture, mining, fishing, infrastructure development, with the deterioration of the physical environment through tourism/recreation development, and landscape destruction through large-scale construction works. Meanwhile, and as a result of the above impacts on the land, the appearance of the rural landscape is changing fast, at rates so rapid that we find degraded landscapes in the vicinity of or within environmentally sensitive parts of the country. Also noteworthy is the debasement of environmental standards, the ecological degradation and the destruction of the landscape, in favor of economic growth. An ineffective legal framework and inappropriate mechanisms of urban and regional planning together with the lack of institutionalization for areas of ecological and cultural value, insufficient appreciation of the value of cultural landscapes and the lack of awareness and education, intensified the consequences of the various drivers mentioned above.

Reinforcing the tourism product through existing policies and legislation should be undertaken not only to solve problems when they arise, but as an application of procedures and guidelines that lead to specific, desirable and sustainable outcomes. Tourism, as a complex activity with a direct and indirect impact on the living and non-living space of human societies, should be suited to their characteristics and prospects, emphasizing regional uniqueness and particularities, protecting but at the same time

promoting the landscape and the environment, enhancing entrepreneurship and safeguarding local cultural, physical, economic and historical diversity and richness. For this purpose, all aspects of land use, change and development ought to be integrated, both in law and in practice, into prospective tourism planning and management.

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