



## MSc in Sustainable Development

### Dissertation Thesis

*"Participatory destination management and creative tourism: From co-production of tourism products to co-creation of experiences. A reality and stakeholders' check for Thessaloniki, Greece."*



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## ❖ **Abstract**

In the modern globalised world, competition among tourism destinations becomes more severe. Destinations who can offer a tourism product that is able to attract new visitors who get emotionally attached with the destination and repeat their visit, can create and sustain a big competitive advantage. Creative tourism, the evolution of cultural tourism, is a contemporary form of tourism that can exploit visitor's creative sense and treat him/her as an active member of the local lifestyle. To implement such a shift in tourism product, participatory destination management is an intangible asset and a basic prerequisite. Collaborative actions for tourism development using stakeholder management and contemporary governance is the most efficient and legitimate way to exploit all possible social and economic resources of a destination in a sustainable manner. In this context a coordinator organization, a local DMO is a strong meta-governance structure that express collaboration processes. The current study attempts to conduct a reality check on the willingness of stakeholders in Thessaloniki, Greece to adopt such a policy and use it as a foundation of a shift to creative tourism that can move the city from the edge of co-production of tourism products to the edge of co-creation of tourism experiences with visitors.

## ❖ **Chapter 1: Introduction**

As the world moves towards a deeper globalised environment all human activities, in addition to social and economic procedures, become even more complicated. Thus the need for more efficient management schemes becomes top priority for all aspects of social prosperity and sustainable economic development. A prosperous field where all the former policies can grow and urgently implemented is tourism industry.

Tourism industry, accounting 9% of global GDP, creating almost 9% of global employment and projecting a total of 1.8 billion international arrivals for 2030 (UNWTO, 2013) is a crucial sector both in terms of national, regional and local economic development but also in terms of social development and prosperity. On the other hand tourism is often recognized as a non-environmental friendly industry. Hence if development policies steer towards a more environmental friendly set of actions, tourism can become a sustainable development paradigm with global positive consequences.

Spatial distribution of tourism development, both in terms of socioeconomic benefits but also in terms of environmental and sometimes social distraction, brings destination as a system to the center of the tourism development process. Hence, tourism destination can be considered as the most important unit of management applications (D'Angella & Go, 2009). A proper choice of effective management action can provide the destination with a huge competitive advantage in the tourism market. Recent studies have shown that the most effective way to increase competitive advantage of a destination is to implement strategic planning with the collaboration of various stakeholders of a destination (Getz & Jamal, 1994; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Thus a stakeholder management approach seems to be more effective than the classical top-down hierarchy approach when tourism destination development is to be considered. The latter is also evident by the fact that destination's stakeholders are strongly interdependent given the nature of tourism industry where destination's resources are usually deeply fragmented and small sized (Pearce, 1992).

In this vein there is a need to effectively and efficiently govern destinations in order to ensure their good performance and competitiveness. To that end, the right mix of

balance is needed between destination's stakeholders but also between tourism development and inhabitant's living conditions. In this scenario, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) seek to keep this balance but also to orchestrate decision making on design, organization and management of relationships in the destination's stakeholders network (D'Angella & Go, 2009). Thus, a destination's DMO acts as a major stakeholder responsible for coordinating and managing destination's stakeholder's interests, vision, goals and objectives.

Contemporary destination management treats local communities as a major stakeholder too. More specifically in the modern destination management, tourism must be treated as a resource of communities and not communities as a resource for tourism (Moscardo in Laws et.al, 2011). Thus, community capacity building is a prerequisite if local communities are to be considered in the tourism development process and lack of knowledge is the basic barrier towards this target.

Contemporary destination management needs to engage tourist to the development procedure also. Tourists are another major stakeholder of a tourism destination but their main role is usually the one of a passive consumer of destination's tourism product. Since modern tourists seek mainly for experiences, a destination that is able to transform a tourist from a passive gazer to an active actor of destination's everyday life by engaging him/her into creative production and consumption scenes (Richards, 2011), will eventually achieve and sustain a big competitive advantage. Tourists get emotionally touched with the destination through the latter participation scheme and thus repeat visitation or even become destination's ambassador to his/her home country.

Although this shift towards creative tourism is considered an asset for a destination the role of DMOs and tourism stakeholders in general to excel this type of tourism development is not yet sufficiently researched. Moreover this shift towards more creative forms of tourism development can be a scene where a transformation occurs from the co-production of tourism products between local stakeholders to the co-creation of tourism experiences between tourists and local communities and entrepreneurs.

The city of Thessaloniki, Greece can possibly operate as real case study for the above propositions. Firstly, because of its immaturity as a tourism destination but also

because of its relatively big creative industry sector. In this context, this thesis aims to identify the stakeholders of the city and perform a reality check of the stakeholder's capabilities and willingness to support its tourism development by adding a creative aspect to it.

## ❖ Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **2.1: The destination**

As the tourism industry is very both spatially but also sectional distributed, destinations as an action site of tourism activities play a major importance in uniting disparate tourism related organizations. A tourism destination is defined as “a geographical region, political jurisdiction, or major attraction, which seeks to provide visitors with a range of satisfying to memorable visitation experiences”, thus is obviously important as “the primary unit of study and management action”. (Bornhorst et al., 2010).

Although according to UNWTO (p.1, 2007) “tourism destination is a physical space in which a tourist spends at least one overnight which has physical and administrative boundaries”, Bornhorst et al (p.572, 2010) argue that it is managerially more effective to view a destination as “the geographical region which contains a sufficient critical mass or cluster of attractions so as to be capable of providing tourists with visitation experiences that attract them to the destination for tourism purposes”. In this context destination is not delineated only in geographical and political terms where the notion of destination is expressed by countries, regions, cities or metropolitan cities but can be differentiated to contain sites of major tourism importance within the same region or city (i.e. Eurodisneyland, Machu Picchu ruins in Peru etc.).

A supply-focus destination definition, projects the destination as an area where various components of the visitor economy supply their services to travel and tourism markets (Middleton et al., 2009). Finally, a more holistic approach to the notion of destination would consider the role of local community and the environment in the amalgam of the tourism product (Reid et al., 2004).

In this vein, the role of the destination is crucial towards management of tourism development. Bornhorst et al (p.573, 2010) argue that a destination has two primary and a number of supporting roles. First, “it must seek to enhance the social and economic well-being of the residents who live within its boundaries” and secondly it must provide “the enhancement of resident well-being by offering a range of activities and experiences of the kind that we identify as “tourism experiences””.

Moreover a tourism destination consists of several elements which can attract the visitor to the destination. Cho, B.H. (2000) as cited in UNWTO (p.1, 2007) argues

that the basic elements of a destination can be broken down into two main categories. Attractions (built or cultural) and all the other remaining elements. In more detail UNWTO (pp. 1-2, 2007) classifies the following elements of a tourism destination:

- **Attractions.** These are often the main and initial motivations for a potential visitor of the destination. Attractions can split to different categories whether being tangible or intangible (e.g. uniqueness) as:
  1. Natural (mountains, beaches, weather)
  2. Built (heritage monuments, well known buildings, religious buildings, stadiums)
  3. Cultural (theaters, museums, art galleries, cultural events)
- **Amenities.** In this group are gathered all facilities or services that support visitors' stay. Including accommodation, roads, public transport, catering services and guides or info services.
- **Accessibility.** This element is connected with everything that can make the destination accessible to a large amount of population containing air, road, train and cruise/ships travel services.
- **Image.** Another crucial element of destination's success. Again there is presence of both tangible (sights, scenes) but also intangible assets of the destination such as the friendliness of people, their tourism culture and environmental quality.
- **Price.** Especially in recent turbulent economic era pricing is crucial for a destination's success. Prices in transportation and accommodation can deeply affect customer's choices.
- **Human Resources.** This special aspect of a destination is rarely taken into account from the policy makers but is equally crucial to the former. Well trained workforce of a destination combined with citizens well aware of tourism potential for the city can create miracles in terms of repeated visitation.

Using this typology to analyze the characteristics and assets of a destination it is obvious that success of a tourism destination is a multidimensional goal. A net of several stakeholders is acting in the destination's scene in order to produce what the visitor will perceive as the experience of the destination. Thus destination domain can be characterized as "an open – system of interdependent, multiple



stakeholders, where the actions of one stakeholder impact on the rest of the actors in the community” (Jamal and Getz, 1995).

Hence the destination as an open-system seems to follow the nature of tourism industry in general. Pearce in his book *Tourism Organizations* (p.5, 1992) describes the basic elements of the nature of the tourism industry: “Interdependence, small size, market fragmentation, and spatial separation are all factors which may lead to a desire for combined action, a willingness to unite to achieve common goals, a need to form tourism organizations”.

As a consequence of this notion, successful tourism destination development and competitive destination performance comes along with proper destination management and thus effective destination governance (Laws et al., 2011).

## **2.2.: Participatory destination management.**

### 2.2.1.: Destination's stakeholder's analysis and management

#### 2.2.1a.: Stakeholders: definition, types, interests and role in destinations

Several studies in management theory suggest that modern institutions are not self-sufficient. In contrary they depend on support from other organizations (except shareholders) within their business environment. In addition they argue that the degree of dependence on another external actor is connected with the concentration and control of resources that he possesses and hence the degree of threat that can wield from its operation (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978 in Sheehan and Ritchie, 2005). D'Angella and Go (2009) argue that alliances, partnerships, clustering, networking may represent a more effective strategy than conventional business models that represent a more stand-alone model. Especially in tourism which is mainly characterized as a "network driven" business the latter "free-rider" model seems inadequate to achieve and sustain competitiveness.

In this context, focus is given on the importance of stakeholder as the basic cell of the collaboration process. The notion of "stakeholder" and stakeholder theory in general is mainly part of the business management literature. Freeman (p.25, 1984) in his seminal study provided the most recognized and accepted definition of stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by the achievement of a corporation's purpose". Although Freeman's definition is quite broad it becomes apparent that he argues of the importance of interactions between an organization and external groups that can affect the organization. The importance of those interactions supports the shift to a strategic planning based in stakeholder theory and collaboration.

The first step towards implementing a stakeholder theory approach as a tool for collaborative destination management is the acknowledgement of destination's stakeholders. According to WTO (pp.6-7, 2007) and Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) the various stakeholders of a destination include: national-regional-local authorities, economic development agencies, attractions and cultural organizations, transport providers, accommodation providers, intermediates (tour operators), competitors, media, local business, educational institutions, social agencies, convention centers,

visitors. Sigala and Marinidis (2012) argue that none of the previously mentioned stakeholders can control the destination by themselves due to the fact that they are strongly interdependent and the destination environment is complex and deeply fragmented by several firms. Moreover those stakeholders often possess different resources, values and goals that turn destination's interconnections deeply turbulent and collaboration a difficult equation to solve (Wang, 2008 in Sigala and Marinidis, 2012).

#### 2.2.1b.: Stakeholder's management approaches

Once destination's relevant stakeholders have been identified management of the latter, based on differentiation among them, is the step to follow. Several studies have argued on different ways of differentiation. Many (Carroll 1989; Clarkson 1995; and Freeman 1984 in Sheehan and Ritchie, 2005) differentiate stakeholders as primary and secondary based on the form of engagement they have with the organization. In broad terms primary are the group of stakeholders who are essential for the survival of the organization contrary to secondary that are not engaged in contractual transactions with the organizations. Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1987) choose a typology of stakeholder salience based on a blend of attributes of power, urgency and legitimacy. Finally, Savage et al. (p.65, 1991) propose a more holistic approach that is based on the relation between the stakeholders' potential to threat the organization to their potential to cooperate with it. Thus, they propose a matrix of four different strategies. A "Collaboration strategy", where the potential for both collaboration and threat is high. A "Defensive strategy" when potential for threat is high and potential for cooperation is low. An "Involvement strategy" when potential for threat is low and potential for cooperation is high and "Monitoring strategy" when potential for both collaboration and threat is low.

Savage et al. based on this typology suggest a blend of management strategies where more importance is given to stakeholders keen on cooperating while effort is made to shift stakeholders from a less efficient category to a more favorable one.

The following Figure.1 is indicative of the typology.

		Stakeholder's potential for threat	
		<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>
Stakeholder's potential for cooperation	<b>High</b>	Mixed Blessing Strategy: <b>Collaborate</b>	Supportive Strategy: <b>Involve</b>
	<b>Low</b>	Non-supportive Strategy: <b>Defend</b>	Marginal Strategy: <b>Monitor</b>

Figure 1: Stakeholder's management strategies typology per Savage et al (1991)

None of these stakeholder's collaboration strategies can be implemented without the initiation of a convener organization. The result of combining the proposed architecture of a non-profit umbrella organization with the collaborative spirit of the stakeholder theory, as expressed previously is a destination management organization (DMO).

#### 2.2.2.: The role of DMO in destination management.

According to WTO (pp.2-3, 2007), the role of the DMO is to "lead and coordinate activities under a coherent strategy. They don't control the activities of their partners but bring together resources and expertise and a degree of independence and objectivity to lead the way forward". In essence WTO (p.12) compares the destination with a "factory" where DMO's role is to be in charge of it with a duty to achieve an efficient return on investment, market growth, quality products and branding to all "shareholders". The crucial difference with the corporation analog is that the DMO do not own the "factory" neither employ people working on it, nor controls all of its processes. D'Angella and Go (p.429, 2009) argue that the role of a DOM is to "orchestrate decision making" on management and organization of the relationships in a tourism network in order to compete effectively with other tourism networks and thus achieve economic performance for both DMO and its stakeholders.

Moreover a DMO should be able to be legitimate and in power to address the multiple interests of the various stakeholders involved in the destination’s development process. Efficient leadership and effective pooling of resources are among DMO’s responsibilities too (Sigala and Marinidis, 2009). Hence, as Sigala (2009) argues, “DMO is becoming a prominent destination developer” firstly by acting as a catalyst for realization of benefits and drawbacks of tourism development but also by supporting destination’s stakeholders in order to improve their competitiveness and thus improve destination’s performance too.

In this context it is crucial to acknowledge the most important stakeholders of a destination but also to understand their relative importance in the decision-making process. Sheehann and Ritchie (2005) initiated a graphic “stakeholder view of the DMO” based on a research among several DMO CEOs.

In the following Figure 2 stakeholder salience decreases as distance from the DMO increases.

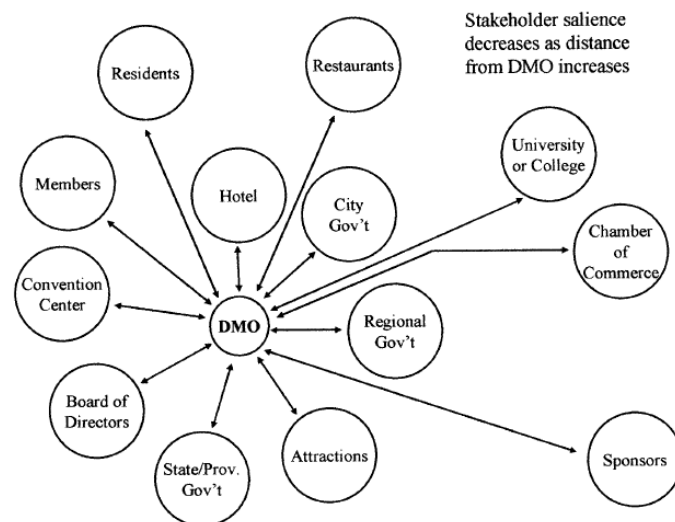


Figure 2: A stakeholder view of the DMO

Source: Sheehan and Ritchie, Destination Stakeholders Exploring Identity and Salience (2005)

Several assumptions are made from Figure 2. Firstly, becomes apparent the crucial role of the DMO as a coordinator of many different interests both of public but also of private suppliers. Secondly, local and regional governments combined with hoteliers seem to be the most important actors for a DMO. Sheehan and Ritchie in the same

study argue that this is valid because of the fact that the former are the most crucial funding providers and the latter play an extremely important role as accommodation facilitators but also as attractors of conventional tourism. Although this study is strongly indicative of the identity and the relative importance of a DMO, it has to be remarked that there is an absence of special interests groups mainly due to the perceived by the DMO's CEOs destructive image.

Applying Savage et al (1991) typology of stakeholders, Sheehan and Ritchie also assessed CEO's opinion of the relative importance of the stakeholders based on the potential to cooperate or to threat the organization. The study found that CEO's of DMOs perceptions almost agree with Savage et al (1991) typology arguing that the latter is valid for further use.

The results are presented in the following Figure 3.

		Stakeholder's potential for threat	
		High	Low
Stakeholder's potential for cooperation	High	<p><i>Mixed Blessing</i></p> <p>Strategy: <b>Collaborate</b></p> <p>Stakeholders: City government, Regional government, State/provincial government and board of directors, convention center, residents</p>	<p><i>Supportive</i></p> <p>Strategy: <b>Involve</b></p> <p>Stakeholders: Attractions, members, restaurants, university/college, chamber of commerce, sponsors</p>
	Low	<p><i>Non-supportive</i></p> <p>Strategy: <b>Defend</b></p> <p>Stakeholders: None</p>	<p><i>Marginal</i></p> <p>Strategy: <b>Monitor</b></p> <p>Stakeholders: None</p>

Figure 3: Savage et al (1991) typology for key DMO stakeholders. Source: Sheehan and Ritchie, Destination Stakeholders Exploring Identity and Saliency (2005)

In general, facilitators and managers of a DMO indicate as most important those stakeholders who control the resources of the DMO. Thus perceived importance of a stakeholder is fully analog to its “threat to funding” (Sheehan and Ritchie, 2005).

Several studies (Sigala, 2009; Sigala and Marinidis 2012; Sheehan and Ritchie, 2005) have also proved that some trade-offs of a DMO’s operation do exist both for the organization and the destination. Although uncontrolled participation to DMO’s operating scheme is a desirable target, limitation to participation is considered the most effective strategy. This is due to the fact that stakeholders holding power and resources feel threaten of the possible decline of their power to control decision-making, while on the other hand non-power stakeholders may create more expectations than those that their relative power can address. Thus there is a need for a delicate and balanced form of stakeholder management that will secure the full encompass of the pre-mentioned stakeholders while carefully explore their potential to threaten DMO’s operations by seeking all of the available methods and incentives to engage every stakeholder in such manner that will maximize potential benefits and minimize potential of threat.

Finally Bornhorst et al (2010) argue that DMO’s success is not always followed by destination’s success. More specifically they indicate that DMO success and destination success share some similarities (community support, marketing, destination performance) but also some differences too. Unique to a destination’s success found to be: tourism product and services offer, location and its accessibility, quality of visitor experience and community support. On the other hand DMO’s success is uniquely measured by more hard economic indicators as effective management, supplier relations and focused in strategic planning.

### **2.3.: Destination Governance**

Modern societies are facing numerous structural and deeply complicated changes. Thus there is a strong need of participative solutions due to the fact that no public or private stakeholder can sustain sufficient resources or information to address those strategic challenges on his own. Progress in several governing models brought governance to surface as an answer to modern socio-economical requirements (de

Bruin & Alonso, 2012). Destination as an open system of many interdependent stakeholders can be easily considered as a proper governance implementation field (Spyriadis et al in Laws et al, 2011).

Before highlighting the interconnection between governance schemes and tourism destination development, it is useful to analyze the term *governance*. Graham et al. (2003) argue that in broad terms, governance refers to the processes by which groups of people make decisions focusing on the decision-making processes and how execution of power is organized and used in a group. On the other hand Rhodes (1997, in Laws et al., 2011) claims that “governance refers to the self-organizing, inter-organizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state”.

In the context of management and development of tourism destinations, governance refers to the processes but also the organizations responsible for implementation of decision making in tourism. Those organizations can differ from various levels of government structures to chambers of commerce, private sector enterprises, tourism promotion bureaus and community or resident groups (Hall, 2005). Thus destination governance consists of two core dimensions. Firstly, it refers to structure and links of the destination’s tourism network characterized by interdependence of stakeholders, exchange of available resources, codes of conduct, hierarchy and authority. Secondly, destination governance refers to the way in which the multiple destination stakeholders manage their relationship towards the common goal of meeting visitor’s demands and the process they use to achieve this target. In conclusion destination governance can be defined as “the totality of interactions of governments, public bodies, private sector and civil societies that aim at solving problems, meeting challenges and creating opportunities for the visitor economy at the destination” (Spyriadis et al. in Laws et al., 2011).

Regarding structure of destination governance, stakeholders with their inevitable interdependences can be considered as the basic nodes of development networks. Destination networks are described by Provan & Kenis (p.231, 2008) as “groups of three or more legally autonomous organizations that work together to achieve not only their own goals but also a collective goal. Such networks may be self-initiated, by network members themselves, or may be mandated or contracted”. Thus it becomes



apparent a shift from geographical cluster formation of stakeholders towards network structures.

De Bruyn & Alonso (p.232-233, 2012) argue that there is a twofold distinction of destination governance models. On the one hand a geographical distinction exists among national, regional and local tourism organizations responsible for tourism development. On the other hand each of the latter organizations can use several governance models to structure their organizations such as Council Departments and Business Units (within local tourism authority), Council organizations and Council controlled trusts or Independent Organizations.

From all of the above it becomes apparent that a strong multi-agency partnership is needed especially if local tourism development is to be considered. In this context decision-making process is more flexible and several demands are also heard from local communities and other interest groups. Thus a non-profit governance structure seems to be the most appropriate scheme for destinations (Spyriadis et al. in Laws et al., 2011) due to the fact that it enables stakeholders to operate in complex environments, mobilizing resources from markets, community or governmental subsidies while promoting civic and democratic objectives (Enjolras, 2009). Moreover another basic characteristic of a destination's tourism product is that of collective ownership, meaning that there is no single stakeholder that can declare himself as the direct and exclusive owner of the destination's tourism product. On the other hand none of the stakeholders can benefit directly from the tourism product of the destination without be affected from other stakeholder's decisions. Hence collaboration of autonomous stakeholders under one umbrella organization can form an effective destination development governance structure (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005).

The non-profit governance structure may face several trade-offs too. Inefficiencies, misuse of resources, lack of trust and transparency and goal displacement can be major obstacles towards the initiation of an effective destination governance scheme (Spyriadis et al. in Laws et al., 2011).

While destination governance architecture is a major first step nothing can be implemented without defining the operating process of the structure. Contemporary literature (Fyall and Garrod, 2005; Ritchie and Crouch, 2005) suggests collaboration and "co-opetition" as basic elements of an organization responsible for destination

development. This is mainly because those attributes can excel destination development, improve “product” quality and most important, create and sustain competitive advantage of the destination.

Jamal and Getz (p.188, 1995) define collaborative tourism planning as “process of joint decision-making among autonomous, key stakeholders of an inter-organizational, community tourism domain to resolve planning problems of the domain and/or to manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain”. In more general context collaboration in tourism takes place when “a group of autonomous stakeholders engaged in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures to act or decide on issues related to a particular problem domain through a process of exchange of ideas and expertise and pooling of financial and human resources” (Vernon et al., 2005 in Sigala and Marinidis, 2012).

Collaboration as process needs to fulfill certain preconditions in order to be effective. According to Jamal and Getz (pp.196-200) there are six preconditions of effective collaboration in tourism:

1. Recognition of high degree of interdependence of stakeholders in planning and managing the domain.
2. Recognition among stakeholders of mutual and individual benefits from collaboration process.
3. Implementation of decisions. Legitimate processes and inclusion of all key stakeholders are crucial towards securing implementation of decisions.
4. Inclusion of all levels of key stakeholders such as local tourism authorities, chamber of commerce, convention and visitor bureaus, resident organizations, social agencies.
5. Existence of a coordinator body. Basic characteristics of such organization should be: legitimacy, expertise, authority and efficient resources.
6. Common vision, goals and objectives

Moreover the proposed organization participants usually have different intentions and objectives that may turn decision-making process into a tough quest. More specifically, Laws et al. (p.193, 2011) suggest that the influence is determined by three key attributes of the destination governance participants: power, legitimacy, and

urgency. Those attributes can be crucial due to the fact that can determine the amount of necessary resources and the final outcome of value creation for the destination.

In conclusion, in order to sustain a collaborative governance structure where multiple stakeholders need to collaborate while possessing different amount and type of resources and thus different power basis, co-governance is essential (Sullivan et al., 2006 in Laws et al, 2011). Hence, regarding process type of governance model, stakeholder theory can address such a challenge (Sautter and Leisen, 1999 in Laws et al., 2011).

Although a more extended analysis of the multi-stakeholder approach and its management is further investigated in the previous chapter of literature review, it is important to cite the dominant types of governance used in destination management and the way that can be mixed in order to produce efficient results.

According to Meuleman (2006) there are 3 major “ideal-types of governance”: hierarchy, market and network. Hierarchy is characterized by rules, authority and puts the governing organization at the center of the decision-making procedure. Market type of governance is mainly characterized by prices and competition and finally networks are based on mutual trust, diplomacy and voluntary agreements among interdependent actors. In contemporary governance there is no preferable type. Instead, Meuleman (2006) argues that “contemporary governance needs to be situational, integrating all three modes according to circumstances”.

Moreover another crucial aspect of destination governance is the co-creation of value of tourism experiences. Value of destination’s tourism product is mainly perceived by visitors thus interactions of visitors may need to be considered in the governance process too (Ciasullo and Carrubbo, 2011; Laws et al., 2011).

From all of the above the complexity of an effective governance model for destination management becomes evident. A multi-stakeholder approach is preferable but not enough if the implementation of governance process mix is not effective. Thus there is a need of an organization that will adjust the mix of governance needed between different actions of different stakeholders. This “governance of governance” is referred to as “Meta-governance” (Meuleman, 2006). Due to the fact that a destination management organization’s role is to “coordinate and integrate the development and

implementation of policies and strategies across different sectors (intersectional) and across different levels of government (intergovernmental)” (Spyriadis et al. in Laws et al., 2011), this is a role for a meta-governance institution. This the role of a destination management organization (DMO) (Beritelli et al., in Laws et., 2011).

#### **2.4.: Community based tourism**

A contemporary form of collaborative tourism supports the idea of community involvement in tourism development as a major stakeholder. Although the notion of community based tourism is mostly researched in tourism development of rural areas (Moscardo et al., 2008) where community’s involvement is direct, some of the results may fit in urban destinations too.

Several studies (Tosun 2005, Moscardo et al., 2008) suggest that stakeholder collaboration in tourism destination development is a form of community based tourism due to the fact that residents are represented in the development process and thus have the ability to secure fair distribution of development benefits not only in economic but also in social and environmental terms. Moreover in urban destinations where community cannot involve directly to tourism development due to its relative size, indirect commitment of community in participatory destination management institutions (as a DMO) as a key stakeholder empower DMO’s role and results. Participatory destination management can built a strong consensus over destination management planning that can lead to a form of sustainable destination management (Healey, 1996; Waligo et al., 2013).

The strongest barrier against community participation and hence against community based tourism is lack of awareness over tourism development procedures and alternatives. In other words, prerequisite of implementing and sustaining a community based tourism destination management is to build a community capacity that can empower stakeholders with the appropriate knowledge to propose and implement tourism development ideas and projects (Moscardo et al., 2008). Originated to the notion of social capital, community capacity refers to education and awareness of community in tourism development issues, to collective knowledge itself and finally the existence and ability of community stakeholders to asses and propose alternative

solutions to given projects. In conclusion the notion of community capacity building refers to “the readiness of the community stakeholders to participate in decision making (Moscardo, 2008 in Sigala and Marinidis, 2012).

In contrary, in the absence of community capacity, leadership for tourism development comes from outside the destination’s community. In that way community is excluded from the decision-making process due to lack of knowledge. (Moscardo et al., 2008).

Sustainability in tourism development requires great attention in developing community’s capacity over tourism development choices and alternatives. In this vein, education plays a major role. Education regarding tourism development practices but most important regarding value of collaboration and building of consensus among stakeholders. “This requires a change from seeing communities as resources for tourism towards tourism as a resource for communities” (Moscardo et al in Laws et al., 2011).

## 2.5.: Creative Tourism

### 2.5.1: From cultural tourism to creative tourism

Modern network societies accompanied with knowledge economy aspects have brought creativity to the surface of contemporary urban policies. Many studies (Florida, 2002; Frey, 2009) have connected creativity with urban innovation and regeneration. In the modern global tourism arena cities need to distinguish themselves and thus gain a strong competitive advantage. Shift to creativity as a mean of differentiation for urban destinations can be a great asset for a city both in tourism terms but more generally in urban regeneration terms (Richards, 2012).

Several studies (Klausen, 2010; Scott, 2010, Rhodes, 1961) have tried to associate creativity with a standard definition. The most dominant approach group creativity into four main areas, the “4Ps of creativity” (Rhodes, 1961 in Richards, 2011):

- The creative person.
- The creative process.
- The creative product
- The creative environment

Tourism in practice involves all of the above four elements of creativity. “Creative person” is associated with the activities of Florida’s (2002) “creative class”. According to Florida (2002), “creative class” accounts more than 40 million workers only in USA and is divided into two main sections:

1. Super-Creative Core: This group includes a wide range of occupations (e.g. science, engineering, education, computer programming, research), with arts, design, and media workers forming a small subset. This segment is considered innovative, creating commercial products and consumer of goods. The primary work function of its members is to be creative and innovative.
2. Creative Professionals: These professionals are the classic knowledge-based employees. This segment includes those working in healthcare, business and finance, the legal sector, and education. They “draw on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems” using higher degrees of education to do so (Florida, 2002).

“Creative processes” refer to creative activities for tourists and the way the latter are implemented. Creative relationship and networking in conjunction with co-creation of tourism experiences experiences, as described in more detail in the following chapters, are the main policies proposed in this context.

“Creative products” notion refers to creative products that can be used as tourism attractions. Those can vary from visits to creative clusters to participation in creative events.

“Creative environment” or “creative buzz” refers to the outcome all of the above characteristics have in urban spaces. Presence of creative industry in an urban destination combined with creators-visitors osmosis in establishment of authentic local creative experiences can create a unique environment that in turn can generate visitation to destination (Richards, 2011).

Creativity in tourism industry is an innovative form of development that exists as an outcome of several social and economic changes. More specifically, Richards (2009) argues that creative tourism is actually the descendant of cultural tourism. During 20<sup>th</sup> century, when tourists became more experienced started to seek alternative modes of tourism than classic leisure destinations. This need combined with several socioeconomic changes turned cultural tourism as a major tourism sector.

Development of society made people seeking for more “high-order” needs as self-fulfillment which changed the way of consumption from a static purchase to a self-development through consumption of goods and services (Scitovsky, 1976 in Richards, 2009). Moreover there was a dramatic change from the production point of view too. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999) production of goods and services has been replaced by “an economy specialized in the production of experiences”. Finally regarding tourism market, there was a major shift from mass tourism to cultural tourism. This phenomenon occurred due to promotion of cultural tourism as low impact for destinations while attracting high-income visitors.

Although cultural tourism is still a dominant form of tourism (ATLAS research in Richards, 2009), suffers from the consequences of its own success. Excessive reproduction of cultural tourism model across the globe resulted in an extensive “commodification” of its practice which led visitors to ask for a new, more active

form of cultural tourism. Visitors ask for experiences “that offer a taste of local or authentic” culture. They want to “live like locals and find out about the real identity of the places they visit” (ATLAS research in Richards, 2009). Thus the emergence of this active type of culture tourism demand, leads to growth of “presumption”, the process by which visitors (and consumers in general) become co-producers of the products they consume (Richards, 2009; Chathoth et al., 2013).

In this context, Richards and Raymond (2000) have defined creative tourism as:

“Tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken”.

#### 2.5.2.: Creative tourism importance and implementation

In more detail, Richards (2012) argues that creativity can be used in tourism in several forms:

- Tourism products and experiences
- Revitalization of existing products
- Valorizing cultural and creative assets
- Provide economic spin-offs for creative development
- Creative techniques to enhance tourism experience
- Creating buzz and atmosphere

Two emerging models of creative development, creative cities (Landry and Bianchini, 1995) and creative class (Florida, 2002) underline the need of a critical mass of “creative infrastructure” (design, fashion, advertising, music, arts and crafts, software engineering, cultural heritage) to produce a “creative buzz” for the city and thus make it favorable for modern tourists. Moreover Rutten and Gelissen (2008) argue that economic growth of a city is positively associated with three crucial indicators: talent, technology and diversity. Cities rich in the former attributes except economic growth can also be more attractive to live, work and most important to visit.

Recent studies (Maitland, 2007; Hanningan, 1998 in Richards, 2012) argue that modern tourist, rather than passively visit main attractions in a city, seek alternative forms of visitation, new areas, and a sense of “safe danger”. Thus there is space for a



totally new market of tourism “products” that will be based in co-creation of tourism experiences rather than just supplying co-created products from city’s stakeholders (Chathoth et al., 2013). The modern need of tourist to get involved into “everyday life” of a destination, engage visitors in creative production but also consumption of experiences lead to an inter-play of producers and consumers that result in communities of producers and consumers with almost no distinctions. (Richards, 2011). In order to invest in such an inventory, urban destinations need to embed creativity in destination’s social networks too (Richards, 2012).

In quest of fulfilling visitor’s need for “authentic experiences”, creative tourism needs to have some common elements. Firstly, it needs operational presence of participative forms for tourism development and secondly it must allow visitors develop their own creative potential and skills while getting in touch with locals and their culture (Richards, 2011).

In this context destination’s stakeholders need to form certain collaborative synergies in order to produce several strategies that will supply visitors motivations to consume “local lifestyle” and get “under the skin” of the destination. Those strategies can be:

- Creative Spaces

Development of cultural and creative clusters in a destination is a crucial factor of creative tourism development. Co-creation of experiences relies on both creative production and consumer’s presence. Thus the presence of a local creative clustering can be a first step towards the creation of a “creative buzz” for the destination, able to stimulate visitation from “creative class”. Moreover visitor’s presence can link the localized “space of places” to the global “space of flows” providing global recognition to local creators (Castells, 2009 in Ricahrds, 2012).

- Creative Events

Creative events represent a great asset of creative tourism for two reasons. Firstly, events can be a creative space where relations between creators are initiated and maintained and secondly events are the catalyst of networking between creative actors. Hence, creative events can play a major role towards establishment of networks that if maintained properly can excel destination’s tourism product in combination with enrich in social capital (Richards, 2012).

- Creative Relationships

Both of the above strategies provide valuable synergies that help establishment and maintenance of creative networks both locally and internationally. Richards (2012) argues that initiation of such relationships helps attraction of VFR visitation while at the same time local creators can act as “local gatekeepers” that will help visitors get in contact with “local creativity”. This kind of interactions legitimize creative status of places and hence attract creative visitors’ streams. The most interesting example of such strategy is Barcelona which has an international status as “creative destination” partly because of the initiation of such strategy (Rovira, 2010 in Richards, 2012).

- Creative Networks

The next step from creative relationships is the initiation of creative networks among creative actors but among creative destinations also (New Zealand, Barcelona, Stiges, Santa Fe, Paris, Rome). Richards (2012) describes such networks as “loose associations of actors with an interest in creative tourism and the creative industries such as artists, cultural institutions, tourist boards, tourism providers and local authorities”. Those networks are usually informally organized but have the ability to offer tourists a range of creative activities either in the form of courses or taste experiences. They can also operate as mediators between creative producers and local cultural institutions. This formalization is crucial towards creation of “creative crowds” phenomenon (den Dekker and Tabbers, 2012). This is usually a group of people who except of being producers, they also enhance informal generation of knowledge and cultural capital that supports creative economy. Thus their presence is crucial for the upgrade of a destination’s creative tourism “product”.

### 2.5.3.: Creative tourism and participatory destination management

Definition of creative tourism by Richards and Raymond (2000), mentioned on previous chapter, has a number of important implications. Firstly, creative tourism notion does not consider visitors as passive users of destination’s resources. In contrary, visitor is provided with necessary tools to excel its “creative potential”, taking much more than souvenirs back home. Moreover during the creative process, visitor is more actively involved in everyday life of the destination and thus becomes more engaged with local people and local culture (Richards, 2009).

Most importantly, Richards (2009) argues that creative industry of a destination is not enough to implement a creative tourism strategy. Since creativity can happen everywhere, the most important thing is to “link the creative process to the destination and to anchor it in local culture, creativity and identity”. An effective tool towards this inclusion of creative industry into the local tourist product is the concept of ‘co-creation’.

Co-creation, which is the modern alternative view of the firm-centric co-production notion, is informed by service dominant logic (S-D) and is defined as: “the joint production of value for both customers and firms alike through an interactive process”. Emphasis is mainly given on joint effort and collaboration of producer and consumer in value creation activities (Vargo et al., 2008 in Chathoth et al., 2013). Creative tourism implies a form of co-creation between local creators and visitors who jointly produce products, services and experiences (Richards, 2009).

A throughout analysis of both creative tourism definition implications and creative tourism strategies, constitute creative tourism as a deeply participative tourism development model (Richards, 2012). Although there is no extensive analysis in current literature of the role of participatory destination management in the evolution of creative tourism, synergies between local stakeholders are apparent towards implementation of it (Richards, 2011). As a matter of fact, all of the formerly proposed creative tourism strategies (creative events, creative spaces, creative relations and most of all creative networks) contain the notion of co-operation between certain stakeholders as a strong prerequisite of implementation.

Moreover development of creative tourism in a destination is mainly based on local capacity (atmosphere, skills, and creativity) and thus local social capital. Those aspects are characteristic of the specific location and importing them is usually counter-productive towards creation of a distinctive destination profile (Richards, 2009). Hence development of a creative tourism destination demands synergies of the local stakeholders, in conjunction with visitors, in order to create or expand local social capital, targeting production of quality and authentic experiences that will differentiate the destination in visitor’s perception.

Richards (2011) argue that “the material and contextual forms of authenticity so important in the tangible heritage of cultural tourism” are being replaced by co-

created conceptual authenticity “that is negotiated in situ by the host and the tourist each playing a role as the originator of the experience”. Hence perceived authenticity is one more crucial element of creative tourism that demands synergetic formations.

In conclusion participatory destination management is a strong prerequisite for implementation of creative tourism to be considered. Since, as mentioned in the previous chapter, participatory destination management is implemented by local DMOs the latter play a demanding role in promotion and implementation of creative tourism initiatives.

#### 2.5.4.: DMO’s role in supporting and fostering creative tourism

Creative tourism is a relatively new form of tourism. Thus destination management literature is not fully equipped with certain formations that can describe the exact role of a local DMO towards promoting creative tourism.

Although there is no standard procedure, DMOs role is to act as the coordinator unit where creators, tourism entrepreneurs and visitors can align their resources in an effective way for destination’s appeal. In this context, tourism can be beneficial for creative industries of a destination while the latter can be “an effective conduit for tourism” (Richards, 2012). However there is always the danger to choose and implement simplistic or ineffective models of creative tourism development. In particular creative tourism sometimes falls into the same trap that led to downgrade of cultural tourism, the assumption that “having culture, or being creative, is sufficient to attract tourists” (Raymond, 2007 in Richards, 2012).

In order to overcome such trap, attention has to be paid in intangible factors of development process, such as planning, knowledge development and networking. Although tangible assets of a destination are crucial to attract visitors, the former intangible assets are a prerequisite for success in development of creative tourism strategies. In fact there is strong need of careful design of the development process containing both tangible and intangible assets (Richards, 2012).

The latter set of strategic approaches in creative tourism development is best supported by participative forms in destination management. Thus DMO is the only unit of participatory destination management that can have sufficient resources and structure in order to assist such a complex development plan. Although participatory

sense of creative tourism projects DMO as a suitable coordinator of such incentives, there is only practical evidence to prove this allegation.

According to den Dekker and Tabbers (2012) the creative development model that can be followed by the local DMO has three steps:

1. Dialogue stimulation

During this first step the local DMO need to “map the complete experience network of the tourist and all actors involved in the city”. The next step is to stimulate a lasting dialogue between the local actors-stakeholders themselves and between the actors and potential creative tourists.

2. Possibilities assessment

The following step is to asses which individual dialogue has such market potential that worth investing DMO’s resources. Potential of shift to creative tourism incentive needs to be assessed by specialists on creative industry who can acknowledge possible innovations and trends.

3. Converting chances into cash

DMO’s most important role is to sustain all of the appropriate conditions towards participative implementation of a creative tourism incentive. If the chosen network functions well and the DMO sincerely supports its operations then chances for success in the creative tourism market are high.

Recent real case-studies in Santa Fe, Barcelona, New Zealand and Noord-Brabant region in Holland have shown that local creators are a step ahead of local DMOs. In Barcelona, Spain local creativity networks and platforms (Barcelona Creative Tourism Platform) have started promoting creative industry of the city to global tourism market achieving amazing results and creating a new “tag” of Barcelona as creative city to visit.

## **2.6.: From co-production of tourism products to co-creation of experiences.**

Tourism is a service production system where firms operate in a specific geographical area and become part of an established network in order to benefit from share of given resources and as a result to offer better service as a whole (Ciasullo and Carrubbo, 2011). In this context service literature has proposed two different service production approaches, co-production and co-creation of services (Chathoth et al., 2013).

In current literature (Kristensson et al., 2008; Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004 in Chathoth et al., 2013) co-production approach represents a firm-centric view of customer involvement in service production. Based on the traditional view of “goods dominant logic”, co-production is defined as “an exchange of products and services between customers and firms which is built on a platform of simultaneous production and consumption”. The basic characteristics of co-production are:

1. The firm at the center of value creation.
2. Ignores the importance of reciprocity between the firm and consumers.
3. Ignores potential of mutual dependence of firm and consumer in service production.

Alternatively, co-creation approach represents a service dominant logic (S-D) (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004a,b in Chathoth et al., 2013; Vargo and Lusch, 2004 in Ciasullo and Carrubbo, 2011). Base of this approach is the notion that “service forms the foundation of value creation through which customers are intensively engaged in every stage of the value creation process” (Ciasullo and Carrubbo, 2011). Critical role in this process is to engage in a dialogue with and customers and actually learn from them and their preferences (Chathoth et al., 2013). In general it requires “collaboration with customers for the purpose of innovation” (Kristensson et al., 2008 in Chathoth et al., 2013).

Chathoth et al. (2013) argue that the former two approaches are not two absolute philosophies. In contrary they suggest that “there is a continuum from co-production to co-creation”. Depending on the service or product intensity of a firm or organization, the latter can move anywhere on this continuum. Moreover the same research paper concludes that “the co-creation end of this continuum appears to be an

antecedent of competitive advantage in today's dynamic world with changing consumer expectations and needs". Thus the study proposes a turn towards a more service-dominant philosophy for the organization or firm.

As mentioned in the previous chapters destination is considered as a complex tourist product from both demand and supply point of view (Ciasullo and Carrubbo, 2011). Thus there is a strong need of synergic cooperation (Della Corte, 2000 in Ciasullo and Carrubbo, 2011) between destination's stakeholders due to heavy interdependence among them. In this brief context except of the need of proper destination governance and strategic planning that was mentioned in previous chapters of the current study, improvement of appeal and standards of service provided to visitors are of major importance also. Thus "a series of relations characterized by logics of co-production and collaboration" between stakeholders of the destination are favored (Ciasullo and Carrubbo, 2011). As a result, participatory destination management represents an organizational co-production model.

In contrary, inclusion of creative tourism in a destination's tourism development inventory possibly move the destination as an organization closer to the co-creation edge of the continuum. Turn from static cultural tourism development projects to a co-creation model of participative "authentic" experiences that allow people to develop their personal creativity and skills, seems to accomplish all of co-creation approach characteristics.

## ❖ **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **3.1.: Research aims**

The general aim of this thesis is to examine feasibility of participatory destination management for supporting creative tourism in Thessaloniki, Greece and the research of the real contribution of stakeholders to creative tourism potential of the city.

In more detail, the study aims at first to analyze Thessaloniki, Greece stakeholder's views on participatory destination management and then to examine in what way those perceptions on collaborative destination management could motivate initiation of creative tourism applications in the city.

### **3.2.: Methods of data collection**

According to research aims, the study follows an inductive in nature and thus qualitative, interpretative approach (Saunders et al., 2003). Qualitative research contains several formations. The research method of data collection chosen was semi-structured in-depth interviews with key stakeholders of Thessaloniki, Greece as a tourism destination.

According to Longhurst (2009), "in-depth, semi-structured interviews are verbal interchanges where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions. Even though interviewers tend to prepare a list of predetermined questions, in-depth, semi-structured interviews usually unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to pursue issues they feel are important". Semi-structure type of interviewing is like a conversation and there is a need of flow from the responses previously given by the respondents (Brophy et al., 2008).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews with key actors of a research field are more associated with qualitative analysis in tourism research (Ritchie B. et al., 2005). Thus, due to lack of practical evidence and due to nature of stakeholders, in-depth semi-structured interviews were chosen as an appropriate method to accomplish the aims of the study.



Moreover semi-structured interviews, as a qualitative research method, favor informal dialogue between questions that is crucial if terminology and connected notions of research aim are less familiar to stakeholders interviewed. An interviewer is then expected to ask follow up questions and probes to get in-depth information.

Creativity and creative tourism notions may be less familiar to certain stakeholders. Hence, in contrast with other qualitative research methods, in-depth semi-structured interviews can help the researcher understand to what extent stakeholders are familiar with the latter notions and its relative implications.

### **3.3.: Design of research instruments**

Research aim was filtered into three main targets of research according to literature review applications:

- A. Explore stakeholders' perceptions about the potential of participatory destination management for managing Thessaloniki, Greece as a tourism destination.
- B. Investigate the degree of stakeholders' familiarization with the notion of “creative tourism” and their level of willingness to apply resources towards implementation of it.
- C. Measure the stakeholders' perceptions about the role of participatory destination management in implementing creative tourism in Thessaloniki, Greece

### **3.4.: Methods of data collection**

After research targets have set there is a need of survey research design inventory. Survey research design can have many different forms but according to Muijs (2004), “all are characterized by the collection of data using standard questionnaire forms administrated by telephone or face to face, by postal pencil-and-paper questionnaires or increasingly by using web-based and e-mail forms”.

Questionnaires are an efficient way to gather relevant information and it is extremely important to develop a proper design according to research aims and targets. Moreover questionnaires are not time-consuming and can secure privacy of respondents (Brace, 2004).

For this particular purpose, questionnaires have been delivered in multiple ways based on stakeholder's preferences. A questionnaire of thirteen questions was designed based on the former three research targets.

Four face to face interviews were conducted and two using e-mailing answer of questionnaire due to time and space constraints of the interviewees.

### **3.5.: Design of research sample**

The potential research sample of the current study consists of Thessaloniki's, Greece tourism stakeholders. According to literature typologies (WTO, 2007; Sheenhan and Ritchie, 2005; Sigala and Marinidis, 2012) the group of Thessaloniki's tourism product stakeholders contains the following organizations and individuals:

- Municipality of Thessaloniki
- Regional government of Central Macedonia
- Greek national tourism organization
- Thessaloniki Tourism and Marketing organization
- Thessaloniki convention bureau
- Thessaloniki Hotels association
- Local attraction authorities (museums, archeological sites)
- Airlines and other transportation authorities
- Port authorities
- Creative industry entrepreneurs
- Chamber of Commerce
- Universities
- Local community (residential organizations, NGOs)
- Visitors

Due to time constraints of the research there was a selection among them. The selection was firstly based on Sheenhan and Ritchie (2005) study on salience of a DMO's stakeholders and secondly on stakeholders relevance with study aims. Thus, from a total of fourteen stakeholders, eight were finally approached. Visitors, port authorities were excluded due to time constraints, universities due to relevant salience and Greek national tourism organization, local attraction authorities and Thessaloniki tourism and marketing organization due to lack of legitimate representation.

Face to face interviews were conducted with the following stakeholders:

- Municipality of Thessaloniki representative
- Aegean Airlines representative
- Thessaloniki Convention Bureau
- Creativity Platform NGO representative

Interviews through e-mail questionnaire were conducted with the following stakeholders:

- Local community NGO (NOPE)
- Chamber of commerce representative

Finally representatives from regional government of Central Macedonia and Thessaloniki Hotels association did not reply to the questionnaire in time, although given adequate time.

### **3.6.: Limitations of the study**

#### 3.6.1.: General limitations

Due to time constrains of research and stakeholders it was impossible to conduct one way of interviews. More specifically, half of interviews were conducted face to face and half using e-mail written responses. Thus, there is a limitation regarding nature of responses since face to face semi-structure in depth interviews are more spontaneous. In contrary, e-mail responses can be more prepared and less impulsive

#### 3.6.2.: Sample limitations

Due to lack of legitimate representation of certain stakeholders in conjunction with time constraints of the research process in general, the final number of interviewees were half of the total sample. This aspect adds a serious limitation to the degree of valid representation of research results.

## ❖ Chapter 4: Analysis of the study context

Research is conducted in the city of Thessaloniki, Greece. Thessaloniki, Greece is located in the Northern part of Greece (520 km. north of Athens) in the region of Central Macedonia. Being the second in terms of population city of Greece (population of all the metropolitan area in 2011 reached a total of 1.104.460 inhabitants) and the fifth in Balkans, is the second most populated city that is not a capital after Istanbul. Built near the sea (at the back of the Thermaïkos Gulf), Thessaloniki is Greece's second major economic, industrial, commercial and political centre, and a major transportation hub for the rest of southeastern Europe.

Thessaloniki has a unique history background of more than 2300 years. A great variety of remains from different civilizations among of which are the following: Ancient Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman. Moreover Thessaloniki exists as a unique mosaic of modern civilization residents and religions (Jewish, Turks, Bulgarians, Greeks). These characteristics are enough to create a set of different but joint tales that can describe the city's sense as a unique crossroad of people and history. 15 World Heritage Monuments of UNESCO are located in Thessaloniki also.

Moreover, the city is located less than an hour from unique global historical heritage sites such as the ancient city of Vergina, capital of the Macedonian civilization (where tombs of Philip II King of the Macedons are found), the ancient city of Pella, the archeological site of Dion and finally the famous Mount Olympus.

Except historical heritage assets Thessaloniki has to offer a variety of modern cultural assets too. Home of the 53 years old Thessaloniki international Film Festival, the 2012 WOMEX expo and the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art the city has a lot to offer in modern arts too.

Thessaloniki's greater modern landmark is its totally renovated waterfront area. By the end of 2013 citizens and visitors of Thessaloniki are be able to walk by the sea to a modern multi-theme area of 6km. Although it seems strange this special area has the ability to become the most value asset of the city because of the images it creates all time of the year for everyone using it. It is the place that can be a trademark of the new spirit of the city.

Being the home city of the biggest student and academic community in Greece (1/10 of its population are students and university professors) who are allocated in 3 universities and one technical institution Thessaloniki can easily be described as a lively city despite its age. In addition the city belongs to the European Union's Innovation Zone, an area designed to house innovative enterprises and research organizations. In recent years local groups have created a great force of creativity keeping the city spirit alive both in academic innovation terms but also in simple youth initiatives and actions. Moreover the wide nightlife of the city adds to its youth preface. A great proof of the above and a great opportunity for the city also, is the nomination of Thessaloniki as the European Youth Capital of 2014. Such an organization can move the center of the city's main touristic provision from the great history of the city to the present and the future character that needs to create.

Thessaloniki's present situation in organizational destination management terms is amateurish. Before 2006 all processes regarding management of the city as tourism destination was on a Prefecture of Thessaloniki's authority. In 2007 a DMO called Thessaloniki Tourism Organization and Marketing (TTOM) was introduced. The ambitious plan of the initiation of the DMO was to increase visitation in the city up to 100% until 2013. The initial strategic plan of the DMO was conducted after its introduction and anticipated the commitment of all tourism stakeholders of the city to the governing board (Municipality of Thessaloniki, prefecture of Thessaloniki, Hotelier's chamber, tourist agents etc). The first action plans were the participation of the DMO to tourism exhibitions worldwide and focus on business and conventional tourism but also city break travel.

Although the initial master plan described really ambitious targets, the TTOM was not actually operating until 2009 when the organization started to operate for the first time. The new governing board of the TTOM consisted of almost all the stakeholders connected to tourism industry and the Mayor himself became the president of the DMO. The operational part was left to an executive director but still the DMO lacked of sufficient budget and staff. The outcome of this rebirth was a new marketing plan and a new logo-brand of the city that until then was the former ottoman prison called White Tower. The new logo called "Thessaloniki: Many stories, one heart" tried to describe the multinational sense of the history of the city and invest in this flair. This

logo is still the branding image of the city, although it is not considered as a successful one.



Figure 4: “Thessaloniki: Many stories, one heart” logo

Thessaloniki’s DMO never actually operated in professional terms. Lack of willingness of stakeholders to sincerely participate towards accomplishment of a common target did not let the organization accomplish its targets. Political interventions and a culture of free-riding from individual stakeholder’s interests led to the resign of the general manager of the DMO and the recycle of the governing board in 2013. As a result no major market or other studies have been conducted for the development of Thessaloniki at any level. Instead every individual stakeholder makes its own procurement to extend its own interests from tourism in the city.

Finally Thessaloniki accompanies a major creative industry. According to Creativity Platform, “a non-profit, collective scheme, seeking to function as an interdisciplinary platform of exchanging ideas, actions, research and appliances related to the “creative capital” and the “creative economy” in the city of Thessaloniki” there are more than 180 creative industry businesses operating in Thessaloniki. Moreover a recent research by the latter NGO proved that the majority of creative industry of the city is located in a former industrial area of the city center. Thus clustering of creative businesses exists named as the “Creative Diamond” of the city.

## ❖ Chapter 5: Research findings

Research findings chapter is the result of the conducted interviews with stakeholders accepted to answer the questionnaire. The stakeholders interviewed were:

- ❖ Mr.Spiros Pengas, councilman of Municipality of Thessaloniki and commissioner in tourism department.
- ❖ Mrs.Vicky Papadimitriou, general secretary of Thessaloniki Convention bureau and managing director of “Symvoli” – Conference and cultural management.
- ❖ Mr.Panos Remoundos, co-founder of Creativity Platform. Creativity Platform is a non-profit, collective scheme identifying itself as “seeking to function as an interdisciplinary platform of exchanging ideas, actions, research and appliances related to the “creative capital” and the “creative economy” in the city of Thessaloniki”.
- ❖ Mrs. Zinovia Stefanidou, managing director of Aegean Airline’s Makedonia airport station.
- ❖ Mr. Serafeim Nikolaou, Thessaloniki chamber of commerce representative.
- ❖ Mr.Alexandros Papoutsis, representative of NOPE, a local youth NGO.

As explained in the previous chapter, the research had three major aims which are also reflected in the literature review. Accordingly, the research findings will also be presented according to these aims.

- *Explore the stakeholders' perceptions about the potential of participatory destination management for managing Thessaloniki, Greece as a tourism destination.*

In this section the research aim was to explore whether the stakeholders have positive or negative perceptions about participatory destination management and the degree to which those perceptions match Jamal and Getz’s (1995) six preconditions of effective collaboration in tourism.

All interviewed stakeholders accepted participatory destination management as a prerequisite for successful tourism development of Thessaloniki. Nevertheless each stakeholder has its own perception of collaboration in tourism development.

Mrs. Zinovia Stefanidou states: “our company supports the idea of collaborative actions towards development of Thessaloniki as a competitive tourism destination. We are ready to commit many of our resources both regarding increase of routes from our base in Makedonia airport but also in terms of advertising”.

Mr. Panos Remoundos states that platform itself and individual creators also, “are always available for synergies regarding tourism development of the city. Match-making between creators and the tourism industry is a top priority for the platform”.

Mrs. Papadimitriou also argues that “a concrete and effective strategy for place marketing can only be the result of a broad and collaborative scheme among different stakeholders, a participatory structure and procedure that embraces and takes under consideration different aspects, practices, professions”. The latter view is also supported by willingness of TCB to share some of its authority in tourism development with the condition of an equal and mutual basis among stakeholders, and driven by a commonly accepted and sufficiently documented plan for maximising results.

Most of the interviewees seem to understand the high interdependence of tourism stakeholders and the need of a shared vision. Mr.Spiros states: “It is true that a high degree of interdependence exists between stakeholders of Thessaloniki as a tourism destination. Moreover there is a strong need for a common vision among them. Mayor himself has tried to initiate a vision of tourism as a common development goal”.

The interviewed stakeholders have almost unanimously stated that there is a need of a shared vision for development of the city’s tourism product too. The Chamber of commerce board of director’s representative stated that: “In the absence of a shared vision free-riders will eventually demolish the common efforts”.

Past experience of stakeholders in collaboration through the current Thessaloniki Tourism and Marketing Organization (TTMO) is crucial for their perceptions of the model of the DMO they consider as most effective and legitimate. Mr. Pengas states that the most effective model of a DMO that would fit in Thessaloniki’s needs and resources would be the one of a collaborative scheme that wont’ be owned by the state. “Collaboration with government authorities such as, regional government or the national tourism organization has proved inefficient. Thus a new collaboration



scheme must be established from the city's tourism professionals with public authorities operating as coordinators and intermediates. There is a need for a change of perception that state is the source of financial and organizational authority”.

In contrary TCB's representative view is more inclusive regarding the role of DMO. Mrs.Papadimitriou states that “apart from becoming a point of reference for all tourism related stakeholders in the city, acting as an overall policy making body and a coordinating mechanism, the city's DMO must take under consideration and incorporate in its strategy different travel forms of tourism. In this framework, DMO should support TCB by its all its means in order to attract the conference and meeting industry professionals”. This view is more strategic in sense and accepts the role of DMO as a coordinator of city' tourism resources with emphasis in conference and MICE tourism but without mentioning any exceptions in stakeholders participation.

Financial resources are crucial for a DMO's operational activities but for legitimating its processes also. Stakeholders who control financial resources of a DMO literature shows (Bornhorst et al, 2010) that can apply more authority towards DMO's decisions. According to Mr.Pengas a city-tax model (collected from visitors through accommodation providers) for financing DMO's operations is more effective. “Municipality of Thessaloniki budget on tourism is €50,000. This amount of money is clearly insufficient”, he states.

Behalf of creative industry, Mr.Remoundos insists that the future or even the current model of the DMO should firstly make an assessment of the present situation regarding performance of the city as a tourism destination. Thus, they support the idea of scientific inclusion in DMO's procedures.

Finally all stakeholders agree that Thessaloniki fits excellent in a city-break tourism development model. Aegean Airlines representative mentions religious tourism as a second option due to the fact that a huge market share of orthodox Christians, originated mainly from Russia and the Balkans, are extremely interested in byzantine and old-Christian heritage of the city. Chamber of commerce representative supports city break tourism but giving priority to visitors from Balkan countries but also Greeks which accounted more than 60% of the total Thessaloniki's visitation for many years until a sudden decline in 2010, due to economic recession.

Representative of local community youth NGO states that tourism development in the city will be ineffective if the local community is excluded from the process. “Knowledge capital of Thessaloniki regarding tourism management is relatively low. Thus there is a deep need of investment in tourism studies from local universities. Our city will become a more competitive destination if tourism professionals are also part of the local community”, Mr. Papoutsis states.

- *Investigate the degree of stakeholders' familiarization with the notion of “creative tourism” and their level of willingness to apply resources towards implementation of it.*

Most of the interviewed stakeholders have a relatively mixed idea of what is “creative tourist” or “creative tourism”.

Mr. Pengas states that “creative tourism is the evolution of cultural tourism which in turn is the evolution of heritage tourism”. As creative tourists he acknowledges “people who need to express their creativity through travel, participation in workshops or exhibitions”. He also indicates that “this form of tourism has a limit. The city owns an active creative community, but visitation because of creative economy has a certain limit. We must attract creative tourists mainly from the Balkans. This was our target promoting the World Music Exhibition (WOMEX) in Thessaloniki in 2012 and the introduction of the 4<sup>th</sup> Biennale. Thessaloniki does not have the resources to organize events or workshops that will attract creative tourists outside the Balkan region”.

In contrary Mr. Remoundos, states that “creative tourist is the person who has the personal background of being fond of creative professions such as graphic and industrial design, music or architecture and also has the willingness to travel in order to get in touch with those aspects abroad. Regarding creative tourism, Mr. Remoundos states that “is the ability of a destination to exploit its creative community in order to develop a tourism product that will attract creative tourists”.

He also states that Thessaloniki has a unique location to attract the “creative buzz” but most of all is rich in talented creators. “Especially in music, graphic and industrial design Thessaloniki can be proud of its creative community. Thus, since “raw materials” of creative tourism exist, match-making between creators and tourism

industry is the step to follow. In this context creators should also be included in the decision-making process of the local DMO”. Creativity platform declared also its commitment to contribute in evolution of creative tourism in Thessaloniki as a deeply relevant organization

TCB representative argues in a more holistic approach that: “The concept of creative tourism is based on the developing desire of travellers to get acquainted with and indulge in a place’s unique cultural identity and features, to experience a destination rather than just visit it”. She also argues that Thessaloniki “has the privilege of combining a multicultural history and past (ex monuments, traditions) with an emerging contemporary cultural production (ex creative sector, cultural events”) and proposes cultural, festival, musical, culinary and heritage tourism as the most relevant types of creative tourism for Thessaloniki’s profile.

The rest of the interviewees declared unfamiliar with the terminology.

- *Measure the stakeholders' perceptions about the role of participatory destination management in implementing creative tourism in Thessaloniki, Greece.*

Creativity platform representative considers participatory destination management the only way of promoting synergies needed to support initiation of creative tourism in Thessaloniki. Mr. Remoundos states that ‘if creative tourism is to be supported there is need of strategic synergies between different stakeholders. Hence, a coordinating organization must bridge creators and travel industry in order to produce an assessment of the present situation followed by a series of projects and expertise transfer that will build a trustful relationship among those worlds. Creativity Platform is ready to offer project propositions in this context. Since there is no operational coordinating unit at the moment, implementation of such ideas is a matter of private sector willingness to support them”.

Mr. Pengas also supports the notion of participatory destination management as a basic prerequisite towards implementing creative tourism since there is no other way to unite creators with tourism industry and visitors.

Finally Mrs.Papadimitriou supports a more relevant with the literature view of the role of DMO in supporting creative tourism. She states that: “Apart from a form of

tourism among others, creative tourism is an emerging element in travelling practice, especially among young people, and a way for tourism practice to re-invent itself. Furthermore, the defining features of creative tourism, related to cultural identity and production, set this form of tourism as a unique selling point for any destination and therefore an important element of any DMO's strategic planning". This argument is closer to the notion of co-creation which is dominant in visitor-destination interplay.

## ❖ Chapter 6: Conclusions

The current study aimed to attempt a reality check regarding Thessaloniki stakeholder's views on participatory destination management, emphasizing in the way this particular destination management approach could promote evolution of creative tourism.

The research is not completely representative, due to research bias but it is still indicative of stakeholder's approach on participatory destination management. All of the interviewees agree that participatory destination management is the most effective development model but their secondary answers indicate that the latter is not an unconditional perspective.

Although there is a deep understanding of interdependence of tourism stakeholders most of the interviewees state that they would exclude particular stakeholders of the collaborative process. The latter standpoint is due to past experience of stakeholders and existing conflicts among them. A number of stakeholders have stated that inefficient and bureaucratic public sector is a basic source of inconvenience. Thus they would prefer to avoid collaboration under a public-law coordinator unit.

Initiation of Thessaloniki Tourism and Marketing Organization as a public-law institution followed by intra-organizational conflicts over policy issues and allocation of resources resulted the informal termination of its operations and excessive free-riding policies from stakeholders. This past experience creates bias over willingness for collaboration between public bodies themselves but mostly between public tourism institutions (regional government, national tourism organization) and private sector institutions. In those terms city's stakeholders acknowledge the common benefits from participatory destination management but their willingness to implement it including all relevant stakeholders is almost impossible. Since public institutions control crucial authority and financial resources, this exclusion may prove ineffective.

Thessaloniki's competitive advantage in the tourism market is at huge risk given that strategic planning is not included in the city's tourism development agenda. Since TTMO is not operating, literature propositions of proper governance and stakeholder's management approach are not valid, at least for now. Tourism

governance both in terms of structure but also in terms of process is a quest for the future development of the city. Thus, the current research checks only the intentions of stakeholders for implementing tourism governance structures due to lack of actual tourism governance institutions.

Moreover none of the interviewees considered building of community capacity as a basic prerequisite for collaborative actions and strategic planning. As Moscardo (2008) argues, in the absence of local community capacity for tourism development, true knowledge over common benefits of collaboration process is absent. Thus absence of knowledge of common benefits creates free-riding strategies from individual stakeholders that are totally against participative form of destination development.

In this context, Jamal and Getz's (1995) preconditions of collaboration for implementing participatory destination management are only partially confirmed in Thessaloniki, Greece. Hence, participatory destination management is far from being implemented from city's stakeholders although intentions are positive.

The latter conclusion is crucial if implementation of creative tourism is to be considered. Thessaloniki is relatively rich in creators and creative industry clustering. On the contrary, research proved that city's stakeholders are only partially familiar with notions of "creative tourist" and "creative tourism" in general. Nevertheless they also declared their willingness to support incentives promoting match-making between local creators and the tourism industry.

Moreover, if those incentives were to be implemented they consider a tourism participatory organization as valid for coordinating match-making between creative industry and tourism industry. The latter notion confirms literature review remarks on DMOs role in fostering creative tourism but in the absence of an operating DMO in Thessaloniki, implementation of creative tourism can only occur on a voluntary basis. Although stakeholders argue that DMO would be a relevant organization to support creative tourism, absence of such a tourism governance organization is a major obstacle towards implementation of creative tourism practices.

Research also proved that Thessaloniki is poor in major intangible resources that, according to Richards (2012) are basic creative tourism development prerequisites. Proper development planning, knowledge development and networking between

relevant stakeholders should be part of creative tourism destination. In Thessaloniki the later notions found completely irrelevant with the majority of stakeholders views and intentions.

Another important assumption is the lack of stakeholder's attention of active engagement of visitors in local culture and local lifestyle. This complementary notion of creative tourism is not part of stakeholder's knowledge spectrum. Just one of the interviewed stakeholders declared this notion as important for fostering creative tourism. For those reasons they propose only creative cultural events as a possible form of creative tourism implementation strategy.

In conclusion, research confirms that participatory destination management is a strong prerequisite of implementing creative tourism policies and promoting a transfer from co-production of local tourism products to co-creation of tourism experiences. The latter notion is confirmed reversibly by the absence of participatory destination management in Thessaloniki, Greece. More specifically, although there is adequate cultural and creative capital in Thessaloniki, lack of willingness of stakeholders to adopt a solid participative destination management model, affects implementation of creative tourism policies too. In the absence of an active DMO, stakeholders implement their own agenda which is totally against creative tourism implementation notion. Thus Thessaloniki's tourism product is downgraded and stands nowhere on the continuum between co-production and co-creation of tourism experiences (Chathoth et al., 2013). Tourism stakeholders don't chose to implement synergies in order to co-produce tourism products but in contrary chose to adopt free-rider strategies which, according to literature, can prove rather ineffective. Finally the absence of collaborative culture is deterrent of implementing creative tourism projects that would highlight a degree of co-creation between visitors and producers.

Further research can be conducted by exploiting the views of more stakeholders. The current research, due to time constraints, evaluated a small number of stakeholders relevant with research aims. Thus, a study that would include the total of Thessaloniki's tourism stakeholders would add more in research.

Contribution of the current research in terms of recommendations is connected with tourism governance and strategic planning of Thessaloniki, Greece. Creative tourism has proved an effective tool for creating and sustaining a destination's competitive

advantage. Especially for destinations rich in creative economy actors the latter notion is even more effective. But tangible factors are not enough. Although Thessaloniki is relatively rich in “creative infrastructure”, lack of intangible factors of tourism development such as initiation of strategic tourism planning and tourism governance institutions are important trade-offs. Change of culture in terms of collaboration and introduction of a formal DMO based on modern tourism governance without exclusions can be the first step. It is then in DMO’s operational willingness to act as a legitimate facilitator between creators, tourism industry and visitors in order to move Thessaloniki closer to the co-creation edge of the relevant continuum and thus create a competitive



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