

MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPE THROUGH THE ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN OF CULTURAL ROUTES. CASE STUDY: ANCIENT OLYMPIA

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Abstract

The management of archaeological sites in Greece is often confined within the limits of the excavation for the sole purpose of being rendered accessible to the public, as open-air museum sites. In contrast with the confined and demarcated archaeological site, the concept of the cultural landscape refers to all of the perceptions of the civilization, which has formed or interpreted the landscape, and it includes, apart from the physical background, a sum of intangible elements and values. This paper refers to the management and the projection of the cultural landscape through the design of cultural networks and routes, with bioclimatic criteria. Ancient Olympia has been the cause and case study of the present research, as one of the most significant archaeological sites in our country. The research has showcased the need for formulating a modern framework of management and projection of the archaeological sites, by exploiting the concept of the cultural landscape and by expanding the interactive experience between the monuments and the residents or visitors, both in terms of space, beyond the limits of the excavated area, and time, beyond their opening hours.

Keywords: *Cultural heritage management, archaeological sites, cultural landscape, bioclimatic design, Ancient Olympia*

1. INTRODUCTION

In Greece, several archaeological sites are often found scattered inside or outside the urban web. This fragmentation is reinforced by their fragmentary management since they are treated as “fragments” of earlier times (Giannakis et al, 2004). According to the current institutional framework (OJHR,2002), the management of the archaeological sites focuses on their protection and study, whereas the term “management” is used as synonymous to administration or it pertains to the “integrated use of the monuments” (Article 40). Therefore, the usual practice in our country is to treat the archaeological sites as enclosed open-air exhibition areas, which mark the past, detached from the present and the everyday life. The criticism on the above-mentioned viewpoint and the concern regarding the socialisation of the archaeological sites constituted the cause for projects such as the unification of the archaeological sites of Athens. The aim of those projects was based on the idea that the presence of monuments would not cause a conflict between the dynamic, changing present and the static and unchangeable past (Zivas, 1997).

The challenge of the integration of the cultural heritage in the modern era is not a new phenomenon at international level. The social shift of the management of cultural heritage monuments is reflected on the international regulatory texts (Council of Europe, Amsterdam, 1975 - Council of Europe, Granada, 1985 - ICOMOS, Australia 1999 - Council of Europe, Faro,

2005) many decades ago. Even though in the first texts (ICOMOS, Venice, 1964) the management focuses on the protection of the “materiality” of the monuments, in the decade of 1980 a major shift of great importance occurs, by recognising the multifaceted value of the monuments. The concept of cultural heritage is extended in order to include, besides the physical elements, the new categories such as the intangible characteristics and values that it bears as a result of the interaction with the humans (Poulios et al., 2015). The transition to the value-centred model of management proposes the development of study groups of multidisciplinary nature and with the extended participation of the local community and of other interest groups, recognising thus the multidimensional character of the monuments and their need for “socialisation”.

The historical investigation of previous cultures is based on the study of what they bequeathed to us. By preserving the monuments and studying the art and literature of previous cultures, we aim to gain information regarding their customs and structure. The reason of searching, excavating, studying and restoring archaeological sites is to better understand the cultures that have constructed them, through experiencing these sites (Zouni, 1999).

The aim of the research is to showcase the need for redefining the management of archaeological sites, beyond the limits of the excavated area, through the examination and the projection of the characteristics of the cultural landscape. This constitutes a complex concept which refers to the sum of the perceptions of the civilization that has formed or interpreted the landscape. It includes the tangible and intangible elements which constitute cultural interpretation bodies, as well as the values that it bears and include the physical, cultural or socioeconomic characteristics of the place (Hockings et al., 2008).

As a case study, Ancient Olympia was chosen, which was also the cause of the above concern. The investigation of the management of the cultural landscape of Ancient Olympia, as a typical example of an archaeological site outside the urban web, is expected to contribute to the management procedure of plenty of such sites. As a monument of the world cultural heritage, its management presents an international interest and it owes to be adapted to the official management instructions (UNESCO, WHC, 2017) as well as with the UNESCO strategy (project UWH and Sustainable Tourism), which aims to the management of monuments of the cultural heritage through the sustainable development of the wider area, with the enhancement of the appropriate forms of tourism.

At the present study, the following is leveraged:

- The cultural networks, because they constitute a complex tool for the formulation of local narratives and interpretations. They unify cultural and natural resources, by incorporating green spaces and communal recreational areas.
- The cultural routes which lead the visitor to reformulate and perceive the area regarding particular themes.
- The principles of bioclimatic design, because the public open-air space is upgraded environmentally and aesthetically, both the everyday life of citizens and the visitors’ experience are enriched and the conditions for the development of diverse activities and alternative forms of tourism are configured.

2. METHODOLOGY

For the present study, there were used: literature review and field research (visits, field observation), interviews with citizens of the area, local bodies and professionals in the tourism sector. The aim was to record the visitors’ experience, the problems that arise during rush hours and the problems that the stakeholders of tourism face, the display of existing paths and possible networks and the assessment of public open-air spaces. Moreover, there were used statistical data and designs of the area, as well as the legal framework and the international agreements,

which pertain to the management of cultural heritage monuments, focusing on the management of the archaeological sites.

3. CASE STUDY: Ancient Olympia

For the specification of the data that construct the cultural landscape of Olympia, the associations with the available natural and cultural resources of the Elis Prefecture (Ilia) are examined, the diverse cultural interpretations are approached, and an assessment of the current situation takes place.

3.1. Natural resources

At the borders of the Elis Prefecture, there are located areas of great ecological value, which are protected by the international, communal and national law of the environmental protection, such as the Kotychi lagoon, which constitutes a wetland of great importance as a Ramsar Convention area (N.1950/91), the National Park of Kotychi lagoons and of Strofylia, while eight regions (Fig. 1), including Olympia as well (GR2330004) belong to the European ecological network of Natura 2000 (YPEKA, protected areas).

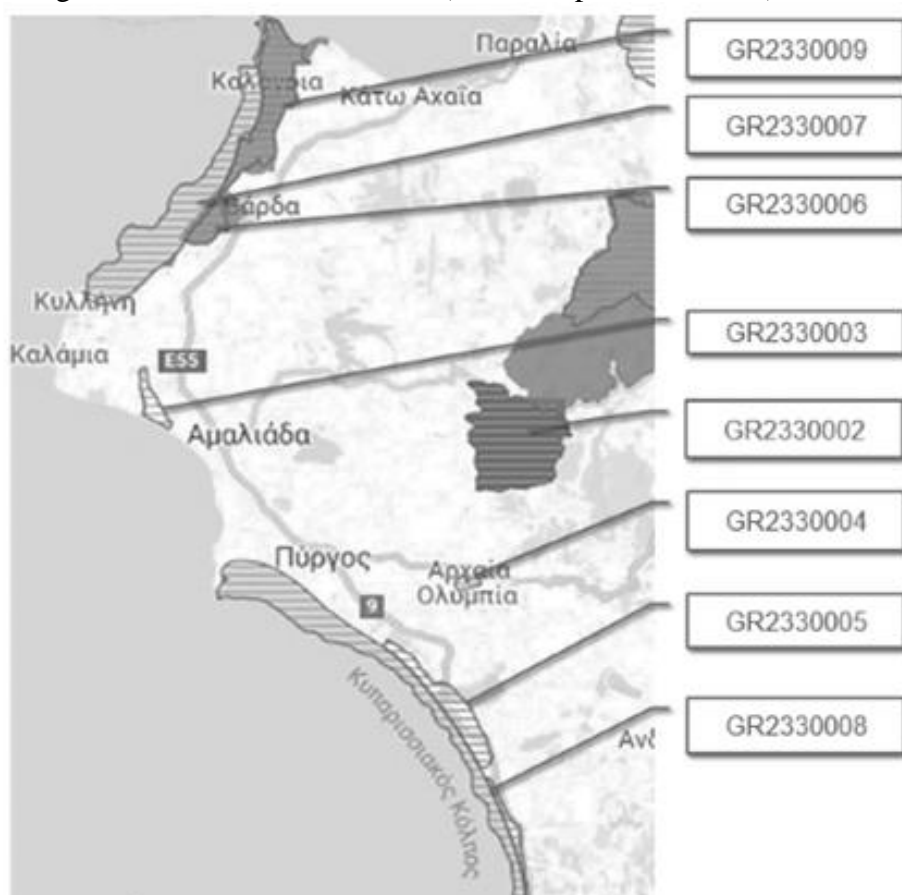


Fig. 1, Natura2000 areas of the Elis Prefecture

The Foloji oak forest, the Kaiafas Lake and the estuaries of Pinios present a particular association with the cultural landscape of Olympia because of their proximity and their common mythological references. Focusing on the natural resources of the surrounding area of Ancient Olympia, Kronios Hill and the two rivers: Alpheus and Kladeos are of great importance, since the archaeological site of Ancient Olympia is situated at the valley of the river Alpheus and in particular at its confluence with its tributary Kladeos at the foothills of Kronios hill.

3.2. Cultural Resources

The prefecture of Elis (Iliia) has plenty of important cultural resources, while major importance in this research presents the threefold: Olympia-Iliida-Bassae. Iliida, as the capital of the inhabitants and the organising city of Olympic Games was connected with the Sanctuary of Olympia, while the temple of Epicurean Apollo at Bassae and Olympia constitute monuments of the world cultural heritage of UNESCO (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2, The threefold: Olympia-Iliida-Bassae of the Elis Prefecture

Attending to the region of Ancient Olympia, it offers, besides the archaeological site and the museum, a number of significant cultural resources, such as the Museum of the History of the Olympic Games of Antiquity, the Museum of the History of the Excavations of Olympia, the Museum of Ancient Greek Technology, the monument of Pierre De Coubertin, the recently excavated Sanctuary of Demetra Hamini etc.

3.3. The cultural landscape of Ancient Olympia

The information that arose from the literature and historical review in combination with the field visits, showcased the importance of the landscape elements of Olympia: Kronios hill and the two rivers, Alpheus and Kladeos, beyond their natural presence.

The existence of these landscape elements has led to the recognition of the sacredness of the place of Olympia, before the construction of the first religious buildings, and to the organisation of the ancient temple by having access (Doxiadis, 1972). The references to the

myth and the representations (*Figure 3*) of the landscape elements constitute testimonies of cultural interpretations. In contrast, the experience of the visit to the temple during antiquity was directly associated with the existence of two rivers, since at their river beds the ancient routes were developed: the Sacred Road (lowland road) and the Mountain Road. By recognising this fact, the expansion of the declared archaeological site is extended (OJHR, 2000) so that it can include the river bed of Alpheus from its confluence with Kladeos and to the east, since “Alpheus river along with the Sacred Site of Olympia constitute an inseparable sum of worship and myths, which construct the unique Olympian Landscape, while the sacredness of the river is attested by the ancient sources and it is expressed with the personalisation of the river at the east pediment of the temple of Zeus”. But nowadays as well, the discovery of the ancient temple is owed to the particular landscape of Olympia since the descriptions of the landscape elements of Olympia by Pausanias (Papachatzis, 1979) constituted the guide for European visitors, many centuries later and after its traces had been buried.



Fig. 3, Representation of the rivers Alpheus and Kladeos at the pediment of the temple of Zeus (source: Gialouri, A. & Gialouris, N., 1991)

3.4. The experience of visitors

During the field research and according to the statistical data, an important inconsistency was discovered between the complex cultural landscape of Ancient Olympia and the experience the visitors get. Only a small part of the physical and cultural resources of Olympia and the Elis Prefecture is exploited with an important repercussion in the experience of the visitors and in the sustainable tourism development of the area. In absence of the management plan of Olympia, aside the responsibilities that arise from its integration to the catalogue of world cultural heritage monuments, mass cruise tourism, primarily, imposes paces that frequently surpass the ability of the area, limit the available time, by ignoring important cultural resources, and damage visitors' experience. Most of the visitors (more than 2 out of 3) are led to the archaeological site for a short visit and then they leave. The numbers are revealing: only 1 out of 3 visitors of the archaeological site of Olympia continues his/her visit to the archaeological museum, in spite of the proximity and the important exhibits, only 6% of whom visit the temple of Epicurean Apollo at Bassae, world cultural heritage monuments and 1 out of 100 the archaeological museum of Ilida, the organising city of the Olympic Games (Fig. 4).

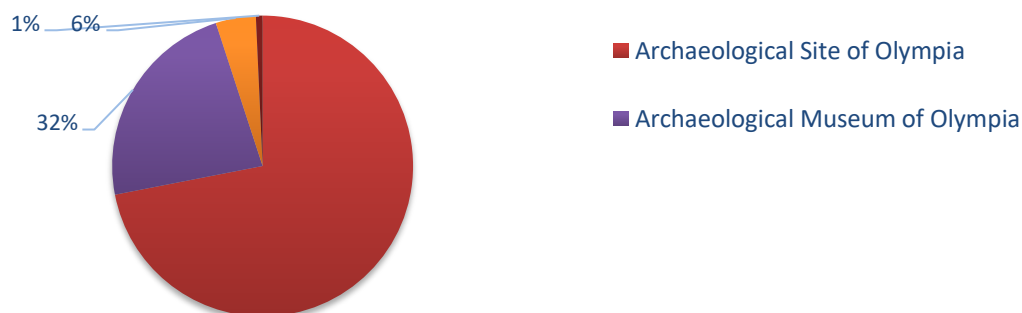


Fig. 4, Visitors of the main cultural resources of Elis for the year 2018 (source: Hellenic Statistical Authority)

3.5. Research Results

Olympia does not own a comprehensive management plan, despite the responsibilities which arise from its integration to the world cultural heritage monuments catalogue. Today's organisation of the area and the interventions that have been implemented are limited to the borders of the enclosure or even in infrastructure at its borders. The restoration of the association between the ancient sanctuary and the landscape elements, or the projection of the ancient connections or paths are not expected. Visitors' experience is limited to fragmentary visits to the individual attractions and they do not understand the values of the cultural landscape of Olympia, which slightly affects the everyday life of the inhabitants which is evolving at the other riverbank of Kladeos. The professionals of the area along with the local authority express the fixed request for an extension of visitors' lodging time and the extension of the tourism period, so that the benefits to the local economy are diffused. It is about a request which is coordinated with the strategy of UNESCO, as it was expressed by the World Heritage Journeys programme, which aims to the management of cultural heritage monuments through a sustainable financial development of the surrounding area, by strengthening appropriate tourism forms.

Through the historical review, it was found that the excavated area which coincides with the borders of the declared and visiting archaeological site of Ancient Olympia is a part and not the sum of its multidimensional cultural landscape. The particular landscape elements, the ancient routes, the myths, the customs and traditions and the associations with other places and landscapes constitute a part of it. The limits of the cultural scenery of Olympia do not identify with the borders of the archaeological site, and so, instead of referring to the management of the archaeological sites, it will make more sense if we refer to the management of the cultural landscapes, so that the associations, the links and their elements are projected. The showcasing of the cultural landscape of Olympia is complex. The development of a comprehensive management plan requires the composition of a multidisciplinary study group along with the participation of additional interest groups, based on the guidelines.

3.6. Proposed interventions

Firstly, interventions inside the agglomeration of Ancient Olympia are proposed in order to organise the traffic and the parking areas and to integrate sustainable means of transport. Subsequently, the following are proposed:

- a cultural network (orange line) of pedestrians and bicycles which unifies the adjoining natural and cultural resources, showcases the cultural landscape of Olympia and meets the operating needs (Fig. 5)
- a riparian path (blue line) further down the river bed of Kladeos, which recalls in an experiential way, the experience of ancient routes along the rivers (Fig. 6). The path follows

the river bed of Kladeos, resting areas are configured and the eye contact with the archaeological site is ensured, as it is developed at the other side of the riverbank.



Fig. 5, Proposed cultural network and path along

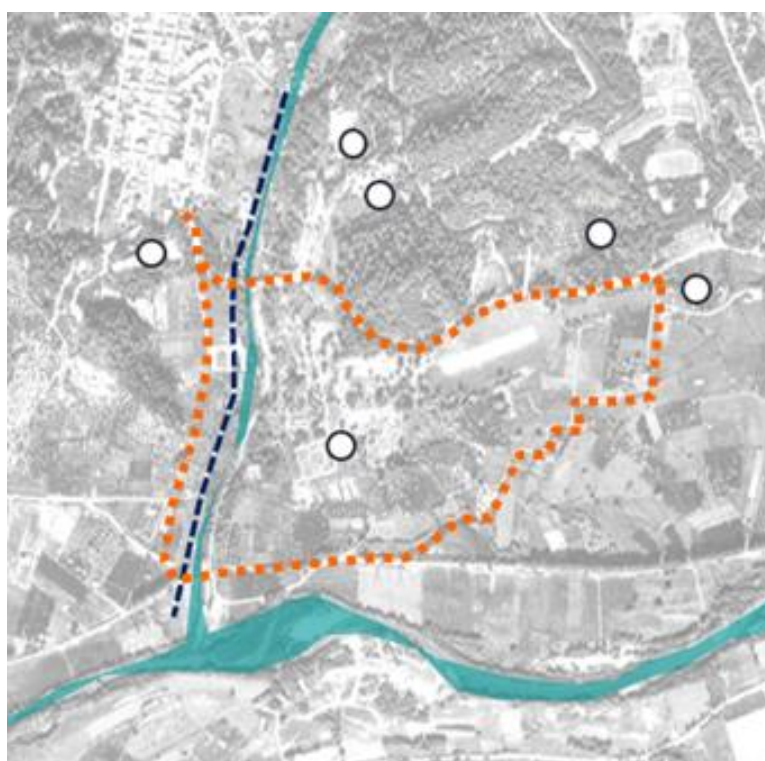


Fig. 6, Riparian path further down the river bed of Kladeos

At the level of the Elis Prefecture, the marking of cultural routes is proposed (Fig. 7) which capture, at the area, the results of the historical investigation and reformulate the links to the past, showcasing the cultural landscape of Ancient Olympia:

- the route “**On the Trails of the Sacred Road**” which obtains its agenda from the ancient customs and traditions and it follows the route of the procession of athletes and spectators from Ilida to Ancient Olympia
- the route “**Following Pausanias**”, which has a narrative nature since it is traced according to the descriptions of Pausanias and it unifies the lagoon of Kaiafa with Olympia
- the route “**NATURA areas**” which moves around the theme of ecology and it connects the Ancient Olympia with the Foloji oak forest, protected areas that belong to the European Network of Natura 2000 and

- the route “World cultural heritage monuments UNESCO” which obtains its agenda from the world cultural heritage of UNESCO and it connects Ancient Olympia with the temple of Epicurean Apollo at Bassae.

A cultural network for the operating and perceiving unification of the natural and cultural resources which create the cultural landscape of Olympia, a riparian path which, as an interpretation and familiarisation element of the landscape, recalls, in an experiential way, the experience of ancient routes along the river and four cultural routes, which bring back links, by proposing narrations which motivate the visitors to reformulate and to understand the cultural landscape of Olympia regarding particular themes.

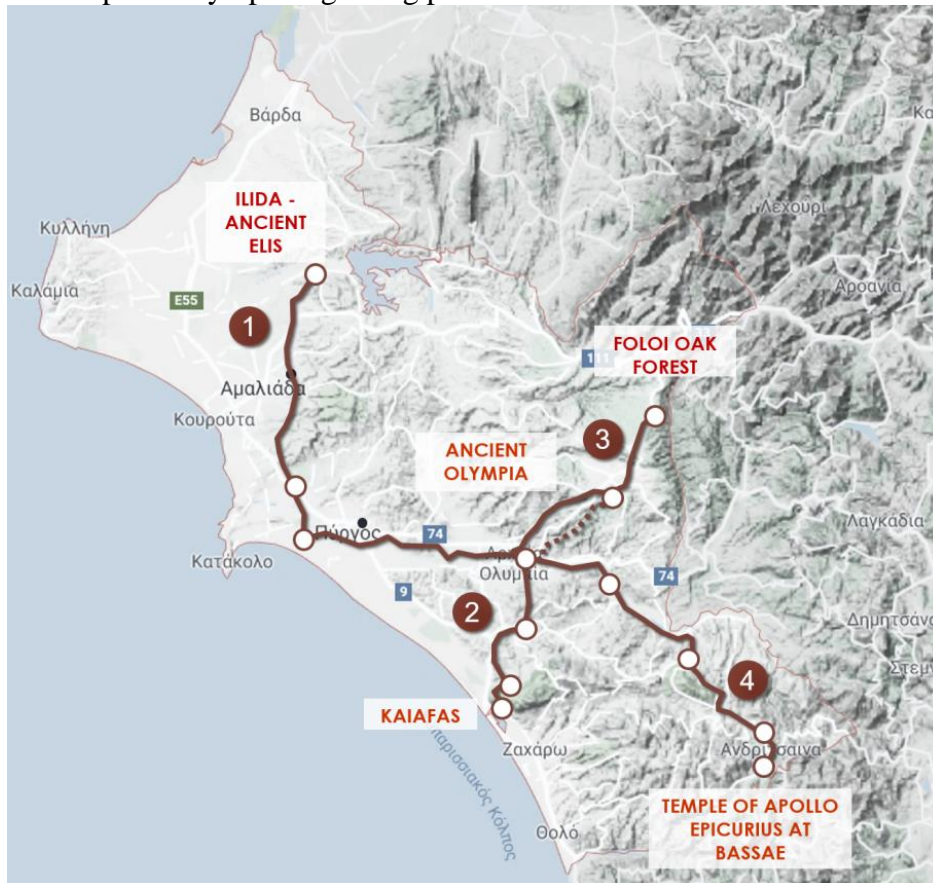


Fig. 7, Proposed thematic cultural routes at the level of the Elis Prefecture

4. Conclusion

The preservation of the cultural heritage monuments is regarded now as a given, but the management and the preservation do not constitute identical concepts. Consequently, the archaeological sites today, as cultural heritage monuments are seen as detached from the landscape which surrounds them and from the everyday life of the inhabitants, and they are organised as enclosed open-air exhibitions.

The basic contribution of the present study is associated with the extension of the concept and the limits of the management of the archaeological sites, and the socialisation of the cultural heritage monuments. The scope, especially in our country, is extended with a significant impact on the culture, the tourism, the economy with conditions of sustainability and the urban environment or the public open-air space.

The benefits of a complete management of the cultural landscape in an experiential way, are associated with the projection of the monuments, the understanding of cultures which made them, their socialisation to the benefit of the visitors and the everyday life of the inhabitants, the upgrade of the open-air spaces and the development of alternative forms of tourism.

Within the context of this viewpoint, the management of the archaeological sites is not confined to the need of their protection, but it also leverages tools for the organisation of the area so that the present can communicate with the past. The “limits” of the archaeological sites are mitigated beyond the borders of the excavated area and beyond the time limits of the opening hours.

For the management and the projection of the cultural landscape of Olympia, complex tools for the organisation of the area are exploited, for the purpose of visualising links and narrations that impact on the understanding and readability of the cultural landscape. The proposed interventions aim to a) the projection of the cultural landscape of Olympia, b) the resolution of operating problems, c) the upgrade and the enrichment of public open-air spaces and d) the environmental upgrade with the improvement of the microclimate and of the conditions of comfort.

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