

LANDSCAPE AND URBAN SUSTAINABILITY. CULTURAL ROUTES FOR CULTURAL TRAVELLERS: A POSITIVE APPROACH - CASE STUDY

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Dimitra Katraouzou

Ph.D. NTUA, Architect, National Technical University of Athens, Greece

M.Sc. Bartlett School, University College London

dkatraouzou@gmail.com

Abstract

The value of protecting natural spaces is highlighted by the environmental, social, economic and cultural principles of sustainability, which are recognized as contributing factors to the goal of development. Furthermore, the role of 'cultural routes' is very important, to strengthen the enabling environment by encouraging policies and methods that support sustainable tourism as a significant vehicle for managing cultural and natural heritage. It is well known that Greece, although a small piece of landmass with numerous islands scattered around, has always communicated with the rest of the world, the Mediterranean and beyond, through sea routes. Consequently, several of the most important cities that were established as ports were built next to the sea, from antiquity until today. The fact that Greece, at the edge of the Balkan peninsula, is surrounded by sea, reflects the importance of the water element as a means of communication and a pole of sustainable development for the coastal cities that constitute natural areas of great importance.

It is argued that the promotion of the identity of a "place" towards sustainable development undoubtedly has multiple benefits for the local society, in terms of improving the living environment and supporting cultural, social and economic development. Moreover, the progression of sustainable development goals in tourism, in a human-centered way, creates cultural and political connections between the local to global, the past to the present, transforming the modern traveller through experiences and co-presence into a 'cultural traveller'.

This paper explores a contemporary approach to the promotion of "cultural landscapes" through the creation of Cultural Routes, at a "supra-local" level. The research focuses on a holistic view of methodological processes in terms of education and awareness for sustainable consumption and the improvement of the quality of life of citizens.

Key words: *Cultural landscape, routes, political sustainability, interactive platform*

Introduction

In 1987, the concept of Cultural Routes was launched and established at European level by the Council of Europe with the aim to strengthen the common European identity through the contribution of a shared cultural legacy (EU 2016). Greece's contribution to the establishment of the partial agreement is highlighted by its role as one of the main pillars of cultural interconnection in Europe, as it has always been a crossroads of civilizations. Moreover, although it is a small country, it has the peculiarity that parts of its territory are mostly submerged in the sea. Thus, the landmass consists mainly of a main strip of land and a multitude of islands between the Aegean, the Ionian and the Cretan Sea, endowed with magnificent natural beauty with a wide variety of landscape variations. By extension, Greece

has been a place intertwined with history and culture since ancient times, so every part of it includes archaeological sites as fragments of evidence of historical memory. Therefore, these two advantages (historical background and natural geographical location) can be exploited for cultural and tourist activities. Cultural Routes are emerging today as an important management and useful tool for the promotion of cultural resources and the advanced promotion of cultural tourism of a city, or of a cultural landscape. Through a marked path, the visitor has the opportunity to experience the history and culture of a place and to get to know its special physiognomy (Moraitis, 2015). But at present, the progression of sustainable development goals in tourism, at present are predominantly 'local area' focused, whilst 'cultural landscapes' are usually treated in a fragmented manner (e.g. archaeological sites from urban landscapes). Subsequently, a field of discussions and reflections on the management of this kind of cultural landscape has developed into an important field of research. This paper attempts to introduce a better understanding between the links of heritage and tourism. It also suggests that it is important for monuments and archeological sites not to be presented in isolation from their social context, but rather to be examined in relation to man and his environment.

A positive approach. Case Study: Research Area and general framework

As a positive approach, it has been chosen a case study of a special innovative Cultural Route Project, created by the Ministry of Culture of Athens (Directorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities) which is part of a broader action entitled "Cultural routes in emblematic archaeological sites and monuments", and included in the financial programs of the Recovery and Resilience Fund. The said action concerns the planning of a total of five (5) emblematic cultural routes, with themes that cover all periods of Greek history and extend geographically almost throughout the Greek territory.

The examined route implemented by the Directorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, whose implementation is still in progress, has the title: "**Cultural Route: The Road to the West. From Homer to Cervantes**". The program unfolded in May 2022 and is coming to an end. (The supervisors have been appointed as: *Anastasia Gadolou, Georgia Ivou and Napoleon Xifaras (archaeologists)* and the Scientific collaboration Team of: *Ieremias S. & Chiotis G. (archaeologists), Katraouzou D.-architect, Kotsainas M.-civil engineer*).

The main narrative of this Cultural Route deals with the 'dual movement of colonists': Greeks and Romans. An additional important element that differentiates this specific cultural route project from the usual ones is the different modes of transportation by the traveller-visitor, a fact that differentiates not only the character of the two individual routes (by sailing boat or by van land) but also the way of visitors' view and understanding. Specifically, the project consists of the next two sub-routes:

The first one 'from Greece to the West' takes place as a 'sea route' (by a sailing boat). It refers to the historical background, where the Corinthians and the Achaeans, (from the 8th and the end of the 7th century BC) moved west, establishing colonies in Southern Italy and Sicily, following divine instructions from the Oracle of Delphi. The colonies that they founded were particularly important because they remained powerful cities for many centuries whilst in turn, they founded other new cities, thus creating *Magna Grecia*.

The second one 'from the West to Greece' is a 'land route' (by car, on foot etc.). It refers to the fact that Romans from the 1st century BC and after (167 BC) seem to have moved to the S.W. Peloponnese and specifically in Olympia for the games but also for the promotion of their emperors, while continuing to the Northwest they founded colonies, that is, cities with Roman citizens and corresponding rights, such as Patras and even Nicopolis, where Augustus consolidated his victory (after the conquest of Actium in 30 BC).

The physical object of this project concerns the creation of a 'double cultural route', which will connect various archaeological sites in the Peloponnese, central Greece, including the western Greece regions of the Ionian Islands and Epirus (Ephorates of Antiquities of Corinth, Achaia, Ilia, Phocis, Aitolokarnania, Preveza, Corfu and Ithaca). These sites, based on archaeological data and ancient sources, constitute starting points or stations in the movement of populations that transported goods and ideologies, within the general context of the economic, commercial and colonial process of early historical times, as well as of classical and late antiquity. Moreover, the distinctiveness of this tour is that it is based on the plot of an entire narrative, while it is formed with a network of physical and mental routes, articulating various types of 'landscapes'. Thus, in addition to archaeological sites, such as cemeteries, sanctuaries, ancient cities and ports, it will include a wide range of information concerning architectural cultural heritage and natural environment ancient and modern. Furthermore, as well as elements of the intangible cultural heritage of the areas through which it passes will be addressed along the cultural activities of modern life such as: tours and visits to local festivities of music or food celebrations of local customs revival, and other artistic cultural events such as performances, exhibitions, sailing boat sports or navy competitions (e.g. Regatta etc.).

The following activities were scheduled to be carried out within the general framework of this project:

- to record and collate scientific documentation of selected locations, that will constitute main and secondary stops on the cultural routes, collection of cartographic data and audiovisual material, gathering information on monuments or archaeological sites located in close distance from the selected monuments on the route. This material will be fed to an *interactive digital platform*;
- to identify potential improvement works in order to beautify and enhance the surrounding area of the monuments/stations;
- to design, supply and organise the installation of information signs;
- to create the production of information material (guides/brochures) in various languages and in Braille, and to organise public information activities (e.g. seminar, periodic exhibition).

It should be noted that within the framework of the broader action of the Cultural Routes, for the implementation of the physical object of the above project, as well as for the indication of possible locations and monuments, a range of improvement and promotion works are going to be carried out such as: cleaning, beautification, upgrade and/or expansion of existing paths, introducing interventions at both, ancient and modern paths for improved access and security. Moreover, conservation, restoration and promotion projects are proposed to be implemented by the competent regional services and central Directorates of the Ministry of Culture, as appropriate, in selected archaeological sites and monuments related to the above thematic routes.

Methodologically, an interdisciplinary collaboration has been followed for its accomplishment consisting of scientific documentation, natural and digital technologies correlated with material and intangible heritage data, myths and facts, symbolic and imaginative interpretations that intercross between the past, the present and the future.

Design of a cultural route. *The Architectural Project*

The aim of the work was also to demonstrate the contribution of these cultural places and landscapes to improving the quality of life, as well as the frequency and reasons for citizens finding them worth visiting (Aravantinos, 1997). On the other hand, the recent crisis caused

by the pandemic of covid-19 has prompted an unprecedented acceleration of the digital transformation of the cultural sector in most countries (UNESCO 2020). According to this, the Hellenic Ministry of Culture also issued a special invitation for the creation and distribution of digital cultural material, original or converted from existing material, aiming at the possibility of remote access in the context of finding alternative ways of cultural production and innovative means of cultural expression (YPPOA 1995-2022). Additionally, the main goal is to create a dynamic relationship between individuals who may not share the same physical space but have an interest in the same topic. Thus, the creation of an interactive digital platform in our project aims to consist of a social and communicative **‘common place=κοινό τόπο’** using technology with the continuous flow of information and continuous feedback, investing in participation, safety and sustainability (Micheli, 2020).

All the members, of the Project’ working group, participated in the on-site inspections at archaeological stations along the route, where the areas that required immediate rescue interventions were recorded, drafting corresponding technical reports with intervention proposals and the relevant specifications. For the implementation of the project, we contributed to the creation of the interactive map of the route and digitized archival material, while in the context of planning its promotional actions, we collaborated with co-responsible bodies and representatives of local communities. Moreover, to create an exciting cultural route, the initiation on our project includes three stages that connect man with life and with other people over time: 1) Receiving information through digital browsing of the site, 2) in-situ browsing in real time with all the possible difficulties and physical fatigue but with the opportunity of experiential participation in actions and events (e.g. in sacred places to local festivals) and 3) providing feedback from knowledge and experience associatively as well as communicating and searching for participation in subsequent actions.

Specifically, due to the context of the ‘architectural work’ regarding the architectural design, the following were specifically implemented: According to a systematic bibliographic study of the findings of the Route Stations and based on the narrative of the Project, the ‘logo’ and the ‘informative metal signs’ of the Project were synthetically studied and digitally designed, while patterns were proposed for the creation of objects (souvenirs). As the goal is to encourage European citizens to rediscover their heritage, the ‘Architectural Synthesis’ of this project is characterized by: *Inspiration, Innovation, Exploration, Temptation for Socialization and Co-Presence*. In this way the experience should stretch throughout the entire time range, which means *before, during and after* the route. Overall, the architectural intervention concerned all stages from the idea conception to the design proposal in digital form of a complete series of architectural and construction drawings.

The design of the new information signs of the route, consists of a complete series of digital architectural and construction (detailed) plans of the basic, in totem type signs for indoor and outdoor use and two more alternative types for special cases. Specifically, their aesthetic aspect was studied and their graphic structure as well as their perspective and realistic form were designed in a color model, so as to fit into the wider landscape, proposing their placement positions at the thirty-three (33) stations in each case. Moreover, access configurations (for visitors and people with disabilities), signage, decorum and the promotion of monuments and archaeological sites were also proposed. Additionally, the design and beautification of the new main entrance area for the Heraion of Perachora at Corinthia, was studied. The architectural proposal concerns the construction of a 'new central entrance', of a new door with a new fence with an aesthetic upgrade of the surrounding area and the addition of a new visitor outdoor lounge with a canopy for visitors. The architectural design project includes the conception of the initial idea to digital design in a full series of architectural and construction plans as well as photorealistic presentations. For the implementation needs of the Project, market research was conducted into the type of products and construction materials.

Due to the morphological aspect of every new construction of our route project concerning architectural or landscape 'beautification' design, the general rule focuses on the creation of a unified style, easily visible, with contemporary and innovative style. Functionally, it is necessary to have good quality of materials for resilience in outdoor exposure and to be easily informative and ergonomic for all categories of visitors.

Architectural Approach: The design of the route's logo

However, in order to encourage the development of a new type of tourism with an ethic focused on dialogue among cultures, the architectural investigation of designing the 'Logo' and the 'Information Signs' is to express the 'meaning' of the route according to its symbolic notion of the total narrative and the creation of a 'new language' with 'new messages'.

Finally, the design of the project's logo was inspired by one of the dominant geometric motifs of 'the spiral, founded in early historical times in ceramic art, in relation to the time period of the Geometric Age, in which our Cultural Route' project refers to, but also to its symbolic dimension (Gadolou 2008). Considering that the Project of our Cultural Route "The Road to the West. From Homer to Cervantes" deals with the double movement of colonists: Greeks and Romans, the motif of the 'double spiral' that folds as a logo represents, precisely this double movement. Therefore, at first reading, the double folding form of the spiral of the logo in a symbolic and minimalistic way renders this two-way flow relationship of the movement of colonists 'from Greece to the West and vice versa' as well as the transfer of their Cultural heritage. The term "colonization" in its conventional sense is used for the founding of cities because of the organized activity of a 'mother city' (metropolis/mother city) under the leadership of an official founder (oikistes/oikistes). Thus, the double movement of the spiral interprets this very relationship: from the mother city to the new city-offspring, expressing a centrifugal-extroverted force and a continuous introverted folding in reverse from the new city-offspring to the mother city. With a freer interpretation, the motto of the logo could also symbolize the '*Nostos for the return*' or by extension the swirling wave of the sea for this journey. Odysseus, as a mythical figure of a traveller, hero and in a sense the 'first colonizer', inspired the myth (especially for *Nostos*) with his journey to return to Ithaca (Malkin, 1998).

Equally important, however, is that fiction inspires ventures, and so the Greeks, having a perception of reality and myth, succeeded and sailed, explored, created relationships of friendship and hospitality (*xenia*), raided, traded and colonized the coasts beyond Ithaca in the Ionian, Adriatic and Tyrrhenian seas, while simultaneously projecting the myth into new territories, thus articulating new landscapes, genealogies and ethnicities. As historical documents, the three-legged cauldrons (*tripods*) were also votive offerings of settlers to the West to propitiate the gods for a favorable outcome of their journey. Similar ones existed in sanctuaries such as Delphi, Olympia, the sanctuary in the cave of Loizos in Ithaca and elsewhere, an event directly related to the narrative of the work 'from Homer to Cervantes' (Gadolou, 2013).

In a second, more expanded reading, the double movement 'Towards and From the West', as rendered by the 'folded spiral with a dot', can also be likened to a wheel (of a chariot) that runs endlessly and arduously (on rough roads, throwing up gravel), traveling through the depths of time and history, marking the constantly recurring movement of people and goods around the world, but also the 'global phenomenon' of population migration, which with the corresponding mixing and exchange of different views and ways of life each time ultimately contributes to the 'osmosis' of ideas, people, types of art and cultures, thus contributing to the 'overall,' social, political and cultural 'becoming', enriching and developing it.

Architectural Approach: The Design of the Information Signs

The project includes the design and placement of information signs at the stations along the route (e.g. archaeological sites and museums) that will inform the public about the narrative of the route to each station. The project's information signs were designed in a 'totem' type, while the logo and the vertically written title of the project (which are cut out) mark and emphasize them on both sides. Their construction consists mainly of two metal sheets: a larger one (dimensions 0.49m x 1.75m) at the back and a smaller one (by 10 cm) in front, which has a wavy shape to resemble the way a postcard unfolds, to facilitate the reading by a standing or a sitting person. They are designed to be used in both cases: for outdoor spaces, on a concrete base and for indoor use in Museums, as self-supporting (see Figure 1).

Due to the special nature of the Project, the design of the information signs has to satisfy various special cases such as: the different way and level of viewing (either from the sea or from land) so that they are easily recognizable even from afar, thus highlighting each station and its position as part of an overall Cultural Route. They can also be used as landmarks of significant intermediate stations, even in the case where the traveller does not need to go to them (e.g. their use to signify the position of important caves in the view of a traveller from the sea, sailing by boat, as they would have appeared in the eyes of a seafarer of the past) (Lynch, 1960). Specifically the design of the information boards, according to their form and function, satisfies the following basic principles:

Morphologically, they are easily visible from sea & land (in a totem type) and are not similar nor competitive, with the existing ones found in museum and archaeological site signs -with a unified style, so as to mark on the one hand each station of the Cultural Route, as a 'reference point' and on the other hand its importance as a 'part' of a 'wider overall tour'. They incorporate an innovative design (corrugated sheet metal that seems to unfold like a postcard) challenging the traveler-explorer to read it by additionally projecting the title and logo on both sides, while for their integration into the landscape, they are in rust-colored ('Corten' type).

Functionally, they are made of high-quality materials whilst manufactured to slowly wear and tear over time in outdoor exposure (e.g. severe weather). They are easy informative for all visitors (even at low level - for children and wheelchair users) and offer additional services for visually or hearing-impaired people (with Qr Code and audio listening method). Finally, they are ergonomic for all, due to their shape, proportions and the combination of vertical (covered with fine glass) and inclined reading surfaces, so that they can be read from close up and from distance.



Figure 1: The project's information sign and logo,

Architectural approach: The design of the New Entrance and Sitting Area with Pavilion. Works to beautify and enhance the surrounding area of the Route.

The important area of Heraion Perachora in Loutraki at Corinthia was chosen as the starting (departure) point of the maritime cultural route by sailing boat. The archaeological site takes

its name to the great sanctuary of the goddess Hera Akraia that is located at the lowest point of the area, at sea level next to the old harbor (Payne, 1940).

The wider area uniquely combines the magnificent natural landscape of land and sea. The visitor who chooses to visit it by car arrives at the parking area, where the end of the road is. From that place to the top, where the archaeological site can be visited, the visitor has to walk down, along a pedestrian ramp, and pass through the existing 'rough' entrance. Thus, due to the importance of sacred landscape and in the context of the possibility of beautification works, the design project for a new entrance was carried out. The basic architectural synthesis proposes the creation of a new central entrance with a new fence and the extension of a new sitting area next to it, with a pavilion.

Furthermore, in terms of beautifying and enhancing this important stop, the main goal of the landscape architectural synthesis, is to create an unbreakable contact in consecutive stages between the visitor and the archaeological site, even when the visitor is not inside it. Thus, according to the new architectural synthesis (see Figure 2), when the visitor arrives at the height of the platform, the form of the new entrance and the image of the new fence signifies 'the boundary' between the countryside and the archaeological site and the 'transition' practically and symbolically. Both the visual escapes from the walk and towards the archaeological site, as well as the urban planning of the new sitting area (with a clear reference to the ancient roads) intensify the visitor's communication with the archaeological site as well as with other people. Visitors are informed about the route by the project's information board (of new design), which is placed centrally in the open space, while small metal cubes arranged in a spiral direction create a fluid continuity and extend the sitting area.

Moreover, the compositional proposal was not limited just to a superficial beautification of the entrance but was deepened to reflect the interconnection of the sacred space with our cultural route, by searching for a new language about the common historical time period of the narrative with the relevant archaeological findings. Given the fact that the vessels are 'spoken symbols' telling the story of the people who used them (Gadolou 2013), this strong numerical repetition of lines and spiral forms underlines the conceptual correlation between the identity of society and its symbolic representations. Specifically, the design of the facade of the new entrance enclosure came out from the decoding of specific motifs and symbols of Achaean pots of the Geometric era, not by copying them, but by decomposition and redesigning in a new 'plexus' (πλέξη), using also proportions regarding the 'golden ratio'. Morphologically, the whole synthesis of the new entrance fence and its surrounding landscape distribution was treated as a sculpture.

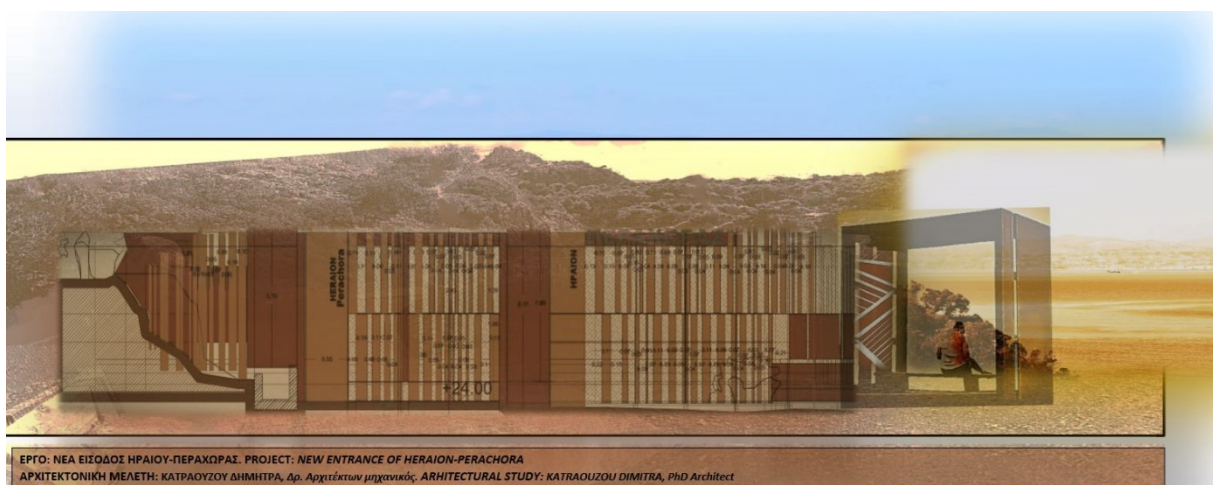


Figure 2. The archaeological site of Heraion at Perachora-Corinthia.

The design of the New Main Entrance by Katraouzou Dimitra -PhD architect.

Furthermore, its construction of rusty metal strips (analogous to those of the newly designed information signs) harmoniously integrates the structure into the landscape even in the event of possible future damage from material fatigue, even in the case of lack of maintenance. The visitor, through a shaped pedestrian walkway-ramp, is directed to the archaeological site at a much lower level that ends up by the sea. After visiting the sacred site, the only way out is following the same ramp back to the (previous) area of the new main entrance.

The nearby addition of a newly designed shelter offers rest by also protecting in adverse weather conditions (like wind, rain or hot summer sunshine). Its characteristic cubic form creates a frame from where the visitor's gaze (like a photographic lens), focuses with contemplation on the unique landscape of the wider natural and mainly cultural environment.

Finally, the design of the facade of the new entrance as a '*striped barcode*' of the architectural form works associatively to the visitor by transmitting the rhythmic pulse of the sacred space, even when he has left, while the knowledge acquired may continue to be fed back through the interactive platform. Upon leaving, the visitor should have experienced the place's code, felt the rhythm of history as well as the identity of the sacred cultural landscape.

Conclusions

Memory has always been a contributing factor in the analytical and synthetic design process. From a local point of view, the open public spaces from ancient times until today are places of gathering and communication for citizens, an interface 'network' of exchange and expression of ideas, a 'political scene'. From a global point of view, according to Greek history, since ancient times, communication networks have been formed, both economically by the movement of goods through trade and culturally and socially by the exchange of ideas and social contact by the movement of people-travellers.

Nowadays, digital technologies and social networks have opened 'new routes' not only for information, searching and browsing, but also for communication by a multiple cultural interface.

This paper refers to the positive way in which the gifts of nature and history can be exploited to the maximum extent possible to constitute a natural, economic, historical and mainly tourist resource, that will familiarize citizens with both local and global cultural heritage, as well as strengthening the relationship between them. In particular, the modern cultural traveller has the opportunity to acquire valuable knowledge that is integrated into a broader game of browsing and gaining experiences of various cultural activities, combining creative exploration with education and entertainment, from antiquity to the present day.

The aim of the architectural research is also to demonstrate the contribution of these cultural sites and landscapes to improving the quality of life of citizens. By highlighting and redesigning them it is anticipated to make their integration into modern life more familiar and attractive so that citizens find them worth visiting.

Conclusively, the "identity" of Cultural Routes focuses on highlighting the physiognomy of the "diversity" of the urban and digital cultural landscape with the sense of "political viability" thus enabling the traveller to reproduce some kind of "collective end" - the model of "co-presence".

Similarly, the initiated "world traveller", following in the "footsteps" of the mythical traveller Odysseus, will discover that what is ultimately worthwhile is "the journey".

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