Trans Balkans Cultural Corridors:

The Cultural routes in Grece as an implement for the local development and the protection of the natural and cultural heritage.

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Abstract

The multicultural wealth, result of the crossroad of civilizations, which characterizes the Balkans peninsula, is an asset to use if a proper developmental framework is established. *Cultural routes* might operate as an instrument amplifying the local development and the special integration. The *cultural routes* apart of the importance in the development process are en implement for the protection of the natural and cultural heritage.

The Balkans peninsula is an area of a great cultural, ethnological, religious, and lingual diversity. In many cases this particularity didn't have any influence as a factor of unification and integration; dividing the Balkans territory by stressing the inter-regional and trans-regional inequalities. The waiving of the territorial discontinuity which is in many cases an important obstacle for the sustainable development in the Balkans territory is a factor and a precondition for its integration in the European level. The *Cultural routes* are en implement for this also by establishing a common space for a dialogue, where the natural and cultural heritage plays the primordial role.

In Greece the adaptation of the *Cultural routes* and their integration in the local tourism projects can amplify in many cases the local development in a decisive way. The protection of the rich cultural and natural heritage in Greece is a crucial developmental parameter and the best way for the achievement of this challenge is the integration of patrimonial goods in the developmental processes in a pertinent way. The *Cultural routes* are an implement to this end.

Key words: *cultural routes, cultural corridors, cultural itineraries, local development, cultural tourism, heritage management, cultural heritage, natural heritage, local development, sustainable development.*

Balkans:
a crossroads of civilizations

Balkans peninsula is a real crossroad of civilizations. It is the region that the west civilization met the orient one, creating a unique amalgam of different cultural, ethnological, religious, and lingual groups that have to live together. The cultural routes is en implement to protect and to use this richness as a symbol of dialogue, interchange and agreement, waiving the *discontinuity of the Balkans territory* that has, in many cases, a negative effect on the development and *prosperity* for the local societies. The local societies need to use this cultural asset for their prosperity waiving the uneven territorial opportunities.

Balkans area possesses cultural values of particular identity and important diversity, result of cultural exchange on a crossroads of different civilizations in a common space [6]. The historical routes have formed numerous different themes of the cultural phenomena remnants of the important civilizations that flourished in the area. A new vision for the development of Balkans territory needs to be established using the key role of cultural heritage fostering the elimination of the inter-regional and trans-regional inequalities. The achievement of a common space for a dialogue, where the natural and cultural heritage plays the key role is an important aspect for the Balkans region.

The mobility of the populations of the Balkans area as well as that of many other areas in the Mediterranean, either as a seasonal migration or for larger periods, contributed to the prosperity of the local communities and coexistence of various populations through the adaptation of a *civilization of peace* and understanding [9, 13]. After the establishment of the national states, this characteristic was annulled and the functioning of borders, all the more sealed, lead to the disintegration of the Balkans territory. Today, many regions in the Balkans peninsula show a possibility of mobility (in modern terms) and the *cultural routes* may contribute by encouraging this dynamic.

The *cultural routes* are an important implement fostering the Balkans integration in the European space. The common history, the Balkan cultures are important factors of unity that define the Balkans as a unity fostering the prosperity of the local societies. The development of the *cultural tourism*[1] can amplify in an effective mode the local development in a sustainable way.

The cultural Mosaic: the national, lingual and religious diversity. The Balkan Peninsula is for historical reasons a multicultural area with various nations, languages, cultures and religions. This multicultural mosaic of populations is a heritage of the Ottoman Empire that was installed at the end of the 14th century and since that time gradually unifies the Balkans peninsula, from the administrative point of view. The installation of the populations during the Ottoman period has contributed to a further intermixture of the

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[1] The Balkans territory is a privileged space for the development of cultural tourism. The cultural tourism and in general the whole genre of alternative tourism is not static but dynamic and flexible. This kind of cultural activities does not recognize any border. The development of cultural routes in trans-boundary cultural itineraries, can offer a unique experience of the cultural phenomena giving an important impulsion in the economy of local societies [7].

populations, and magnified the particularities and differences between the numerous local societies.

<u>Balkans discontinuity: the socioeconomical dimension</u>. The socioeconomical communication in Balkans was gradually disrupted by the etablissement of the national states in the beginning of the 19th century, and once again by the prevalence of the communism in the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe. The disintegration of the Balkans territory had a negative impact in a developmental level, given that the area of the Balkans peninsula has functioned in unity for many centuries, throughout the periods of the Byzantine and especially of the Ottoman Empire. The waiving of this disintegration and the reunited operation of the Balkan area is a necessary precondition for the development of the wider area.

<u>Mountains civilization: a particular cultural and natural heritage.</u> The Balkan Peninsula is a particularly mountainous, naturally and physicogeographically fragmented area of the southeastern Europe. Its important mountain chains alternate with small watersheds, which makes the geography of the Balkans of great interest due to the diversity seen in an ecological level and climate. The rich natural heritage that characterize the mountains territories are in osmosis with the cultural and architectural heritage developed from the *mountains civilization.* This particular region gives the possibilities for the development of cultural routes of mountains civilizations.

The Balkans peninsula is a particular *geographical entity*, the integration of which in the European region is an important challenge and a necessary condition for the European completion. Despite the discontinuity due to the intense diversity that the area presents not only physicogeographically, but also nationally, linguistically, and religiously is a precondition for the local developpement. It is necessary for the good function of the Balkans area to establish communication and cooperation channels between populations, capable to master the difficulties that the area inherited from the disputes and the conflicts that followed the political transition of the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), as well as the various historical facts that never cease to return, poisoning the relations between the various population groups.

The area of the Balkans is a special field for the implementation of projects for the development of *cultural routes* not only as a developmental tool (principally through tourism) but mainly for the promotion of the common elements arising as a product of the Balkans territory culture and the common history. This entire Balkans territory common asset tends to be annulled due to the conflicts and the wars of the last period, amplifying the fragmentation of the area. The function of the *cultural routes* will foster the unified function of the Balkans, encouraging the diffusion of the *civilization of peace* in all organizational levels (social, economic, cultural, etc.), without eliminating its multiethnic character.

Cultural routes
Definitions and semantic clarifications

The routes, used for centuries for the transport of goods and people have created an important linear assemble of cultural properties. The domination of the national states in the beginning of the 19th century and the establishment of the national borders had

fragmented these *territorial entities* by demolishing the socioeconomic relationships that permit the function and the reproduction of theses processes that permit the flourishing of these multicultural societies.

The development of the cultural routes in these historical corridors can provide a new vision for the cultural heritage in the Balkan territory as a common value, which requires transnational affords for its sustainable management. According to this consideration the cultural routes can define a common space for a dialogue, where culture plays the primordial role [7, 16, 18].

The above argument comprises the suggestion of cultural routes as a mode to associate and interconnect cultural goods within the framework of the modern concepts. In this way we can foster the integration of the European space and the common function of wider geographical ensembles.

Through a multi-level inspection on cultural goods, the relations of synergy are encouraged and a far more effective management of the cultural assets is insured. Through these cultural *routes*, the individual tangible and intangible cultural goods are integrated in a common territorial and operational system where the relations between them are distinguished and their study and management is promoted, leading to a multilevel knowledge and to a liberated vision of history [2, 3].

The function of cultural heritage promotes through a feedback relation the crossing of the borders of every level (which is an important fragmentation factor of the Balkan area). In this way they can suggest the cooperation between various social and economical aggregates with the aim of a good management of the cultural heritage.

Within this context, the understanding and communication between different populations is amplifying and reestablishing the socioeconomic relationships between the local populations [7]. By fostering the function of the local socioeconomic trans-boundary networks we can achieve in a pertinent way the real integration in a European level and an effective mode for amplifying the local development.

The nomination of the *cultural routes* is an action ideologically charged with a powerful symbolic context. This feature should be taken into consideration and the carving of the routes should aim at the selection of those elements that promote the area's unity and fostering the civilization of peace. Cultural routes have historically stemmed not only from peaceful procedures but also through conflicts and wars [2, 3]. However, today they overcome the conditions of historical past and constitute a privileged field for the promotion of the culture of peace.

The *participation procedures* play a critical role in the effectuation of such a venture. The function of cultural routes can amplify the local identity by highlighting the historical and geographical characteristics. This function of the cultural routes has an important effect in the coherence and cohesion for the local societies. The participation of the population in the process of reestablishing of these transboundary linear routes is a pertinent way for

the dissemination of the *civilization of peace* and dialogue that is an important aspect for the prosperity of numerous local societies in European region[2].

By the function of the cultural routes the heritage properties are integrated in a territorial operational system in a dynamic way. Their point character is negated, allowing the transition from the traditional logic of their "absolute protection" to the modern consideration of their management trough their integration in the local production system [1]. The tangible and intangible properties of heritage are a live asset that we can manage in a sustainable way by their integration in the local productive activity. Very often the alternative tourism focuses to this end.

Greek case

Tourism is one of the most important productive activities in Greece. It is a multilevel economical activity with important influences in the socioeconomical structures and the environmental management. The new consideration for tourism developpement is trying to foster alternative models pertinent for the incorporation of the activity in the particularities the local societies. In this way the tourism can be combatable with the principle of the sustainable developpement. The protection of the natural and cultural heritage, the provision of social coherence and cohesion and the economical efficiency are the triptych for the sustainable development in a local level. The *cultural route*s are a pertinent implement compatible with the sustainable touristic development in Greece.

The character of the routes is should justify its actual nomination from its historical identity instead of being a linear sequence of important historical monuments, a logic that in many cases is most attractive for the development of the traditional tourism model.

The *thematic* approach for the charted of the cultural routs probably is more difficult and complicates the process because it is based in the historical functions but the result is more documented and interesting. In this choice for the charting of the *cultural routes* their incorporation in the local societies is feasible if *bottom up participation* processes are incorporated during their curving. The integration of participation process of the competent locals stakeholders is crucial parameter for success of the routs and its positive effect in the local development and in the sustainable management of tangible and intangible heritage properties.

The adaptation of the logic of *"democratization[3]"* of the cultural heritage management and protection is a crucial parameter for the local development and in this logic we need

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[2] The degradation of the idea of coexistence between different nations, as result of the weakness of the role of national states amplifies the parochial tendencies in many regions in European continent explicit in more or less violent way. Very often these secession tendencies are motivated from development and economical problems [12].

[3] In this consideration we don't try to protect only the leading part of the cultural and natural heritage, that in general have supranational importance but we try to protect also the "second" important properties. The only way for achieving this is the establishment of pertinent processes competent to provide the integration of these cultural and natural properties in the developemental process. Only if the local societies understand the importance of the protection of their natural and cultural heritage, their inalterable transmission to the future generations would be possible. The best way for achieving this is by the incorporation of the heritage in the production process.

to develop a network of cultural routes. The local cultural tangible and intangible heritage properties in many cases have important role in the organization of the local space and their management can foster productive activities.

The mountainous routes

Mountainous areas cover an important part of the Greek surface, 42% but only 10% of the total Greek population lives there. This disproportion is mostly the result of the developmental policy that was adopted in modern Greece encouraging the concentration of the population and subsequently the economical activities in the urban regions [4]. We can consider, in general that the development is orientated towards the coastal and valley regions not only as result of historical coincidences and political choices but also for cultural reasons. This reality causes an important imbalance in the development in regional level with a crucial negative effect in the global function of the state [4].

Actually we can describe a tendency for transition from the "marginalization" towards the "incorporation" for many mountainous regions [17]. In some cases this tendency can be a considerable threat not only on the ecological level, but also for the social cohesion in many mountainous territories. The over-exploitation, not only for certain local resources (natural and architectural heritage) but also for traditional productive activities, creates an important pressure for the mountainous territorial systems that very often are in sensitive equilibrium [17, 11].

Tourism is very often the principal productive activity that can be developed in these particular territories [15, 5]. The adaptation of an alternative touristic model in small scale that can be easily incorporated in the sensitive local territorial systems is important. *Cultural routes* are a pertinent implement to this end.

In Greece we can Identify numerous mountain routes that during the historical period were very important corridors for the transport of people and goods. During the Byzantine Empire and mostly the Ottoman period of Greece the *mountainous civilizations* were flourishing, developing an important network of transit mostly for security reasons. Along these routes there are important monuments on regional or local level, remnants of the flourishing of the *mountain civilization*. By the development of *mountainous cultural routes*, that very often cross the borders, we can foster the local development and amplify the cultural identity for these particular regions.

The water routes

The most significant geographical characteristic of Greece is the important coastal line and the islands, particularities that influence in a decisive way the mode of the development, the socioeconomic structures and character and in general the Hellenic culture. The *sea routes* since antiquity were the dominant transport system [9, 13]. The official, road networks in continental Greece was degraded after the end of the Roman Empire[4] and it was reestablished with the establishment of the Modern Greek state in the

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[4] In general the network of the routes of Rome Empire that united the Europe with the East and the Africa gradually disrupted. The important ports of antiquity and roman period lost their important economical status. The medieval periode signifies the decadence for an important number of cities and for the network of socioeconomical relationships. [14]

beginning of the 20th century. For all this period, apart of the mountain itineraries that were developed, the sea routes played the primordial role for the transport of people and goods.

The intercultural encounters on marine, river and lake routes of south East Europe have played a crucial role in the evaluation of the European culture. The nomination of them will illustrate the major role the water element can play in the dissemination of ~~the~~ culture and in general in the organization and ~~the~~ function of the wide spatial systems. In the evaluation of the Hellenic culture the *sea routes* plays a primordial role, fostering the cultural interchange and the dialogue of civilizations. [7]

The process of charting of the *water routes* is complicate with important symbolic value, we need to highlight the important properties of tangible and intangible heritage following the historical routes with a certain identity and not to create linear sequence of important monuments. In the charting of the *water routes* the participation of the all competent authorities is a critical parameter for the success of their nomination [7].

The nomination of this network of floating routes as *cultural routes* is very important. In this way we can foster the local development for this particular coastal and insular areas, amplify the dialogue in our neighborhood in this sensible area of southeast Europe and finally provide a pertinent framework for important properties that we can meet along the *floating and sea routes*.

Conclusion:
The importance of the cultural routes in Balkans and in Greece.

Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the prevalence of the national states, the area of the Balkans has shown an intense territorial discontinuity not only as a result of the particular physichogeographical characteristics, but mainly due to the political choices and the historical coincidences that determined the character of this particular area of the southeastern Europe. The waiving of territorial discontinuity of the Balkans, and their integration in the European area is a precondition for the local development. *Cultural routes* are a modern implement for the sustainable development that promotes the unified operation of wide areas that might, in some cases, cross the national borders.

The *cultural routes* have been considered as an important aspect of scientific research from NGOs and governmental organizations since the 60s. The consideration of that period was mostly about the removal of special discontinuity that was created from the function of the Cold War periods' states. In our days the *cultural routes* can play an important role in waiving the socioeconomic discontinuity that has been amplified as a follow up of the economical and political destabilization of the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe after the 1989.

This political transition for many countries of the Central and Eastern Europe which preserved many multinational states degraded the idea of coexistence between different nations, and in some cases created the conditions for economic crisis, political aggravation and conflicts. The prevalence of neo-liberalism in the 90's has encouraged secession tendencies by magnifying the regional inequalities in a national and intra-regional level [12]. Very often, the new secession tendencies mostly in the west Balkans

are called nationalistic, in order to "legitimize" their economical and developmental causes. However, the enlargement of European Union's functions gives a new context to the role of its member states and creates new and optimistic perspectives for the region of the Balkans [12].

The *cultural routes* are considered as an important implement for the development of *sustainable touristic activity*. Through the construction of the pertinent framework, the function of the cultural routes can conduce on the one side in the prosperity in local level, and on the other side, in the cohesion and the coherence of greater spatial systems amplifying the osmosis of different socioeconomic groups [7, 16].

The development of *cultural route*s in Greece is a critical parameter for the touristic development in a sustainable way. The character of the routes is important to 'legitimize' its nomination from its historical identity instead of being a linear sequence of important historical monuments. The adaptation of the logic of a "democratization" of the cultural heritage protection is a crucial parameter for the definition of pertinent cultural routes competent to foster the local development.

The mountain routes were very important corridors for the transport of people and goods. During the Byzantine Empire and mostly in the Ottoman period in Greece the *mountainous civilizations* were flourished developing an important network of movement in mountains, mostly for security reasons. Along these routes there are not always the most important monuments in global level but there are monuments important in regional or local level. By the development of *mountain cultural routes*, that very often cross the borders, we can foster the local development and amplify the cultural identity of the particular regions. In our days the mountain territories are in a very sensitive equilibrium in social, economical and environmental level. The adaptation of the pertinent development implement is a crucial parameter for the prosperity of these particular territorial systems. The cultural routes are a pertinent implement to this end.

The most significant geographical characteristic of Greece is the important number of coast lines and islands that influence the developmental process, the character of our historical civilization as well as the Hellenic culture in general.

The official, organized and secure road system in Greece degraded after the end of the Roman Empire and its reestablishment is achieved with the establishment of the Modern Greek state in the beginning of the 20st century. For all this period apart of the mountain itineraries that were developed, the *sea routes* played the most important role in the transportation of people and goods.

This network of the historical *floating routes* we need to nominate as *cultural routes*. In this way we can foster the local development for these particular coastal and insulars areas. In this way we can encourage the dialog between the local populations in this sensitive area of southeast Europe. The *cultural routes* are also a mode for the preservation of the common heritage remnant of the multicultural civilization that very often creates them [7, 16].

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