

Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management in Greece

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Abstract : The Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management (ICTZM) is an emerging management approach practiced in tourism destinations which face an accrued demand. It is an integral part of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) policy which the European Union has already adopted in order to comply with the injunctions of Agenda 21. The Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management, in its capacity of specific design process, aims to involve all economical and social stakeholders of the tourism industry and to take into account their views on matters pertaining to coastal tourism design. This process was born out of the necessity to pursue a disciplined tourism development of the coastal zone in a systematic and sustainable manner.

The research which was conducted in the frame of the Greek case, brought to light a twofold mission, consisting first of the adoption of this new planning process and second of the creation a Greek network of cooperation of all the stakeholders involved in the developmental and administrative aspects of the tourism industry in the coastal tourism zones. This new planning philosophy requires the development of participatory processes at the local level, the formation of a network of international community institutions involved with the matters at hand, the carrying out of effective information and communication campaigns as well as the contribution of robust political counseling.

Keywords: Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management, Tourism Policy, Sustainable Development, Tourism Planning.

Introduction

The urgent need to protect coasts as fragile ecosystems was one of the key subjects in the agenda of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio in 1992. It is also included in the Agenda 21. In this context, the European Union promoted the policy of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) by means of the directives (COM/OO/547 and Recommendation 2002/413/EC) aiming at the protection of coastal ecosystems. However, on the strength of the experience acquired so far from the implementation of such actions, the results come across as unsatisfactory. The shortcomings can be imputed to insufficient political guidance, shortage of funds and absence of international collaboration.

The Agenda MED21, as it was adjusted to the Mediterranean framework by the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSDD) of the UN (UNEP 1996), stipulates that the concretization of the goals of sustainable development in the Mediterranean region requires a major mobilization of the public opinion and the active participation of all social stakeholders, such as the civil society, groups, organizations etc. Raising public awareness, conducting information campaigns, encouraging sensitization and public participation are all actions which must be supported since they contribute to the active mobilization of the citizens who in turn would encourage the implementation of sustainable development and the protection of the Mediterranean environment. So, the question arises, as to which tools to employ for the incorporation of social consensus in the decision making process and for the citizens' constant active involvement in local initiatives affecting the coastal environment (Camplillo-Besses et al. 2004; PNUE 2005). More specifically, in Greece where the experience in matters of integrated management of the coastal zone is indeed limited, there is a tendency to resist change to more viable models of development and the related problems are more important than in other countries. For example, environmental problems are dense in the Greek coastal tourism zone, and they are imputable to the development of tourism activities (Andriotis 2004; Tsartas 2004). They can be traced back to the absence of control over the implementation of the regulatory provisions of urban design and land use, the overlapping jurisdictions of various stakeholders, as well as the sketchy information campaigns and inadequate civil involvement in the decision making process. Also, if we take into account the fact that the model of coastal tourism is widely developed in Greece, it is clear that problems of the coastal zone necessitate taking immediate policy measures addressing the management and protection of the natural and anthropogenic coastal environment.

Consequently, the promotion of a plan of Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management is a necessary condition for sustainable tourism development. The concept of Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management implies that the conservation of the natural environment where tourism activity is concentrated can be combined with other activities e.g. agriculture, water resources management, the preservation of ecosystems, etc. These activities can have overlapping spatial uses or be in conflict with each other. The adoption of an Integrated Management of the Coastal Tourism Zone process is indispensable for many reasons. Among them can be counted the need for coastal environment protection and/or improvement, the regulation of the problems generated by the presence of tourists (tourism capacity), the demand for an accepted degree of sustainable tourism development, the achievement of cost efficiency, cross-sectoral and multi-sectoral level collaborations and the guarantee of real participation from all tourism industry stakeholders.

From the above it can be deduced that the Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone

Management relies on the necessity to coordinate actions at every administrative and institutional level and every sector of interest. In this framework, the Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management aims to achieve, firstly the intertwining of the various policies (economical, social, environmental and developmental) impacting on the coastal regions and, secondly the organization of a decision-making process according to a methodology of participatory tourism planning. It is by no means an ideal solution that is one which will yield immediate and palpable results, but rather a dynamic procedure at work and one constantly evolving.

The Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management is a participatory tool of tourism planning and policy put at the disposition of stakeholders and the tourism industry management so as to enable them to achieve sustainable tourism development in the coastal zone (Arronson 2000; Lagos & Thalassinos 2000). It also aims to achieve the resolution of conflicts and the search for synergies between human activities taking place in coastal tourism regions and their impact on natural resources and ecosystems. It is a means to secure that, in the long run, tourism development in the coastal zone will balance out the various economic, social and environmental goals and priorities. Long-term tourism planning is necessary for the management of coastal zones in order to anticipate future needs and to make it possible to cope with eventual problems. It is also indispensable when it comes to enabling stakeholders to act collectively and effectively, encouraging positive action and resolving potential conflicts on time (Bramwell 2004).

An Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management must integrate the following principles.

Table 1. Principles of Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The protection and promotion of the natural and cultural specificities of every tourism zone-region must constitute the core of an Integrated Coastal Tourism Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The carrying capacity of natural resources and ecosystems must be respected when tourism activities and their corresponding projects or projects requiring special tourism infrastructure are planned
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sustainable tourism development necessitates the mobilization of the coastal population and the inspiration of a sense of collective responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Tourism planning aiming at sustainable development and management must be performed at the local level (municipalities, prefecture authorities, peripheries) whereas tourism policy must be shaped at the national one

Integrated Coastal Zone Management goals include (UNESCO 2005):

- an integrated and sustainable economic development combined with the expansion of employment opportunities, the differentiation-diversity of the economic base of coastal regions and the support of alternative forms of growth.
- the safeguard of natural and cultural heritage through a sustainable management of natural resources, respect for the diversity of the landscape and seascape and promotion of the historical and cultural landmarks.

It is obvious that planning a sustainable management of tourism resources consists first of balancing priorities, then of translating priorities to policies and finally of setting the appropriate goals to achieve. It follows that the number one objective of a management plan is the definition of the steps to be followed in order to achieve these goals. Next, responsibilities for every step must be assigned to those involved, and a time schedule for action and review must be set. In order to practice an effective coastal management, those in charge of tourism planning must grasp the manner in which natural environment and human activities interlock, and how they form a system. The principal components of the latter include: a) the environmental processes set in motion by coastal ecosystems which preserve their soundness and their productivity, b) the coastal ecosystems' operation, c) the flow of resources they produce, d) the possible uses of the resources in question so as to achieve social and economical development goals, e) the type and extent of existing conflicts (but also an estimation of future ones) which arise from competing uses of resources in the context of social, economical and cultural reforms.

The above framework provides the context in which the notion of Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management must be understood. To resume the points made above, the latter can be described as a permanent process of tourism management, aiming to implement sustainable development principles while maintaining biodiversity and to achieve both in a manner which will be met with consensual acceptance by all interested groups of the Coastal Tourism Zone (Laws 1995; Briassoulis 2001). By the same token and by means of the most efficient management possible, it is necessary to conserve or ameliorate the natural condition of the Coastal Tourism Zone and to buttress its financial growth in accordance with the specific goals and principles agreed upon (Diagne 1992).

European Policy and Legislation for Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management

Quite a number of the coastal areas of the European Union (EU) are facing

problems of environmental degradation and socio-economic and cultural resources' depletion; quite a few of these problems are of a cross-border nature.

The European Community environmental policy is enacted in a special chapter of the Treaty establishing the European Community, [(article 174 (ex article 130r) of the consolidated version of the Treaty (97/C 340/03)]. Since 1972, the community policy on the environment promotes, by means of a variety of Action Programs, the development of strategic interventions on environmental matters of high priority. Today, the Sixth Environment Action Program of the European Community 2002-2012 is in course of implementation. It bears the title of "Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice", and it focuses on four sectors: nature and biodiversity is one of them, health and the environment another, and the other two include how to face climatic change and the management of natural resources and waste.

More specifically, the European Committee has been working since 1996 towards the shaping and promotion of measures aiming to arrest environmental degradation and to improve the overall state of the coastal areas. The policy the European Union chose to embrace is of the highest importance in relation to the Integrated Coastal Tourism Zone Management, on account of the direct impact it may have on the natural environment of the coast, the seascape or landscape (EC 1999; EC 2002; EC 2004).

Today, we count a significant number of policies adopted by the EU which influence, at various degrees, the coastal tourism development and management. These are:

- the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
- the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)
- the Structural Funds and Community Initiatives
- the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T)
- the Habitats' Directive
- the Sustainable Energy policy
- the policy concerning the accession of the Central and Eastern Europe candidate countries.

The European Union, as opposed to intergovernmental bodies such as the United Nations or the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), does have legislative power. Regulations, which bind the country-members directly, and directives, which are incorporated in the national legislation, can be found among the legislative tools available in the EU. Since the 1970s the EU has enacted and maintained in force more than 300 binding documents the aim of which is to protect and fortify the coastal and marine tourist

areas of its member countries.

In parallel, the three General Directorates of the European Commission (the Directorate for Regional Development, the Environment Directorate and the one responsible for Fisheries) have collaborated for the implementation of Demonstration Programs (DP) pertaining to the Integrated Coastal Zone Management and aiming at the determination of prerequisite best practices for sustainable development. On the whole, 35 projects concerning the quasi-totality of EU coastal countries were integrated in these programs. The Demonstration Programs are funded by the programs Terra and INTERREG IIC and the funding instrument LIFE.

The implementation of the European programs mentioned above shed light to the fact that the constant degradation and bad management practices observed in many European coastal regions can be traced back to problems related to:

- diffusion of insufficient or inappropriate information concerning the actual state of coastal zones and the impact of human activities on them (at the financial as well as at other levels)
- inadequate coordination between administration levels (central, peripheral, local), administration sectors and between corresponding policies implemented by each of them
- poor stakeholders' participation and deliberation.

These general problems are all associated with tourism activity, since more than 80% of the international tourism traffic in the Mediterranean is located at the European Mediterranean coastal regions. In fact, the regions in question attract an important number of visitors thanks to their climate, their beauty and the diversity of their coastline landscape but also on account of their important cultural resources. Undoubtedly, the growth of the tourism sector offers substantial occupation opportunities at the local and peripheral level, but it is also the source of an array of negative impacts on the quality of the natural as well as of the built environment.

It must be pointed out that tourism growth is part of the wider Strategy for Sustainable Development and that individual actions should be promoted in the framework of an integrated coastal management process (World Bank 1996; Clark 1996; Barousseau et al. 1997).

In order to address the above problematic, the European Union funds ENCORA, a international network founded by 13 European countries in 2006,

which provides ready-to-use scientific knowledge and expertise on matters concerning coastal zone ever since.

Integrated Actions and Programs in the Greek Coastal Environment

Greece happens to be a country disposing of more insular and coastal regions than most. The length of its coastline is 25.021 kilometers, 40 per cent of which is accounted for by its islands. Greece is also the country with the largest insular surface of the Mediterranean region, which consists of a totality of 3.053 islands representing 19 per cent of its total surface and where 14 per cent of the population lives. The Greek coastal area consists of a 5 km wide coastline zone in which important urban centers are located (Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Heraklion, Volos, Kavala) as well as a significant part of transport and communication infrastructure and where a multitude of human activities takes place. Also, Greek coastal areas host the quasi-totally of tourism and recreation activities and features a great variety of natural and cultural characteristics. In 2006, Greece was placed 2nd out of 40 countries worldwide in the "Blue Flag" rating, with 404 "blue flag" certified beaches (Alpha Bank 2006).

As a consequence, the Greek coastal area, in its capacity of place where a significant percentage of the population resides, an equally significant number of urban centers are located, a multitude of human activities are conducted and an important array of infrastructure features such as transportation, communication and of course tourism installations are hosted, is of an importance no longer to be proven. In the data mentioned above must be added the fact that an important percentage of the coastal zone is arable land, often of very high productivity. Furthermore, the coastal region is of special interest from the natural ecosystems' point of view because of the cohabitation and interaction between the three principal natural elements: sea, land and air. The Greek coastal areas face specific problems (erosion, pollution) not only on account of their natural fragility but because they are also under human-generated pressure. At the origin of the latter are human activities as well as the often unruly urban development; both led to the degradation of the coastal ecosystems and natural resources and gave rise to conflicts for their uses. Moreover, both affect the possibilities of development of the tourist destinations negatively (Kokkossis & Lemmi 2002).

The existing institutional framework, despite its plethora of related laws and regulative provisions dealing, albeit partially, with coastal areas, is not adequate. This fact is hardly surprising considering that the framework not only is the fruit of a fragmentary approach but is also further handicapped by the great number of services and organizations involved in the planning and implementation of the actions pertaining to the coastal area (Defner & Vrasida 2006). As a

consequence, the multi-fractional and overlapping jurisdiction of a multitude of disparate bodies undermines all efforts of coordination (Kokkosis & Tsartas 2001). In parallel, the absence of a tourism-specific Spatial Plan is palpable, especially of one which would exploit the competitive advantage of the environment and set the terms and parameters for the sustainable management of the coastal zones where tourism activities mostly take place (Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works 1997).

The tourism's structural problems and the growth possibilities of the Greek coastal zone make obvious the need for a rational management of the latter. Such a management should be conceived in the perspective of shaping a strategy for sustainable development. In this framework, the role of a tourism spatial planning is capital: it must function as a policy encouraging the development and coordination of separate sectoral-specific policies and the spatial allocation of tourism activities and special tourism infrastructure. It must also guarantee a simultaneous protection of natural sources and ecosystems (Tsartas 2004).

In Greece, a program for the sustainable development of Greek coastal zones and islands which addresses special matters such as "seashore and beaches", "spatial planning- housing- secondary homes", "nature" and "islands" is already under implementation. The program in question provides both general and specific guiding principles concerning the management of these areas, guidelines for coastal zone delineation, sectoral directives conceived in the context of an integrated management and special proposals for each of the four aforementioned matters. A draft Directive for the Sustainable Development of Coastal Areas was also drawn in the framework of this program. The law for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development (Law 2742/99) makes provisions for Special Frames of Spatial Development for areas under significant pressure such as coastal areas or islands. Also, the year 2007 is expected to see the completion of the Special Spatial Plan for Tourism.

Likewise, the 1997-2000 periods saw the implementation of six Demonstration Programs for the Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Greece, funded by the programs Terra and INTERREG IIC or the funding mechanism Life. They are as follows:

- "Program for Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Cyclades Archipelago"/ (Life), implementing body: the University of the Aegean, Environmental Planning Laboratory
- "Information, cooperation and requirements for the sustainable development of Magnesia's coastal zones"/ (Life), implementing body: Magnesia Development Company (ANEM S.A.)

- “Integrated Management of the Strymonikos Coastal Zone”/ (Life), implementing bodies: Hellenic Wetland-Habitat Center/ Natural Agriculture Research Foundation (NAGREF)
- “Integrated Management of the Coastal Zone of Ipiros”/ (Terra), implementing body: Ipiros Periphery
- “Strategies for Management and Cooperation in the Metropolitan and Peri-urban Coastal Zones of the Saronic Gulf”/ (Terra), implementing body: Athens Environmental Management and Protection Organization
- “Integrated Management of the Coastal Zone of Kavala”/ (Terra) implementing body: Prefecture of Kavala.

Also, besides the programs mentioned above, other programs implement similar actions concerning the Greek coastal zone, such as:

- the EDEN Program (Balancing Economic Development and Environmental Planning for Tourism in Rural Europe) inaugurated in 1999, funded by the Directorate for Regional Development—ECOS OUVERTURE— and implemented by local authorities and organizations of social and private initiatives in the following countries: Greece, Sweden, Romania and Hungary
- the study “Defining, measuring and evaluating carrying capacity in the European tourism destinations” aiming to delimit a methodological framework around the concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity, the way to measure the latter and to utilize it in European tourism destinations (Kokkossis et al. 2001).

It can be deduced by the above mentioned elements that the Greek coastal zone is intensely dynamic when it comes to development. Therefore, its rationalized administration must be the object of a special tourism policy. In this context, European policy integrates in its actions specialized plans and programs which aim at the integrated management of the coastal areas. The latter include the coastal tourist zone.

In Greece, programs implemented so far which include actions related to tourism in coastal zones are fragmentary and do not provide an overall framework of comprehensive study of all the existing local problems. They also fail to take into account the tourist's carrying capacity which is specific to each separate zone (Parpairis 1993).

Actions developed by Greece in relation to the Integrated Coastal Tourism

Management must necessarily comply with its main principles. More specifically; they must be holistic and associated to the more general actions concerning the Integrated Coastal Zone Management in manners which will eschew piecemeal implementation of separate actions and policies. Actions must be participatory, and their constant aim must be none other than the wider possible participation; all those who take an interest in the region's future and have its best interests at heart must take part in the process. Another major goal of these actions must be the collaboration between regions and countries in order to diffuse and take advantage of experience and know-how acquired in the process.

Conclusions- Policy Proposals

Tourism growth plays a preponderant role in Integrated Coastal Zone Management, since tourism is very often the most important activity to be pursued in the majority of these zones. The range and complexity of human activities, natural systems and property issues in these areas render an integrated management scheme indispensable so that equal distribution and utilization of coastal tourism resources and minimization of the environmental degradation are guaranteed. It is necessary to make choices between conflicting uses and to set limitations to the exploitation of the resources in order to avoid their depletion and escalating confrontations (Hall & Page 1999).

During the last decades, in many countries all over the world, experience in the field of Integrated Coastal Zone Management was amassed and was gradually made available to all interested parties. The Coastal Zone Management Center (CZM-C) has developed a methodology for the assessment of programs of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (CZM-C Publication Nr. 2001/2), aiming to promote the latter's pro-active use. The methodology developed can be implemented as such or adapted for the coastal tourism zone. From an international point of view, the successful implementation of the latter is a rare phenomenon. This is hardly surprising, if one takes into account that ICZM is a rather new topic in the field of tourism policy-making. In view of its scale and complexity, from the physical, socio-economic and institutional perspectives, it is generally recognized that the Integrated Coastal Zone Management constitutes a long-term active process, involving a number of cyclic steps from problem identification to implementation to evaluation of tourism policy measures.

More specifically, the tourism-related problems and the developmental

possibilities afforded by the Greek coastal areas necessitate a rational management in view of a future sustainable growth strategy. The latter shall take the carrying tourist capacity of every region under consideration. Its goal must be a balanced integration of tourism activities in the natural environment by means of either a successful management of the environmental pressures generated by the activities in question or the formers' abolition. This goal will be achieved by means of the following tourism actions:

- more efficient management of mass tourism focusing on programs of environmental management, the goal of which will be to relieve local natural resources such as drinkable water from the pressures weighing them down by means of the adoption of measures such as saving and recycling
- diversification and enhancement of the tourism product with emphasis placed on special forms of tourism (e.g. eco-tourism, agro-tourism) which will promote the respect of the natural environment and not mere exploitation as a core value
- the development of specialized tourism infrastructure aiming at the attraction of more tourists and the provision of higher quality services. The latter must be developed in compatibility with natural and human environment standards. Deliberations with local stakeholders and their active participation are prerequisites.

It is obvious from the above analysis, and given the importance of tourism in the Greek coastal zone, that the list of priorities must include the promotion of actions for better mass tourism management, the diversification and enhancement of the tourism product, the extension of the tourism period and campaigns aiming to sensitize local population, (professionals of the tourism sector and visitors alike) towards issues of environment protection etc. More specifically, it is urgent to adopt environmental management programs aiming at the reduction of pressures on local natural resources (such as energy or drinkable water) by adopting measures to save or recycle them. In every case, tourism growth must be integrated in a wider strategy for sustainable growth of the coastal areas and individual actions must be promoted in a framework of integrated management. Therefore, the creation of a Greek network promoting integrated programs of participatory processes and coastal tourism zone management and protection is deemed necessary. The network in question must collaborate with its European counterparts and corresponding organizations in order to open efficient communication channels and to develop collaborative actions.

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