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APPRECIATION OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN CYPRUS

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Abstract:

Because of their specific features (isolation, important sea shores, difficult access, scattering, limited natural resources, prone to cultural disasters, large imports, etc.) islands and small island states need to be protected. They represent case studies regarding sustainable tourism, just like arid zones and mountainous regions. This article takes Cyprus as an example to assess positive and negative aspects which, from a tourist point of view, characterize each of the traditional pillars of sustainability: social, environmental and economic, including patrimonial and cultural. The appraisal as described is largely positive.

Keywords: Cyprus, Sustainability, Tourism, Social, Economic, Environmental, Island

Résumé :

De par leurs caractéristiques (isolement, littoral important, accès difficile, éparpillement, ressources naturelles limitées, vulnérabilité aux catastrophes naturelles, etc.) les îles et petits états insulaires sont des zones à risques donc à protéger. Pour le tourisme durable, les îles sont donc un objet d'étude spécifique comme le sont les zones montagneuses et les zones arides et désertiques. Cet article prend l'exemple de Chypre pour évaluer les points positifs et négatifs qui, du point de vue du touriste, caractérisent chacun des piliers de la durabilité : sociaux, environnementaux et économiques qui incluent également les aspects patrimoniaux et culturels. L'évaluation s'avère positive à beaucoup d'égards.

Mots-clés : Chypre, Durabilité, Tourisme, Social, Économique, Environnemental, Îles

JEL Classification: F00, O010

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Work in progress

Ce texte s'inscrit dans une étude plus large sur les zones à risques protégées et plus particulièrement les îles en Méditerranée.

L'étude sur les îles fera l'objet d'un article (été 2007). Elle se poursuivra dans les zones arides et désertiques (2007-2008)

INTRODUCTION/CONTEXT

Cyprus has over 30 years of experience in the sector of tourism. In the Eastern Mediterranean, at the crossroads of three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa), the island is a developed tourist destination in an intensely competitive environment.

The major share of the tourist traffic to Cyprus originates from Western, Central and Northern Europe. In 2003, the United Kingdom remained the major source of tourist traffic, contributing almost 60% of the total tourist arrivals, followed by Germany, Greece, Russia, Sweden and Ireland (each contributing about 5-6%). France (2.1%) is only a medium priority country for Cyprus

The Strategic Plan for Tourism 2010 aims at introducing sustainability in the tourism development of Cyprus; it will revolve around two pillars: culture and the environment which will reposition Cyprus in the global tourist arena¹;

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND ITS IMPACT

The development of tourism was a delicate decision of the government of the newly established Republic of Cyprus in 1960. Hotels and other tourist infrastructure were constructed and the island began to position itself on the international tourist map until July 1974 when Turkish troops invaded Cyprus. All economic activity came to a standstill and the tourist sector suffered a devastating blow. About 70% of the total bed capacity was lost as well as 55% of the coastline.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus constitutes 37% of the surface of the island and has a population of 200 000 people of whom 99% are Muslim. The Greek Cypriots in the south constitute 83% of a total population of 800 000. Nicosia is today the last divided city in Europe (Ledra Street and the Green Line²).

¹ Strategic Plan for Tourism 2000-2010, CTO

² « Green Line » for the UN, called « Attila line » by Turks

The impact of the political situation will be visible on the economic, social, patrimonial, cultural, environmental aspects studied.

ISLAND SPECIFIC FEATURES

Climatic change effect

Water raises one centimetre and backs four centimetres from the coast every year.

Stricter control on tourism development

By 1989, it seemed absolutely necessary to formulate the right policies to slow down the growth of tourism, thus the government decided to introduce a moratorium on tourism development. The moratorium lasted 18 months and in December 1990, it was replaced by the New Tourism Development Policy. Its principal aims were directed at ensuring a controlled development on the one hand and diversification and enrichment of the tourist product on the other hand.

When the new policy was formulated, the following issues were examined:

- the quality and the need to sustain and protect the environment,
- the carrying capacity of the beaches,
- protection of resources and conservation of nature through planning,
- control of the coastal tourism development,
- the improvement and enrichment of the tourist product, the improvement of the infrastructure and the protection of the natural and cultural environment.

With the introduction of the New Tourism Development Policy, stricter control on tourism development in the coastal areas at a distance of three kilometres from the shore was enforced. Minimum site requirements were specified to ensure harmonisation of new development with its surroundings and the natural environment in general³.

Beach protection

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia and has a coastal length of 790 kms. As an island destination, Cyprus invested chiefly in the sun and sea clientele. All beaches are public beaches.

The blue flag programme is widespread which ensures good maintenance⁴. Yet jet skiing is allowed and therefore a main source of pollution. In 2005, “Blue Flags” were awarded to a total of 39 organised beaches in 12 municipalities and communities in Cyprus. The Agia Napa region, for example, attracts a large number of tourists, thanks to

³ From CTO, by Athena Metaxas, « Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development in Cyprus», *International seminar on Sustainable tourism and competitiveness in the islands of the Mediterranean*, Island of Capri, Italy, 17-20 May 2000

⁴ The blue flag is an exclusive eco-label awarded to beaches which fulfil certain criteria relating to Environmental Education and Information, Beach Area Management, Quality of the Bathing Water according to the relevant EU Directive and Safety

its golden sandy beaches. All the beaches have been awarded with the EU blue flag for their level of cleanliness and the comprehensive facilities offered in line with the uniform standards set by the European Union.

Cruise tourism

Another CTO initiative is the promotion of cruises from/to Cyprus and of Cyprus as a stop-over cruise destination. The problems involved pertain to all islands making that choice. Larnaka will be converted into a passenger port; tourist operators running cruise ships will certainly benefit. Besides, four marinas with mooring facilities for 2000 vessels are being built. Water sports and yachting are expected on any island. Cyprus could become a diving training center like the occupied northern part and yachting could also bring economic benefits.

Fisheries and marine research

The Department of Fisheries and Marine Research developed activities in multidisciplinary fields concerning the sustainable use of marine resources, the development and sound management of fisheries and aquaculture, the marine ecology, the protection of endangered species and habitats, physical and chemical oceanography and the prevention and combat of marine pollution. Furthermore, the department promotes supporting programmes to the fishermen including inter alia, the construction of fishing shelters.

The Cyprus production of fish is mainly derived from the inshore fishery, the trawl fishery, territorial and international waters and a purse seiner, as well as from aquaculture. Fish is scarce because of the lack of rivers but also on the Mediterranean shore and expensive for the Cypriot consumer or tourist. The products of local marine aquaculture, seabream (tsipoura), seabass (lavraki) and prawns (garides) are becoming popular among the Cypriots and the tourists.

ECONOMIC CRITERIA

General

2.5 million tourists visit the island each year. The contribution of tourism to the country's economy is of vital importance. In 2003, total revenue from tourism reached C£ 1.02 billion (Euro 1.74 billion), representing 15,5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 30% of the foreign exchange earnings from the export of goods and services.

However, Cyprus was able to offer visitors products beyond those of the sun and sea which was a good sustainability criterion. Another major criterion was for Cyprus economy not to be totally dependent on the tourism sector. It was able to maintain a prosperous economy besides tourism thanks to its maritime sector, growing services sector and new technologies as well as its more traditional agriculture⁵.

⁵ *Commerce International*, n° 27, July 2007, pp. 114-122, by Philippe Adam « Cyprus, an island business platform »

Alternative forms of tourism clearly intend to liberate the island yet further from its exclusive dependence on the only sun and sea tourist sector. They all contribute to the target of increase of the per capita expenditure, maximization of economic benefits while, at the same time, they upgrade standards, satisfy customers as they enrich the whole tourist experience and decrease the seasonality. The economic pillar of tourism sustainability is therefore satisfied.

Diversification: alternative forms of tourism

Programmes for the promotion of alternative forms of tourism and diversification of tourism in non-coastal parts of the island were introduced.

- ***Green Cyprus: the development of agrotourism in Cyprus***

The Cyprus Agrotourism/Rural tourism programme, as designed and launched by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, encourages the conversion of traditional houses in certain picturesque villages for tourist use. A significant number of traditional houses have already been converted into accommodation establishments⁶. The development of agrotourism in Cyprus began in the early nineties and it was promoted via a special incentives scheme administered by the CTO. As of 1.05.2004 Cyprus became a full member of the EU and a new phase in the development of agrotourism has begun. The whole of the Cypriot hinterland was declared as a Target 2 area and a new financial assistance scheme aimed at the development of small and medium size enterprises related to agrotourism replaced the previous one. This new, generous scheme is expected to contribute significantly towards the creation of other agrotourism infrastructure (such as handicraft and folk art centres, museums and small wineries) which will complement the accommodation offerings, and this assist in the development of a well-rounded agrotourist product.

The Cyprus Agrotourism Programme aimed to achieve:

- economic and social revitalisation of rural communities
- better geographic and social distribution of the economic benefits from tourism
- diversification of the tourist product
- provision of a unique, multi-dimensional “Cyprus” experience
- conservation of the natural, cultural and built environment

All the sustainability aspects of the agrotourism project are described in WTO publications⁷: its contribution to the conservation of natural areas, community involvement and benefits, educational and interpretation features, environmental practices in the development and operation of ecotourism facilities, establishments and services. It fully describes the problems and their solution, the results achieved, the lessons learned and the monitoring activities.

Among the villages restored, let us quote those of Lythrodontas, Askas, Drouisia, Kritou Tera, Nikokleia, Houlou, Goudi... They all open all year round, thus smoothening out the seasonality pattern of Cyprus tourism.

⁶ www.agrotourism.com.cy, email : helpdesk@agrotourism.com.cy, Société chypriote de vacances en gîte rural

⁷ Sustainable Development of Ecotourism: a compilation of good practices, WTO, 2001

- ***religious tourism***

Important action plans have been drafted and are being implemented for the development of religious tourism in Cyprus. An important conference was held on the subject in 2006⁸. Religious fairs (Panigiria) are colourful fairs held in villages with saint's name-days are celebrated around the main churches.

Most Greek Cypriots are orthodox Christians. Cyprus was the first country visited by Apostles Paul and Barnabe when christening the region and the first country with a Christian administration. Saint Paul converted the Roman Governor Sergius Paulus. Pilgrims visit monasteries and churches (Kykkos, Machairas, Chrysoroyatissa, Ayios Araklidios, Ayios Minas, etc...) as well as ten churches listed on the Unesco World Heritage sites.

Chemins et Rencontres, a Macon-based tour operator specialises in this type of religious tourism in Cyprus.

- ***nature tourism: hiking, nature trails, cycling, mountain biking***

Cycling is especially promoted in the German market. The hosting of races in Cyprus is supported, a cycling route network is on the way. The site of Germasogeia hosted events in mountain biking and cross-country mountain bike races.

- ***well being and pampering tourism*** (spa, thalasso) is considered for future development.

- ***learning tourism***

Cyprus, like Malta, tries to promote English language courses for private educational institutes. Italy, Poland and Austria were the first countries where the promotion applied.

- ***golf***

Golf is meant to attract high income people, ensure the upgrading of the destination and make a prominent contribution to the economy. A new policy calls for the development of up to 14 golf courses in total. On the basis of the new policy for encouraging investments in golf courses, 27 applications have been submitted which are currently under consideration. The CTO also secured the hosting of the 2006 Golf Business Tourism Forum in Cyprus.

- ***skiing*** is available in the winter on Mount Olympus (1951 meters) in the Troodos Mountains.

⁸ Icoret.org, October 2006, with presentations on “ Kykkos Monastery as a religious attraction ” (by the director of the Kykkos Museum) and “on the footsteps of St Paul in Pafos” (by the CCI of Paphos)

- **wedding ceremonies and honeymoon** is offered due to the Cyprus relation to the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite. It is promoted mainly in the English, Irish, Russian and Israeli markets.
- **medical tourism**: this industry is a idea being explored. Cyprus has competitive price in the medical sector. The offer would be linked to fitness and health, spas, treatment and therapy centres, dental and aesthetic surgery clinics. It has been included in the CTO's Strategy for Tourism 2003-2010.
- **theme parks**

Wonderland Theme Park Ltd is presently seeking out investors attracted to the idea of becoming involved in a project to construct the country's first theme park on a site near Larnaca. European building companies have already expressed an interest and the American firm ITPS (International Theme Park Services) recently announced that it would play a role in promoting, organising and running the attraction after its completion.

- **conference and incentive travel**

Meanwhile, to meet the needs of business tourism, another growing sector, several new conference centres are planned for the near future as an adjunct to the recently constructed, ultra-modern facility in Limassol. Joining the Euro will only accelerate this internationalist trend. Conference and incentive trips of small to medium size will also contribute to the decrease of seasonality.

- **sports tourism**

Training, preparation of teams is encouraged in Cyprus. It was agreed to upgrade existing sports facilities, help organise important international sports events, encourage football and soccer teams to choose Cyprus as their winter training destination.

ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA

Waste management, energy consumption

Recycling, sorting out waste is a very recent trend that was only started a few months ago in Limassol. Sustainable development has only been publicized recently. For hotels, the only existing certification is that of the International Standard for Quality (iso 9001: 2000). In Paphos, the Annabelle is one of the rare hotels implementing sustainability criteria: own biological sewage plant; re-use of purified water for garden irrigation. Use of solar energy for hot-water supply, waste separation and use of returnable bottles. Automatic tailor-made air-conditioning equipment⁹.

Another project is that of the Greek family chain of hotels Aldemar, established in Greece, Crete and Cyprus. They support NGOs and associations such as WWF, Clean up

⁹ Source : Touristik Union International GmbH & Co. KG, Mr. Adonis Papakyriakou, Manager

Greece, Green Globe, Clean up the Mediterranean¹⁰. Besides, solar panels are becoming more widespread in a country enjoying sunshine most of the time.

Protection of the natural environment

Cyprus is keen to diminish negative tourism externalities such as the destruction of the natural environment, pollution, noise and traffic. As 17% of the island is woodland (pin, dwarf oak, cypress, cedar trees...) National Forest Parks extend all over the island: Troodos NFP, Cavo Gkreko, Athalassa NFP, Pedagogical Academy NFP, Rizoelia NFP, etc...

Regions devastated by open sky asbestos quarries are now reforested. Forests destroyed by fire (mainly carobs) in 1974 with the Turkish invasion account for 15% of the woodland and are being replaced with sequoias (of Canadian origin). The olive tree is a sacred tree; the carob tree is the "black gold" of Cyprus.

An action plan for the special interest product "Nature Tourism" was drafted and Cyprus offers a network of 70 nature trails -among them thematic trails, guided walking tours- which cover more than a total of 250 km. These trails are located in areas of natural beauty such as the Troodos Mountains, the Pafos and Adelphi forests, the Cape Gkreko and Athalassa national forest parks, the Pitsilia area and the Marathasa Valley.

Protection of the flora and fauna

The flora of Cyprus is unique and constitutes a truly outstanding botanical heritage. With an estimated 1 800 species of flowering plants, 8% of which are found only on the island, it is a paradise for botanists. Among rare plants, the Cyprus tulip and cyclamen (the national flower), 40 species of wild orchids can be found.

Endemic bird species (365) and hundreds of migrating birds use Cyprus as a stopping off point. Northwest of Paphos, an ornithological reserve (Akamas), has been set up and Birdlife Cyprus organises field meetings throughout the year for bird watching¹¹. Some reptiles are also very rare species.

The largest wild animal found on the island today is the mouflon, a rare type of mountain sheep unique to the island. It is strictly protected¹² and its population has revived from near extinction to about 2 000 animals at present. It is the symbol of the Republic of Cyprus and is used on its coins and is the logo of Cyprus Airways.

Marine reserves also protect the few known nesting areas of the remaining population of the Green Turtle and the loggerhead turtle. A successful conservation project was launched in 1978 in order to protect these two species. The programme, which includes a hatchery, is a model one in the Mediterranean.

¹⁰ Nicolas Angelopoulos received Kuoni's Green Planet Award for five consecutive years
www.aldemarhotels.com

¹¹ www.birdlifecyprus.org

¹² Killing a mouflon sends you to prison for two years. The mouflon should not be confused with mountain goats used for food and skin and which do not belong to the Geneva 1985 Convention for restricted or endangered species

In North Cyprus, Alagadi Beach is classified as a special protected area. Group of ecologists and students have been observing and helping to protect these rare animals from extinction for a number of years. About 20 diving sites exist east and west of Kyrenia where the Dive Centers have an agreement with the fishermen to leave the waters around the diving sites undisturbed.

Water shortages

Throughout its long history, Cyprus has always been confronted with the problem of water shortage. Cyprus has no rivers with perennial flow while rainfall is highly variable and droughts occur frequently. With a declining trend of rainfall and snow¹³, climatological changes and the greenhouse phenomenon, the available quantities of water for water supply and irrigation are not adequate. Each household has not always enjoyed a continuous supply of water and threat of water restrictions could cause more hardships. 180 dams were built with both positive and negative effects¹⁴.

The choice of promoting golf on the island from that point of view is hardly positive. Yet, in North Cyprus, at the Korineum Golf and Country Club, the watering system is computer controlled. A special type of genetically engineered grass, “Seashore Paspalum”, was imported from the USA with an approved license and used for the first time in Europe on this project. This particular type of grass is 65% more economical in its utilisation of water.

However, many more golf courses will be built to upgrade tourism. They damage the environment (example: the Secret Valley Professional Golf Course). Let us also mention the British military bases near Limassol and Larnaka where the grass is upkept for typical British sports like cricket, polo, horse racing, etc...

SOCIAL CRITERIA

The seasonal pattern of tourism

All sustainable criteria of tourism concentrate on seasonality problems which need to be improved through a better distribution of arrivals throughout the year. Wonderful climatic conditions make swimming possible eight months in a year. Therefore, the peak season (July to September) could be decreased from 40 to 33%. This means better exploitation of current investments, limitation of the need for new investments, decrease in negative impacts, less pressure on natural and human resources. This was made possible thanks to the development of all year, all weather alternative forms of tourism, among them agrotourism.

Directing tourists to the countryside means fewer of them in seaside resorts. It also means more permanent jobs on the island.

¹³ 60 cm of snow in 2006/07 while it could reach 4 meters in the past. Cyprus enjoys 340 days of sunshine a year

¹⁴ The negative effects are on the scarcity of fish and on the humidity destroying valuable chapel frescoes

The spirit of hospitality

Traditional hospitality distinguishes the Cypriot people. “Kopiaste” means “sit down and share with us”. A hearty, friendly welcome awaits the foreigner or visitor. Being invited into their homes for local coffee or wine is normal.

This tradition of hospitality was noted by Charles C. Flankland in 1827 as he recounts “...We were regaled with pipes and coffee, after which we were each presented with conserves (Macun)... then followed by excellent sherebet... next we were sprinkled with rose-water and perfumed with incense in filagree silver censers¹⁵.”

Traditional hospitality is shared between North and South of the island. However, accommodation in private houses is not available in Cyprus. One doesn't sleep in another person's house unless a close friend totally trusted. Besides, in shops or supermarkets, welcoming the customer with a smile is not natural and has to be taught. But most employees are very receptive¹⁶.

Multicultural Cyprus

With a low structural unemployment rate (5,3% in 2005) Cyprus needs to resort to foreign labour, especially in the tourism industry. A diminishing yet numerous Russian community, workers from Ukraine, from Bulgaria, from many other former Eastern European countries after 2004 (admission to the European Community) make Cyprus a multi-ethnic society. At Carrefour in Limassol, only 30% of the customers are Greek Cypriots. In the tourism industry, most of them need to be bilingual.

Social/humanitarian issue after the Turkish invasion

The displaced 200 000 Greek Cypriots from the occupied northern part of the island deprived of their homes and possessions, the 1500 Greek Cypriots civilians and soldiers disappeared during the invasion, the implantation of 115 000 Anatolian colonists settled in the occupied area, the 55 000 Turkish Cypriots forced to emigrate because of poverty and unemployment¹⁷, the 20 000, now much fewer enclaved (Greek Cypriots and Maronites), the 34 000 title deeds given to settlers from Turkey since 1974¹⁸, the thousands of workers crossing the Ledra Palace check point every day to work in the south for better pay: all of this contributes to the condemnation by the international community and the Turkish Cypriots themselves of the colonisation of the occupied part of Cyprus.

The European Court of Human Rights found Turkey guilty of continuing gross violations of human rights in Cyprus. The impact on the tourism industry is important from a social viewpoint and because many touristic buildings are constructed on land owned by Greek Cypriots.

¹⁵ One of the most well-known expressions is “a single cup of coffee is remembered with respect for forty years”.

¹⁶ Interview with Carrefour, just established in Limassol, March 2007: Alain Bocard, Marketing Director; Alain Goanvec, Managing Director

¹⁷ They now make up only 11% if the native population. The total number of Turkish troops and settlers is now greater than that of the Turkish Cypriots remaining

¹⁸ More than half of Northern Cyprus. Source: Turkish Cypriot daily “Arupa”, 26/03/01

Influence of casinos in North Cyprus

Many casinos exist in the occupied part of Cyprus, most of them in Kyrenia, a few in Nicosia. The impact of casinos on the numerous student population was studied by the Eastern Mediterranean University¹⁹. Other studies are being carried out for the social impact and for the economic impact on the tourist sector and the wider economy from the potential creation of casinos in Cyprus²⁰.

Training for the tourism industry

The College of Tourism and Hotel Management was founded in 1987 and admits many international students. Its main academic partnerships are with the United Kingdom, USA, Slovakia and Russia. Vocational training in hotel professions is provided by both public and private educational institutions like the Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus. More than 43 000 people are employed in the hotel industry and in catering and entertainment establishments²¹. Those are found in Limassol, Larnaka, Paphos, Lefkosie... For hotel and tourism management, some students go overseas in countries like Switzerland and Germany. In recent years, the catering industry has employed many staff members from Poland and more recently Bulgaria and the Czech Republic.

In North Cyprus, the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, part of the Eastern Mediterranean University, offers two and four-year programmes with many internships the world over coordinated by a consulting company. EMU located in Famagusta boasts 15 000 students from around 70 different nations. In hotel management, some students chose the Business Department within the Faculty of Business and Economics established in 1986 with now over 2000 students.

Among the Greek speakers, Cyprus boats the highest ratio of university degrees per head of population in Europe. However, in tourism training, most specialists think that the system must be set on a new basis and is in need of reorganisation and upgrading.

CULTURAL CRITERIA

The historical heritage

The island cultural heritage reaches back to the 9th millennium BC. Antique sites of Paphos and Choirokoitia, ten churches of Byzantine art near Troodos are listed Unesco World Heritage Sites.

¹⁹ International Conference on Sustainable Tourism held in Malta, 25-27 May 2006. Professor, Dr Mehmet Altınay, Director, School of Tourism & Hospitality Management, Eastern Mediterranean University; Professor, Dr Hasan Biçak, Dean, Faculty of Business and Economics, Eastern Mediterranean University

²⁰ Annual report CTO, 2005, p. 24

²¹ CTO (Cyprus Tourism Organisation) survey, 2005. They account for about 13% of the country's gainfully employed population

- ***The impact of the Turkish invasion***

The island cultural heritage has been systematically and deliberately destroyed in the occupied areas. Byzantine churches, monuments and antiquities were destroyed or looted and many items were smuggled abroad. The illegal regime in the occupied area has pursued a deliberate policy aimed at destroying and plundering the ancient cultural and historical heritage of the island as part of a wider goal to turkify the island and erases all evidence of its Cypriot character²². From Greek sources²³ as a consequence of Turkey's policy and illegal actions: at least 55 churches have been converted into mosques; another 50 churches and monasteries have been converted into stables, stores, military barracks, hostels, museums or have been demolished; the cemeteries of at least 25 villages have been desecrated and destroyed; innumerable icons, religious artefacts and all kinds of archaeological treasures have been stolen and smuggled abroad; illegal excavations and smuggling of antiquities is openly taking place all the time with the involvement of the occupying forces; all Greek place names contrary to all historical and cultural reason were converted into Turkish ones.

Today, great efforts are made to recover stolen items (icons, frescoes, mosaics, texts and artefacts) especially from the USA and Germany.

- ***Protection of North Cyprus***

Two major cultural centers, Kyriena and Famagusta, are now occupied. In Kyriena, the Abbaye was not looted and the castle is being restored and refurbished... The European Community will help restore the gothic cathedral in Famagusta, damaged by salt and the ruins of a Venetian palace. During British rule already much of the architectural heritage of the city was lost when stone was taken from many of the historical sites to aid in the building of the Suez Canal. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) restored the historical Bedestan of Nicosia.

In contrast to the total disrespect shown by the occupation regime, all Muslim sites in the area controlled by the Government of Cyprus are properly and respectfully kept, preserved and maintained by the competent authorities.

Popular culture: arts and crafts

- ***Traditional crafts***

To remedy the downgrading of the traditional cultural character of Cyprus, classes are organised to teach the traditional craft work and revive the interest and a Handicraft Centre has opened in Nicosia²⁴, run by the government. The Handicrafts range from ceramic pots, carved wooden chairs or chests, basketware, silverware, copperware and embroidery products. Lefkara lace, pottery of Fini and Kornos, Phyté

²² Abundant evidence gathered from foreign and Turkish Cypriot press, as well as evidence obtained from other authoritative sources (Jacques Delibard's UNESCO report), demonstrate the magnitude of the damage and destruction caused to the cultural heritage of Cyprus.

²³ « Aspects of Cyprus », Press and Information Office, Republic of Cyprus, January 2006

²⁴ Created by the Cyprus Handicraft Service in 1979

weaving, scarves, traditional costumes and leather work of Cyprus are all well-known and created a wealth of traditions in folk art.

- *Artistics events*

They take place throughout the year and cover all areas of Cyprus: examples are Pafos Aphrodite Festival, International Festival “Kypria 2007”: musical recitals, theatre in Curium, festivals, concerts and exhibitions are also offered in North Cyprus: Güzelyurt Orange Festival, International Bellapais Music Festival, Famagusta International Festival, North Cyprus International Music Festival...

Food and wine

Food is one of the basic aspects of our tourist product and forms an integral part of the tourist experience. For many centuries bread, oil and wine constituted the ingredients of daily fare. The first records indicate that in prehistoric times only few and poor ingredients were available. Shipping, journey, wars, colonies conquerors and expeditions eventually brought the Cypriots in contact with new civilizations and, as a result, new ingredients and techniques influenced the local food customs.

The earliest evidence of human presence on the island is associated with food. This is the site of “Episkopi-Aetokremmon” where remains of pygmy hippopotami have been found in association with art crafts dating around 8500 BC.

Wine-making goes back to at least 2000 BC and in the past Cyprus’s wine was considered to be so delectable that the Pharaohs of Egypt ordered it and its fine quality did not go unnoticed by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Mosaics at the House of Dionysus in Paphos are an excellent example of the colourful history of the Cyprus wine and a panel in the West Gallery relates its mythological origins. Dionysus, the pleasure-loving God who taught Icarius how to plant vines in exchange for the hospitality he had shown to him is seated on a chair holding grapes. An inscription in Greek that reads “the first wine drinker” accompanies a mosaic of two shepherds quite drunk on Icarius’s wine. Many renowned wines of the world are made from vines brought to Europe from Cyprus after the Crusades.

Today, no Cypriot wine enjoys greater reputation than Commandaria, a sweet, robust dessert wine. No one seems quite sure how old this honey-sweet red wine is. Certainly, it is a great deal older than its name, which dates only from about 1191.

The Cyprus Tourism Organisation, within the framework of the Strategic Tourism Plan, and in cooperation with the Higher Hotel Institute has compiled a project called “VAKHIS” which aims at the adoption, use and promotion of Cypriot traditional authentic cuisine by local taverns which operate either independently or within traditional hotel enterprises.

The project has been named after a famous Cypriot chef called Vakhis who lived in the ancient city of Kition around 300 AD.

The project is purely voluntary and is supported by Eurotoques International and the Association of Cypriot Chefs.

The project provides the opportunity to all entrepreneurs who serve local cuisine and meet the strict standards of the programme to obtain CTO's quality certificate for authentic cuisine, while there is a respective obligation by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation to promote these establishments in a special guide and in other information or promotional leaflets as well as in the website of the organisation.

The certificate is by itself an important promo tool for the tavern.

A special committee consisting of representatives of Cyprus Tourism Organisation, the Higher Hotel Institute, Eurotoques International and the Association of Cyprus Chefs has been set up to supervise the implementation of the project.

Up until thirty years ago, all the wine was made from just two grape types: Mavro, a black grape for red wine and Xynisteri for white wine²⁵. Since the 1950's the government has introduced a range of new grapes to Cyprus and the customer can now choose between a large range of wines from light sparkling whites to full bodied red wines.

The vast majority of grapes grown in Cyprus are processed by four large ultra-modern wineries in Limassol – Keo, Etko, Loel and Sodap.

Wine festivals take place in September every year. Limassol stages some of the island's best-known festivals: the annual wine festival in September, when the various wineries offer free samples of their products for ten days. The wine festival was organised for the first time in 1961 and since then it has become an established annual event of merrymaking and fun, offering a joyful atmosphere to visitors from all over Cyprus and abroad. Wine from the barrels is on offer free of charge every evening.

The wine producing villages (Krassochooria) such as Vasa, Koilani, Omodos, North of Limassol, on the southern slopes of the Troodos Mountain Range are very popular. Gourmets will particularly appreciate what Cyprus has to offer, as Cyprus cuisine consists of dishes very rich in taste and unique in specialities. Within the very large range of the Cyprus cuisine, the three favourites are: meze, tava and stifado²⁶. Meal times are more influenced by the British than the Greeks; dinner time is around 7 pm but taverns will open later. Many products are imported from Greece and no product of Turkey will ever be served in the South of the island.

CYPRUS COVERAGE BY TOUR OPERATORS

Generalists tour operators

The offer is geared to cultural tourism or sand and sea tourism, including golf²⁷, spa/thalasso. No emphasis is put on the economy of Cyprus, education/training in Cyprus, agrotourism (no visit of those villages); the wine route and wine tasting are not

²⁵ Among the dry white: Amathus, Kolossi, Bellapaïa, Aphrodite, Arsinoé; among the red: Olympus, Kikko, Salamis, Kolossi, Ahera, Keo Claret and rosé wines such as Amorosa, Rosella, Rose Lady

²⁶ « meze », a rich collection of more than 20 different appetizers and savouries, « tava », a lamb stew with plenty of onions and tomatoes. « stifado », a stew of beef or hare, cooked with wine, vinegar, onion and spices

²⁷ Golf is part of the Merilia offer and Mille et un Soleils in France

developed²⁸. In Limassol, a tour to one of the wineries can easily be arranged in order to witness production and taste the final product. But, this is not offered spontaneously or on tours. Cyprus North is part of some organised tours; only Kyrenia is offered. Guides tend to be biased in their explanations. A fair picture is impossible to grasp for the tourist.

Specialized tours operators

The offer is mainly concentrated on hiking for example with Allibert, Arvel, Chamina Sylva, La Burle, Montagne Evasion, Terres d'Aventure. All of them alternate hiking with the discovery of Cypriot culture and patrimony.

As for guidebooks, a study on Cyprus²⁹ shows that “alternative” guidebooks take a more pro-active stance on sustainability issues than traditional ones: they show a conservation-oriented approach to wildlife, have specific sections on loggerhead turtles, mention the environmental damage caused by building golf courses, finally better describe the implications of the Turkish invasion.

CONCLUSION

Because of their specific features (isolation, important sea shores, difficult access, scattering, limited natural resources, prone to cultural disasters, large imports, etc...) islands and small island states need to be protected. They represent case studies regarding sustainable tourism, just like arid zones and mountainous regions. This article takes Cyprus as an example to assess positive and negative aspects which, from a tourist point of view, characterize each of the traditional pillars of sustainability: social, environmental and economic, including patrimonial and cultural. The appraisal as described is largely positive.

²⁸ Wine in taverns is served in a carafe and no mention of any brand or origin is visible to a tourist

²⁹ Sustainable Tourism Management, J. Swarbrooke, 1999, CABI publishing, p. 140. Baedeker vs Rough Guide

Basic Economic and Tourism Indicators

Table 1. Main Macroeconomic Indicators of North and South Cyprus

	NORTH CYPRUS	SOUTH CYPRUS
Years	2004	2004
Population	218,066	713,000
GNP (m \$)	1,602.9	12,436.7
Growth Rate	9.6	2.0
GNP/Capita	7,350	17,828
Inflation Rate	11.6	4.1
Exports (m \$)	62.0	918.1
Imports (m \$)	853.1	3,988.4
Trade Balance (m \$)	-791.1	-3,070.3
Export/Import (%)	7.3	23.0

Sustainable Tourism with Special Reference to Islands and Small States, "Perceptions of Local Community on Costs and Benefits of Tourism in North Cyprus", prepared by Professor, Dr Mehmet Altınay, Professor, Dr Hasan Ali Bıçak, Professor, Dr Turgut Var, Mr. Mehmet Basel, 25-27 May 2006, Malta

Basic Economic and Tourism Indicators (Continues)

Table 2. Main Tourism Indicators of North and South Cyprus

	NORTH CYPRUS	SOUTH CYPRUS
Years	2004	2004
Tourist Establishments	116	955
Bed Capacity	12,222	96,535
Overnight Stay of Tourists (000)	1,523	13,637
Tourist Arrivals (000)	306	2,349
Average Stay	5	10.7
Net Utilization Rate	41.2	55.5
Tourism Revenues (m \$)	271.1	1,891.4

Sustainable Tourism with Special Reference to Islands and Small States, "Perceptions of Local Community on Costs and Benefits of Tourism in North Cyprus", prepared by Professor, Dr. Mehmet Altınay, Professor, Dr. Hasan Ali Biçak, Professor, Dr. Turgut Var, Mr. Mehmet Baseli, 25-27 May 2006, Malta

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