**VILLAGE TOURISM PROJECTS AT CYPRUS**

## Özlem Yamak

School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Near East University, unpublished project, 2009.

**INTRODUCTION**

Throughout the island’s history many cultures have left their mark on the island, thus making it an attractive destination for lovers of culture and history. In addition, it has the benefit of offering sun, sea and sand (S3) tourism to very high standards. Considering especially the natural, cultural, geographical, climate, human capital, religious and historical aspects of Cyprus we can assert that Cyprus has either absolute or comparative advantage in providing a variety of tourism alternatives rather than solely concentrating on the basis of ***‘sun, sea, and sand (3S) tourism’***.

As a result tourism has been considered for some time the leading sector of the economy or having the potential to become the leading sector. Pursuing this vision Cyprus (both North and South Cyprus) policy makers have implemented governmental policies and incentives to encourage further tourism development.

A recent commentator (Hunter, C. 1997) has commented Southern European tourism is ***‘product*** –***led’***, meaning that environmental issues come second to the need to come up with new tourism products while maintaining existing ones. And this is true for Cyprus where as mass tourism has grown so the resources on which it depends have become increasingly at risk. Furthermore, Cyprus, as a small island, has limited resources and has in recently years experienced a series of very dry winters. Thus, water for use in this sector is scarce.

Notwithstanding the important role that tourism plays in socio-economic development by creating livelihood opportunities, the environmental and social burden of S3 tourism is now such that we need to consider other, more sustainable options for this important sector.

This report is designed to study on background of village tourism projects in Cyprus. And try to learn challenges of rural tourism, and finished with some recommendations.

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

The idea sustainable tourism development has achieved virtual global endorsement as the new industry paradigm since the late 1980s. However, this has been achieved at the expense of almost becoming a platitude. Ironically, it has this aspect universal acceptance that casts doubts on the validity of the concept, representing both its strengths and weaknesses as the new environmental ethos. As a strength, sustainability has become general issue and represents a catalyst for change, but as a weakness, it is used by both governments and industry to justify or legitimize current activities and policies (Harrison L. C., Husbands W., 1996).

Thus, like the general concept of sustainable development, what is really meant by sustainable tourism development is also the subject of some discussions. While there exists a number of definitions, the key objectives and rationale underpinning these many different terms have been similar and generally can be placed within one of two broad schools of thought (Godfrey, 1993). One school tends to support sustainability as representing an alternative to, replacement of, conventional (evil) mass tourism with new (good) green products (the product approach). The others argue that mass tourism is inevitable due to sheer tourist demand, and what is needed is a way to make all tourism more sustainable (the industry approach).

For the organisers of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) sustainable development meant the following:

***‘Sustainable development calls for improving the quality of life for all of the world’s people without increasing the use of our natural resources beyond the earth’s carrying capacity’***. While sustainable development may require different actions in every region of the world, the efforts to build a truly sustainable way of life require the integration of action in three key areas.

1. ***Economic Growth and Equity***- Today’s interlinked, global economic systems demand an integrated approach in order to foster responsible long-term growth while ensuring that no nation or community is left behind.
2. ***Conserving Natural Resources and the Environment***- To conserve our environmental heritage and natural resources for future generations, economically viable solutions must be developed to reduce resource consumption, stop pollution and conserve natural habitats.
3. ***Social Development***- Throughout the world, people require jobs, food, education, energy, health care, water, and sanitation. While addressing these needs, the world community must also ensure that the rich fabric of cultural and social diversity, and the rights of workers are respected, and that all members of society are empowered to play a role in determining their futures (WSSD Brochure, page 2, <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/brochure/brochure12.pdf>).

Ioanides (2001) makes the point that despite the popularity both overall and in the context of tourism as a sustainable development implementation has remained elusive. Perhaps the most important hurdle, barring the transformation of sustainable development into action, derives from the fact that there is no consensus as the term’s precise definition... Tourism academics have grappled for some time with definitional issues relating to sustainable development... (Scott, 2002).

Much of the confusion surrounding sustainable tourism development is based premarily on the preoccupation of some to avoid the mass tourism label which ***‘functions to this context as a repulsive point of reference’*** (Cazes, 1989, p. 123 cited in Harrison and Husband, 1996). In trying to be different common phrasing and synonyms such as ***soft***  (Kariel, 1989; Krippendorf, 1982, 1991), ***post-industrial*** (SEEDS, 1989), ***alternative*** (Holden, 1984; Gonsalves and Holden, 1985; Eadington & Smith, 1992), ***responsible*** (WTO, 1990; Harrison & Husbands, 1996), ***appropriate*** (Singh et al., 1989), ***green*** (Bramwell, 1991; Lillywhite & Lillywhite, 1991), ***rural*** (Lane, 1989, 1990; Lillywhite & Lillywhite, 1991), ***low impact*** (Lillywhite & Lillywhite, 1991), ***eco-*** (Boo, 1990), and ***nature-based*** (Fennel and Eagles, 1990) have all been applied. To some, sustainable tourism development is all about new products or market segments. To others, it is process of development, while to still others it represents a guiding principle to which all tourism should aspire.

**RURAL TOURISM**

Tourism has been considered an effective catalyst of rural socio-economic development and regeneration. More specifically, it has been widely promoted and supported as source of income and employment in peripheral rural areas suffering a decline in traditional agrarian industries, offering opportunities for diversification, pluriactivity and new markets for traditional products. As a result, not only has rural tourism assumed an important, and sometimes dominant role in western rural economies (Robinson 1990, cited in Sharpley 2001), but also it frequently represents an integral element of rural development policy. In many countries, such as USA, Israel, Canada, Australia, New Zeland and those in both the former Eastern Europe and the pacific region, tourism is employed as an engine of economic growth and diversification in rural areas (Luloff et al. 1994; Fleisher and Pizam, 1997; Page and Getz, 1997; Hall and Jenkins, 1998 cited in Sharpley 2001).

More recently, an additional role has been assigned to rural tourism, namely as a counterpoint to mass, package tourism in destination areas (Getz, 1998). In other words, a number of established summer-sun destinations, such as Gran Canaria and the Spanish Costa del Sol, have attempted to diversify into rural tourism- tourism that is both locationally and experientially rural/traditional as opposed to coastal/modern- in order to both regenerate areas and communities in the rural hinterland to meet a number of more specific tourism developments. The latter include the attraction of more diverse, higher spending market; mitigating the problems of seasonality associated with summer-sun, package tourism; encouraging independent, non-organised tourism, spreading the socio-economic benefits of tourism into the hinterland; promoting the cultural, as opposed to climatic, attractions of the destination; and satisfying the alleged demand for more environmentally appropriate forms of tourism (Sharpley, 2001).

**Pros and Cons of Rural Tourism**

In many countries, rural tourism has enjoyed substantial encouragement, support and in some cases, direct financial assistance from both the public and private sectors (Fleischer and Pizam, 1997 cited in Sharpley, 2001). According to Hall and Jenkins (1998), such intervention and support is unsurprising given the extent of the problems facing many rural regions, typically a vicious circle of falling incomes and employment, the loss of public services and outmigration amongst the younger, better educated members of rural communities. Conversely, rural tourism is seen as a valuable and growing sector of the overall tourism market and therefore, as a potentially significant source of income for rural economies, effective in reversing these trends. More specifically, it is claimed that rural tourism offers potential solutions to many of the problems facing rural areas (Thibal, 1998; Kieselbach and Long, 1990; Gannon, 1994; OECD, 1994 cited in Sharpley, 2001). These may be summarized as:

* Economic growth, diversification and stabilisation through employment creation in both new (tourism related) and existing businesses, trades and crafts; opportunities for income growth through pluriactivity; the creation of new markets for agricultural products; and the broadening of a region’s economic base;
* Socio-cultural development, including the repopulation of rural areas; the maintenance and improvement of public services; the revitalisation of local crafts, customs and cultural identities; and increased opportunities for social contact and exchange; and
* Protection and improvement of both the natural and built environment and infrastructure.

The extent to which these benefits are realised remains the subject of intense debate. Certainly, there is evidence to suggest that, in some rural areas, tourism is a vital source of income and employment and plays a fundamental role in socio-economic and environmental development. Nevertheless, the notion that rural tourism is a universal ***‘magic wand that will speed up economic progress’***  (Hoggart et al. 1995: 36 cited in Sharpley, 2001), and hence deserving of public sector support and finance, must be treated with some caution. Inevitably, of course, the development of rural tourism- at with most other forms of tourism- may have undesirable economic, social and environmental consequences for local communities (Gannon, 1994 cited in Sharpley). However, studies have also shown that a number of factors militate against the achievement of rural economic diversification and growth through tourism.

In particular, it has been found that tourism contributes relatively little extra to farm incomes, with the returns from investing in tourism- primarily in accommodation facilities- rarely meeting expectations (Hijalager, 1996; Opperman, 1996 cited in Sharpley, 2001). To an extent, this can be explained by the fact that rural tourism enterprises tend to be small scale and supply a highly seasonal market (Fleischer and Pizam, 1997 cited in Sharpley, 2001), although it is indicative of a number of challenges facing the successful diversification into tourism. These include:

* Not all rural areas are equally attractive to rural tourists and simply providing accommodation facilities does not guarantee demand. The total product package must be sufficient to attract and keep tourists, offering suitable opportunities for spending (Gannon, 1994 cited in Sharpley, 2001).
* Developing and organising rural tourism may require a significant investment either beyond the means of the business owner or greater than justified by potential returns. In such cases, government subsidies may be required to maintain the social benefits of diversification into tourism (Fleischer and Felsenstein, (Hjala2000 cited in Sharpley, 2001).
* Local communities and business may find it difficult to adapt to a service role. For example, Hjalager (1996) observes that European farmers found it difficult to combine the ‘***commodification of agricultural traditions’*** through tourism with the industry of agriculture. In other words, agricultural values and guests-service values are frequently incompatible (Fleischer and Pizam, 1997 cited in Sharpley, 2001).
* The quality of products and services must match tourists’ demands and expectations. In the Bran region in central Romania, for example, the success of rural tourism was hampered by a failure to meet the needs of overseas visitors (Roberts, 1996 cited in Sharpley, 2001).
* Individual rural tourism enterprises normally possess neither the skills nor the resources for effective marketing, prerequisite to success (Embacher, 1994 cited in Sharpley, 2001). In many regions or countries, marketing and advertising support is available, although it has been found that rural communities may be suspicious or even resentful of ***‘outside’*** assistance.

These challenges are not, of course, all evident in every situation. However they do suggest that tourism is not necessarily a solution to the problems facing rural areas. That is, tourism may not always represent the most suitable development path, whilst the costs and other difficulties summarized above may limit the potential economic returns.

All the sustainability aspects of the agro-tourism project are described in World Tourism Organisation (WTO) publications: 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.

According to Van der Ploeg and Renting (2004), agro-tourism is regarded as a valuable and significant mean for maintaining agricultural activities, promoting diversification of economic activities and introducing new ones in the countryside while at the same time assisting in the conservation of cultural landscapes. Agro-tourism as Lakovidou (1997) asserts, is part of rural tourism concept that is commonly defined as tourism going on in the countryside. This spatial definition deals with various types of tourism for instance trekking, culinary, leisure, nature, sports and outdoor activities tourism. As a result, agro-tourism is one of these types dealing with activities related to agri-culture. Regarding the Agro-tourist profile, this has to do with people with urban life styles who search for experience of rural culture, rural life styles and ‘authenticity’ experiences (Marsdon, 1999) and the common attributes of these activities according to Lakovidou (1997), are diversification, consumption of local natural and cultural resources and development of personal relationships between visitors and local people (Opatija, 2010).

**VILLAGE TOURISM PROJECTS IN SOUTH CYPRUS**

The challenges facing the tourism industry in South Cyprus have not gone unrecognised by authorities. In mid-1980s, when it became evident that the development of tourism was becoming, in a sense, too successful, measures were introduced to re-focus the direction and scale of tourism development away from the burgeoning coastal resorts. In particular, policies were introduced which aimed to encourage tourism development in the traditional hill resorts, backed up by marketing strategies designed to attract more diverse, middle to upper income tourists (Andronikou, 1986 cited in Sharpley 2001).

The ***‘Loana Project’*** is a unique and vital project which promotes a new alternative to mass development and tourism. The aim of the project has been skilfully inject new life into declining village communities by introducing new style of tourism in the area-appealing to a different type of tourist, who is interested in the history and environment he is in and, vitally, he is interested in conserving it. The Loana Project began in the late 1980’s as an initiative by Friends of the Earth in Cyprus to project the unique and beautiful Akamas peninsula and its designation as a National Park. And its funded by the European Commission and the private sector most notably through the very generous support of the Leventis Foundation (Greenwood, 1994).

Since then, successive plans and policies have sought, albeit with limited success, to achieve a more balanced approach to tourism, implicit objectives being to slow the growth in tourism; to improve and diversify the tourism product; to attract higher spending tourists; to reduce the impacts of seasonality; and, to spread the benefits of tourism around the island. Over the last decade, the principal vehicle for achieving these objectives has been the development of ***agro-tourism.***

The agro-tourism programme in South Cyprus, launched by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO) in 1991, is designed primarily to facilitate the socio-economic regeneration of rural areas in South Cyprus. As far as the Government, the Local Authorities and the various migrants’ associations are concerned-multi-disciplinary approach-, the Programme constituted a significant incentive for the revitalisation of the countryside and reversal of the urbanisation trend. More specifically, program seeks to:

* Revitalise rural communities in order to counter outmigration,
* Channel a more significant proportion of tourism income directly to rural communities,
* Diversify the Greek Cypriot tourism product by providing an alternative to the beach holidays and by attracting new, specialised segments of the tourist market,
* Develop a uniquely Greek Cypriot product based on traditional rural culture and ***philoxenia***-Greek Cypriot hospitality,
* Protect and conserve existing natural and built environments and to preserve and strengthen traditional lifestyle and culture (PIO, 1999).

In short, agro-tourism in South Cyprus embraces the ***‘typical’*** socio-economic aims of rural tourism development. It is not intended as an alternative to traditional rural occupations or lifestyles, but rather as a supplementary income enabling everyday practices to continue. At the same time, however, it encompasses the broader objective of repositioning the island’s tourism product.

Following its launch in 1991, about 50 rural villages both in the Troodos mountain region and elsewhere, including the Akamas, Limassol and Larnaka regions, were initially selected, on the basis of their traditional architecture, general attractiveness and the willingness of local communities, for involvement in the program. Through the following two schemes, the Program set out to develop agro-tourist infrastructure in the countryside:

* A scheme for the execution of civic projects in hinterland/mountain villages. The CTO commissioned studies by independent architects on the traditional architecture of 50 selected villages and financed the design and execution of civic projects, such as the restoration of village squares, paved or cobbled, the creation of nature trails and the embellishment of points of traditional architecture. All these projects were completed, at a total cost of over $2 million.
* A financial Incentives Scheme (administrated by the CTO), providing for the partial subsidisation of the interest payments on loans undertaken by individuals towards the restoration of traditional buildings and their conversion into tourist establishments such as accommodation units, taverns, folk art centres, museums etc. The private sector spent about $4 million in restoring and converting into various tourists uses some 60 traditional buildings all over the Cyprus countryside, while the Government contributed about $500,000. more in the form of interest payment subsidisation. The majority of these buildings were converted to accommodation units, primarily as serviced/self-catering inns and small hotels, although some as villas for rent.



Above picture is a ‘***logo and moto’*** of CTO’s Rural Tourism.

Source: Demetriadou, Annita. CTO, Acting Director of Tourism.

In addition to these schemes, efforts were also made to encourage the revitalisation and promotion of traditional Cypriot socio-cultural practices as an integral element of the agro- tourism ‘***product’***. To this end, a variety of educational and awareness programmes for local communities were initiated. For example, a collection of traditional recopies, complied and edited by the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment in association with independent culinary groups, supported efforts to promote traditional Cypriot cookery amongst rural restaurateurs. Similarly, specific training modules in other areas, such as Cypriot folk-dancing and music and traditional crafts, as well as general business and service skills, were developed by the public education authorities in co-operation with the CTO (Sharpley, 2001).

In South Cyprus, there is other project for developing rural tourism program. European Union Leonardo da Vinci project ***‘Cultural Heritage Tourism Network ’***(1997) which has left its impact on vocational training in Europe. In Cyprus, three modules (SMEs business development skills, Traditional Gastronomy and organisation of cultural events) are being used by the Cyprus Agro-tourism Company and cultural heritage SMEs.

Furthermore, it was also recognised that the success of the agro-tourism program would be depended upon effective marketing. In 1996 the non-profit Cyprus Agro-tourism Company was founded with CTO’s initiative and support to promote the new product and serve as a platform for all Agro-tourism stakeholders. Cyprus Agro-tourism Company is organising, marketing, and selling the traditional rural tourist houses product through a central reservation system. At the same time, the Company publishes an annual ‘***Traditional Holiday Homes Guide’*** for distribution to the trade and general public. However, the CTO also foresaw that participation on the part of agro-tourism entrepreneurs in a common marketing/distribution network would facilitate the control and uniformity of prices and services offered, as well as co-ordinating individual marketing and training efforts, thus representing a cohesive and mutually supportive marketing effort across the sector. The CTO continues to play a central role in the Company. In 1998, for example, it provided CY£15,000 in financial support, whilst the Director General of the CTO also presides over the Agro-tourism Company’s Board of Directors (Sharpley, 2001).

The Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI) is a Cyprus charity affiliation to The Travel Foundation, a unique UK travel industry charity set up to ***‘care for the places we love to visit’.*** Members of the CSTI include Sunvil, Tui, Thomas Cook, village communities, village producers and crafts people, various environmental organisations and the CTO.

In April 2010, the CTO, the Travel Foundation and the CSTI signed a five year co-founded agreement to make Cyprus the first ***‘sustainable destination’.*** Water, energy and waste will be looked at in great detail and sustainability in hotel management especially so. This is an enormous undertaking, spanning several government departments and progress will understandably be slow and there will be many obstacles to overcome. But, as long as the will is there to make a difference, then success will follow.

One of the ways CSTI meets the changing needs to today’s more sophisticated travellers is through the production of a series of six village routes. The routes cover the whole South Cyprus and are ideal for anyone incorporating car hire in their holiday. And those village routes are:

Village Route 1 – Central and Western Limassol District

Village Route 2 – Inland from Larnaka

Village Route 3 ­– The Famagusta District- red earth villages and windmills

Village Route 4 – Trodoos Mountains and Southern Villages

Village Route 5 – Trodos Mountains and Northern Villages

Village Route 6 – Akamas National Park Area

There are small and interesting museums in many of the villages, mostly funded by individuals or the local communities, which give an interesting insight into the history and daily life of the inhabitants. Usually there is a nominal entry charge.

Listed below are three private village museums worth visiting.

1. **Cyprus Wine Museum on Village route one:** Erimi village-Commanderia Wine first produced
2. **Oleastro (the wild olive tree) Olive Park on village route one:** Anogyra village-Cyprus organic olive oil production, offer a wealth of information, interesting items to purchase and good tavern and coffee shop.
3. **The Crob Museum on village route one:** Anogyra village- only village where the tradition of Pastelli (carob, honey and seasame pie) making is still practiced. There is annual Pastelli festival in September.

Listed below are six traditional wine villages. The area, known as ***‘Krassochoria’*** (the Wine Villages) is located north of Limassol, on the southern slopes of the Trodos mountain range.

1. Koilani Village
2. Omodos
3. Foini Village
4. Vasa Village
5. Arsos Village
6. Fasoula Village

On cycling routes are kiosks in view points, bicycle storage in central points and information signs and maps. Trodos Cycling Routes (57 km).

1. Psilo Dendro (Platres)-Karvounos 16,2 km
2. Karvounos-Prodromos 22,7 km
3. Prodomos-Psilo Dentro (Platres) 18,2 km

In addition, projects co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund divided into two programming period. First programming period 2004-2006 for promoting Rural Cyprus Tourism, Wine Routes and Cycling Routes that mentioned above and finished. Second programming period is 2007-2013 for further development of the three projects that still not continued yet.

The villages or locations relating to Agro-tourism in Cyprus are highlighted on the map below.

Source:www.agrotourism.com.cy



Among the villages restored, let us quote those of Lythrodontas, Askas, Drousia, Kritou Tera, Nikokleia, Houlou, Goudi… They all open all year round, thus smoothening out the seasonality pattern of Cyprus tourism. And properties are divided into modern villas, mostly with pool, and traditional renovated village houses, a few of which have private or shared pool. Premier properties are marked as such. Some of properties are older with simple furnishings even if they do have a pool with large gardens. Cleaning is generally once a week and a Welcome Pack is provided in villas and village houses but not in apartments. Holidaying within a village has additional attractions such as making of ***‘Halloumi’***, the traditional Cyprus cheese, the making of ***‘Zivania’***, a raki typestrong alcoholic drink and in the picking of the grapes and olives. They provide the tranquillity and easy pace of life, the narrow stone-paved streets, the ‘gossip of the day’ at the ***‘kafenio’***. Village houses are authentic working villages, where the sights, sounds and smell of rural life are to be expected, where the locals start their day early and nightlife must be sought elsewhere.

What is more, other project in South Cyprus is the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) is a European Commission Tourism Unit initiative calling for submission of proposals from 30 European countries for a pilot project related to rural tourism entitled Best Emerging Rural Destinations. The CTO was one of ten National Representatives selected to implement the project.

Following a national competition launched by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, the region of [Troodos](http://www.cyprus-eden.com/2007/eng/rural_destinations/troodos/index.htm), represented by the ‘***Troodos Regional Tourism*** ***Body***’ was selected as Best Emerging Rural Destination - Cyprus. The ***‘Troodos Regional Tourism Body’*** is a non-profit organisation set up for the sustainable development of tourism in the Troodos region. It represents area local communities, private sector bodies, NGOs and other organised bodies***.***

***Agro-tourism in South Cyprus: Success or Failure***

In 2001, Sharpley conducted a research to explore the extent to which this latter role of rural tourism represents a realistic tourism development policy. Based upon research into the development of ‘***agro-tourism’*** in South Cyprus it highlights the challenges and problems encountered by rural tourism entrepreneurs, identifying a number of issues which militate against the success of rural tourism development. In particular, it identifies high development costs but low returns, low demand, a lack of essential skills and the dominance of mass tourism operators as major challenges. It concludes, therefore, long-term financial and technical support is essential if tourism is to play an effective rural development role (Sharpley, 2001).

Collectively, these problems point to a number of lessons for the development of rural tourism, particularly as a new ***‘product’*** in established tourism destinations. Firstly, an underlying problem in Cyprus, implicit in the interview responses, is that expectations of the success of the project in terms of numbers of visitors, income generated and contribution to rural generation have been unrealistically high. From the entrepreneurs perspective, this has lead to levels of investment that are unlikely to be matched by returns whilst, for the CTO it has resulted in significant initial investment but a lack of continuing technical and financial support. This suggest, therefore, that any rural tourism project development should be preceded by a cost-benefit analysis, matching the costs of development to both public and private sectors to realistic estimates of likely visitor numbers and spending. More simply stated, the belief that increasing numbers of tourists are demanding ***‘traditional’*** experiences is not a guarantee of success.

Secondly, the evidence from Cyprus and other studies suggest that, generally, rural tourism does not generate high levels of income. Therefore it is likely that continuing financial subsidy will be necessary to sustain rural tourism enterprises, particularly where, as in the case of Cyprus, tourism has been ***‘officially’*** selected as a development policy and where the cost of investment is higher than likely returns. If this does not occur, there remains the possibility that organisations such as Cyprus Villages, the one larger scale agro-tourism provider on the island, could expand its operations through acquiring less successful properties. This, of course, would run counter to the principles of localised, community-based rural tourism development.

Thirdly, central guidance and control is necessary to ensure that a total rural tourism experience can be provided. That is, not only is there a need for conformity in terms of service, facilities to attract visitors to rural areas, to keep them there and to encourage repeat visits. Related to this, there is also a need for ongoing public sector support and guidance in terms of both training/education and marketing. Certainly, the evidence from the agro-tourism project points to a lack of relevant skills on the part of local communities whilst the major challenge, in particular given the traditional summer-sun image of South Cyprus, is to attract new, diverse and higher-spending markets. Generally, it is only at the level of the National Tourism Organisation that such research and target marketing can be undertaken.

Fourthly, the development of rural tourism must be considered within the broader context of destination’s tourism system. That is, although rural tourism experiences may be sold as inclusive ***‘packages’*** by tour operators, it is more likely to be the independent tourist who seek such holidays. Therefore, policies to facilitate independent travel may be required, particularly in the context of island summer-sun destinations where the majority of the business is dominated by package tour operators and where current aviation policy discourages independent travel, particularly on charter flights (Sharpley, 2001).

Since the mid 90s the debate of how to achieve the objective of sustainability in the tourism sector is en vogue. Recently, Kaufman and Gronau (2010) had a paper which aims on contributing to the dialogue with a new interdisciplinary perspective. Rather than putting the emphasis on the question of weather the tourism industry can be sustainable or how sustainable it can be, the perspective of paper focuses on weather tourism can support sustainable development. This, so far neglected shift in perspective, opens up a completely new field of academic discussion due to its remodelling of the interrelationship between sustainability and tourism industry. This research’s first step was, the possible influences of the tourism industry towards supporting sustainable development will be discussed. In a second step, the results of a qualitative study performed by the authors in the context of the Cypriot Agro Tourism will be presented, in order to empirically elicit existing influences of tourism on sustainable development in the rural areas of South Cyprus. Especially, the case study illuminates the consequences of an efficient interplay between strategic and operational decision makers, hence, addressing both, macro and micro issues. The paper concludes, that, in synthesis with local heritage, entrepreneurship and location branding, this innovative form of tourism can provide a significant contribution to the economic, social and environmental components of sustainnability and can be regarded as a best practice example (Gronau, Werner and Kaufman, Rudi 2008).

**VILLAGE TOURISM PROJECTS IN NORTH CYPRUS**

Gaining wide popularity as an alternative to mass tourism, tourists have been exhibiting a greater tendency to travel to experience different lifestyles, cultures, and cuisines in different countries. North Cyprus has recently started experiencing better diversity in special tourism through numerous events such as a Tulip Festival, Famagusta Culture and Arts Festival, Büyükkonuk eco-village eco-day...

The ancient Karpaz settlement of Buyukkonuk (Komi Kebir) has been selected as the first eco-village in North Cyprus in and attempt to counteract the growth of mass tourism.

The village of Dipkarpaz, lying at the end of the Karpaz Peninsula, is remote, under-resourced and much neglected. To redress this situation a plan was developed in 1999 by the Ministry responsible at that time for tourism, to restore a group of five village houses with the aim of using them as a ***‘rural tourism’*** centre. The Turkey Embassy funded this project. The logic of this was that Dipkarpaz is close to the designated National Park and has many attractions for special interest tourists- and of course is close to excellent beaches for those who only want S3 tourism. The initiative was aimed at bringing some new tourism revenue into the country and especially into the local community.

In addition, the scheme aims to preserve the village's local culture in an environmentally sensitive way, and promote the area as a destination for special activity holidays. It is hoped that the initiative will encourage community life in the village to continue, while raising awareness among villagers about the importance for caring for the countryside.

While extremely worthy and very imaginative in its conception, Scott (2002) feels that it has failed in that it is not likely to meet its objectives: The reasons are as follows:

* The complex is some distance from the centre of the village and any tourist staying there will be forced to hire a car. If they stay there for the whole of their holiday, than this adds considerably to their total holiday budget. Typically tourists staying in the Kyrenia area hire cars for just two or three days for specific excursions.
* Rural tourists hoping to learn more of local host community will be frustrated, since it has been constructed in such a way as to be apart from the surrounding community.
* The complex has own restaurant and built-in kitchen units, therefore it seems unlikely that the village will benefit economically from the complex.
* While the buildings themselves have been attractively restored, the area around the complex, generally comprises abandoned houses or badly neglected houses and these are an eyesore.
* It was not clear how the marketed and managed. But if it is to be marketed as part of a normal S3 initiative then it seems that very few benefits will accrue to the local community.
* An alternative would be direct marketing principally through the internet but no attempt has been made to provide any IT facilities or training.
* If it were to be marketed and managed by the local community then there would be a need for basic infrastructure in the form of good roads and communications. This is not yet true in the case of Dipkarpaz
* No assessment seem to have been done concerned what the local community could provide and sell or otherwise make available to tourists.
* In addition the village has 112 livestock within the village. These are a double-edged sword: On the one hand they can be a tourist attraction but on the other hand can be a healthy hazard (Scott, 2002)

According to the ***‘2002 Tourism Promotion and Marketing Strategic Plan’*** of the Tourism and Environment Ministry of the T.R.N.C. small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will have a role to play in the future development of rural tourism (Tourism Promotion and Marketing Strategic Plan, 2002, pp. 4-5). Furthermore the government is planning to facilitate this development. Existing or would be SMEs will be required to submit an application in accordance with the Teşvik Yasası (Nr 47/2000). On the surface this dose appear to be an exciting new departure and may go someway towards creating a positive policy background against which specific low-intensity rural tourism developments could be created in the future. However in an interview with a representative of the Ministery and Scott (2002) it become clear that by the term SME (KOBİ in Turkish) what was meant was ***‘small to medium sized hotels’,*** rather than small-sized village-based initiatives. As a result it is not clear if funds would made available under this scheme to low intensity rural tourism initiatives.

In the T.R.N.C. there is no system of eco-taxation on tourism. A recent commentator Shaw (2000) argued that Mediterranean countries could well consider the imposition of eco-taxes on tourists in order to generate income which could be used to fund environmental remediation and protection. Scott (2002) does not sanguine regarding the possible successful introduction of such a scheme because it would be opposed vigorously by foreign tour operators, who are always in a position to determine tourism costs in the host country. This in itself is a comment of the way host countries have little control over their own tourism industry (Scott, 2002).

In 2006, T.R.N.C. Tourism Ministry was formed committee with Turkey Donation Committee for renovation of those vernacular houses in Komi Kebi. At the end the Arch House restored and the first village tourism started in North Cyprus. For each renovation of houses average spending was 150,000.TL and this project not continued yet (Personal interview with Ahmet Özkaram from Tourism Ministry, February 2011).

 In this context, in 2006 Karpaz Eco Tourism Association was established for providing a network between members for developing a cooperation of information and customer sharing. Now it has got 15 members with 165 bed capacity in Dipkarpaz, Bükükkonuk, Tatlısu and Kumyalı ([www.karpazekoturizm.com](http://www.karpazekoturizm.com)). Karpaz Eco Tourism Association’s website is a Turkish and in an international tourism market it does not has an attraction by foreign tourists. I think, it must be also in English language for marketing village tourism product. And those member lodgings are:

1. Karpaz Arch Houses Dipkarpaz
2. Karpaz Stone House Dipkarpaz
3. Villalembos Dipkarpaz
4. Villa Karparis Dipkarpaz
5. Rosagi Guest Houses Mehmetçik
6. Çebiler Guest Houses Dipkarpaz
7. Teko’s Karpasia Nature House Dipkarpaz
8. Cyprus Guest House Dipkarpaz
9. Karpaz Çiftlik Pansiyon Dipkarpaz
10. Revaklı Ev Guest House Dipkarpaz
11. Galifes Guest House Büyükkonuk
12. Ayphodios Guest House Büyükkonuk
13. Marisote Guest House Kumyalı
14. Aşut Guest House Büyükkonuk
15. Şinya Guest House Tatlısu

Plus above, the Delcraft shop and craft cooperative in the Komi-Kebir has received UNDP funding to finish additional accommodation (including 3 rooms adapted for disabled cases), an activity room (for displays, events and activities). By the time the additional accommodation is finished in February 2006 with 10 self-catering rooms available (Scott, 2006).

Recent developments emphasize the growing trend of Community based tourism, worldwide. The Karpasia Peninsula of North Cyprus is one of the most ecological important regions of the Eastern Mediterranean that has an enormous potential for impact on communities. Currently, much of the peninsula is under the protection of the ***‘Karpasia Region Control and Development Ordinance’.*** Büyük Konuk (Komi Kebir) Eco Village, the gateway to Karpasia Peninsula, is the pilot project created by the Economic Development and Growth for Enterprises (EDGE), registered as part of the ***‘Global Eco-Village Tourism Network’***, and funded by the United State of America Agency for International Development (USAID), also presenting valuable resource for community based tourism (Yüksel, 2010).

As put on the website of The Centre for People and Forests (RECOFTC, 2010 cited in Yüksel, 2010) ‘***It is now widely accepted that local stewardship of resources plays an important role in the long-term sustainability of resource use. A range of collaborative activities has demonstrated that participation of local communities in the management of natural resources greatly assists in conservation as well as in the promotion of rural development. Community-based tourism (CBT) is one such emerging activity that is generating much interest’.***

EDGE-USAID Manual (2009) defines CBT as ***‘tourism that promotes a community’s natural, historical, cultural, and environmental assets to a targeted number of potential visitors. CBT implies that a community is taking care of its natural and/or cultural resources in order to gain income through operating a tourism enterprise and using that income to better their lives’.*** In short CBT provides communities with a way to promote their special qualities...attractions, heritage, history, and environmental characteristics that make them unique CBT also is regarded as a tool for natural resource conservation and community development and it is closely associated with ecotourism, sometimes referred to as community-based ecotourism (Harris and Vogel, 2002 cited in Yüksel, 2010).

***‘Traditional Guest House Project’*** in Dipkarpasia Peninsula where Büyük Konuk (Komi Kebir) Eco Village is a project created by EDGE, funded by USAID and implemented by Deloitte Consulting LLP. According to the EDGE-USAID study (2009), the goals of this approach:

* Empower the local community to embrace CBT as a mechanism for economic growth,
* Increase the number of domestic and international visitors by using CBT methodology to increase awareness, product development, and promotion,
* Increase visitor expenditures during their stay, for both day trips and overnight visits,
* Expand the range and diversity of offerings for special interest and independent travellers (a term inclusive of families),
* Build synergies between the tourism industry in community and the small and medium sized enterprises sector as a whole, and agriculture and handicrafts in particular.

In keeping with the concept of an Eco-Village, ‘***Büyükkonuk Eco-Tourism Village Association***’ pioneered the idea of ***‘Eco Day’***, a one-day event designed to celebrate the traditions of village life. The first Eco Day was held on the third weekend of October 2007 and proved a fantastic celebration of local dance, folk traditions and local music, with seasonal agricultural products and homemade food for sale. In addition to live music, bi-communal dance performances and two bike races- there was the first donkey race in recent memory!

For product development with support from USAID through its implementing partners the nature trail network (25 km) and renovation of -50 years old and was made Florance, Italy-historic olive mill were realized, thereby achieving two product development goals within the projects strategic plan. The association also coordinated the development of new and improved products which included the construction of three bed and breakfast establishments for village tourism. And increased in quality and styles of local handicrafts and hand-made foods. These product improvements combined also increased the pride of Komi Kebir’s residents making them more aware of aesthetic appeal and environment stewardship.

Buyukkonuk’s marketing and promotion plan centred on print collateral, internet based marketing, and events/festivals. While the village’s brochure and illustrative map was funded by USAID through EDGE, the association assisted in its design and contributed a majority of the content and photos. It was indeed a community project. The association also developed a web portal, which featured an electronic copy of the brochure and illustrative map as well as other information of interest to potential visitors. The web portal’s URL is www.ecotourismcyprus.org.



Above picture is the cover of brochure for Büyükkonuk Eco-Village. The logo is created by EDGE and it is the first labelled logo by Şirketler Mukayitliği in TRNC (Samioğlu, Ç. Arzu 2011)

Büyükkonuk eco-village offers tourists traditional activities. You can help pick carobs, or pick your own olives, get them pressed at the local olive mill and take home your own oil. If customers want to press their own olives, the mill normally opens shortly after the start of the picking season to allow the first of the olives to be collected. And other village activities are animal feeding, organic farming activities, handcraft demonstrations and olive oil soap making.

The scheme is an example of multi-national co-operation. Funding has been provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Turkish embassy, while the Buyukkonuk Municipality is providing labour and equipment. Arzu Çağın-Samioğlu who is the tourism team leader at EDGE said that this project had been success and a good example for other projects.

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO NORTH AND SOUTH CYPRUS VILLAGE PROJECTS**

* In Karpaz region/Büyükkonuk currently developing with about 170 bed capacity, despite the fact that the village accommodation sector is quite well developed in the South Cyprus with a stock of about 2000 beds in traditional housing available to the tourist market.
* Although South Cyprus had been financial funds from foreign organisations since 80s, the North Cyprus had been benefit from European Union and UNDP since 2004. And as a result South Cyprus developed. On South Cyprus is most likely to benefit from the following EU funds:
* The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which aims to encourage competition and modernisation at regional level
* The European Social Fund (ESF) which aims to improve the skill and knowledge level of labor force through training and education (Simid and Pedra, 2002).
* In North Cyprus continued lack of development will deepen frustration and lead to extra pressure for quick speculative profits and unplanned construction. However, efforts to develop any sort of tourism in Karpaz run into the problems of accommodation quality both of which are low. On the plus side, it seems that interventions by local and international agencies in the Karpaz region may be reaching a critical mass, enhancing both the discreate and cumulative outcomes of individual projects.
* Agricultural regeneration and development, particularly with regard to introducing or reviving locally-based small scale processing, to produce recognizable and distinctive local products to be incorporated into the Komi-Kebir’s identity and tourist offer. The potential of the UNDP’s organic farming/agro-tourism project to deliver any of this needs to be explored.
* Nevertheless, some easy measures could be taken to enhance the appearance of the other potential villages. Some of the backstreets of Komi-Kebir, for example, with bougainvillea tumbling over the old stone walls, could become as attractive as the flower-lined street for walking. Innovations such as ‘***best kept street’*** competition might be an easy way of improving the look of the village and generating local interest.
* At the socio-economical impact of village tourism to Komi-Kebir is positive. Especially EDGE project was improved local women life quality in economically and socially. Because they participate in organizations directly for preparing foods, making hand-crafts, etc... and they had money from their products. For South Cyprus it is the same result.
* In Komi-Kebir there is an environmental improvement in an area especially, most of the livestock had gone outside the village. On the one hand they can be a tourist attraction but on the other hand can be a health hazard for local people. While the buildings attractively restored, the area around the complex generally comprises abandoned houses or badly neglected houses and these are an eyesore. In the infrastructure side, good/modern roads are still going to continued, although its a positive its also negative effect, because road is passed very near the Komi-Kebir and destroying some natural areas!
* North Cyprus needs to centralize the management of bookings system for all village tourism accommodations, and also need more coordination with other tourism related stakeholders-tourism agents, tour operators...- South Cyprus is managed and organised under the umbrella of CTO. Its the one of the biggest advantage of other side.
* What is more, other potential village tourism areas in North Cyprus are as follows:
* Gaziveren (selected by TRNC Tourism Ministry as a pilot area)
* Bağlıköy (selected by TRNC Tourism Ministry as a pilot area)
* Çamlıbel
* Kalkanlı
* Akdeniz (Potential Nature 2000 Area)
* Yeşilırmak (agro/farm village tourism ie. Strowbery picking...)
* Lefke

**CONCLUSION**

To conclude there is sufficient evidence and will of stakeholders of the tourism sector that the economy of Northern Cyprus can benefit from adopting the sustainable tourism policies and the South Cyprus will benefit from cooperating with the North in order to develop new tourism.

The aim of projects has been skilfully inject new life into declining village commodities by introducing a new style of tourism in the area-appealing to a different type of tourist, who interested in the history and environment and interested in conserving it. And both North and South Cyprus village projects had been in succeed. Village tourism should be recognised as a desirable way of bringing resources to rural communities and therefore any future rural tourism projects should be informed by this insight and for develop a follow on project to maintain momentum.

In conclusion, those peripheral areas could be developed by using village tourism projects. Its provide economic benefits to the local population although renovation of those vernacular buildings are high cost, and it could be improve local people’s social life quality by participating into projects. Environmental protection of the resources should be take high importance for more sustainable tourism which that tourism depends-the environmental base that makes Cyprus a unique destination.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |

**REFERENCES**

1. Demetriadou, Annita. CTO, Acting Director of Tourism. Rural Tourism (Cyprus)
2. EDGE-USAID. 2010. Community Based Tourism. Manual Book. Nicosia.
3. Gronau, Werner and Kaufman, Rudi. 2010. Tourism as a Stimulus for Sustainable Development in Rural Areas: A Cypriot Perspective. Tourismos: An International Multidisciplinary Journal of Tourism. Vol. 4, No. 1, Spring 2009, pp. 83-95.
4. Harrison, Lynn C. and Husbands, Winston. 1996. Practicing Responsible Tourism. John Wiley & Sons Inc. NY, USA.
5. Kazepi, Maro. 2005. Cyprus Rural Tourism, Cost Action 33: Forest Recreation and Nature Tourism-FORREG, presentation paper. Larnaka.
6. Opatija. 2010. Tourism and Hospitality Management. Vol. 16, Iss. 1, pp. 11-20.
7. PIO. 1999. Agro-tourism in Cyprus. Cyprus Today Jan-Mar 1999. Press and Information Office. Nicosia.
8. Scott, Julie. 2002. Agro-tourism: Feasibility Study (UNOPS Project Nr WSE-PSO1-4043) Report. Nicosia.
9. Sharpley, Richard. 2002. Rural Tourism and the Challenge of Tourism Diversification: The Case of Cyprus. Tourism Management. Vol. 23, N0. 3, pp. 233-244.
10. Sharpley, Richard. 2001. The Challenge of Developing Rural Tourism in Established Coastal Tourism Destinations: Lessons from Cyprus. Conference Paper. New Directions in Managing Rural Tourism and Leisure Conference, SAC, Ayr.
11. Sharpley, Richard and Telfer, David J. 2002. Aspects of Tourism, Tourism and Development: Concepts and Issues. Channel View Publications. pp. 326-327.
12. Shaw, Robinson. 2000. Mediterranean tourism takes its toll. Environmental News Network.
13. Smid, Sieman and Zwart, Petra. 2002. Tourism on Cyprus: Study on the Situation of Enterprises, the Industry and the Service Sectors in Turkey, Cyprus, and Malta. IBM Global Services.
14. Warner, Jonatan. 2005. Preservation and Politics: A National Park in North Cyprus. The George Wright Society.
15. Yüksel, Derviş. 2010. The Importance of Karpasia Peninsula as a Potential Community Based Tourism Destination. School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Near East University, Nicosia, North Cyprus.

**WEBLISTS**

[www.visitcyprus.org.cy](http://www.visitcyprus.org.cy)

[www.cyprus-eden.com](http://www.cyprus-eden.com)

[www.ric.nal.usda.gov](http://www.ric.nal.usda.gov)

[www.karpasia.net](http://www.karpasia.net)

[www.csti-cyprus.org](http://www.csti-cyprus.org)

[www.agrotourism.com](http://www.agrotourism.com)

[www.ecotourismcyprus.org](http://www.ecotourismcyprus.org)

[www.cyprustourismorganisation.com](http://www.cyprustourismorganisation.com)

[www.karpazekotourism.com](http://www.karpazekotourism.com)