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**Conference Paper**

"Pilot developmental initiatives in mountainous - less favoured communities: The case of Establishment of an informal school for construction of traditional musical instruments in Akrita, Florina."

50th Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "Sustainable Regional Growth and Development in the Creative Knowledge Economy", 19-23 August 2010, Jönköping, Sweden

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

European Regional Science Association (ERSA)

*Suggested Citation:* Pitoska, Electra (2010) : "Pilot developmental initiatives in mountainous - less favoured communities: The case of Establishment of an informal school for construction of traditional musical instruments in Akrita, Florina.", 50th Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "Sustainable Regional Growth and Development in the Creative Knowledge Economy", 19-23 August 2010, Jönköping, Sweden, European Regional Science Association (ERSA), Louvain-la-Neuve

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/119072>

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**“Pilot developmental initiatives in mountainous – less favoured communities: The case of Establishment of an informal school for construction of traditional musical instruments in Akrita, Florina.”**

### **ABSTRACT**

The European Community has designed and is implementing policies to support disadvantaged mountain areas in today's ever-changing world environment. Despite the initiatives, it appears that to reverse the devastation of mountain communities in disadvantaged areas is a difficult affair. Financial incentives for the development of accommodation, restaurants, e. t. c. in mountain communities alone are not always enough for the mild & sustainable development of these communities.

The parallel exploitation of the cultural reserve and the creation of alternative education centres in these communities can significantly enhance the chances of revival.

The present research explores the possibility of setting up and operating an informal school for construction of traditional instruments in the mountain community of Akritas, Florina, and the developmental prospects that it creates. The pilot establishment of the School based on the exploitation of "rembetiko song" (old, traditional and special kind of songs), on the architectural heritage, on the unique natural environment, on mild development and on a quality of life for residents and visitors

It is concluded that the above pilot action creates multifaceted positive perspective, helps to further rescue and diffuse the “rebetiko” songs, intercepts the devastation of the community, providing quality study conditions which is difficult to provide with the formal education system, creates the conditions of mild and sustainable community development and forces local authorities to cooperate.

***Key words: developmental initiatives, mountainous – less favoured communities, cultural reserve, informal schools, Akritas- Greece***

***JEL Classification: R58***

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## **1. CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT**

The development is a common social, economic and cultural process, aimed at mobilizing the local resources, assets and capabilities in the region. There is a close relationship between culture and development. Both are quantitative and qualitative processes while desired results.

The cultures create an environment of participation and develop dynamics that are not limited to the fields of economic life. Participation in cultural activities offers to the participants the opportunity to establish links contact and communication, creates a sense of "belonging", exceed limits and demarcation lines oppose the social exclusion and connective tissue is suitable for social cohesion.

Each cultural property and any cultural activity is an economic, cultural value, which are capitalized within organized societies and economies. The culture generally as a set of activities has a development role. Fortifies the cultural heritage, folk culture, the natural and residential landscape and creates a suitable environment for developing and promoting them at the same time impose standards of sustainability

Culture is a key resource for sustainable development, since it has common values with those of sustainability, and attaches to the next generations cultural heritage and identity of past generations. The cultural values are the key to sustainability and culture can play a central role in sustainable development.

## **2. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**

The interaction between social development, economic analysis and environmental conditions introduced more and more in the process of theory formation and to discuss the development strategy (Martimussen, 2007:43).

Project milestone in the international literature on the subject of ecological conditions and the "limits" to economic development is the book «The limits to growth» of Meadows & al, published in 1972 in New York, which first introduced the concept of

limits to economic activity, the limits set by the resistance, the "carrying capacity" of the natural environment.

With the text "Our common future" international debate deals with sustainable development which does not compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs (Mitoula etc. 2008: 31).

As part of this development occurred before two decades about, the term integrated development. It was mainly a response to the weakness and the problems showed by the theory of sectoral development Mitoula etc. 2008: 27).

With regard to sectoral development, placing an emphasis on the vertical development of the area where one or more sectors of the economy were addressed interventions to become the lever for development and other sectors.

Unlike the case of integrated development gives priority to the development of horizontal space, so as to link and coordinate branches of the economy in order to develop one of them, give positive spillover effects to other sectors of the economy (Barquero, 1991: 19-20)

Another dimension of development is called "Local Development». This defined as a process of economic growth and structural changes, leading to improved living standards of local populations.

For many decades in the development process applied to the model of top-down development at local level. After the 80s began to create a new standard model from the bottom up or endogenous model , where the space supports the social and functional relationships and becomes a carrier of social transformation and the locally development seen as a more realistic development strategy (Barquero, 1991: 20)

### **3. SUSTAINABLE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT & CULTURE**

In recent years there has been increasingly linking the term viability in culture. Although initially covered only the environment gradually extended to all areas and today is not meant in any way viability, if doesn't mention on at least threefold: environment, economy, culture (Mitoula, 2006: 131).

Cultural diversity in conjunction with the development of a robust growth model can meet the needs of today which has any revival of the culture of local communities (Fioravantes, 2004: 506).

The approach of endogenous growth highlights a new understanding of the economic value of cultural and natural assets. This view attributes to the cultural and natural properties, not only the use value to visitors of the place, as well as critical resources available to residents of areas within the process of economic and social development. The protection and enhancement of cultural and natural assets are an integral part of strategies aimed at improving local identity. They also help in strengthening local traditions and to promote cooperation between local authorities. This new development strategy, the strategy of endogenous growth based on quality rather than quantity and drive up the efficiency of the local community, (Konsola: 1993: 13)

A local society with a developed cultural activity presents significant advantages and supplies in the process of sustainable local development. Moreover, cultural activity raises the level of organizational capacity of communities, empowering local groups and creates active and aware citizens. The findings of many empirical studies on the involvement in cultural activities confirm that cultural activity can play an immediate role vital to local development strategies. Creates an open collaborative environment that enables the success of development initiatives (Matarasso, 1999: 7).

The cultural dimension at local level is a necessary component of development, creating sustainable communities and local vitality (Matarasso, 1999: 4)

### **4. EUROPEAN, NATIONAL POLICIES AND MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES**

In Greece, from the 50s, dropping sharply in mountain areas. The desolation of the communities associated with the exit to the cities in the 50s, 60s and 70s because of the disaster of Nazi occupation, the effects of civil war and the centralized model of economic "growth" which the governments followed

The national land policy in the agricultural and mountainous areas is essentially the adoption of European agricultural policy, as reflected in the revised Common Agricultural Policy and the European Spatial Development Area.

To address the problem of leaving the mountainous area and the development of mountain areas implemented various measures. That is: compensatory damages, incentives to young farmers in mountainous areas and up aid operations in mountainous and disadvantaged areas. In mountainous countries, however, exceptionally poor soil and climatic conditions discourage the establishment of young farmers / residents.

While encouraging the expansion of the activities of farmers and in other sectors such as handicraft and small industrial enterprises, with particular emphasis on dairy products.

The prospect to develop tourism appears in these policies as a total solution for the "development" of each mountain region, regardless of the specific natural and socio-economic circumstances of each case.

The European initiative LEADER, which was considered one of the more positive efforts for integrated rural development, found in practice and in application away from its aims. Furthermore, measures to preserve cultural heritage and tradition in rural areas appear to be limited to encouraging the production units and marketing of traditional products and accommodation in traditional buildings. Overall, the measures focus on the development of alternative activities in mountain areas, without prior study of physical and socioeconomic characteristics of the different mountain areas to ensure the sustainability of such activities

“Agrotourism” proposed by the European Union and the Greek government alike as an activity for the development of mountain areas. Theoretically and practically it

isn't possible all mountain areas to be suitable for "agrotourism". Studies are needed on the feasibility of various mountain regions to respond to this development model. Additionally required systematic information on what represents rural tourism, which will determine how to apply. The agritourism has a future in a mountainous region only when combined with production processes and promoting local products. Otherwise, in the mountainous areas where tourist traffic is low and seasonal, as small and seasonal, it is the income that is guaranteed.

## **5. A SPECIAL FOLK MUSIC: "THE REBETIKO"**

**5.1. Greek folk music: "Rebetiko"**Rebetiko, plural **rebetika**, occasionally transliterated as **Rembetiko**, is a term used today to designate originally disparate kinds of urban Greek folk music which have come to be grouped together since the so-called rebetika revival, which started in the 1960s and developed further from the early 1970s onwards.

The word *rebetiko/rebetika* is generally assumed to be an adjectival form derived from the Greek word *rebetis*. The word *rebetis* is nowadays construed to mean a person who embodies aspects of character, dress, behavior, morals and ethics associated with a particular subculture. The etymology of the word *rebetis* remains the subject of dispute and uncertainty; an early scholar of rebetiko, Elias Petropoulos, and the Modern Greek lexicographer G. Babinotis, both offer various suggested derivations, but leave the question open.

Although nowadays treated as a single genre, rebetiko is, musically speaking, a synthesis of elements of European music, the music of the various areas of the Greek mainland and the Greek islands, Greek ecclesiastical chant, often referred to as Byzantine music, and the modal traditions of Ottoman art music and café music.

### **5.2. Lyrics of Rebetiko**

Like several other urban subculture musical forms such as the blues, flamenco, fado, and tango, rebetiko grew out of particular urban circumstances. Oftentimes, but by no means always, its lyrics reflect the harsher realities of a marginalized subculture's lifestyle. Thus one finds themes such as crime, drink, drugs, poverty, prostitution and

violence, but also a multitude of themes of relevance to people of any social stratum: death, eroticism, exile, exoticism, disease, love, marriage, matchmaking, the mother figure, war, work, and divers other everyday matters, both happy and sad. A perhaps over-emphasized theme of rebetiko is the pleasure of using drugs, especially hashish. Rebetiko songs emphasizing such matters have come to be called *hasiklidika*, although musically speaking they do not differ from the main body of rebetiko songs in any particular way.

### ***5.3. Instruments of Rebetiko***

The first rebetiko songs to be recorded, as mentioned above, were mostly in Ottoman style, employing instruments of the Ottoman tradition. During the second half of the 1930s, as rebetiko music gradually acquired its own character, the bouzouki began to emerge as the emblematic instrument of this music, gradually ousting the instruments which had been brought over from Asia Minor.

The core instruments of rebetiko, from the mid-1930s onwards, have been the bouzouki, the baglamas and the guitar.

### ***5.4. History***

Initially a music associated with the lower classes, rebetiko later reached greater general acceptance as the rough edges of its overt subcultural character were softened and polished, sometimes to the point of unrecognizability. Then, when the original form was almost forgotten, and its original protagonists either dead, or in some cases almost consigned to oblivion, it became, from the 1960s onwards, a revived musical form of wide popularity, especially among younger people of the time.

Rebetiko probably originated in the music of the larger Greek cities, most of them coastal, in today's Greece and Asia Minor. In these cities the cradles of rebetiko were likely to be the taverna, the ouzeri, the hashish den, and the prison. In view of the paucity of documentation prior to the era of sound recordings it is difficult to assert further facts on the very early history of this music. There is a certain amount of recorded Greek material from the first two decades of the 20th century, recorded in Constantinople/Istanbul, in Egypt and in America, of which isolated examples have some bearing on rebetiko, such as in the very first case of the use of the word itself on



a record label. But there are no recordings from this early period which give us an inkling of the local music of Piraeus such as first emerged on disc in 1931.

### ***5.5. The Revival of Rebetiko***

The first phase of the rebetiko revival can perhaps be said to have begun around 1960. In that year the singer Grigoris Bithikotsis recorded a number of songs by Markos Vamvakaris, and Vamvakaris himself made his first recording since 1954. During the same period, writers such as Elias Petropoulos began researching and publishing their earliest attempts to write on rebetiko as a subject in itself. The bouzouki, unquestioned as the basic musical instrument of rebetiko music, now began to make inroads into other areas of Greek music, not least due to the virtuosity of Manolis Hiotis. From 1960 onwards prominent Greek composers such as Mikis Theodorakis and Manos Hadjidakis employed bouzouki virtuosos such as Manolis Hiotis, Giorgios Zambetas and Thanassis Polyhandriotis in their recordings.

The next phase of the rebetiko revival can be said to have started in the beginning of the 1970s, when LP reissues of 78 rpm recordings, both anthologies and records devoted to individual artists, began to appear in larger numbers. This phase of the revival was initially, and is still to a large extent, characterized by a desire to recapture the style of the original recordings, whereas the first phase tended to present old songs in the current musical idiom of Greek popular music, *laiki mousiki*. Many singers emerged and became popular during this period. It was during the 1970s that the first work which aimed at popularizing rebetiko outside the Greek language sphere appeared and the first English-language academic work was completed.

During the 1970s a number of older artists made new recordings of the older repertoire, accompanied by bouzouki players of a younger generation. Giorgios Mouflouzelis, for example, recorded a number of LPs, though he had never recorded during his youth in the 78 rpm era. The most significant contribution in this respect was perhaps a series of LPs recorded by the singer Sotiria Bellou, who had had a fairly successful career from 1947 onwards, initially under the wing of Tsitsanis. These newer recordings were instrumental in bringing rebetiko to the ears of many

who were unfamiliar with the recordings of the 78 pm era, and are still available today as CDs.

An important aspect of the revival of the late 1960s and early 1970s was the element of protest, resistance and revolt against the military dictatorship of the junta years. This was perhaps because rebetiko lyrics, although seldom directly political, were easily construed as subversive by the nature of their subject matter and their association in popular memory with previous periods of conflict.

Today, rebetiko songs are still popular in Greece, both in contemporary interpretations which make no attempt to be other than contemporary in style, and in interpretations aspiring to emulate the 'old' styles. The genre is a subject of growing international research, and its popularity outside Greece is now well-established.

## **6. THE CASE STUDY**

The Case of the Akritas community and the amazing abandoned buildings of the old school is a challenge for researchers and local authorities. For a decade, various attempts have attempted resuscitation of the settlement. There were contacts, negotiations and efforts to attract investment interest mainly to tourism operators centered on the three-storey building of the closed school. After the inglorious end of efforts to attract the "traditional" development methods, residents and local authorities are considering the establishment of an alternative, informal school in the building of the school. Specifically consider the establishment of an institution for manufacture and learning traditional instruments and music.

Under this pilot collective initiative a study is carried to examine the possibility of establishing the School and the direct and indirect effects. From the first stage of research and study, based on the administrative, institutional and social backgrounds, seems the follows:

### ***6.1. The village of Akritas***

Akritas, which till 50s was called Boufi, is a mountainous village in the prefecture of Florina. The village is located at an altitude of 1030 meters on the slopes of Mount

Varnounta.

The population of the community Akritas according to the census was:

Table 1: POPULATION OF AKRITAS

Year	Population
1920	1.709
1928	1.760
1940	1.989
1951	766
2001	134

The half-deserted village has:

Natural environment

Buildings with traditional architecture

An abandoned three-story old school, built in 1909, by the residents which is ready to collapse.

A cafe which opens dispersed a few hours and several days a week

No Shop

Interesting Folk Collection

Many homes with traditional architecture, abandoned and available for rent or sale

Agricultural Association of Women (without operations till today)

Nice square, public place for gathering of people

## ***6.2. The pilot initiative***

The pilot initiative considers the establishment of an institution for manufacture and learning traditional instruments and music. In the frame of this initiative:

To establish the School/ Institute local authorities and the residents will collaborate (at the preparatory stage they are working together already).

The school will not join in any level of formal education, and not under the Ministry of Education

It will be supervised by the Ministry of Culture

The school will have 12 students each year, aged 18-35 years.

Attendance is designed in four semesters (two years).

There will be no tuition, but the instruments that build construct students will be sold and the proceeds will belong to the School

The staff is three specialist teachers for each year

Building will be restored and prepared with funding from the Development resource by the Prefecture of Florina

The conversion of the building includes:

Basement: Workshops musical instruments and similar heavy machinery. Machinery (Lathes, etc. are free from the abandoned project in the region)

Lobby: Bodies-shop of musical instruments and music rooms - cafeteria Reviews

1st floor: Hostel accommodation for students, those unwilling or unable to rent houses in the village

The school will receive educational tours from all musical High Schools in the country by appointment, with an average of 2 schools per week.

The school will accept orders for musical instruments.

The School will organize musical events for the "rebetiko" song

Researchers will be welcome visitors as "lovers of rembetiko" from Greece and abroad.

We conclude cooperation agreements with similar schools and departments abroad

### ***6.3. Expected results:***

- Halting the abandonment of the settlement
- Containment of the population
- Population growth with 15 new residents with specialized music educational background just the first time. In the second year would increase to 30, up 19.48% of residents

- Restoring collapsing stunning architecture school
- Mild regeneration of social life
- Saving the art of manufacturing handmade musical instruments of rembetiko.
- Spreading the rembetiko
- Rent for abandoned houses
- Establishment and operation of small supermarkets for the needs of students and teachers
- Permanent operation of the local cafe
- Establishment and operation of small restaurant
- Maintenance and restoration of the square
- Utilization of local products (potatoes, beans, peppers, etc.)  
Establishment and operation of additional business
- Visitors in the community (100 people per week)
- Enhance and promote the natural and architectural environment  
Promotion and utilization of Folklore Collection
- Activation of the Women's Agricultural Co
- Repair and maintenance of houses
- Establishment Hostels
- Attracting new residents
- Developing relations with other regions and countries
- Development of extraversion

## **7. CONCLUSIONS AND A QUESTION MARK**

There is a close relationship between culture and development. Each cultural property and any cultural activity is an economic, cultural value, which are capitalized within organized societies and economies. The culture generally as a set of activities has a development role.

Cultural diversity in conjunction with the development of a robust growth model can meet the needs of today which has any revival of the culture of local communities

A local society with a developed cultural activity presents significant advantages and supplies in the process of sustainable local development. Moreover, cultural activity raises the level of organizational capacity of communities, empowering local groups and creates active and aware citizens.

The Case of the Akritas community and the amazing abandoned buildings of the old school is a challenge for researchers and local authorities. After the inglorious end of efforts to attract the "traditional" development methods, residents and local authorities are considering the establishment of an alternative, informal school in the building of the school. Specifically consider the establishment of an institution for manufacture and learning traditional instruments and music.

From this initiative the Expected results are: Halting the abandonment of the settlement, Containment of the population, Population growth with 15 new residents with specialized music educational background just the first time. In the second year would increase to 30, up 19.48% of residents, Restoring collapsing stunning architecture school , Mild regeneration of social life, Saving the art of manufacturing handmade musical instruments of rembetiko, Spreading the rembetiko song, Rent for abandoned houses, Establishment and operation of small supermarkets for the needs of students and teachers, Permanent operation of the local café, Establishment and operation of small restaurant, Maintenance and restoration of the square, Utilization of local products (potatoes, beans, peppers, etc.), Establishment and operation of additional business, Visitors in the community (100 people per week), Enhance and promote the natural and architectural environment, Promotion and utilization of Folklore Collection, Activation of the Women's Agricultural Co, Repair and maintenance of houses, Establishment Hostels, Attracting new residents, Developing relations with other regions and countries, Development of extraversion.

The second phase of the study will show whether it is possible to revive the Akritas Finally, there is a question mark: A similar initiative has been successful elsewhere?

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