

CULTURAL AND SPORT ACTIVITIES THAT TAKE PLACE IN THE PARK OF AIGALEO (BAROUTADIKO)

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Abstract

The present research aims to reveal whether an urban park like the Park of Aigaleo (Baroutadiko) can contribute to the sustainable development of the wider urban area of the Municipality of Aigaleo in Athens. Mainly, we focused in the areas of cultural and sports activities performed on site.

For the research purposes of the theoretical part Greek and foreign literature was used. Much of this comes from the municipal library; the local press of the Municipality of Aigaleo. The gathering of the bibliography was difficult as there is no organized material somewhere for the Municipality of Aigaleo, as well as for the Park of Aigaleo. In addition, there are no other relative researches that have been published. Specifically, the theoretical part includes an analysis of the term "sustainable development", the historical approach of the overall area that the Park of Aigaleo belongs to, recording of the cultural and sporting activities - events that take place within the limits of Baroutadiko as well as recording of building complexes - facilities where these kinds of cultural and sporting events - activities are carried out.

For the needs of this essay a field research by means of questionnaires to 200 guests of the park was conducted. Both the questions and the statistical analysis aimed to investigate the opinion of citizens concerning the contribution of the park in the sustainable development. The possibility to approach the degree to which citizens perceive the contribution of the park to the sustainable development of the Municipality of Aigaleo, environmentally, socially and culturally is examined

Keywords: *Sustainable development, cultural and sporting activities, cultural heritage, Municipality of Aigaleo, Park of Aigaleo (Baroutadiko).*

The Park of Aigaleo

Sustainable development is the development that seeks balanced combination of three factors: environmental protection, economic efficiency and social equity and justice. All these have as a core the quality of life which would include decent living, social participation in a healthy environment. (Mitoula, 2008)

Therefore, sustainable development is not as quantitative, but qualitative growth in the sense that it pursues a balance of the human values. The evaluation of the sustainable development of a region is a complex process, which requires specialized knowledge on a large group of issues, availability of information and especially a lot of time for study and research. Thus in the past few years, more and more research focused around sustainable development are conducted. (Mitoula, 2006)

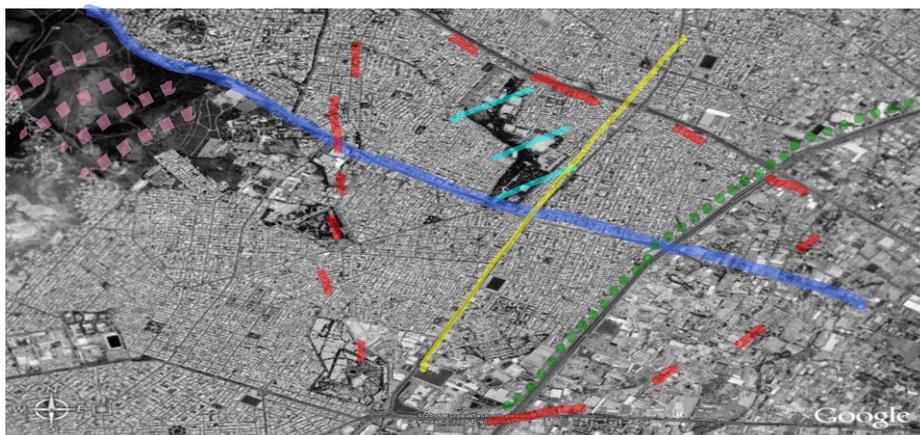
Improving the conditions of quality of life for humans and the environment result in an urgent need to adopt its principles and these are the reasons that most states and particularly those that belong to the European Union have included in their policy and strategy these principles so as to achieve sustainability. (Karvounis Georgakellos, 2003)

The Park of Aigaleo is found in the municipality of Aigaleo and more generally in the wider region of Athens, in Western Athens. The history of the wider region of Aigaleo at the antiquity is integrally tied up with four basic elements of the region: Iera Odos (the Holly Road), Kifisos River, the mountain Aigaleo and the Olive grove. Elements, which exists and today and appear in map 1. The municipality of Aigaleo borders with the municipalities, of Saint Barbara, Peristeri, Nicaea, Chaidari, Tauros. Their population amounts in 78.000 citizens. (Developmental Contact of Western Athens, Η ΑΙΘΟΥΣΑ -2002)

The park is surrounded by an intensely urbanised region, with big environmental problems. The avenues that cross the city, the dense layout, the lack of free spaces, a lot of factories, the exhaust and the pollution downgrade the quality of life of residents of the capital. Each space that can be developed with green is therefore precious. Such a precious space is the Park of Aigaleo. The park begins in small distance between the Thivon road and Iera Odos (the Holly Road). It constitutes until this moment the one and only big lung of green in the Municipality of Aigaleo. (Vasilaki P., Verteouri A., 2007-2008)

Initially, the Park of Aigaleo constituted of simple extents with gardens and properties and afterwards, it reached the apex of its growth with the foundation of the gunpowder factory for gun powder (Piritidopoieio) at the Second World War. Up to 1974 in the area of the park functioned the into account factory, that belonged to Bodosaki. For this reason the Park is named also park Bodosaki. Today only the chimney of the factory still remains (the pink shading in map 2). When the factory stopped its functions, his extent was granted in the State and trees were planted. With the byway of years in its space topographic changes happened. Its parametric, big departments were cemented in order to cover needs, services and communal spaces, (schools, grounds, faculties etc.) as a result from the 167 acres that were the initial extent, today have only remained the 134. That is to say, the 1/5 of its extent has been built. The contribution of the park in the sustainable development of region is not reported only in the environmental sector, but also in economy and society provided that its value is diachronic and begins from many years back. (Bournoba, 2002 - www.bodossaki.gr)

Fig. 1: The wider region of Municipality Aigaleo



Source: Google 2010

1. With blue the Iera Odos (the Holly Road)
2. With yellow the Thivon road
3. With green Kifisos River
4. With interrupted red line the limits of Municipality Aigaleo
5. With turquoise the park-Aigaleo(Baroutadiko)
6. With pink interrupted line the mountain Aigaleo.

Fig. 2: The Park of Aigaleo



Source: (Stamatiou P., Krhtikou G., 2007)

1. With blue the educational institutions of all rungs (public schools, middle schools, high schools and the T.E.I. of Athens and the laboratories of Organisation for the occupation of the work force).
2. With red the athletic installations.
3. With orange children's charms and spaces of recreation for the young persons.
4. With yellow the sculptures that are exposed from the Conference of Sculpture.
5. With coffee the monument dedicated in the resistance.
6. With open green the Municipal Theatre «Alexis Minotis».
7. With pink the chimney of the factory.
8. With turquoise the artificial lake and the paved with slabs space around.
9. With dark green and red the building of maintenance and the nursery of park.
10. With black the cafeterias inside the park.
11. With white the substation of National Electrical Company.

The offer and contribution of the park of Aigaleo (former Baroutadiko) in the growth of the region of the Municipality Aigaleo is really important. Initially, an entire settlement, served the

needs of the factory that existed into the park. As it was reported above, the Park today has suffered a lot of changes. Since the around region densely has been built, the alone near exit of all residents of the region is the Park. With the byway of years various uses were added in the park, that every one of them contributes with its own way in the upgrade of the wider region Moreover, the Park is the heart where numerous cultural and sporting activities and events of various contents are performed, which attract many people both from the Municipality of Aigaleo, and from neighbouring municipalities. Therefore we will present in detail, all building complexes and facilities located in the park, with the events and activities carried out in them, in order to realize the great and valuable contribution of the Park in the sustainable development of the municipality area of Aigaleo

Cultural projects - monuments and activities

The enhancement of the cultural heritage and the activation of local authorities and citizens to undertake creative artistic and cultural activities contribute to the sustainable local development of the Municipality of Aigaleo. A lot of actions of cultural interest are held with epicentre the Park, as for example theatrical, choruses, orchestras, song contests, cultural associations, dance, reports, monuments of culture, conference of sculpture etc. Municipal Cultural Organism (M.C.O.) with its action, in the area of culture, overwhelms systematic effort to support the intellectual and artistic search of the citizens of Aigaleo and the majority of its actions take place in the park.

The municipality intervenes creatively in the daily life of city, providing possibilities of training and entertainment for the all residents. As it is obvious, in the area of the Park many activities that have as objective the intellectual culture of citizens of all ages take place. Many activities are performed in the Municipal Theatre «Alexis Minotis», where the “Cultural Way” is held each summer time, attracting the interest of the all citizens. In this also helps the attendance of known actors, dancers and artists that give their performances in the Theatre. The Municipal Cultural Organism organises major cultural activities that has become annual institutions and attracts on them the attention of all citizens of Aigaleo, but also crowds of people from allover Athens. Important annual cultural events are “The Flower Exhibition of Aigaleo”, the Book exhibition of “Western of Athens”, the Carnival Events and many other important events that take place at the duration of year.

Evidence of cultural growth constitutes the sculptures and the monuments that are found exposed in the spaces of Park (yellow and coffee shading in figure 2). Crossing the space, the visitor can observe them. These sculptures were created in the 1st Conference of Sculpture that was organised by the Municipality of Aigaleo in 2001 in the Park, with the attendance of important figurative. Finally, as it was reported above, in the area is also preserved the old factory's chimney as an historical monument and element of culture and it constitutes the unique conjunctive ring between the old and modern history of the Park. In general, the cultural activities that take place in the Park of Aigaleo add quality of life in the residents of city and contribute in the fertile and socially desirable use of leisure time, creates friendly bonds, that are particularly necessary for the social growth between the citizens and in general they contribute in the social growth of the region and therefore in the sustainable development. Finally, a lot of buildings and installations of various uses exists inside the extent of park, like cafeterias (black shading in the map), the nursery of Municipality and the personnel of maintenance of the park (dark green and red shading in figure 2). (Bournoba, 2002) (www.aigaleo.gr, 19dim-aigal.att.sch.gr/index.html)

Fig. 3: "Flower Exhibition of Aigaleo" and the Book Exhibition "Western of Athens"



Sports activities and facilities

Municipal Athletic Organization (MAO) since 1987 constitutes the main carrier of diverse sporting activities throughout Aigaleo offering creative outlet to thousands of residents and especially to the younger generation. Activation of local authorities and citizens to undertake creative sports activities contribute to the sustainable local development of the Municipality of Aigaleo. The municipal authorities are particularly sensitized for the great goal called "athleticism". In the Municipality of Aigaleo there are 29 sports clubs, the most active of these are the sports club AIGALEO, AO KRONOS, Asteras, AO Themistocles, Chess Club, and Mountaineering Association in which many athletes of all ages participate.

Within the Park there are two large open areas with extensive and modern sports facilities, where guests can work out. The first area is the National Athletic Centre (NAC), shown to the right of the photograph, which since the beginning of 2001 belongs to the Municipality of Aigaleo. In the sports center there is a indoor gymnasium with rooms for gymnastics and rhythmic gymnastics, as well as locker rooms. . In the external surroundings there is football field - grass, with tartan for running track (350m. circle) and preparation area. Also, there are two pits for long jump (there is also equipment for high jump), a valve gated for disk and sphere and a valve for sphere. The football field has bleachers for about 300 people. Outside the fence of the stadium there is a small football field 5 x 5. In the remaining area of NAC there are two basketball courts, which can be converted into volleyball courts and two tennis courts are fenced with barbed wire and with their own bleachers. Municipality Cafeteria for the athletes also exists in the area.

The second sports field within the Park is the courts of Edessa str., shown on the left of the photo. In this sports complex, which is smaller compared with NAC there are a football field, two basketball courts, a tennis court and playground.

The MAO has as main activities the cultivation of mass sports at all ages and social groups, as well as the cooperation and support of clubs and associations of the region. In order to achieve these objectives of award prizes to honored athletes of our city organizes sports programs for children and adults (football, athletics, tennis, rhythmic and artistic gymnastics, and classes for children with special needs). At the same time MAO has defined a series of annual athletic Institutions conducted in the sports facilities of the Park. "The **Panaigaleotika**" is an institution for our city, attracting the interest of many athletes, while basketball, football, volleyball, athletics, swimming, gymnastics, tennis, karate, tae kwon do games are conducted with the participation of all of the municipal sports clubs of Aigaleo. "The **round of Aigaleo** 'held annually give the

opportunity not only to athletes but also to ordinary exercisers to try their abilities in a struggle to polite competition. Also, MAO **organizes football tournaments for Elementary Schools and independent clubs, athletics Meeting for children with special needs, Basketball Tournament and Sports Departments Demonstrations.**

In the remaining area of the Park there are other sports facilities such as an Olympic-size climbing and skating track. Unfortunately, the climbing track is abandoned, in contrast to the skating ring throbbing with mostly young visitors. Moreover in many places there are playgrounds for the younger guests. In addition, there is a large free-standing chess and many board chess, in which groups of elderly people play dominoes dice and cards. The floor-standing chess is used by groups of young people where they perform their dance figures.

Research

For the investigation of the opinion of citizens for to the contribution of Park of Aigaleo in the sustainable development of municipality, a research on the spot was conducted. 250 questionnaires in visitors of park were distributed and 200 were collected. The sample was random.

Initially questions were selected that aimed in the collection of general demographic figures such as: the sex, the age, the educative level, the annual familial income, the familial situation and the educational level. In this way the profile asked was sketched out. From them, the 107 were men and the 93 women.

- 57.5% were between 10 and 20 years, 21.3% between 21 and 30 years, 10% from 31 until 40 years, 6.9% between 51 and 60 years, 2.5% over 60 years, while hardly any belonged in the category between 41-50 years.
- 81.3% of these were bachelors – 16.3% married - only four divorced or widowers.
- 40.6% of families are constituted by 4 members, 20.6% from 5, 20.0% from 3, under 3 or above 5 members the rates of attendance are much too small.
- As for the professional situation: 71.9% students or students, 13.8% civil servants, 6.3% pensioners/domestic, 4.4% private employees, 2.5% unemployed and 2 individuals are businessmen.
- As for the educational level: 80% High school/Lyceum, 19.4% secondary Education and an individual has Postgraduate/Doctoral diploma.
- As for the monthly familial income: 28.8% until 1000€, the 26.9% from 1001-1500€, while 27.5% from 1501-2000€, over 2000€ the percentages are very small.

The results showed that the citizens visit the Park of Aigaleo mainly the Weekend (in percentage 68.8% Saturday and 47.5% Sunday), perhaps because nowadays most do not have school or others obligations.

At the duration of week, and particularly from Monday up to Thursday Monday (11.3%), Tuesday (14.4%), Wednesday (15.0%), Thursday (18.1%). Most citizens use the park as passage in order to reach their destination (ex. school, university, working place etc) and do not have the time for other activities inside the space. As long as the week reaches to the end, the park begins to constitute more and more the destination for recreation, walk and relaxation.

Moreover, in its biggest visitation apparently contributes also the easy access in this, after the individuals that makes frequent visits, declare positive as for the subject of accessibility in a percentage about 80%.

Moreover many are respondents who declare that they visit the park to exercise (39.4%). On the other hand in terms of physical activities, 41.3% of the total has said that when visiting the park plays football, basketball, tennis or some other sport, while 37.5% goes for jogging.

In addition 21 persons number that represents 13.1% of the total goes to the park for biking, when just two individuals do mountaineering and 2 skating, while many are those (35.0%), who perform other physical activities that are not listed in the questionnaire.

The research showed that the main aim of visitors in the Park of Aigaleo is so as to walk and particularly for women, but also for the married citizens. (Diagram 1 and 2)

Diagram 1. Gender - Decision to visit the grove for walks

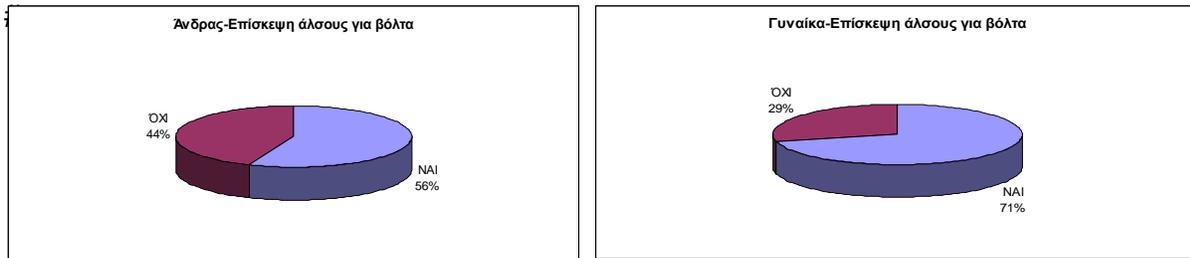
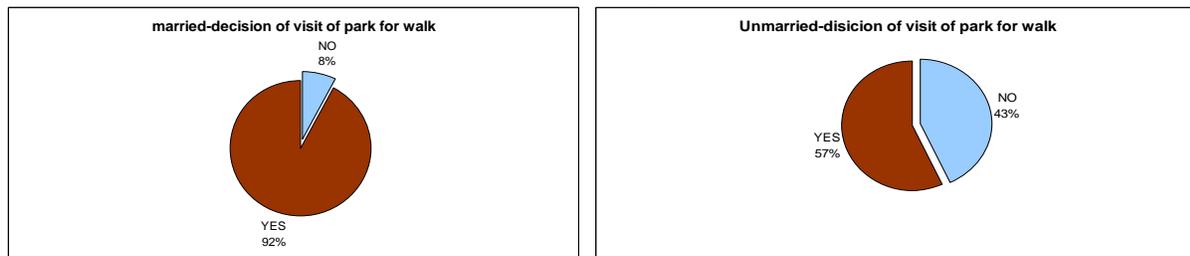


Diagram 2. Marital status- decision of visit to the park for a walk



Many are also those that go to the park in order to exercise, with the exception of the very young person in age, but also those that already have created their own family. The first group perhaps because young age people are interested more for other, while the second group perhaps because of their increased familial obligations. (Diagram 3 and 4)

Diagram 3. Age - Decision of visit to the park for sports

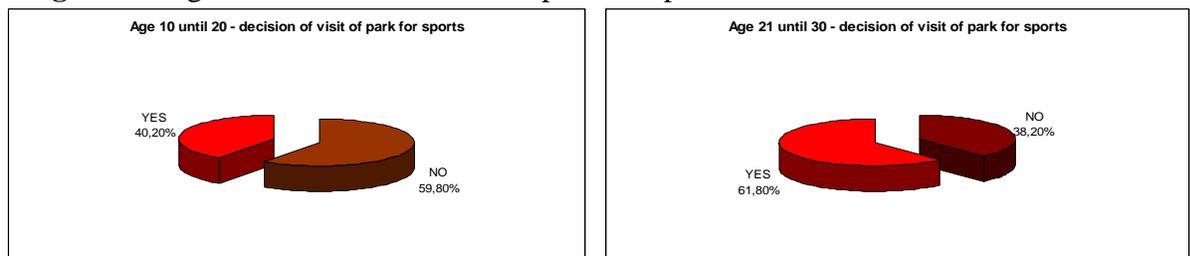
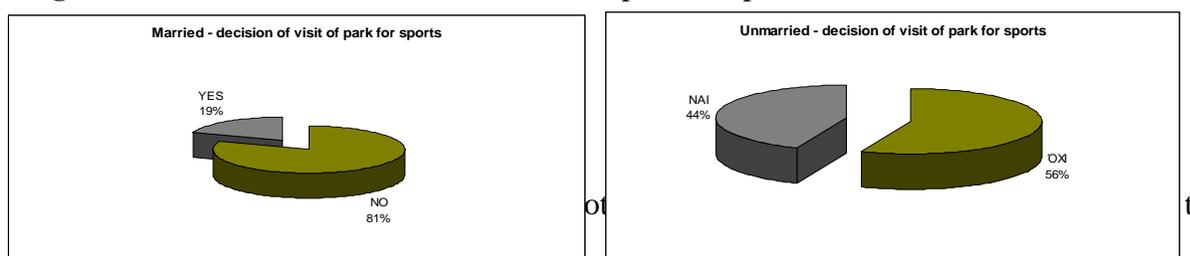
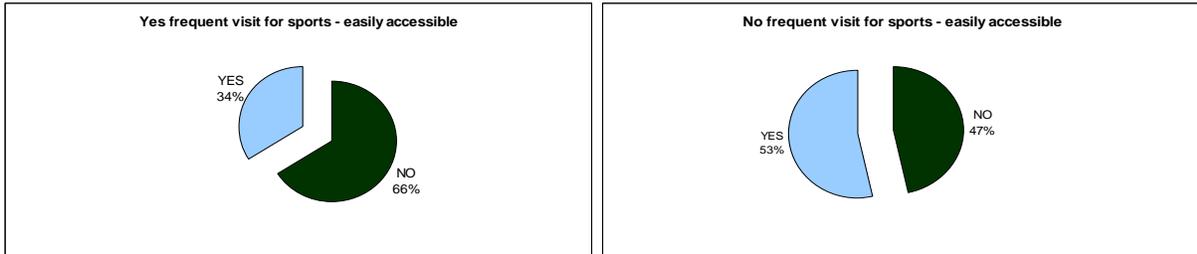


Diagram 4. Marital status - decision to visit the park for sports



where they visit it, they do so in order to exercise. We therefore see that the contribution of the Park in sports and gymnastics in general for the citizens is important as the only escape route for exercise close to nature. Thus, we conclude for our sample, that the little leisure time that daily the respondents have, they use it for sports in the facilities of the Park. (Diagram 5)

Diagram 5. Visit for sports



Less are those that visit the Park in order to reach in some other destination faster 7, 5%, as well as for change of landscape 23,8%, for enjoyment of clean air 21,9%, for recreation 18,8% and observation of the area 6,3% of total. In this point it must be stated that the lastt four activities express more the married, and not the single citizens. (Diagram 6, 7, 8, 9)

Diagram 6. Marital situation - decision of visit to the park for recreation

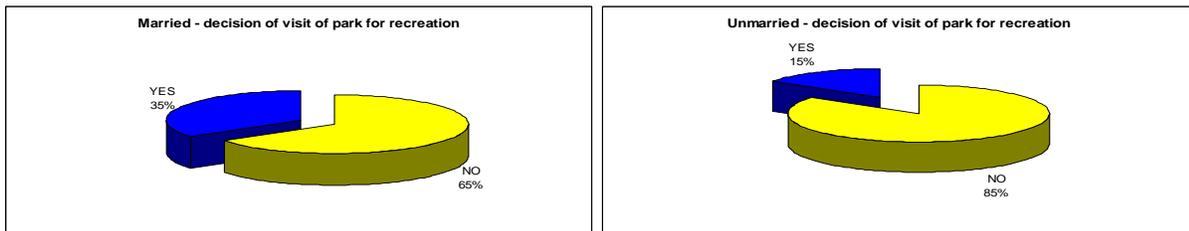


Diagram 7. Marital situation - decision of visit to the park for change of landscape

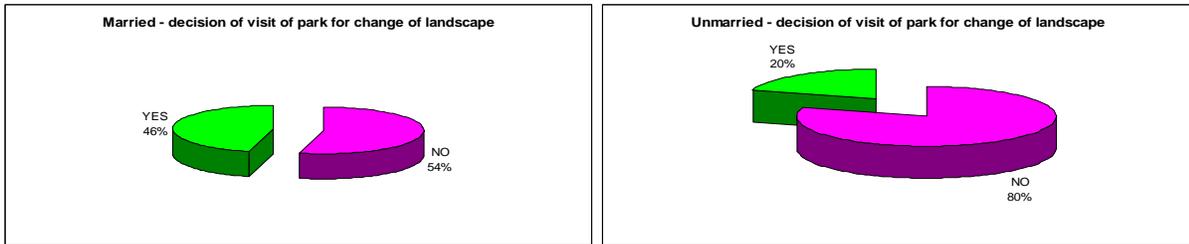


Diagram 8. Marital situation - decision of visit of park for observation

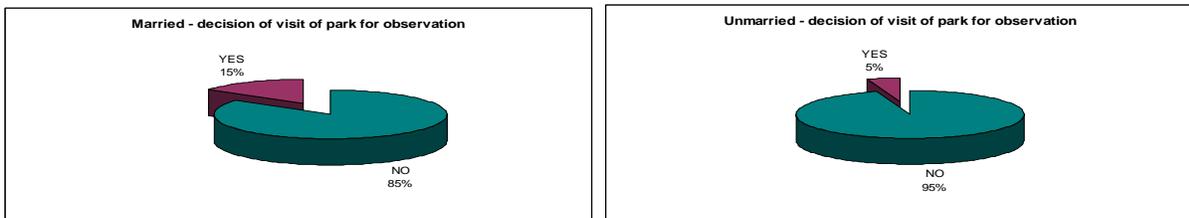
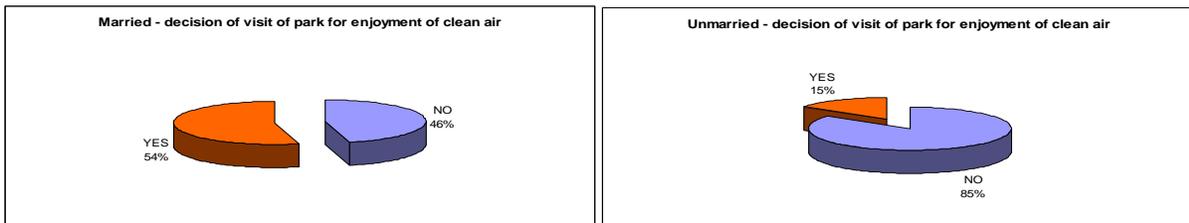


Diagram 9. Marital situation - decision of visit of park for enjoyment of clean air



Unfortunately however, the Park of Aigaleo appears not to be rightly developed and therefore does not entirely satisfy the needs of citizens, judging from the fact that most participants in this research support the particular opinion. (Diagram 10) the main cause that this happens is either that the citizens dispute that the park is maintained clean (40.1%), or that the suitable infrastructures do not exist (40.6%). It is marked that the citizens are least interested for the fact that conditions for development of various activities do not exist (32.5%), as well as the lack of briefing (28.1%) and regular communication from the side of responsible institutions on various questions concerning the park (27.6%)

Diagram 10. The opinion of respondents on whether the Park of Aigaleo is properly developed

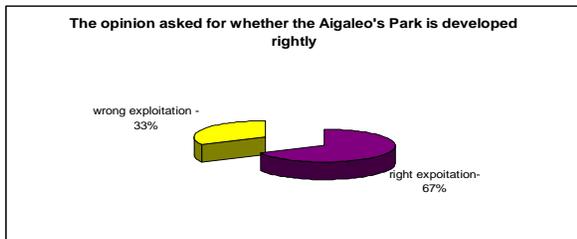


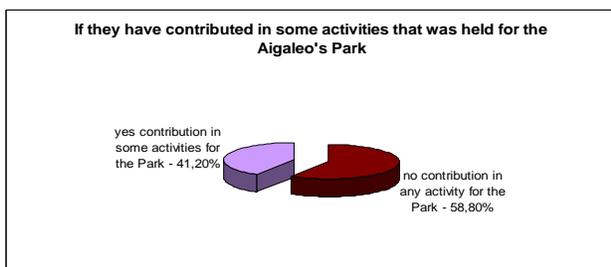
Diagram 11. The respondent's opinion on whether the Park of Aigaleo needs improvements.



From a relative question it appeared that most of respondents are convinced that a lot of improvements are in need (Diagram 11) that they mainly concern about the safety and the cleanness of the park, opinion certainly that expresses the majority of those that visit it very often. Moreover, many are also the citizens that believe that in order for the park to be improved, it is necessary that the state cares more. Important also appears to solve the problem with the lighting (67.6%), the presence of more green areas (63.2%), the improvement of the athletic installations(63.2%) and possibility of more and various activities(53.1%).

However, the opinion that the park is not rightly developed appears to prompt the citizens to contribute in the resolution of various problems via the participation in various activities that take place for this (58.8%). However many are those who declare that they have contributed in some way (41.3%) (Diagram 12)

Diagram 12. If they have contributed in some activity that was held for the Park of Aigaleo



This possibly means that the citizens do not have the possibility or simply do not feel responsible for such a thing, believing maybe that those that should be interested and contribute are the authorities in charge for the park. However, those who they do have contributed declare that they made something via various school activities (26.9%) result that appears to be reasonable if

someone thinks that many of those participating in this research are firstly students in a university or students. Less are those that contributed with athletic (21.3%), environmental, (16.3%), cultural (6.9%), political (2.5%) and mainly economic activities (0.6%). Based on the results of the search however, differences were observed in the opinions of citizens for the question of contribution in the park, depending on their familial and professional situation. Thus, the married and the civil servants appear that they contribute in bigger degree to the park. The first group via various cultural activities, while the second via environmental. (Diagram 13 and 14)

Diagram 13. Marital situation - decision for contribution in the activity of the park

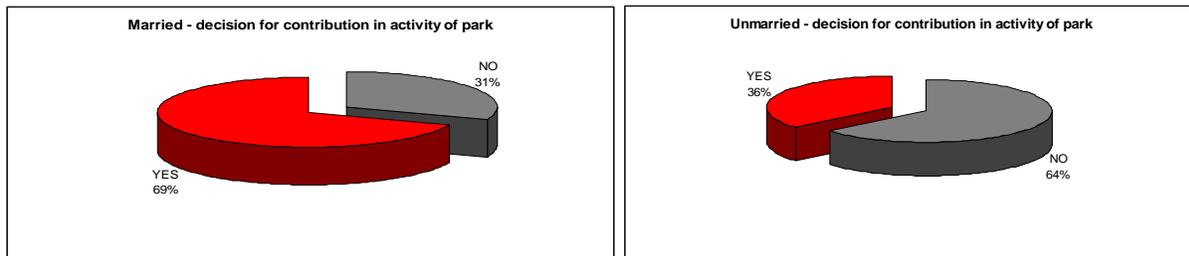
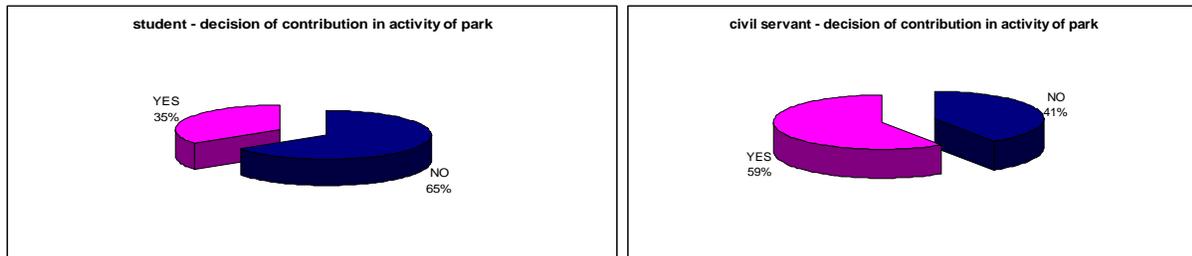
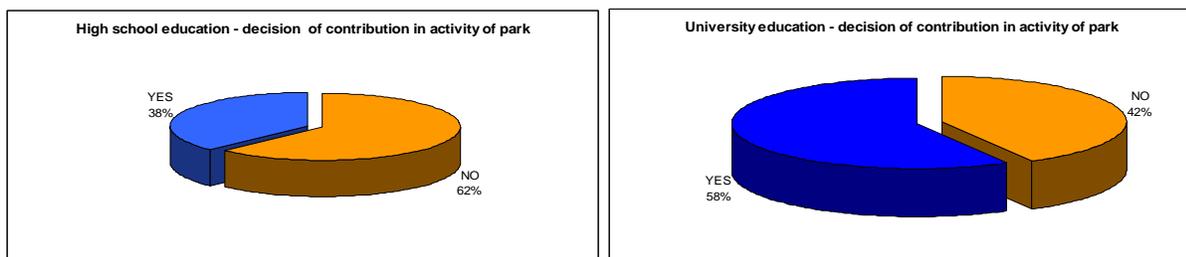


Diagram 14. Professional situation - decision for contribution in activity of park



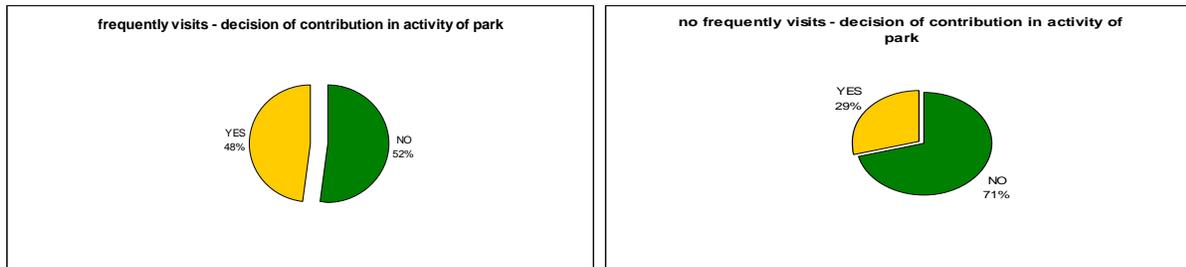
On the other hand, the level of education constitutes also a decisive factor, since citizens with higher education (Universities) contribute much more often than those that have only finished the High school or the Lyceum, something that possibly is due to the fact that the first team has more knowledge and comprehend better the big importance of the park, for the sustainable development of the region. (Diagram 15)

Diagram 15. Decision of contribution in activity of park



Finally, as it was expected, the individuals that frequently visit the park contribute more in its protection in comparison with the rest, perhaps because the particular team is more sentimentally tied up with the particular area and understand its needs. (Diagram 16)

Diagram 16. Frequent visits - Contribution to the park through activities



Conclusion

From the research of elements that were mentioned in the beginning of this essay resulted that the Park of Aigaleo (Baroutadiko) considerably contributes in the multifaceted sustainable development of the Municipality Aigaleo. Environmentally, culturaly, socialy, the activities that are realised with epicentre the Park contribute in the sustainable development of widest area. From the statistical analysis of the questionnaires the followings results were made: The citizens visit the Park often and particularly the Weekend and Friday. From Monday up to Thursday, the park simply constitutes a passage and a solution for a quicker route. The main aim of visits in the Park is the realisation of walk and of sports. Of course, it appeared that the Park is not rightly developed also consequently does not entirely satisfy the needs of the citizens. Since the main cause for such a thing is the fact that the citizens do not feel secure, that the park is not maintained clean and that suitable infrastructures do not exist. Due to the fact that the main reason for such a thing is that civilians need to feel safe, further lighting, improvement of athletic installations, creation of more possibilities for various activities is suggested.

The research showed that the citizens believe that in order for the park to be improved there is a need for greater careon the part of the state. However, the opinion that the park is not rightly developed appears not to prompt the citizens to contribute in the resolution of various problems via the attendance of various activities that are held for this purpose. Nevertheless, most of those that have contributed, declare that they did such an act via various school activities. The individuals that make frequent visits in the park, contribute in this more in contradiction to the rest. The opinion that prevails is that the "Park of Aigaleo" should be protected and not to be destroyed. However the required energies do not happen, because the state and the municipality are too little interested for the image of the park. Further programs for the sensitization of citizens in order for all to contribute in the protection of the park are considered necessary., without of course to downgrade the role of the municipality much, or the state's.

Closing we should once more underline the contribution of Baroutadiko to the sustainable development of the municipality. The offer is great in a social, cultural and environmental level. Especially with regard to the environmental dimension, its presence as its enhancement is considered essential, given its uniqueness as a natural lung within a fully urbanized area such as Aigaleo and generally the urban centre of Athens.

Finally, in a time like this that we live with the manners, customs, culture, education, cultural heritage, sport and health being under heavy pressure due to the financial and spiritual crisis, the Park of Aigaleo can and must stand as a shield for protection. Shield for the entire municipality of Aigaleo and the citizens of Western Athens in general. Through the events and cultural and

sports-related activities that take place in its premises it may contribute to the spiritual and physical cultivation of both young and elders.

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