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The role of Greenways in promoting Sustainable Cultural Landscapes. The case of Greece

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Introduction

A primary focus in the Greek Ministry of Culture is the protection and preservation of its cultural/ archaeological sites as “Treasured Landscapes”. Such sites in Greece face problems of neglect and degradation, lacking in attractiveness and visitor services, comprising spaces of limited socio-cultural/historic/educational/ heritage activities only. The greenways movement has been advocating and implementing greenways and ecological networks internationally (Fabos and Ahern.1995). The paper aims to achieve the goal of promoting and upgrading landscapes through protecting/ conserving/restoring sustainable cultural landscapes/sites: a) by developing a single integrated landscape strategy, that of greenway planning, and b) by defining related actions of implementation of greenways and related green infrastructure, in order to accomplish the desired goal at the national, provincial and local scale. The paper includes three main parts: a) literature review of related terms, b) discussion of greenways as a landscape planning strategy and their role in promoting the sustainable cultural landscapes and archaeological sites of Greece, and c) concluding remarks.

Literature review

Cultural landscapes

In 1908, geographer Otto Schluter, first used “cultural landscape” as an academic term defining two forms of landscape: the *Urlandschaft* (original landscape) or landscape that existed before major human induced changes, and the *Kulturlandschaft* (cultural landscape) a landscape created by human culture. Carl O. Sauer, a human geographer, was probably most influential in promoting and developing the idea of cultural landscapes with his classic definition: “The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, nature is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result” (James and Martin, 1981).

In 1992 the World Heritage Convention became the first international legal instrument to recognize and protect cultural landscapes (<http://www.whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape>). Cultural Landscapes have been defined by the World Heritage Committee as distinct geographical areas, uniquely "representing the combined work of nature and of man". Cultural landscapes are being illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time and under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities, embracing a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment (UNESCO, 2005; Pannell, 2006).

According to The Cultural Landscape Foundation, cultural landscapes provide a sense of place and identity; they map the human relationship with the land over time; and they are part of a national heritage that is being reflected on every citizen's life. Four types of cultural landscapes are proposed: a) a consciously designed landscape based upon design principles, b) a vernacular landscape evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped that landscape, c) a historic site associated with a historic event, activity or person, and d) an ethnographic landscape containing a variety of natural and cultural/heritage resources (<http://www.tclf.org>). The International Federation of Landscape Architects, Cultural Landscapes Committee defines cultural landscapes as the combined products of heritage value as a result of the interaction of people and nature.. (<http://www.iflalc.org>).

Vos and Meek argue that in today's shopping-oriented society, postmodern landscapes comprise a complex mosaic of different landscapes desired by society, displaying different intensities of human control: a) industrial production landscapes: landscape as an industry, b) overstressed multifunctional landscapes: landscape as a supermarket, c) archaic traditional landscapes: landscape as a historical museum, d) marginalized vanishing landscapes: landscape as a ruin, e) natural relict landscapes: landscape as a wilderness (Vos & Meek, 1999). Yahner et al. believe that ordinary landscapes can be interpreted to reveal a great deal about the history and culture of the people who built and lived in those landscapes transforming them into cultural landscapes. As people interact with the landscape, they build on and manipulate their environment in a way that reflects a particular set of natural and cultural conditions (Yahner et al., 1995). Cultural landscapes can also be thought of as any landscape bearing the impact of human activity, historic or pre-historic, a concept emerging from the increasing recognition that humans are a part of nature (Taylor, 2002).

Sustainable Cultural Landscape

Sustainability is a multi-dimensional concept, involving the maintenance of natural resources and spatial patterns of land use that are ecologically, socially, and economically beneficial (van Lier, 1998a). Landscapes are in the core of the science of sustainability because they provide an arena in which biophysical limits interact with economic and socio-cultural values (Potschin & Haines-Young, 2006). A "sustainable landscape" condition, in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future, needs to be met (WCED, 1987 in Ahern, 1995).

Today's often short-sighted decisions threaten the survival and continuity of local but at the same time shared international heritage. The ongoing responsibility to safeguard and care for these cultural sites improves the quality of life and deepens a sense of place and identity for future generations. A people-centred approach as well, placing the study of everyday cultural landscapes at the centerstage but with the future in mind is the paper's proposition. It is believed that greenways can tremendously contribute towards this goal.

Greenways

A greenway is: a) a linear open space established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream valley, or ridgeline, or overland along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use, a canal, a scenic route, or other route, b) any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage, c) an open-space connector linking parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with each other and with populated areas, d) linear parks designated as a parkway or greenbelt (Little, 1990). Greenways are networks of land containing linear elements that are planned, designed and managed for multiple purposes including ecological, recreational, cultural, aesthetic, or other purposes compatible with the concept of sustainable land use (Ahern, 1995). In defining greenways, Ahern emphasizes five key ideas: a) the spatial configuration of greenways is primarily linear, b) linkage is a key greenway characteristic that defines it, c) greenways are multifunctional (assumed or negotiated spatial and functional compatibility of land uses) d) the greenways concept is consistent with the concept of sustainable development, e) greenways represent a distinct spatial strategy based on the particular characteristics and advantages of integrated linear systems.

Little (1990) points out five greenway types according to their project character: a) urban riverside greenways, as part or instead of a redevelopment program along neglected, often run-down urban waterfronts, b) recreational greenways, featuring paths and trails, based on natural corridors, canals, abandoned rail beds, and other public rights-of-way, c) ecologically significant natural corridors, along rivers and streams, or less often ridgelines, d) scenic, historic and cultural routes along a road or highway, and e) comprehensive greenway systems or networks, based on landforms, or opportunistic assemblage of greenways and open spaces of various kinds to alternative municipal or regional infrastructure. Aside of their definition, Ahern (Ahern, 1995) discerns four major factors pertaining to greenway typology: a) spatial scale (four orders of landscape scale), b) goal determination due to greenways' multifunctional nature and strategic approach (biodiversity, water resources, recreational, historical and cultural protection, development control related), c) landscape context (landscape matrix), and d) four principal planning strategies employed individually or in various combinations (protective, defensive, offensive, opportunistic).

Greenways as a landscape planning strategy and design tool promoting and enhancing sustainable cultural landscapes. The case of Greece and its archaeological sites.

Greenways as a planning strategy

The main objective of physical planning (one of the four principal currents of planning –the other three being social, public policy and economic planning) is the optimization of land uses distribution in an often limited space, focusing on land-use allocation (Fabos, 1985, van Lier, 1998b). Sustainable landscape planning places

physical planning in a broader perspective (Botequilha & Ahern, 2002). It is the paper's thesis that greenways, both as a planning strategy and as a design tool, can help in applying sustainable principles into the protection, promotion and wise management of Greek sustainable cultural landscapes, especially the archaeological sites in particular on a national level.

Ahern, proposes four strategies: a) protective strategy: preferred when the existing landscape supports sustainable processes and patterns while the landscape around it may experience change, b) defensive strategy: favourable when seeking to arrest the negative processes of fragmentation in a landscape that is already fragmented isolated, c) offensive strategy: based on a vision or plan to create a new landscape in replacement of a previously disturbed or fragmented landscape ("putting nature back into the landscape" approach), d) opportunistic strategy: chosen when the existing landscape possesses unique elements or opportunities (eg. corridor configurations) that can be integrated (not substitute) to broader planning strategies (Ahern, 1995).

Greenway planning advocates that the most valuable land resources (eg. areas of ecological and natural significance, cultural and historic values, and recreational opportunities) tend to co-occur in common spatial distribution patterns in the landscape (Lewis, 1964; Dawson, 1995; Fabos, 1991; Ribeiro, 1998 in Ribeiro & Barao, 2006). Greenways represent an efficient strategic method for protecting the most resources for the least amount of land (Ahern, 2002), following the phases of landscape analysis, landscape assessment, planning proposals and evaluation. Based on the ecological theories of meta-population and island bio-geography, greenways promote continuity, creativity, linearity and connectivity and attempt to address post-modern criticism in the area of Landscape Architecture and landscape planning (Ahern, 2002; Ribeiro & Barao, 2006).

According to Ribeiro (1997), the study of cultural/historic landscapes should address the following issues: a) identification of cultural and historic landscapes that demonstrate a continuing relationship between human societies and nature, b) identification of cultural and historic landscapes that exhibit ecological values being examples of sustainable relationship between human activities and nature, c) the assessment of the relationship between land-use evolution and natural characteristics of landscape, d) the association of landscapes with historical events, persons or periods, e) the identification of cultural and historic landscapes as a resource that attracts residential development as well as tourism, and other activities because of their visual and experiential opportunities, f) identification of the meanings, memories and other emotional values associated with the landscape, shared by people living or visiting those resources.

Greek Ministry of Culture, Registered Cultural Landscapes, and Physical Planning reality

Cultural landscapes are a legacy for everyone and these special sites reveal various aspects of a country's origins and development as well as evolving relationships

with the natural world. Neglect and inappropriate development put irreplaceable landscape legacy increasingly at risk. Greece boasts a multitude of archaeological sites among whose the most important are: the Acropolis of Athens (Parthenon), the Pan-Hellenic sanctuary-oracle of Delphi, ancient Olympia (Olympic games in honor of god Zeus), the Cretan Palace of Knossos, the peninsula of Mt. Athos with a complex of at least 21 major Byzantine monasteries in an untouched natural state landscape setting (www.odysseus.culture.gr/english). In 1981, Hellas signed the UNESCO treaty for the protection of the monuments and sites of the world's cultural heritage. The sites listed below deemed to be of primary importance having been included so far in the UNESCO list: Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae (1986), Archaeological site at Delphi (1987), Athens' Acropolis (1987), Mount Athos (1988), Meteora (1988), Paleochristian and Byzantine Monuments of Thessalonika (1988), Archaeological site of Epidaurus (1988), Medieval city of Rhodes (1988), Archaeological site of Olympia (1989), Mystras (1989), Delos (1990), Monasteries of Daphni, Osios Loukas, Nea Moni of Chios (1990), The Pythagoreion and the Heraion of Samos (1992), Archaeological site of Vergina (1996), Archaeological sites of Mycenae and Tirynths 1999), Historic Center (Chora) with the Monastery of Saint John "the Theologian" and the cave of the Apocalypse on the Island of Patmos (1999), Ancient city of Corfu (2007) (www.odysseus.culture.gr/english).



Fig 1: Major cultural landscapes of Greece

Greek landscapes have been shaped by traditional patterns of grazing, cultivation, urbanization etc. They are full of cultural evidence including everyday features such as monuments, buildings, farmsteads, settlements and graves dating to the prehistoric era, historical roads, stone walls, clearance cairns etc. (Terkenli, 2001). Lack of comprehensive plans can easily result in fragmented and uncoordinated land use and cultural heritage interests must be part of the land use questions (Swensen, Jerpasen, 2008).

Conclusion

In a summary fashion this paper concludes highlighting the following points:

The old culture-nature dichotomy no longer supports an adequate argument. Today, nature and culture are rather integrated into each other than opposed. Opposition to contemporary culture occurs when important everyday values and beliefs are destroyed by individual and collective indifference. Culture thrives when individuals-groups-civilizations resist the "who cares?" attitude and work for things they believe in, such as environmental protection. Sustainable environmental development cannot be achieved without a sustainable cultural development (Hosgor and Yigiter, 2006).

Landscapes are dynamic cultural entities and change along with the communities living in them (Brown & Mitchell, 2000).

Connectivity is fundamental to spatial concepts that support land-use planning and conservation strategies (van Lier, 1998b) being extremely suitable to cultural resource planning. Cultural landscapes often reflect such sustainable land-use techniques, considering the characteristics and limits of the natural environment they are established in, along with a specific spiritual relation to nature. Protection of cultural landscapes can contribute to modern techniques of sustainable land-use and can maintain/enhance natural values in the landscape (World Heritage Center, <http://www.whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape>).

Lately, ecological and cultural tourism have been attracting an increasing number of tourists because of their unique cultural features. However, rapid development of tourism brings economic benefits, but results in a series of problems that threaten further tourism development and protection of ancient towns, such as over-commercialization and tourism urbanization. Stephenson proposes a Cultural Values Model that stems from three components: a) forms, b) relationships and c) practices/processes offering the basis for an integrated understanding of landscape and its values (Stephenson, 2008).

In formulating a plan with public consensus in mind so that implementation can be achieved, Greece resembles similar conditions in the Italian experience. According to Toccolini et al., a greenway plan must: a) be agreeable to local administrators so it will have more chances to be realized, b) take into account the needs of the local people who during its development have the opportunity to indicate certain priorities (Toccolini et al., 2006).

During the past fifteen years, a public demand for quality cultural experiences by connecting historical sites, combined with recreation and non-motorized modes of transportation has increased steadily in Greece. Lack of environmental and even so landscape planning tradition responses to such needs have been rare and almost non-existent as Greece has entered force in the European Landscape Convention only the

past February. A return to the traditional way of Mediterranean living (Ziman Scudo, 2006), which was active until the mid 1970's in rural Greece, can lead today to rediscovery, appreciation, and reuse of older mono-functional non-motorized routes and paths that can be reintroduced to Greek society under the new concept of multifunctional greenways based on the study and management of resources of the broader landscape.

The greenway movement will endure because it is an adaptive response to expanding urbanization driven by basic human needs (Searns, 1995). To provide for a sustainable greenway framework upon which appropriate uses and management may be integrated (Ahern, 1995) within the broader physical planning process, seems the logical choice for structuring and promoting Greece's cultural sites.

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