Economic, Social and Environmental Aspets for the Promotion of Cultural Heritage in the Balkans

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Abstract

This paper attempts an exploration of economic, social and environmental issues that are related to the promotion of cultural heritage of reference areas in the Balkans. The assessment of the value of cultural heritage contributes to the proper management of cultural identity and hence to the promotion of the image of a region. The enhancement and promotion of cultural identity, focusing on sustainable development, is a key issue in urban planning. In theoretical level it is analyzed the economic, social and environmental aspects of an area that affect the promotion of the cultural reserve and are related to the promotion of the area image. The socio-economic conditions, quality of life, historical traditions and aesthetic values directly affect the cultural environment as an extension of the global environmental system. Contemporary planning policies include practices for the protection and promotion of cultural assets through innovative applications, fulfilling technological requirements. The importance and wealth of cultural reserve in the Balkans is particularly demonstrated by the large number of monuments and sites classified as "World Heritage Sites" by UNESCO, contributing to the promotion of the cultural image of the region, through practical effects. Through specific reference examples, in this paper, we present the new urban policies that enhance the image of the Balkans, highlighting their characteristics. The objective is to evaluate/assess the implementation of economic, social and environmental aspects in planning as an anticipated public benefit in cultural promotion of areas in the Balkans.

Keywords: Balkans, cultural heritage, management, promotion, strategic planning

1. Introduction

According to the General Principles of the Charter in the broad sense of the term heritage is included both natural and cultural environment. They are also included historical sites, places and the built environment, as well as biodiversity, collections, old and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences. It is the heritage that shapes substantially the identity of each nation, country, region or place as an integral part of contemporary life. The particular heritage and collective memory of each region or community is irreplaceable and an important foundation for current and future growth.

The term cultural reserve includes all forms of cultural expression and artistic creativity of humans over time. The architectural heritage is only part of the cultural reserve of a human whole or a geographical area. It includes monuments,

architectural ensembles and historical sites of archaeological, artistic, social, scientific and technological interest. In this context, the cultural heritage is fundamental in determining the local-national, regional and European identity and can variously affect the spatial planning (Gavra, 2004).

The memory of a place is a concept deeply connected with facts, personal experiences, codes and meanings hidden in time, that are not easily distinguishable and comprehensible. And there lies the mystery in reading a place. The memory, above all is identified with the place itself, constituting its tangible and intangible expression. Therefore, it is of great importance the exploration of the meaning of place, of its residency, its spirit, in order to approach the memory and to associate it with specific reference places. The spirit of a place, its physiognomy is determined historically and culturally. The place is the mirror of its history, its transformations in time, is linked deeply to memory, representing at the same time the same collective memory of its users (Fig. 1).

Southeast Europe, a region with particularly wide variety of cultural reserve, includes urban centers and wider areas -not necessarily only urban- with a multicultural character, rich in residues of cultures of various historical periods, important religious movements, and various architectural influences. These traces of history, scattered in the Balkan countries, do not always show the same degree of density. The prevalence in the region and for a long time of great historical dynasties - empires (Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman) created the phenomenon of 'relative sites' or 'cultural synergy zones'. The concept of limits (as natural limits) -as it is today- is replaced with the concept of relative places of common cultural characteristics that are recognized over large geographical sections of the reference area (Gavra, 2004).

2. Management policies: cultural planning, economic, social and environmental aspects

In the era of globalization and information society, the protection and promotion of the monumental, architectural, archaeological, ecological heritage needs to be integrated into individual policies for economic, social and cultural development and in conjunction with the objectives of spatial planning is the instrument of achieving these policies.

Today heritage is no longer seen as an obstacle on development but as a means of strengthening the economy and improving quality of life. The historical centers, historical and cultural poles, traditional settlements, monumental ensembles, archaeological sites and nature reserves are a huge resource for Greece and Europe and also a transmission tool of their cultural values (Beriatos, 2007).

The area of the Balkans, despite the differences in levels of institutional framework concerning the treatment methodology of monumental wealth protection issues, displays the image of a unified cultural space, without special monumental identity differences. This homogenous element now offers a series of transnational cooperation opportunities in research-analysis, protection and management of cultural heritage. The protection, restoration and reuse of cultural reserve might be for the countries of the Balkans a significant wealth factor (Fig. 2).

Already in the last decades, the transition to a market economy as well as the pre-accession process for most of these countries offers a range of corresponding possibilities to exploit the cultural inventory, especially architectural, through public and private investments and programs mainly from transnational cooperation.

Cultural planning is a multidisciplinary approach and can be understood best as a strategic process of collaborations between society, the local administration and local production with effects on economic, environmental and social development. It is a strategy for a unified conservation framework and utilization of cultural resources. The cultural planning is related to urban planning with the strategic use of cultural resources for development at local and regional level. It is the cultural approach to urban and regional planning, focusing on the formulation of a social, environmental and economic policy program (Wilks -Heeg and North, 2004).

The integration of cultural planning into wider processes of spatial and urban planning provides the capability to create viable, attractive and competitive cities. In order for the cities to offer new experiences to their guests (Kolb, 2006), cultural characteristics are used as a tool to differentiate them. The urban marketing, according to Defner & Metaxas (2006) complements and does not replace urban planning. The main convergence areas of the processes are: a) urban development in areas such as tourism, sport, arts and the media, fashion, architecture, cultural heritage, e.t.c., b) urban management, c) urban governance, d) cultural planning, e) city branding, g) design events, h) urban regeneration and i) urban policy.

The heritage protection directly depends on the economic development of a region while helping to promote innovation, the efficient management of resources, the development of employment, tourism and the new e-economy. It is also connected to local, regional national and external economies as a result of cultural industries.

Social cohesion is reinforced by cultural participation of individuals and groups, especially vulnerable, through cultural programs and events, recommending the improvement of quality of life and social inclusion.

Therefore, strategies for cultural heritage are essential to give priorities based on the creation of new partnerships and synergies by integrating the local planning consistently to the specificity of each area.

3. Reference areas: similarities, contradictions, evaluation

The area of SE Europe, as a meeting point of different cultures and civilizations, includes cities and regions with a strong multicultural character due to different historical influences, social conditions and architectural heritage. The accumulation of different ethnic and national minorities and the lack of continuity between the historical past and the modern present affected the image of the urban centers of SE and their identification. Specifically, the transition processes in SE countries influenced the economic, political and social space, with effects to spatial planning and urban programming.

The reference examples are examined at country level and were selected based on previous research. The cases concern Greece, Romania and FYROM.

A. In Greece cultural heritage is now considered one of the most economical resource and a key factor in cultural, social and economic development. In addition to that, the promotion and protection of cultural resources, is an investment fund in conjunction with the tourism sector, crucial for the country's development (Parpairis, 2004).

The urban development policy guidelines for the protection of cultural assets in areas with a strong local identity and characteristic features mainly relate to the establishment of new social economic operators, the creation of new organizational structures and feasible local planning through urban and architectural design. The aim is to institutionalize planning mechanisms and development agencies for the proper management and enhancement of cultural identity and evaluation of cultural heritage (Gavra and Kampouri, 1998).

The particular importance given to the protection of cultural heritage is demonstrated by the fact of its inclusion in the text of the Constitution, expanding the content of the ancient monuments in the surrounding area, the residential complexes and historic landscapes up to intangible cultural goods (Voudouri, 1992·Trova, 2003).

However, systematic survey and registration of cultural and natural monuments, the expansion of the legislative framework in management and protection of cultural and natural heritage, as well as the active role of local authorities remain issues to be addressed (Theodosiou-Drandaki, 2007).

In terms of cooperation, Greece seeks through organizations and institutions interconnection with other European and international actors, aiming to promote Greek language and history, art and culture. The strengthening of cultural relations and ties is a key issue for both public and private cultural institutions in an effort to reformulate the tourism sector, as a powerful national economy product. Moreover, the cultural and educational content programs for the mobility of young people in Europe and abroad are a powerful factor towards this direction (http://culturalpolicies.net).

B. The importance, the wealth and diversity of cultural reserve in the territory of Romania today, is demonstrated by the large number of monuments and sites that have been identified as monuments of universal interest by Unesco. This characterization has a double meaning: on one hand contributes to the establishment of the protection of monuments and on the other, it has a positive effect in promoting the cultural image of the area outside the boundaries of the country as well as the potential enhancement and management towards a "healthy" touristic promotion (Delivani,1992·Nikas, 1992·Gavra, Delivani and Nikas, 2006).

Today, in order for Romania to adapt to the principles of a single, long-term spatial development strategy towards a successful and smooth accession to the European Union, seeks, among others- to adopt a sustainable approach for the management of natural, cultural and residential environment. For this reason, the development of the national territory is based on a series of fundamental principles. According to this approach, in order to harmonize with European territorial

policies, it should aim both at the exploitation of the country's potential, and secondly at the reduction of internal imbalances and disparities at regional and local level.

The main problems registered today in the country in the field of management and promotion of cultural assets can be considered the following:

-the failure of financial service capabilities and, therefore, the utilization and promotion of cultural heritage, in all its width,

-the diversification of priorities towards the direction of management.

As the main tool and framework of spatial development policy in Romania today, is considered the National Urban Development Program, which provides the conceptual framework and strategic perspectives in this direction (Gavra, 2006).

The main objectives of the government are:

-increased accessibility and participation in culture,

-promotion of diversity and protection of cultural identities,

-promoting multiculturalism and protection of minorities cultures,

-protection of cultural, tangible and intangible heritage,

-reinforcement of cultural industry by facilitating and supporting artists and creators, promotion of intercultural dialogue, ideas and creativity

-planning of an appropriate social heritage protection system and strengthening local actors,

-specialization in the cultural sector,

-promoting cultural lifelong education programs.

Regarding partnerships and programs, Romania actively participates in local, European and international level by promoting culture in combination with tourism and education sectors. It is worth to mention measures for the Roma culture as a social cohesion policy and the various plans for interconnectivity and mobility of young artists, ideas and events via electronic communicative platforms (http://culturalpolicies.net).

Other actions involve:

- national protection programs based on foreign capital (UNESCO, Council of Europe)
- international programs of local interest in cooperation with neighboring countries
- regeneration of the historic center of Sibiu within the institution of cultural capital for 2007.

Finally, another one is the protection and management program in the Danube Delta region between Romania and Ukraine within the context of awakening public responsibility for protected areas in Romania (http://www.unesco.org).

C. FYROM is a small country in size and population with limited financial resources. The strategic geographical position of the country and its history has shaped the multicultural identity and has affected its cultural reserve, which is registered as interesting, withdrawing elements from different historical periods.

Regarding the legislative framework for the protection and management of cultural and ekistics heritage, FYROM has validated several international and European conventions, while some of those that are currently in force in the country from the former federation of Yugoslavia (Gavra, 2008).

The Law for Culture, adopted in 1998, was the first single law in the field of culture. However, an important step was the Law for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, valid from January 2005. The Law has been positively assessed by the competent committee of UNESCO, aligned with the most recent issues of what is included or not in the various definitions of cultural heritage (Ristov, 1997).

Specific instructions by UNESCO refer to:

- the preparation of a comprehensive report of the current situation of architectural, archaeological and environmental heritage
- identification of the main problems in the management and protection of cultural heritage
- finding feasible scenarios for resolving technical issues in areas of interest
- the establishment of long-term actions to improve the quality of interventions in individual regions
- compliance with the guidelines for restoration, protection and management of cultural heritage and the environment posed by the national authorities
- the juxtaposition to UNESCO proposals for potential sponsors, whether governmental or private, measures and initiatives to be used as guides for national authorities in the management of cultural heritage (http://www.unesco.org)

FYROM participates in numerous European programs relating to culture, the most important of which was the Plan for Culture 2007-2013, aiming to promote cultural cooperation at transnational level. By participating in similar programs, launched by the Council of Europe, the country achieves both secure financial resources for the implementation of cultural activities, adopts European principles and the expertise to protect the cultural and ekistics heritage and secondly and more importantly promotes intercultural dialogue (http://culturalpolicies.net).

In conclusion, in both three reference cases, the European Union, through the Council of Europe and the international organization of UNESCO, has a decisive contribution to the preparation of key policy axes for heritage issues. Actors, such as the European Heritage Network, the European Institute of Cultural Routes and numbers of non-governmental organizations and other international organizations (World Bank, UNDP), whose countries are active members, are involved in the management of cultural heritage and facilitate startup programs, projects and cooperation in the field of culture (Fig. 3).

4. New urban policies suggestions/ evaluations/estimations

The general principles and policy objectives for culture in the Balkans are consistent with the existing international and EU policies such as environmental policy aimed at sustainable development and environmental protection and nature conservation, economic and social cohesion of the region by improving competitiveness of tourism, spatial development through balanced cultural development and equal opportunities for access to cultural goods (Gavra, 2004).

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Under the new situation, firstly, there is a rapid change and development of urban policies and urban governance from the traditional administrative schemes to new business management models (Cox, 1993 and 1995) and new radical urban governance models focused on growth (economic and demographic) of cities through offered quality of space (Clark and Rempel, 1997 · Clark and Hoffmann-Martinot, 1998 · Clark et al, 2002). Secondly, urban planning appears to take for all categories and groups of cities an important new role as an economic development tool. A significant relationship between design and the economy of the urban space that was maintained for centuries is reversed nowadays. While in the long history of cities the high quality of the designed space and the design innovations have always been the result of the economic boom of specific cities and regions at a time, in the new era of urban design, innovation and quality of space is used consciously as a means of economic development of cities (Gospodini, 2000 · Gospodini, 2002).

Therefore, measures relating to the natural regeneration of the urban environment are combined with measures for promoting education, economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection. Developing strong partnerships where local citizens are involved, civil society, the local economy and the various levels of government, are a prerequisite. The combination of skills and local knowledge is essential for identifying common solutions and ensuring sustainable and generally acceptable results (Cohesion Policy 2014-2020).

Plus, the new economic environment framed by the phenomenon of globalization, according to Gospodini and Beriatos (2006), sets in local governments as an increasingly main objective the provision of conditions that are sufficiently attractive to new businesses.

As mentioned in the Commission's cohesion policy (2014-2020), the cultivation of integrated urban policies would strengthen sustainable urban development and the adaptability of cities to ensure synergies from the European structural and investment funds (GRNET).

In the above context, the promotions of cultural reserve combined with innovative design tools are dominant in spatial transformations (Gospodini, 2006).

Specifically (Fig. 4):

- the protection and restoration of monuments, buildings and historical sites is facilitated with the use of new technologies and applications making them accessible and keeping intact their identity,
- the reuse of buildings and their integration into the existing urban fabric emerges through modern design programs related to their architectural value,
- the promotion of cultural heritage strengthened by the existence of local and nationwide projects is aimed at establishing the identity of a place,
- the knowledge and research for the richness of cultural reserve is feasible with the use of the internet and the amount of technological applications that are eliminating physical barriers such as distance and time,
- cultural interventions in historical cities centers result in strengthening cultural tourism and local identity,
- the preservation of urban historic fabric is achieved by the integration of environmental protection and sustainability policies to harmonize with the urban set,
- the social participation in the programs and planning ensures active citizen action on synergies issues for culture, tourism and local culture.

4. Conclusions

The Balkans are a melting pot, a node of different cultures, creating their own specific image. The geomorphological relief, economic-social context, their history and architecture rendered them as contemporary cultural epicenters and inexhaustible sources of research and interest. In several regions within the reference area is observed an accumulation of ethnic and national minorities with various cultural expressions, while in others there is a lack of continuity in this modern present with the historical past. This historical continuity of cultural expression and creation or the strong historical sections have also consequences in the degree of cultural heritage preservation of individual areas.

The question arises as to whether the cities and regions of Europe operate competitive or complementary to the normalization of their internal tensions and the extent to which modern urban policies create conditions in the direction of reforming the new European space. In the context of European integration, the development of further cooperation actions of countries with common cultural elements is crucial for the proper management of natural and cultural heritage sites.

The objective is the design and implementation of European and international conventions to be incorporated in the legal framework of each country and region, in agreement with the relevant European one, always taking into account the local needs and particularities. Besides, the promotion of a sustainable development model is a key option in both European and global level (Fig. 5).

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Links

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http://www.unesco.org

Figure 1: Views of the Balkans (Source: http://www.balkantale.com/gr/main.php)

Figure 2: Views of the Balkans (Source: http://www.balkantale.com/gr/main.php)

Figure 3: Views of the Balkans (Source: http://www.balkantale.com/gr/main.php)

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