

LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION IN (SUSTAINABLE) TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF THE SOUTH KYNOURIA MUNICIPALITY, GREECE

A PARTICIPAÇÃO DOS PARCEIROS LOCAIS NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DO TURISMO (SUSTENTÁVEL). O CASO DO MUNICÍPIO DE KYNOURIA-SUL, GRÉCIA

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ABSTRACT/RESUMO

The attempt to integrate tourism in rural areas is founded on the understanding that tourism can contribute to their viability. The establishment of the conditions for tourism development requires the mobilisation of the totality of the resources available in an area through networks which highlight the local offering and create synergies based on local planning with a view to sustainability. The current paper explores the participation of stakeholders in tourism development in a Greek municipality, based on a series of in-depth interviews with local actors. The findings point to the lack of sound local development design processes aiming at integrated actions for the utilisation of local resources, of entrepreneurial spirit and of networking and collaboration of the concerned stakeholders who are not involved in public affairs, i.e. of critical for sustainable tourism development factors.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Networks, Participation, Destination Governance, Greece.

JEL Codes: Z130, D830, O150, O180, R580

A tentativa de integrar o turismo nas áreas rurais baseia-se na compreensão de que o mesmo pode contribuir para a sua viabilidade. O estabelecimento de condições para o desenvolvimento do turismo requer a mobilização da totalidade dos recursos disponíveis numa área, através de redes que privilegiem a oferta local e criem sinergias com base no planeamento local, com vista à sua sustentabilidade. O presente artigo explora a participação dos parceiros interessados no desenvolvimento do turismo de um município grego, com base numa série de entrevistas aos atores locais. A conclusão aponta para a falta de processos sólidos de desenho do desenvolvimento local, visando ações integradas para a utilização dos recursos locais, de espírito empreendedor e de trabalho em rede, bem como de colaboração entre as partes interessadas que não estão envolvidas nos negócios públicos, ou seja, de fatores críticos para o desenvolvimento do turismo sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Turismo Sustentável, Redes de Trabalho, Participação, Governança de Destinos, Grécia

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1. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, rural tourism has emerged as a major option for regional development strategies (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier, & Van

Es, 2001) due to its potential to supplement existing local/regional economic activities and lead to direct income improvements and wider developmental benefits in rural areas (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008). The effort to integrate tourism in rural structures, based on bottom-up processes,

networking and inter-sectoral synergies (Fadeeva, 2005; Saxena & Ilbery, 2008), stems from a holistic theorisation of development, implying the development of all economic sectors, the mobilisation of local potentialities, a focus on SMEs (small and medium enterprises) and entrepreneurship, strong local/regional governance, innovations tailored to local/regional specificities and a sustainability vision (Todtling, 2009). Critical for the success of such a rural development agenda are stakeholders' participation and democracy (Koutsouris, 2004, 2009).

This paper aims at exploring the involvement of local actors in tourism development in the rural municipality of South Kynouria, Greece. Therefore, the networks and cooperation tourism entrepreneurs and local agencies develop, especially with a view to the valorisation of local resources, are examined vis-à-vis the consolidation of the conditions for sustainable (tourism) development.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The potential of rural tourism to permeate a wide range of social and economic sectors as well as to utilise many of the resources available at the countryside highlights its pivotal position as a developmental tool. At the same time, due to its diverse and fragmented nature (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008; Vernon, Essex, Pinder, & Curry, 2005), it may render the local society a battlefield of diverse and conflicting interests; while various stakeholders are called upon to cooperate and benefit through the synergies created, they may also well fall into the pit of competition for the distribution and utilization of limited resources (Berno & Bricker, 2001; Wilson et al., 2001).

In this respect, networks, that is, "sets of formal and informal social relationships that shape collaborative action" between (heterogeneous) actors "that transcend organisational structures and boundaries" (Dredge, 2006, p. 270), have attracted increased interest and become a popular organisational form for dealing with questions of (sustainable) tourism development. Network theory, in short, implies that individuals are not isolated but connected to others, i.e. that there is some 'connectedness' (ties; Granovetter, 1973) between actors which may both facilitate and constrain their actions, including economic action (embeddedness; Granovetter 1985); and while actors interact within existing constraints and opportunities they also act upon and restructure them. Therefore, destinations can be conceived as settings of interactions comprising actors, relationships and resources (Scott, Cooper, & Baggio, 2008).

Importantly, networks are not limited to (tangible) resources' coordination and actors' collaboration; they evolve to (collective) learning processes, utilising, empowering and developing local knowledge thus also allowing for the development of innovations (Dredge, 2006; Zach, 2012). Especially the establishment and enhancement of cross-sectoral networks broadens the number of cooperating actors, stretches the boundaries of their collaboration

beyond conventional arrangements and opens wider 'windows of opportunity' for the generation of innovations. According to Fadeeva (2005), cross-sectoral networks respond to the increased complexity of the issues to be dealt with as well as the need to balance the power of the actors involved, and augment the legitimacy of such partnerships as processes aiming at sustainable development practices.

Given that, as aforementioned, the competitive advantage of a destination relies on network configuration rather than on individual firm competencies, different network approaches result in the development of different tourism competencies (Denicolai, Cioccarelli, & Zucchella, 2010). Many studies have indeed shown the importance of various types of partnerships, co-operation and networks, further leading to the emergence of the issue of governance in tourism destinations. The concept of governance itself is characterized by numerous and disparate definitions and confusion (Ruhanen, Scott, Ritchie, & Tkaczynski, 2010). Concerning specifically tourism destinations Beritelle, Bieger, and Laesser (2007, p. 96) assert that "the concept of governance ... consists of setting and developing rules and mechanisms for a policy, as well as business strategies, by involving all the institutions and individuals" (see also: Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Hall, 2011; Nordin & Svensson, 2007). Within such a framework, special attention has been given to DMOs (Destination Marketing and/or Management Organisations), aiming at forming and managing governance structures. DMOs' main purpose is to foster stakeholders' active and collaborative participation in the decision making process through a facilitation strategy involving stakeholders' mobilization, building and managing of their relationships (bridging) and reconciling their diverging interests (d'Angella, De Carlo, & Sainaghi, 2010; Elbe, Hallen, & Axelsson, 2009; Fyall, Garrod, & Wang, 2012).

At this point the fact that local people usually find themselves excluded from such processes should be stressed vis-à-vis the requirement, in terms of sustainable tourism and collaborative planning, for the active involvement/participation of local populations in the design, implementation and control of tourism development (Nunkoo & Smith, 2013; Presenza, DelChiappa, & Sheehan, 2013). As Panyik, Costa, and Rätz (2011) assert, even if not all stakeholders are equally involved in the decision making process, it is necessary that all interests are identified, understood and taken into account.

Moreover, the capacity for holistic consideration of the factors involved in tourism development is a crucial element for development planning, particularly with reference to sustainability (Panyik et al., 2011); the development of such a capacity is thus a challenge for local societies (Berno & Bricker, 2001; Vernon et al., 2005). This is more so since nowadays rural tourism "outstrips the economic value of agriculture to the rural economy" (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2012, p. 29). Such a capacity has to mark the local community, its leadership as well as, given the large number of small-scale and diverse enterprises involved, a substantial number of stakeholders. Such players, as aforementioned,

make up the factors that contribute to the success of rural tourism through the development of cooperative networks, the interconnection of local resources and the configuration and promotion of the local tourism product through appropriate strategic planning (Wilson et al., 2001).

On the other hand, as Janschitz and Zimmermann (2010) point out, a serious problem in relation to the realization of participation in strategic planning is that stakeholders' groups (and the public) taking part in the participatory processes bring forward their views at the 'lower logical levels', that is without been related to the strategy level and thus to the vision and mission from which strategy derives. Therefore, they do not recognize the need to change their values and beliefs which, in turn, can transform capabilities and behaviours and constitute basic elements of sustainable development.

Moreover, collaboration and networking are not easily attained due to factors such as: the diversity of relevant actors and their varied interests and priorities; the lack of time, resources, knowledge/expertise and training, and local attachment; a mentality of low engagement in wider destination development processes; and the avoidance of pursuing commercial objectives by particularly small-scale businesses (Bramwell, 2011; Haven-Tang & Jones, 2012).

3. METHODOLOGY

The current paper aims at exploring local stakeholders' participation in tourism development in the South Kynouria municipality. Data were collected through in-depth interviews addressing relevant local actors' perceptions and behaviours, with emphasis on networking and cooperation. Thirty-one businesses and 7 local agencies (including local authorities) participated in the research carried out in the period December 2011-March 2012. Interviews were taped, transcribed and analysed (exploratory analysis; Sarantakos, 2005, p. 294).

The businesses were drawn from a list provided by the local association of accommodation owners and the local authorities comprising accommodation as well as restaurant (including tavern) owners (100 and 64 respectively). The final sample was selected following the stratification of the population according to the locale and businesses' capacity. The local agencies comprise representatives of the local authorities, the association of accommodation owners, the development agency, two cultural clubs and two agricultural cooperatives.

4. RESULTS

4.1. TOURISM IN SOUTH KYNOURIA

The South Kynouria municipality, located at the south-east of Arkadia Prefecture, Peloponnese, was established through the unification of two (former) municipalities and

an independent community since 2010. It comprises 16 towns and villages with highly varying topography, a fact that determines its interesting and diverse natural environment. Its capital is the town of Leonidio, located in a small but highly productive plain.

The population of the municipality in 2011 is as high as 8,180 inhabitants and declined by 9.1% since 2001. The main occupations of the locals have always been agriculture, navigation and commerce. Recently though, there has been a turn away from agriculture towards services, especially tourism; it suffices to note that the local aubergine registered as PDO is cultivated in only 10 ha. Consequently, the priority of the local agencies is the establishment of the area as a tourism destination through the utilization of local resources.

A large part of the municipality is included in the NATURA 2000 network; at the borders of the 'Mt Parnonas – Moustos wetland' ecodesign area, biotopes of high aesthetic and scientific value are located. The area is known for its hiking routes, including the international path 33. Locations with geological and speleological interest are also found in the area. The distinctive cultural identity of the area stems from the Tsakonones inheritance, a large group of inhabitants coming from the ancient Doric tribes. Main features are the Tsakoniki dialect, an evolution of the ancient Doric dialect and the Tsakonikos dance devoted to Theseus' attempt to escape from Labyrinth. In the area, where according to the mythology Dionysus was raised, ruins of ancient as well as byzantine villages, forts, graves, temples and churches, ports, roads and quarries can be found. The area is also famous for its monasteries. Many among the settlements have been officially registered as traditional owing to the outstanding preservation of their 18th and 19th century architecture.

Tourism demand is covered by 22 hotels, 88 rent rooms businesses and two camping sites. The area mainly attracts Greek families and pensioners looking for a peaceful environment for their vacations. Nevertheless, foreign tourism is not negligible; additionally, quite many foreigners have bought houses in the area.

4.2. RESOURCES' MANAGEMENT

The area's features as a tourism destination comprise its natural beauty and cultural identity. According to the local agencies local development is (to be) pursued through the development of soft tourism which will combine activities in the nature, the agricultural economy and education revolving around local architecture. However, the management of both the natural and the cultural resources does not meet expectations; it is a commonplace that the degree of utilization of the resources does not meet the area's potential.

The local culture is mainly promoted through festivities which, organized by the local authorities, aim at the entertainment of locals and visitors and the promotion of local products. Major such events are Easter and the local

(PDO) aubergine feast including music and dances, local products' sales and the preparation and enjoyment of local dishes. The second feature of the local culture, the Tsakoniki dialect, is largely neither spoken nor promoted so as to enrich tourists' experiences. At the same time, local entrepreneurship is limited to accommodation and eating without being supplemented by other activities.

Both local agencies and entrepreneurs believe that the area's natural environment is partially protected, claiming at the same time that it is rather unharmed; the institutionalization of the ecodevelopment area in 2008 was a decisive step towards its protection. On the other hand, potential dangers which may downgrade the natural resources, such as the irrational use of resources by agriculture and tourism, the inadequate institutional framework (lack of land register and spatial planning) and the inactivity of the relevant state control mechanisms, resulting at considerable pressure for often illegal building developments outside the existing settlements, are referred to. Nevertheless, interviewees do not object either to real estate or the development of heavy infrastructure (such as a ski resort).

A major constraint for tourism development is considered to be the poor road network and the lack of coastal lines connecting the area with Piraeus and other well-known regional tourism destinations. A further important constraint, referred to by all participants, relates to the lack of development planning perpetuating the inadequate institutional framework as well as locals' distrust and reluctance to participate in/undertake local action. According to the entrepreneurs, organisational weaknesses, the lack of coordination between various agencies, which "act independently, even if they serve the same purpose", and "the lack of professionalism" on their own part discourage some of the tourists to revisit the area; additionally, the current crisis is expected to result in the stagnation of tourism in the area.

4.3. TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The large majority of the interviewed tourism entrepreneurs are permanent inhabitants of the area; their average age is 48 years; 45% are women. Half of them have inherited the business and operate it on a seasonal basis as a family business. The entrepreneurs' educational level varies; additionally, none of them but one has followed training in tourism. Tourism is the main occupation for less than half of the entrepreneurs; nine out of ten claimed that their family income comes from multiple resources. Two thirds said that they had been looking for opportunities to access tourism related programmes. One out of three succeeded and thus obtained financial assistance to develop his/her business. Their main sources of information were the local development agency, the regional and national authorities, occupational associations, the internet, their immediate social environment and mass media. Major problems have been bureaucracy, delayed repayments for their in-

vestments, causing liquidity problems and obliging them to borrow from the banks and, in some cases, the fuzziness of the legal framework.

According to the local agencies, the capacity of local businesses is moderate. Their further development is related to entrepreneurs' training which would allow them to undertake initiatives and access investment programmes, resulting in a considerable improvement of the quality of the tourism offering. Half of the interviewed agencies have managed tourism related programmes and consider their contribution to local development being significant; through such programmes a number of local entrepreneurs obtained financial assistance for their investments while, in parallel, public works and the restoration of sites as well as the promotion of the area were attained.

On their part, the entrepreneurs maintain that bureaucracy, the seasonal character of tourism and the low level of tourists' spending are factors suspending entrepreneurial development; moreover, the current financial crisis has eliminated incentives in terms of undertaking entrepreneurial initiatives. Thus the plans of three out of four for the near future do not include investments; half of them are uncertain and pessimist about the future of their businesses. Their proposals relating to tourism development include the improvement of the existing or new infrastructure (3 out of 4), the marketing of the area (1 out of 3) and the design of activities which will facilitate the acquaintance of tourists with the place (1 out of 5).

4.4. NETWORKING – THE INTEGRATION OF TOURISM IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY

4.4.1. TOURISM BUSINESSES NETWORKING

The local association of the accommodation owners is the professional body representing all those who are occupied with accommodation services while commercial businesses are represented through 3 different associations, one in each of the previously existing administrative units which nowadays constitute the municipality.

Tourism businesses can also join the Local Quality Convention (see: Koutsouris, 2009), a network established since 2003 by the local development agency, aiming at bringing together tourism and agricultural units in order to promote the area's identity and secure the quality of the local products and services. However, only one out of ten of the interviewed entrepreneurs is knowledgeable of the Convention and none participates. Among the representatives of local agencies only one knows about it claiming that its function is unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, the agencies believe that, in general, tourism and agriculture interconnect. Only two representatives complained that the local produces are not adequately marketed but took notice of recent attempts by hotel owners to promote local delicacies.

The representatives stress the fact that the local networks between tourism entrepreneurs as well as those be-

tween all the area's entrepreneurs are extremely weak and cooperation is based on personal relationships. This is attributed to "the lack of a culture of cooperation", "indifference towards public matters" and "non-participation in the associations' administration".

4.4.2. NETWORKS BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURS AND AGENCIES

The views of the local agencies' representatives regarding the frequency and quality of the relationships between their organisations and local entrepreneurs vary with only half of them stating a satisfactory, though infrequent, level of cooperation.

More than two out of three of the entrepreneurs know of actions related to tourism development undertaken by the local agencies, mainly entertainment activities (8 out of 10) and the area's promotion (1 out of 4); one mentioned the establishment on the part of the local authorities of a tourism development committee. The local authorities and associations are evaluated higher in comparison to the local development agency and the central (regional and national) administration, even though the highest evaluation scores revolve around medium. Nevertheless, the situation is more complex. For example, one entrepreneur who declared that he was very satisfied with the services provided by the local development agency in view to his access to a tourism investment programme also appears "very disappointed due to the lack of communication afterwards". Furthermore, one out of three entrepreneurs does not have a clear picture of its activities and thus refused to evaluate it.

4.4.3. LOCAL AGENCIES' NETWORKING

The local authorities play a central role in the area's agencies' networking since all of them cooperate with them. A feature of the area is the absence of collaboration between similar bodies activated in different (groups of) settlements, a fact attributed to the localism of the formerly independent administrative units nowadays unified into the municipality. As far as networking with external actors is concerned, the agricultural cooperative shows considerable activity; such activity goes beyond the collaboration necessary for the marketing of their produce and concerns the regional and national authorities and two educational/research institutes. The development agency has also established relationships beyond the areas' boundaries.

The views of the local agencies with regard to their level of cooperation differ; some believe that such efforts are successful, others that they are not and yet others that there is some success in their efforts for coordination. Their representatives maintain that "some of the agencies work well together" while in other cases "communication is difficult" or "cooperation takes place in a limited number of issues", mainly in the form of consultation, "which

[however] does not imply the establishment of steady communication channels".

4.5. LOCAL CONSULTATION – INFORMATION

The entrepreneurs claimed that they contribute to the design of local actions through their participation in the boards and the assemblies of their association. Nevertheless, it is accepted that such participation is limited, especially on the part of younger entrepreneurs. Six out of ten entrepreneurs acknowledge the fact that they do not actively participate in the collective activities of their association mainly due to their engagement in multiple professional activities. Thus, participation refers to the payment of their annual fee and attendance of the cultural events organized by the association; only two have taken part in consultations out of who one maintained that "no matter what our proposals are, they are always bypassed". Concurrently, some of the hotel owners believe that the association cannot adequately represent their interests since their businesses are under a different legal framework as compared to the entrepreneurs who rent rooms and operate without being strictly controlled by the state and thus compete with hotels on an unequal footing.

According to the local agencies' representatives the area's needs are defined "through the everyday contacts of their staff with the local population" and discussions within each of the agencies; in turn, the satisfaction of the local needs is related to the existence of opportunities, as, for example, investment programmes. Nevertheless, one of the representatives noted that "all decisions are taken at the central/national level", usually "without a clear target"; additionally, consultation processes are rare while, in case they are held, the results are often ignored. Although such a picture is but a positive one, they underline their efforts to mobilise the participation of certain segments of the local population in local development processes; an example is the rural women's cooperative of Leonidio. However, often such attempts fail as locals do not respond to such initiatives.

The representatives recognise the need for the improvement of the mechanisms aiming at the provision of timely, reliable and appropriate information to the local population which for the moment is based on public announcements and briefings; they also accept that although general information is provided, access to detailed and tailor-made information is difficult. Furthermore, although they reckon that such passive methods do not mobilise the local population, they insist in the intensification of information provision, including the establishment of a public information centre in the municipality's offices. The case of the ecodevelopment area is characteristic in this respect: although two out of three entrepreneurs know about it, half of them claim that the information they receive about it is occasional and fragmentary; furthermore, only two of them participated in the consultation process aiming at its establishment.

5. CONCLUSION

Local people's expectations concerning tourism development in the research area are founded on its abundant natural and cultural resources. Nevertheless, the existence of resources per se is not sufficient for local development (Terluin, 2003) and does not necessarily make the area a successful tourism destination (Wilson et al., 2001). At the same time, the view that is dominant in the area focuses on the management of the local, mainly tangible resources (and the interplay between economy and the environment) thus neglecting the social dimension, the human resources (and the development of human capabilities) that is, a crucial dimension in tourism development (Denicolai et al., 2010). However, as underlined by Panyik et al. (2011), community mobilisation and its involvement in decision-making and the control of development processes is a prerequisite for sustainable development; in this respect, local leadership is of crucial importance and "key to organisational effectiveness and successful endogenous development activities" (Davies 2011, p. 61, as cited in Haven-Tang & Jones, 2012, p. 30).

In the research area, local leadership does not seem to have been successful in terms of organisational effectiveness regarding development processes. Despite the fact that various development programmes have been implemented, these have not sufficiently been related to the satisfaction of local needs and have not led to the realisation of fundamental (institutional) infrastructure (waste management, land register, spatial planning, etc.). On the contrary, interventions have been scattered and failed to create synergies thus pointing to the inadequacy of development design and the lack of coordination between the local, the regional and the national level.

Furthermore, tourism development is conceived of in terms of local events which, however, do not contribute markedly to the promotion of the area and its differentiation vis-à-vis competitors; additionally, the existing positive attitudes on the part of some of the local entrepreneurs who actively contribute to such activities (e.g. cultural events) is not further utilised. Notably, the Tsakoniki dialect despite rhetoric and its potential to generate a unique tourism destination image and enrich tourists' experience in combination, for example, with the archaeological sites, is largely neglected; such negligence weakens the awareness of the local community for the value of such a cultural resource and on the long-term may result in its distortion or the invalidation.

The feeble entrepreneurial spirit and the weak relationship between tourism and other sectors of the local economy ascertained in the area are also expressions of the inadequate development processes which target tourism rather than holistic local development. Actions, such as the training of local entrepreneurs and the establishment of networks, which would foster the local knowledge base, widen entrepreneurial horizons and allow access to markets through modern, collective schemes are not in place;

actions which would enrich the tourism product and might overcome the seasonal nature of tourism are also lacking.

It is also obvious that the current state of tourism development in the research area also owes to poor stakeholders' participation; the limited participation of, at least, the local tourism entrepreneurs in planning processes, their passive role as recipients of information and the devaluation of their own association are indicative of the situation. A tentative explanation for this may be the diversity of interests of those involved in professional associations; in any case, the fact is that the local entrepreneurs do not strive together for the attainment of common goals. However, notice should be also taken to allegations that "participation is easier advocated than achieved" (Goymen, 2000, as cited in d'Angella et al., 2010, p. 63) or that it "cannot be assumed that to participate is the default position or the social norm" (Shortall, 2008, p. 455). It can therefore be argued that participation is rather a behaviour which is realized through people's mobilization (see: Koutsouris, 2004).

The limited participation of the local entrepreneurs has at least two repercussions. First, it weakens collaboration among them as well as between them and external actors and thus their capability to perceive and utilise entrepreneurial opportunities which, in turn, would foster innovative thinking and strengthen their willingness to participate in development processes. At the same time, such activities would allow stakeholders' collectivities to play a decisive role in development and foster a trust climate between groups, which, despite not benefiting in terms direct economic revenues, contribute in putting together the prerequisites for their attainment.

Second, it limits the capacity of the local society to grasp the 'real meaning' of various development interventions, to orient itself towards the exploration of the most appropriate solutions vis-à-vis its needs and problems, to make decisions and control tourism development processes. Our research has clearly identified gaps in terms of information dissemination and expectations as well as that the latter divert from the espoused model of soft tourism development. It is worth noting that in the area, despite the fact that all parties focus on the lack of information, training and in the last instance of comprehension, actors in fact deny to participate in activities which would ameliorate the situation; instead they expect solutions to come through infrastructure development and the marketing of the area. Finally, the lack of involvement of stakeholders in the design of the strategy of tourism development prevents the establishment of the 'logics of sustainability' (Janschitz & Zimmermann, 2010).

A solution under such circumstances might be the establishment of a DMO (or some co-ordination structure) through an initiative taken jointly by the local authorities and the development agency (possibly along with one or more interested entrepreneurs). As underlined by Ruhanen (2013) "[T]he reasons for, and challenges associated with, local government involvement and direction in addressing the objectives of sustainable development in a tourism

destination context are numerous" (p. 82); development agencies have also the potential to play a decisive role in such a process (Koutsouris, 2009). Based on the realization that the interdependence pertaining tourism development creates incentives for combined action, especially under the current economic crisis, such an organization should strive to identify stakeholders and bring them together in order to involve them in achieving accepted and sustainable outcomes (Elbe et al., 2009; Koutsouris, 2009). Such an endeavour can take off with 'limited' co-operation (Elbe et al., 2009) or 'project' partnerships (Svensson, Nordin, & Flagestad, 2005); so as, in the first place, to find a common understanding among stakeholders (esp. on 'collaborative' vs. 'competitive' advantage; Fyall et al., 2012); build upon existing capabilities, including the provision of training schemes, and enhance collaborative learning (Haugland, Ness, Grønseth, & Aarstad, 2011); mobilise/co-ordinate (some of the distributed) resources for the solution of a concrete, pending problem; and thus build the DMO's legitimacy and trust within the local society.

In a nutshell, our research in the South Kynouria municipality has shown the existence of extremely weak governance structures and limited community mobilisation resulting in limited participation in collective (tourism) development processes in the area. Furthermore, the lack of appropriate information and training as well as of collective learning processes results, on the one hand, in limited capacity for holistic theorisation of development and, on the other hand, in the predominance of chaotic conceptions of, at least, local agencies and tourism entrepreneurs about (sustainable) tourism development. Accordingly, local actors' views are restricted at the 'lower logical levels' thus undermining the establishment of the 'logics of sustainability'. The reorganisation of local structures and efforts and the reorientation of the local society's priorities, also triggered by the current economic crisis in Greece, may thus facilitate the turn (both conceptually and in practice) towards a more sustainable future. And, although this study draws on the experience of Greece, these lessons may be of wider interest.

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