

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL ROUTES IN THE SUSTAINABLE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES AND REGIONS - CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract

*The main purpose of the research was to investigate the utilization of cultural routes in cities and regions of Greece and abroad, as a means for their sustainable development. The methodology used was a literature review through the collection of secondary data of research studies conducted in Greece and internationally focusing on specific cases. The resulting data showed that cultural routes are an innovative tool for the development of cities and regions that can be exploited in different ways. In particular, cultural itineraries focus on the resources that each case has that contribute to its high added value as a tourist destination and create benefits that are not short-term but instead act **as a** multiplier and lay the foundations for a development that is both sustainable and sustainable. Cultural itineraries include different cultural resources and can take more than one form, even in the same destination, so that they can attract different groups of visitors, depending on their interests. This, in turn, implies upgrading each destination, creating a strong brand name that is different from the rest, and conditions for social and economic development. Cultural routes contribute to the development of the economy, synergies, infrastructure cultural entrepreneurship and attracting investment, while also protecting and enhancing cultural resources. This shows that the benefits offered are multiple, long term and with proper management can lead to a development of tourist destinations that would not be possible by other means.*

Key Words: *cultural routes, development, development, sustainability, sustainability. cultural entrepreneurship.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism and culture are two concepts that are linked in a partnership that can lead to development. Tourism needs culture in order to be able to develop, but so does culture, regarding the support it receives from tourism (Kokkosis et al., 2011). There is therefore a

link between culture and tourism with the former attracting visitors to a destination while receiving the impact of tourism flows (Guccio et al., 2017).

For most of the 20th century, tourism and culture were largely considered separate aspects of destinations. Cultural resources were seen as part of the cultural heritage of destinations and were largely associated with educating the local population and supporting local or national cultural identities. On the other hand, tourism was largely seen as an activity related to leisure and recreation, separate from the daily life and culture of the local population. However, this belief gradually changed towards the end of the century, as the role of cultural goods in attracting tourists became more apparent. More specifically, since the 1980s, cultural tourism has been considered a particularly important source of economic growth for many destinations (OECD, 2009).

The growing interaction between culture and tourism has been stimulated by several factors that can be distinguished in the general categories of demand and supply. In particular, on the demand side there has been an increased interest in culture, particularly as a source of identity and diversification in the face of globalisation. There were also increased levels of cultural capital, due to the encouragement provided by rising levels of education. Postmodern modes of consumption, which emphasised personal development rather than materialism, also played an important role. Finally, the desire for direct forms of experience, the increasing importance of intangible culture and the role of image and atmosphere, and increased mobility that created easier access to other cultures (OECD, 2009) played an important role (Manola et al., 2022a ; Manola et al., 2022b)

In today's reality and the conditions it has created, the relationship between culture and tourism offers new perspectives for cities and regions. The development of cities and regions has traditionally been based on the industrial and economic sectors. Tourism and culture, however, are nowadays called upon to be used as alternatives to traditional development methods in the context of sustainability and viability (Lysgard, 2013). These perspectives are also examined in this article and in particular how cultural routes can be used for the sustainable and sustainable development of cities and regions.

2. THE CULTURAL ROUTES

Urban tourism is a phenomenon that has emerged and developed strongly since the 1980s due to the interest in their culture and history. The development of urban tourism has had positive benefits such as economic benefits but also negative consequences such as environmental degradation and increased traffic created by the arrival of large numbers of visitors (Hayllar et al., 2010).

Over time, the increase in urban tourism has magnified these impacts which, combined with phenomena such as climate change, have highlighted the need to reshape urban tourism for development, sustainability and viability. One practice that emerged from this necessity was that of cultural itineraries. Cultural itineraries constitute a form of tourism that is linked to the environment but also to the culture and history of each destination. The combination of these elements offers the visitor who takes part in them a unique experience as it can bring them into contact with authentic features of the destinations and their societies, which explains the demand for them. Visitors enhance the demand for cultural itineraries because through it they get different experiences even if they are held in the same city because of the places they focus on (Mitoula & Kaldis, 2020; Mitoula, 2014 ; Manola, & Vaka, 2024).

Cultural routes are an important development factor for both cities and regions. By attracting visitors, they boost the development of the areas to which they extend, ensuring the benefits of this form of tourism such as the promotion of cultural heritage, the strengthening

of the local economy, job creation, etc. At the same time, however, they reduce the environmental impact of other forms of tourism, thus enhancing sustainable development (Kantzoura & Mitoula, 2016; Mitoula & Astará 2012).

The creation of cultural routes is usually based on a cultural concept or a historical route in an attempt to highlight values and elements. This implies that cultural itineraries may differ both in their content and in the form they take. For example, they may be based on a theme such as wine and its related activities, or they may focus on history and culture by following routes that include elements of different historical periods or cultural elements. They may also combine cultural and natural heritage elements as well as other elements, i.e. they may be mixed (Mitoula & Kaldis, 2020). This is not the only distinction of cultural routes which can be divided into local or extended depending on the areas in which they are developed. However, whatever form cultural routes take, their common characteristics are that they include educational as well as recreational activities and are shaped according to the principles of sustainable development in the context of responsible tourism (Mitoula & Kaldis, 2018; Manola et al., 2023; Manola et al., 2024; Maniou, 2024b).

3. CULTURAL ITINERARIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Cultural Routes programme was launched by the Council of Europe in 1987. The Council of Europe's Cultural Routes are an invitation to travel and discover Europe's rich and diverse heritage by bringing people and places together in networks of shared history and heritage. They implement the Council of Europe's values of human rights, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual exchanges across borders. The programme includes over 30 Council of Europe cultural routes that provide a wealth of recreational and educational activities for all citizens across Europe. They are also key resources for responsible tourism and sustainable development. The routes cover a range of different themes, from architecture and landscape to religious influences, from gastronomy and intangible heritage to music and literature (Council of Europe, n.d.).

The "Council of Europe Cultural Route" certification is a guarantee of excellence. The networks implement innovative activities and projects in five main priority areas of action: cooperation in research and development; enhancing memory, history and European heritage; cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans; contemporary cultural and artistic practice; and cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development. Through its programme, the Council of Europe offers a model for the transnational management of culture and tourism and enables synergies between national, regional and local authorities and a wide range of associations and socio-economic actors (Council of Europe, n.d.).

Some of these routes include Greece. One such route is the "Olive Roads". They are routes of intercultural discovery and dialogue based on the theme of the olive tree, which is also a symbol of peace. These routes are a gateway to new cooperation between remote areas that would otherwise be condemned to isolation, as they bring together all the players involved in the economic exploitation of the olive (artists, small producers and farmers, young entrepreneurs, etc.) who are threatened by the current crisis. The project is a way of developing work in these areas (Council of Europe, n.d.).

The olive routes follow the steps of the olive culture, from Greece to the Euro-Mediterranean countries. The traveller can experience the culture of the olive tree and become familiar with the landscapes, products and traditions of the olive tree. Different cultural itineraries cross the countries of Southern Europe and North Africa, from the Balkans to the Peloponnese in Greece and extending to the Meknes region in Morocco. Even the sea routes underline the importance of the maritime link between the ports of Mediterranean cities.

Various olive-related activities are also organised along the routes, with exhibitions, concerts and product tasting events (Council of Europe, n.d.).

There are also routes which include various parts of Europe, and which pass through Greece, such as the "Roads of the Phoenicians", "Roads of Mozart", "Iter Vitis", "European route of cemeteries", "European route of historic spa towns", "Napoleon's destination", "Roads of Impressionism", "European route of industrial heritage", "In the footsteps of Apostle Paul", etc.

Literary routes are also an integral part of cultural routes and serve as an important tool for the promotion of cultural tourism. Not only do these routes offer visitors the opportunity to visit places of literary interest, but they also contribute to the economic development of their host regions. Through these routes, the history, culture and art of each region are highlighted, bringing to life favourite heroes and stories. Manola, et al 2023a; Manola et al., 2023b),

Montalbano's Vigata route is inspired by the work of Andrea Camilleri and explores the fictional world of Inspector Montalbano. El Greco's footsteps in Greece highlights the influence of the famous artist Dominikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) and the places that marked his life. In the places of Sappho in Lesbos, a cultural journey is inspired by the life and work of the ancient poetess Sappho. (Tsatalbassoglou & Manola,2024)Rome according to Dan Brown is based on his popular works and takes visitors to important monuments in the city, such as the Vatican and Castel Sant'Angelo. Following in the footsteps of Sherlock Holmes explores the world of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous detective, with points of interest such as 221B Baker Street in London. Finally, the Nikos Kazantzakis itinerary explores the spiritual legacy of the great Greek writer, with an emphasis on Crete and Aegina, which were his sources of inspiration. (Tsalbasoglou et al., 2024; Manola et al, 2022a; Manola et al, 2022b).

4. THE CASE OF CITIES AND REGIONS

In recent years, the term urban regeneration has emerged to describe a strategy designed to address various urban and social issues caused by, among other things, economic recession and urban degradation (Davies, 2002). Urban regeneration aims to improve the aesthetics, safety and sustainability of urban areas (Nobre, 2002). During the 1980s and early 1990s, many projects addressing the above objectives were designed and implemented in various cities around the world leading to cultural regeneration (Plaza & Haarich, 2009). The cultural aspects of each region are important levers for promoting sustainable development. In some cases, culture is used as an instrument of local economic policy, while in others it is used as a strategy in its own right, for the globalization of capital and the political necessity of pooling all available resources to attract and retain international investment (McGreal et al., 2000). Such projects are usually successfully planned and implemented with benefits extending beyond the social balance of the regions in which they are implemented. Such benefits include improved quality of life and economic development through the conversion of culture into investment, income, employment, tourism and recreation. Therefore, it is evident that the key objective when culture is used as a tool for urban regeneration is to promote the images of cities internationally, at times when cities are competing with each other to attract more visitors, residents, and investment (Martone & Sepe, 2012). This goal can be achieved regardless of how different cultural regions have emerged. Mommaas (2004) highlights the fact that cultural sites emerged as: (a) Places that were left over after planning and subsequently converted into cultural places by cultural managers, (b) places envisioned by cultural managers with the aim of enhancing the marketing power of

these places within a competitive leisure and heritage market, and (c) in the design of urban planners who sought ways to revitalize declining urban areas and stimulate the local creative economy.

The success of cultural areas depends on how far these objectives can be achieved. Montgomery (2003), when arguing for urban images and functions, argues that the factors that determine the success of cultural clusters are activity, form and meaning. All three parameters are significantly influenced by the design of sustainable urban mobility, which is an emerging concept within the European transport and urban planning agenda. It is noted that sustainable mobility interventions can improve cultural capacity by enhancing the cultural identity of an area through the creation of new cultural routes.

The period from 1970 to 2000 was characterised by the implementation of many urban regeneration strategies in post-industrial cities in North America and Western Europe, as well as in Australia. More recently, developing countries and East Asian cities have also attempted such strategies (Lin & Hsing, 2009). Remarkably, this wave of culture-led urban regeneration has spread from one country to another relatively quickly (Miles & Paddison, 2005). Indeed, areas such as Pittsburgh's Cultural Quarter, Manchester's Northern Quarter, Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter, Vienna's Museum Quarter and the cultural area around the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao have managed to imprint themselves in people's minds as highly successful landmarks. The above-mentioned areas have based their development on a holistic and integrated planning model, emphasising the preservation of historical memory and cultural heritage by highlighting the areas' residential abundance and planning land use and activities. At the same time, however, special emphasis was placed on the presence of pedestrians and cyclists in the areas, although sustainable mobility was not such a trend at the time.

In some cases, sustainable mobility strategies have been implemented to enhance existing and redeveloped cultural sites, while in others both strategies have been implemented simultaneously. Typical cases are the Cheong-Gye-Cheon River Renewal Project in Seoul, South Korea and the Highline Urban Trail in New York, USA. The first case involves the removal of a 4-lane highway, about 6 km long with overpasses, which, combined with a 10-lane highway, connects downtown Seoul to the suburbs and the restoration of the river. The project was completed in 2005 and contributed to the development of a linear river-based park that is an integral part of Seoul's history (Ryu & Kwon, 2016). The restoration of the river created a green oasis in the heart of the city through the establishment of an ecosystem within the urban space. The riverbanks feature extensive green and recreational areas, fountains and cultural activities connected by pedestrian walkways. Newly created walking trails encourage citizens to walk more, while the removal of the highway promotes the use of public transportation. The project sends a message to limit car use in central areas of the city at a time when the city is seeking a balance between transportation infrastructure as a mobility provider and public space. Greenways now connect museums, cultural expression spaces and public art elements, demonstrating the transition from industry-led development to development driven by well-being and sustainability (Park & Shin, 2017). Furthermore, the fact that a number of cultural events take place on a regular basis in the area reinforces the identity of the site as a cultural hub. Remarkably, just 15 months after redevelopment, the park attracted around 90,000 visitors on a daily basis. The number of visitors is now estimated at more than 20 million visitors, a large part of which are foreigners (Križnik, 2011). The positive impact on the economy is also reflected through the relocation of companies near the area. During the implementation phase alone, the number of businesses increased by 3.5% and the number of employees also increased by 0.8%, which led to an increase in land value, which at times reached 50% of the original price (Shafray & Kim, 2017).

In addition to the purely economic impact, the overall impact of the project is multiplied by the social benefits. The intervention, to improve this degraded area contributed to environmental protection as well as promoting sustainable mobility and transport safety having contributed to development in the wider area and Seoul in general (Yoon, 2022).

A second case study is the redevelopment of New York's High Line. This is one of the most successful urban regeneration projects involving the reuse of a 1.6-mile-long overhead rail line in West Manhattan, which was abandoned in the 1980s. The area around the High Line housed mostly industrial buildings. After the line was redeveloped into an elevated park, some 350 galleries and other related businesses were added. These were relocated in the 1990s from Soho to the Chelsea area because of low rents in the area, creating clusters of galleries mainly in the area between 10th and 11th Avenues and between 20th and 27th Avenues. Unlike the Cheong-Gye-Cheon case, the area already had a cultural identity that was reinforced by art and cultural landmarks such as Chelsea Studios, the Pike Opera House, and the Rubin Museum of Art. The intervention of the High Line enhanced the current cultural dynamism, as the site was transformed into a cultural hub and the High Line into a route connecting recreational complexes and museums, new galleries and art and retail spaces, and recently planned expansions of existing cultural buildings, e.g., the Whitney Museum expanding to accommodate an exhibition space, a theater and a restaurant. At the same time, improvements in sustainable mobility were achieved by promoting pedestrian and cyclist movement through a public participation process that decisively influenced the management of public space for the benefit of people (Bakoyannis, 2018).

The organization of monuments and more generally of cultural heritage elements into cultural routes facilitates the tourist while at the same time creating new forms of cultural entrepreneurship by enhancing existing ones. Entrepreneurship, tourism, cultural heritage and the organisation and promotion of all these through cultural routes are directly linked and interdependent concepts. Tourists are motivated to travel taking into account the cultural factor and their desire to come into contact with the cultural elements of the destination country. (Maniou et al.,2024 Maniou, et al.,2024a). Satisfaction with the services provided creates a positive experience and a desire to repeat the trip or motivate friends and acquaintances. (word of mouth advertising). Travellers' needs should be met by products and services, boosting the development of entrepreneurship and creating new jobs. Greece has a large number of points of cultural interest which should be organized and promoted in order to avoid the phenomenon of seasonality since cultural tourists are willing to travel outside the summer months (Maniou et al.,2024b ; Maniou,2023 ; Maniou 2024a; Maniou ,2024c).

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