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Correspondence: jkarkazis@aegean.gr

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ALTERNATIVE TOURISM AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN GREECE: MANAGEMENT AND POLICY ISSUES

Leonidas Maroudas and Paris Tsartas

*Department of Business Administration
University of the Aegean
Chios, Greece*

Abstract. The adverse effects of the organized mass tourism application model, in conjunction with the increasing demand for differentiated tourism products, have brought forth alternative tourism as a dynamic regional development factor both internationally and in Greece, especially since the mid-'80s. Alternative tourism has already become a rapidly developing section of the world tourism industry and, in contrast with the standardized forms of mass tourism, offers a number of presumed economic benefits to local hosting communities. This paper aims at describing and assessing first the changes in tourism development planning and second the role that alternative tourism plays in regional development of Greece.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism development, Alternative forms of tourism, Regional development, Greece

INTRODUCTION

The spectacular increase of the tourist voyages number in the post-World War II period has brought dramatic changes in the developmental context of countries and regions possessing resources (and the necessary infrastructures) capable of attracting tourists. For many countries tourism has gradually become on the one hand an important income generator and on the other hand a dynamic industry with positive effects on regional and local development, at least in the medium-term. The stabilization of tourism development has been most notable since 1970, whence the increase in tourism demand (both national and international) has been continuous. Parallel to the process of continual diversification of the tourism product, tourism development has been increasingly specialized as regards infrastructures and services provided, thus giving rise to a greater and more diversified number of products and services demanded, and correspondingly infrastructures provided.

The development of organized mass tourism into the world's largest industry may have offered certain medium-term benefits to local societies, but has also brought about, as has been widely accepted, economic dislocation, environmental deterioration and cultural degeneration (Croall 1995). According to a growing number of research projects, the implementation of mass vacation tourism in many mountainous and more significantly insular areas resulted in very profound economic deformation of their production structures and wide-ranging irreversible alterations in marine and terrestrial ecosystems (De

Albuquerque and McElroy 1995; Miller and Auyong 1991; Pantin 1994).

The rise of environmentalism and “green” consciousness in the mid to late 1980’s resulted on the one hand in a reassessment of the role and value placed upon tourism at destinations (Cooper, Fletcher, Wanhill 1993), and on the other in the emergence of alternative tourism as one of the most dynamically developing modern composite tourism products. The term “alternative tourism”¹ usually refers to the structured development of a number of soft tourism activities in a region (agrotourism, ecotourism, sports and adventure tourism, cultural tourism, etc.). Alternative tourism must demonstrate the following main characteristics:

- The existence of a predominant special motive on tourists leading them to travel in search for: adventure, naturalism, sports, acquaintance with local traditions, sight-seeing, spending time in areas with interesting natural or man-made environment.
- Autonomy in organizing a trip, in contrast to the staging of mass vacation tourism, and its often touring character.
- The development of special infrastructures (lodgings, services, activity organization) in areas possessing the necessary resources.
- Respect shown by tourists to local social and environmental structures.

¹ In many cases, the term “alternative” is substituted with other terms such as sustainable, responsible, eco-, special interest, soft, green, etc., whose analysis does not lie within the scope of the present paper.

The broad scope of activities and infrastructures implied by alternative tourism and its local developmental dimension, have rendered it a particularly dynamic regional tourism development factor globally, especially during the last twenty years².

The present paper attempts an assessment of the contribution of alternative tourism to Greece's regional development. The first section of the present paper attempts to describe the characteristics of tourism development in Greece and to assess the sustainability and geographic expansion of alternative tourism. The second section is devoted to the analysis of the most important preconditions necessary for a systematic interlinkage of alternative tourism with a regional development policy, in order to overcome the lack of coordination and the inadequacies of the tourism education and training system, in order to achieve the setting up of a competitive and sustainable tourism product.

1. ALTERNATIVE TOURISM: LINKS WITH SUSTAINABILITY AND ITS DEVELOPMENTAL DIMENSION IN GREECE

1.1. The characteristics of tourism development in Greece

During the period from the 1950s until about the beginning of the 1980s tourism development planning in Greece—but also in other European countries—focused on tourism supply, i.e. on tourist

²The main reasons underpinning the dynamic development of alternative tourism during the last two decades Harrison 1996; Tsartas 1998) are most probably first of all the gradually growing reaction to mass tourism's adverse effects and second the necessity for the tourism industry itself to cover increased demand coming from a growing segment of the market for differentiated tourism products, whose quality is often related with eclectivity, environmental consciousness, "political correctness" and reluctance to accept organized mass vacation packages.

destinations. Especially in the beginning during 1960s and 1970s the comprehensive planning marked the state's direct intervention in the construction of hotel units and infrastructures, as well as in the support of private tourism sector by means of various fiscal policy measures (Konsolas and Zacharatos 1992). Along with comprehensive planning existed also disjointed incrementalism³, as a result of the wide range and the great differentiation of private interests. The gradual transition to the phase of maturity and crisis of tourist destinations caused international and national authorities exercising tourism policy to adopt the planning for sustainable tourism development that was followed by an increase of alternative tourism.

As a result of the aforementioned changes in tourism development planning the characteristics of tourism development in Greece during the period 1950 to 2000, have been affected by certain factors related to the politics, marketing and management of the tourism sector:

- The adoption of a development paradigm based on summer vacation tourism.

We are dealing with a model characterized by intense seasonality and involving large scale and volume infrastructures that rapidly spread to almost all coastal and insular areas of the country, often causing environmental problems.

- The integration of Greece into the broader Mediterranean "tourism product".

³ The different forms of tourism development planning are analysed in Briassoulis 1997; Inskeep 1994.

Since the 1960s Greece has become a significant integral part of the largest tourism—and more specifically vacation tourism—market in the world. This has directly affected the characteristics of the infrastructures and services offered by the country, due to the standardized character of demand.

- Dependence relation of many areas on foreign tourism demand.

The (mainly European) demand for coastal areas with a rich natural and cultural environment has led many of these areas to a dependence relation of their development with specific markets (English, German), but also with a specific type of tourism (mass organized vacation tourism).

- Inadequacies in the institutional framework and strategic planning of tourism development.

Immediately after the World War II, there has been a clear delay in the setting up of a coherent institutional framework for policy making in the development of tourism. This has affected all parameters related to the formulation of a stable long-term strategic plan for the development of tourism.

- The need to modernize and upgrade the tourism infrastructures and services offered.

A large part of infrastructures and services provided – especially in more mass developed tourist areas – demonstrate degradation symptoms. As of the 1980s, significant efforts have been made to upgrade the country's tourism product, in the face of intensifying international competition over the past twenty years.

- Asymmetries in the spacial concentration of tourism development.

Tourism development has been notably asymmetrically distributed over the country⁴. The largest part of tourist resorts have been concentrated in coastal and insular areas, causing both important environmental problems and the degradation of services offered. Furthermore, because of the institutional and natural seasonality of mass tourism, employment in tourism causes a notable special form of labor migration with job-seeking people moving to the tourist areas during the summer months and returning to their homes in other parts of the country during the rest of the year.

- Inadequacies in education and research in tourism.

The tourism education system cannot cover the needs of the labor market, and is also found working according to international standards, that require the vertical integration of educational levels (Zacharatos and Tsartas 2002). Research in tourism has also been lagging behind although there have been some improvements over the last few years.

- Marketing and advertising: institutional inadequacies and positive steps.

State tourism policy has been late to appreciate the need to activate a coherent marketing plan on a national and regional level. In contrast, in the advertising sphere, there have been positive efforts that have contributed to the promotion of the Greek tourism product, both on a national and on a regional and local level.

- Gradual development of special interest and alternative tourism and the adoption of sustainable development models.

⁴The assumption that mass tourism, being a dynamically developing sector, is the most suitable instrument of regional policy, has led to the strengthening of inequalities in development potentials, as both public and private investments were biased in favor of already developed tourist locations (NTO – CPER 1994; Spilanis 1985).

Not until 1980 has there been a development of special type products and services. Their absence had caused a failure of Greek tourism development to reach the standards of other competitive countries. This failure has manifested itself despite the fact that the country possesses considerably rich resources specifically suitable for alternative tourism. Now we notice a more dynamic promotion of development models based on the principles of sustainability on a regional level, although international experience shows that it is quite hard to transform sustainable concepts into workable practices (Berry and Ladkin 1997). This policy results both from the new international planning parameters and from the critical stance taken by the local authorities and scientists towards the traditional paradigm of organized mass tourism established in the country.

Critical analysis and evaluation of the main parameters that have influenced tourism development in the period between 1950 and 1980 can lead to the following conclusions:

For many decades (at least until 1980) Greek tourism policy-although the country itself offers a lot and very rich alternative tourism resources-had been underestimating this important aspect of the tourism product, while at the same time many of our competitors have developed and promoted infrastructures and services in this field (Tsartas 1998).

The promotion policy of all Greek activities and initiatives was based only on the promotion of one part of the country's tourism product, depriving in this way the country of the demand for the specialised and dynamically developing markets of SIT (Special Interest Tourism).

The great importance of internal tourism for regional development of Greek tourism, through the reinforcement of local development activities and initiatives, has not been correctly evaluated (Tsartas, Manoglou, Markou 2001). Most of the efforts in this field started substantially after 1990 and were aided mostly by the CSF (Community Support Framework) and the initiatives of the E.U. development policies, which paid great attention to “local” tourism development and the special and alternative forms of tourism (WTO 2002).

1.2 The geographic expansion of alternative tourism development

Alternative tourism-as the sum total of the various special forms of tourism it incorporates-has been developing since the '80s ever more rapidly and has also been expanding to geographic areas with little or no tourism tradition. The main parameters characterizing its development are the following:

- There is a number of alternative tourism activities that have been traditionally carried out in Greece since before the World War II (alpine, mountaineering, sports, touring). This tradition held on and was broadened during the first post-war decades to include agrotourism, cultural tourism and ecotourism activities. The infrastructures offered were initially rudimentary, but have gradually been improving, attracting significant numbers of mainly Greek, but also foreign tourists (especially German, English and French).

- The demand for alternative tourism activities on the part of domestic tourists has been steady and growing. It has been recently estimated that a large percentage of Greeks possesses or uses vacation houses and travel many times a year within the country on usually short visits. Part of this demand is channeled towards trips related with alternative tourism activities. This demand mainly comes from urban inhabitants, young age groups and middle-income brackets (Tsartas, Manoglou, Markou 2001). As expected, this demand has led to an increase in infrastructures and services provided throughout the country.
- The spreading of alternative tourism activities has gradually altered the development scenery, as a large percentage of alternative tourism resources is found in areas with little tourism development during the period between 1950 and 1980. Many of these areas are inland, alpine or semi-alpine, thus leading to the expansion of alternative tourism demand-with consequently positive effects on local development-towards areas that do not attract the “typical” organized mass vacation tourism. In this way, alternative tourism acts as a catalyst for the creation of new local development pockets.
- The increase in foreign tourists’ multi-motive demand boosts the multiplication of alternative tourism activities, as it has been noted over the last twenty years that tourists aim to cover in one trip many of the motives that led them to travel. Such motives may be recreation, naturalism, resting, acquaintance with local culture, sports, touring, etc. In this context, demand for alternative tourism activities is continually rising, as these may be combined with other forms-such as organized tourism-during the same trip.

- The most systematic development of alternative tourism activities is recorded in mountainous and semi-mountainous areas in Middle, West and East Macedonia, in Middle (mountainous) Peloponnesus, in the mountainous areas of Thessaly and Epirus, in Crete and at the islands of North-East Aegean as well as at some islands of the Dodecanese and the Cyclades. The factors that have contributed to this development were in brief the following: the rise of the number of agrotourism partnerships during the last 20 years (Gousiou, Spilanis, Kizos 2001), the programmes aiming at the environmental protection (wetlands, national parks, etc.) but also at the protection of the man-made environment (traditional settlements, historic cities' centres, etc.), the increase of internal tourism, the development and special expansion of ski resorts and the development of winter tourism activities as well as the special expansion of business activities in outdoor tourism and ecotourism (NTO 2004; Tsartas 1998).

1.3. The sustainable development dimension of alternative tourism

Over the past twenty years sustainability and viable tourism development have been featuring as core parameters of the tourist policies implemented and the corresponding tourist development programmes, both on national and regional level (Ahn et al. 2002; WTO 2002). According to the findings of research studies, alternative tourism is considered a consolidating factor for the sustainable dimension of tourism, especially on a local and regional level (Berry and Ladkin 1997; Inskeep 1994; Maroudas and Tsartas 1997). The fields where alternative tourism is linked to sustainability are analyzed as follows:

A crucial parameter for any policy aiming at the sustainable development of tourism is the implementation of measures and projects which contribute to environmental protection.⁵ The objective is twofold: on the one hand to achieve the balanced development of a tourist area without draining or degrading its resources and on the other hand to meet the “green” expectations of tourists. Alternative tourism activities, services and infrastructures are functionally and directly linked to this policy of environmental protection and enhancement (WTO 2002).

Sustainable planning for tourism development consistently aims at strengthening and bolstering local tradition and culture, realizing that it represents a high value tourism resource, directly addressing tourists’ current motives. Alternative tourism development on a local level focuses on such motives, aiming at linking many of its activities and services to the local community’s resources and infrastructures, in an effort to bring out local tradition and culture.

Most theoretical approaches attempting to investigate the possibilities of simultaneous social development and ecological sustainability point out the importance of ever growing civil participation in the economic development process. According to Murphy (1985: 151), the involvement of local society in the process of economic development can control the pace of development, integrate tourism in the economy and produce a more customized tourist product. Despite the fact that in Murphy’s ecological model of tourism planning, massive community participation is considered to be an idealistic

⁵Nevertheless, the ambiguous relationship of alternative tourism with sustainable development (Wheeller 1994), due to the fact that it is very tough to apply the principles of sustainability to all enterprises directly related to tourism-and even tougher to assess their direct and indirect environmental impacts - (Buchalis and Fletcher 1995), renders still premature any clear answer to whether alternative tourism constitutes an authentic viable activity promoting sustainable development or just represents a complementary profitable branch of the tourism industry.

expectation, rather than a realistic condition, it is pointed out that the increase of members' participation ensures stronger social cohesion, as well as greater possibilities of success in the tourist services sector. The reason for this is that the local community is considered the nucleus of the tourist product offered and the cultural differences are supposed to challenge comprehension and to encourage communication and friendly behavior (Simmons 1994). One of the basic aspects of this approach is the projection of community's picture as "the symbol of hospitality" and "friendliness" to its visitors.

Finally, alternative tourism is closely associated with the effort to functionally interlink the various sectors of the local economy, and thus significantly contributes to regional development. It involves the advancing of measures and policies supporting the active interlinkage-on a production and social level-of tourism with other economic sectors (agriculture, commerce, handicraft sales, transport, services, etc.). It is thus consistently attempted to smoothly integrate tourism into the local development framework with a long-term horizon, ensuring stability. Such a policy is in sharp contrast with the mainstream policy implemented in most tourist countries during the first post-World War II decades, namely the promotion of an internationalized in character development, showing little or no respect and sensitivity to local socioeconomic conditions. Alternative tourism, if deployed moderately, favors also the implementation of development policies according to local criteria, taking into account available resources on a long-term horizon⁶. It thus shares, in this sense, the principles of sustainable development regarding planning priorities on a local and regional level.

⁶ The prerequisites for the viability of community-based mountain adventure tourism are analyzed by Maroudas, Gouvis, Kyriakaki 2004.

2. THE CONTRIBUTION OF ALTERNATIVE TOURISM TO GREECE'S REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

After 1980, the first systematic efforts for a coherent local development of alternative tourism have been recorded in Greece. These efforts have been spreading to more and more areas of the country. The result has been the existence of smaller or larger tourism development pockets in almost all the country's districts, drawing on alternative tourism. It is of great importance to understand the extent of alternative tourism's contribution to the country's regional development. Such an understanding must take into account the necessary conditions for the successful and systematic linkage of alternative tourism with regional development policy in Greece.

The following analysis focuses on the investigation of the role of such characteristics and conditions in the two major fields of influence of alternative tourism on regional development: the tourism policy implemented and the management issues of alternative tourism.

2.1. Tourism policy issues

Promotion of alternative tourism

During the twenty years from 1960 to 1980 some patchy efforts had been made to implement specifically focused policies and take measures to create and upgrade alternative tourism infrastructures and activities. These specialized policies focused on certain specific categories of alternative tourism, in the context of the broader policy of supporting regional development through the introduction of new tourism products. The subsequent period 1980-2000 was characterized

by a qualitative improvement of tourism policy on this matter, without however having achieved a fully coherent and specialized policy implementation. Of great importance is the reference to programmes for the training of unemployed persons and workers in tourist areas (European Social Fund, Hellenic Ministry of Labour), the second CSF, Community Support Framework, (Tourism –Culture Programme) and the third CSF (Competitiveness Programme) as well as the Community initiatives LIFE, LEADER and LEADER Plus, NOW, EQUAL, Leonardo Da Vinci (Ministries of Agriculture, Development, Labor and National Economy). The areas where there has been essential reinforcement of the development of alternative tourism have been the following: qualification and training, infrastructures and services in local level as well as various business activities (hosts, agrotourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism).

It should be noted that alternative tourism has been promoted to an integral parameter of the country's policy on tourism. It has also been notable that local and regional development through the reinforcement of alternative tourism activities and infrastructures has been explicitly presented as a crucial objective of such a policy. Furthermore, during this period, a number of measures and proposals have emerged to link the various alternative tourism forms (agrotourism, ecotourism, sports tourism, mountain tourism, cultural tourism, etc.) with specialized demand on the part of foreign-mainly European-tourists. We thus note a bidirectional inter-enforcement of demand for and supply of alternative tourism products, resulting in its growing importance for regional development. However, given that demand originating from foreign tourists is subject to exogenous socioeconomic fluctuations, we assess that any further significant development of alternative tourism should

involve the planning and implementation of a long-term policy on a national and regional level, that will exploit existing and potential demand on the part of domestic tourists. Domestic tourism is in any case more suitable for a socially and economically sustainable regional development, since it does not carry all the problems linked to international mass tourism (for an extensive account, see Seckelmann 2002).

European Union policies regarding alternative tourism

The past twenty years have been characterized by a spectacular increase in the number and thematic diversity of measures, policies and initiatives of the European Commission as regards alternative tourism. Greece has been one of the tourist destination countries that benefited particularly from this development. However, these different policies have not assumed the status of an institutionally and developmentally coherent and structured policy. Nevertheless, many of the country's regions were supported in many ways and on many levels. First of all, a number of infrastructures allowing the development of alternative tourism activities have been constructed or upgraded. Second, training programs for the staging and administration of alternative tourism were implemented (Tsartas and Lagos 2005). Third, in areas possessing significant alternative tourism resources, environmental protection initiatives were taken. Fourth, there has been a direct and indirect highlighting of the local dimension in the planning and development of alternative tourism, in conjunction with the parallel reinforcement of other economic production sectors (agriculture, construction, manufacturing, cultural services, etc.). We believe that the policies implemented by the European Commission have positively contributed

to alternative tourism's regional development, despite of being often under-rated.

Policies promoting decentralization and the strengthening of "locality"

We refer to a variety of policies that have contributed, either directly or indirectly, especially during the past twenty years, to the more dynamic development of alternative tourism in the country's periphery. One such example is the decentralization of decision making procedures regarding local development, strengthening the institutional role of local authorities (municipalities and district councils). In this way, the planning, organization and administration of tourism development have acquired a gradually more "local" character, favouring initiatives and development projects more in line with sustainable development. Another such instance is the spectacular increase in the number of development companies, belonging to prefectures and municipalities. These companies steadily and consistently support the development of alternative tourism in their regions, promoting programs and projects for the setting up of infrastructures, training and the staging of activities and services to this end. Their role has also been important in the systematic promotion (through marketing and advertizing projects) of the local tourism product, both nationally and internationally. A third example is the rapid emergence of agents, associations and organizations created and operating, especially during the past few years, in most tourist areas. These have been the result of mainly local citizens' or scientific associations' initiatives, asserting a more active participation in the planning, organization and administration of local tourism development, but also the protection of the environment and the cultural heritage. A

common denominator to all such initiatives and interventions is the search for tourism development models with a sustainable character, with a prominent role given to alternative tourism.

2.2. Management issues in alternative tourism

Lack of coordination in the development of alternative tourism

While ten to fifteen years ago the first priority was to promote the development of alternative tourism regionally, the predominant issue has now become to resolve coordination problems arising out of this effort. It is, in any case, true that the expansion of many alternative tourism forms—adventure tourism, ecotourism, etc.—does not entail large-scale investments (Eaton 1997), but rather the smooth cooperation of state agents, local communities, private enterprises and non-profit organizations (Maroudas and Kyriakaki 2001). The diverse efforts to develop alternative tourism on a local level are often characterized by lack of know-how or financing and promotion shortcomings. Furthermore, development often notably takes place without any previous substantial research into the demand particularities of the area. The fact that alternative tourism has evolved into a dynamic demand sector has also led many entrepreneurs, but whole areas as well, to brand as “alternative” certain infrastructures, services and activities bearing no kinship with alternative tourism.

The inability to coordinate the development of alternative tourism as of today may inherently jeopardize its successful further growth. Two major problems are worth mentioning:

- alternative tourism does not operate as an organized “tourism product” with specific organizational and developmental characteristics,

but rather as a total sum of diverse local development initiatives and entrepreneurial activities

- there is a lack of some Organization or Agency that would provide know-how, financing and research in issues related to the development, administration and gearing of alternative tourism.

Shortcomings and problems in enterprise level management

Alternative tourism development in the country is interwoven with many diverse entrepreneurial activities: hotels, guest-houses, travel agencies, guides, ecoguides, production of cultural events, staging of sports events and activities, designation and care of protected areas, educational activities, etc. The large scope of these activities and services involved in alternative tourism is supplied by private enterprises (ex. travel agencies), agencies and organizations (ex. development companies, local authorities) or even individuals (ex. guides), many of which are often active in the alternative tourism industry with no corresponding education or training. It should be noted at this point that there is a lack of specialized systematic education and training programs within the framework of tourism management university level courses. It is only at the secondary education level that certain specialized educational courses are to be found (ex. for environmental park keepers), while as regards alternative tourism in its broader dimensions very few training and retraining programs have appeared over the past few years, together with certain subjects in post-graduate courses. Such a lagging behind the market realities, is caused by the shortcomings of the tourist education system, and the very rapid rise in demand which has created a number of problems and shortages in entrepreneurial management detriment to the quality of services supplied. The design and the

implementation at all levels and specialties-of educational and training programs in tourism sector, entrepreneurial management is absolutely necessary to address this problem.

Cooperation between agencies and enterprises and interaction with other economic sectors on a local level

A crucial parameter for the successful management of alternative tourism on a local level is the systematic development and expansion of the scope of functional interactions and cooperation among enterprises active in the sector's service provision on the one hand, and between such enterprises and agents in different sectors on the other. The first objective of such a process-that entails a coordinated and systematic management-is the consolidation of institutions and policies focused on bolstering sustainable tourism development with an alternative tourism core on a local level. The second is the formation of a competitive tourism product, which will comprise a variety of activities and infrastructures for alternative tourism. There are quite a few such success stories on a local level, but there are also a number of areas where the importance of the development and administration of this type of cooperation among the agents active in alternative tourism has not been understood. This kind of interaction and collaboration on a local level will reinforce the role of alternative tourism as a crucial parameter of regional development.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The development of alternative tourism activities in many Greek regions has had a positive contribution to regional development, especially on a local level. We assess that a most significant facet of its contribution has been that alternative tourism has promoted the tourist development of certain areas (alpine, semi-alpine, inland) that were traditionally not considered tourist destinations. What has been achieved in this way is the proliferation and broadening of the benefits of tourism development.

The fact that alternative tourism bolsters the sustainability dimensions of tourism development locally is important, especially in the case of a country that has been trying over the past twenty years to transform its tourism development paradigms, turning the balance in favor of sustainable development (Spilanis 2000; Tsartas 1998). This positive factor is related with the particularities of alternative tourism, which contribute to environmental protection and the promotion and support to local culture, through the development of the necessary infrastructure, activities and services.

Tourism policy gradually tends to adopt alternative tourism-although not in a coordinated and consistent way-as an important tourism product of the country, whose development attracts specific and specialized demand. There has been a number of steps taken towards this direction: the promotion of European Commission policies and measures favoring the development of alternative tourism, and the decentralization policies, that have strengthened “localized” processes of decision making and intervention in the planning and administration and management of tourism development. It should, nevertheless, be noted

that, as both Greek and international experience in sustainable tourism development shows (Berry and Ladkin 1997; Vera and Rippin 1996), despite the acceptance of sustainable tourism as a desirable alternative to more predatory models of development, a large gap exists between policy endorsement and policy implementation (Pigram 1990).

There are also a number of important shortcomings in the field of alternative tourism management, either as a tourism product or as a special type of development. The first issue in hand is the lack of coordination of the diverse-entrepreneurial and developmental-infrastructures and activities on a regional level. Similar problems arise in the field of management on an enterprise level that faces shortages, largely due to the inability of the educational system to cover market demand-through appropriate educational projects. The situation seems more promising regarding agent-agency cooperation regionally, as in most cases joint administrative and management initiatives aim at the consolidation of a steady and consistent local alternative tourism product endowed with composite infrastructures, services and activities, and correspondingly promoted through marketing.

The aforementioned analysis depicts that the adoption of the planning for sustainable tourism development during the past two decades has contributed essentially to the expansion of alternative tourism activities in areas where there have been low rates of tourism activity. Such an increase in demand for alternative tourism activities, not much from foreigners but mostly from native tourists, who are not affected by tour operators, resulted in the regional development of several mountainous and insular areas, which could not have been otherwise integrated to the mass tourism model because of their characteristics. Naturally, the lack of promotion and advertising of

locations that have potential for the development of alternative tourism and the lack of co-ordination among the national, regional and local authorities exercising tourism policy, have limited the contribution that alternative tourism could have had in regional development. The possibilities offered by the participative planning of tourism development in order to overcome the above inadequacies consists a very interesting field for future research.

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