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A HERITAGE TRAIL  
ALONG THE PHOENICIAN  
MARITIME ROUTES  
AND HISTORIC PORT CITIES  
OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA.

# Sustainable Tourism in Rhodos. Preliminary remarks

*Mission report*

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## Paralleli and Mare Nostrum (abstract)

In the framework of the Mare Nostrum project, Istituto Parelleli will be mapping the two cities where it will be implemented the *participated approach (PA)* method, that is to say Rhodes in Greece and Tyre in Lebanon. The aim of the mapping process is to supply a detailed albeit concise picture of the situation in the two cities in relation to tourism so as to highlight difficulties but also the strong points of the industry. The project will thus offer interesting and sound ideas for the establishment of alternative/sustainable tourist routes in the two cities linking the water front to the most important archaeological sites. Results will be used in Phase two of the project - that is the planning and implementation of the tourist itinerary and for the participated action that we will develop in the autumn.

Method: in depth interviews to a series of stakeholders from a range of areas in the tourist industry.

## Introductory remarks and method

The information contained in the present Report is the result of a number of meetings with private and public sector stakeholders from the city of Rhodes, all of whom with some interest in the tourist industry. Meetings were carried out in the course of a mission lasting from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2009 and were performed by Rosita Di Peri. Some of the interviews were carried out by the project coordinator, Ms Raffaella Giordana after the end of the mission due to the impossibility of organizing and agreeing upon a meeting at the time. Our work was supported by the two local partners, the Municipality of City of Rhodes and the House of Europe Association.

Bearing the above in mind, the present Report does not intend to be a comprehensive and complete report of the tourist industry in Rhodes but rather a collection of information, projects and ideas that may prove useful in the decision making phase.

Unfortunately the report is incomplete in certain respects due to the lack of cooperation of some institutions and agencies which made it impossible to organize meetings and failed to send written information.

## Context

The Isle of Rhodes is in the South Eastern part of the Aegean Sea, close to the coast of Asia Minor: it is the largest island of the Dodecanese, a series of eighteen islands varying in size and shape. It can be easily accessed by sea from the Piraeus Port or by air as there are scheduled airline connections to and from Athens and the main European and non European cities. The islands do not share the same landscape, craft and culture.

The Island of Rhodes is divided into municipalities, the capital being the City of Rhodes which also where the Prefecture can be found, it being the headquarters of the regional administration of the Dodecanese<sup>1</sup>.

The island has a population of about 100,000 people. There is an international airport, the *Diagoras*, at 17 kilometres from the centre of Rhodes and an international trading port in the centre of the Rhodes. It is also connected to the neighbouring islands by sea.

Historically the island became an ideal place for the meeting of people of different origins thanks to its position at the crossroads of cultures and continents. The size and power of the islands is witnessed by the documents which have reached us: it had a very powerful fleet which controlled sea travel in the area and produced the first Maritime Law ever. Rhodes was founded in 408 BC when the people of the other centres on the island (Lindos and Ialiso) decided to build a new powerful city as a capital. Soon Rhodes was to become a thriving economic centre although it faded somewhat during the Roman and Byzantine times. Monuments, some of which no longer standing such as the famous Colossus of Rhodes one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, bore witness of the greatness of the island. The strategic importance of the island increased as from 330 AD when the capital of the Roman Empire was transferred to Constantinople: the island acquired greater strategic and trading importance as the architectural remains of the time and the documents passed down over the centuries show. Close alliances with the West made Rhodes a safe haven for ships and boats from all over the world to dock in.

In 1309 the city was conquered by the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta that built major fortifications turning the city from a flourishing mediaeval town to an international city. The power of Rhodes began to wane with the Ottoman Invasion (1522 to 1912) and subsequently with the Italian, German and British occupations during the Second World War.

During the Ottoman period the Greeks were forced to live outside the city walls and they established new districts known as the *marasia*. In 1912 the city of Rhodes and the whole of the Dodecanese were occupied by the Italians. The latter changed the architectural layout of the city with large buildings and squares. In 1948 Rhodes became part of Greece.

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<sup>1</sup> Greece is divided into 13 administrative regions called Districts or Peripheries which in turn are divided into *Nomos* (or *Nomoi* in the plural) , or Prefectures. Altogether there are 51 prefectures and one autonomous area (Mount Athos). Rhodes is part of the Southern Aegean Prefecture which includes many islands and hosts the Dodecanese Prefecture. Each Prefecture contains 147 *eparchies* with 1,033 Municipalities and Communities, 900 being urban municipalities (*demoi*) and 133 rural ones (*koinotetes*).

The above sketched out historical features are what made the island a crossroads of cultures as the complex and stratified archaeological layering show. The visible mix between East and West and the presence of a number of minorities living together on the island have made it a show case for tolerance and the ability to live together.

## Governance and the tourist system in Greece

The tourist industry is one of the main pillars of the nation's economy: all in all it accounts for 37.2 billion Euros, that is 16% of the GDP, with forecasts suggesting it could double the figure over the next ten years (WTTC, 2007).

The industry is thriving as can be seen by looking at data on job growth in the sector with 200,000 new openings between 2004 and 2006 (Greek Ministry of Statistics). If one counts both direct and related employment for the industry it is around 867,000 jobs, 20% of the total national employment. The figure seems set to grow in the coming ten years and should reach 1.2 million jobs. Tourist data indicates a strong growth in the past three years, especially in the islands but also directed to large cities and especially Athens.

Greece has improved its ranking in the world tourist system especially since the 2004 Olympic event which contributed to the revamping of its image in the world. The new picture has generated new needs, and specifically the need for a redefinition of policies for the sector. In 2004 Presidential Decree 122/2004 established a Ministry of Tourism whose remit was further defined by Law 3270 (2004). The Ministry has to issue regulations, plan, set guidelines and draft policies for the tourism industry. The Ministry operates through public agencies and organizations which it in turn supervises. The main strategic axes of the Ministry are to enrich the tourist product through a new regulation and monitoring system, incentives, as well as the promotion and actual interventions in the area. The Ministry promotes the construction of new hotels and resorts as well as the refurbishment of outdated facilities funding new ones. This was also made possible thanks to the law on Investments<sup>2</sup> which introduced incentives in the form of grants for the private sector as well to develop and improve the offer in the tourist sector. The Law also makes provisions for the renovation of the old structures and the establishment of new centres able to address market needs more effectively. Furthermore, simpler procedures were introduced to open up to new tourist enterprises and offer more capillary investments facilitating public-private partnerships through investments.

Progress has been made in terms of diversification and extension of the tourist offer thanks to the creation of a non seasonal flow, but moving to an annual pattern with offers of wellbeing, environmental, cultural, business, sport, urban and gastronomic tourism.

Currently Greece is developing a Master Plan for Tourism including a guide to investments to inform their policy-making to develop the area for tourism. Furthermore 60 M Euro have been invested to reposition the country in a regional system and open up to new markets.

In terms of alternative and sustainable tourism, most investments are funded thanks to EU programmes, and specifically

The 3rd Community Support framework 2000-2006 Programme: "Competitiveness", Measure 5.2, Action 2. "Fostering of entrepreneurship in alternative tourism" which includes investments between 40 and 200,000 Euro and the initiative Europea LEADER + (2000-2006) which includes support to local enterprises and provinces. New and interesting projects have developed over the past few years, some such as Agrotouristiki come directly under the Ministry of Tourism (see below). There have also been

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<sup>2</sup> Investment Law: 3299/2004 and operational program "Competitiveness" part of 3rd Community Support Framework.

portals such as Alternative Greece which supply comprehensive information on alternative/sustainable tourism ([www.alternativegreece.gr](http://www.alternativegreece.gr)).

## Tourist Agencies directly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism

- \* Greek National Tourism Organization
- \* Organisation of Tourism Education and Training
- \* Hellenic Chamber of Hotels
- \* Tourism Development Co.
- \* Agrotouristiki SA
- \* Other Tourism Institutions

Let us now take a closer look at them :

**Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO known in Greece as EOT)** was established in 1927 and reorganized in 1950 by the 'Emergency Act 1565/50, ratified by Law 1624/51. Before 1950 tourism came under various ministries while since 1950 it has come under the remit of GNTO, the government agency in charge.

According to the above mentioned law 3270 (2004), GNTO's headquarters and direction are in Athens and in the regional Departments in the field.

## The Organisation of Tourism Education and Training (O.T.E.K.)

O.T.E.K. is the Greek organization in charge of training for tourism, It is a public agency under the Ministry for development. OTEK inherited the authority of the former institute for Tourist professions and of the institute for Tourist Guides. New policy guidelines place OTEK at the centre of the reorganization and updating of tourist training in Greece. It is also in charge of bringing tourist systems up to date and to develop new high level skills required by present day industry.

Guide lines include:

- Routine monitoring of the labour market and tailoring training to needs;
- Laying out harmonised education policies in the tourist sector according to quality standards
- Guaranteeing national tourist policies to contribute to the development of the industry;
- Creating new spaces and opportunities in the labour market for secondary school leavers, and
- Strengthening cooperation among actors of the tourist industry and education on the bases of National and International legislation.

## The Tourism Development Co. (formerly Hellenic Tourist Properties SA)

The Tourism Development Company was established in 1998 pursuant Law 2636/1998, initially under the name of EOT Development SA. In the year 2000, Law 2837/2000 renamed it Hellenic Tourist

Properties SA, which in turn was renamed in 2004 by Law 3270/2004 Tourism development Co (European Development Fund) SA for Tourism which is what it is still called.

The Tourism Development Company is a limited company with a single shareholder, the Greek Government. It owns and manages all tourist related public real estate consistently with the aims and priorities of the country's tours policy. It also has a mandate to improve and develop tourist infrastructures as well as particular types of tourism aimed at promoting the cultural and natural heritage, as well as local and regional development.

Company strategy focuses on the idea that the tourist development it refers to with the revamping of existing facilities and the building of new ones, may lead to a more balanced regional growth in the country, reducing the *saturation* in some areas.

## The Hellenic Chamber of Hotels

The Hellenic Chamber of Hotels has been active since 1935 as a public agency: it is a consultative body on tourism, hotel and catering. It is mandatory for hotels, camp sites have to join. The organization has a Board with a Chair person, and a representative of the Greek Government sitting on the Board. The Hellenic Chamber of Hotels has a number of sub-Sections.

## Agrotouristiki SA

Agrotouristiki SA was established in 2001 as a shareholding company: its aim is to be proactive in contributing to the development of an alternative to mass tourism suggesting a new modern tourist product. The Tourist Development Company (EDF) is the majority shareholder and although many efforts have been made over the past years to promote agri-tourism (or rural B&B) such attempts have remained isolated, not especially visible and have not contributed to the creation of an agri-touristic national product. This is why the general aim of the Company is to satisfy the needs of integrated development policies for the management and promotion of rural tourism in Greece.

More specifically, the company intends to improve its knowledge on trends in rural tourism and stimulating potential investors in gaining more interest in this industry, by supplying information on the notion of agri-tourism and alternative tourism, which often are inadequate. Furthermore, agritourism has to be perceived as a high standard service provider.

## Tourism in Rhodes: an overview

The beauty of the Island, its position and climate, its history have made it an ideal resort, a place to visit and spend a holiday, turning it into one of the main tourist destinations of the Greek islands. The island, and Rhodes in particular, is an economic centre but more so a cultural centre for the South-Eastern Aegean. One can suggest that the city and the island pioneered tourist development in the Dodecanese but in fact in the whole of Greece. The first tour operator arrived in 1951, a Lebanese group called Nahal, to be joined by the Scandinavians only ten years later. Initially it was an exclusive tourism: Rhodes had 12 hotels and 16 small private guest houses totalling about 1,000 beds. From the mid-Eighties onwards tourism in Rhodes took on the features one might term mass tourism. The number of tour operators and travel agencies mushroomed, the number of hotels increased dramatically and charter flights started pouring in. Currently there are over 500 hotels in Rhodes – 90% of which are members of Hoteliers associations – see below) totalling over 70,000 beds.

The trend over the past 10 to 15 years has been a move to all inclusive package tours with flight, accommodation, tours and so on all included.

**Table 1 Arrivals at the Diagoras International Airport 2007-2008**

| <b>Passenger Arrivals</b> |                  |                  |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------|
|                           | <b>2008</b>      | <b>2007</b>      | <b>%<br/>2007/2008</b> |
| International flights     | 1,358,000        | 1,393,282        | -2.5                   |
| Domestic Flights          | 412,500          | 402,976          | 2.4                    |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>1,770,500</b> | <b>1,796,258</b> | <b>-1.4</b>            |

*Source: GNT0/EOT, National Tourist Board*

**Table 2 Arrivals at the Rhodes International Port**

| <b>Passanger Arrivals</b>          |                  |                  |                        |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------|
|                                    | <b>2008</b>      | <b>2007</b>      | <b>%<br/>2008/2007</b> |
| Cruises                            | 646,085          | 660,577          | -2.2                   |
| Daily<br>Passengers                | 381,775          | 412,400          | -7.4                   |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                 | <b>1,027,860</b> | <b>1,072,977</b> | <b>-4.2</b>            |
| <b>Total number of<br/>cruises</b> | <b>669</b>       | <b>724</b>       | <b>-7.6</b>            |

Source: GNT0/EOT, National Tourist Board

As Tables 1 and 2 show large flows of people go to Rhodes although a slight decline in figures can be observed in the 2007 and 2008 arrivals. As Dimitri Kapetanos, of the National Tourist organization stated, figures peaked in 2000 with 1,285,255 arrivals, after an uninterrupted growth since the 1970s. The interviewee stated this was due to a number of factors first and foremost the diversification and increasing complexity of the European and Greek tourist offer and secondly to the physical limits of the Island of Rhodes which became apparent in spite of the new availability of accommodation<sup>3</sup>.

Table 3 **2007-2008 Arrivals by Nationality (first five)**

| <b>Nation</b> | <b>Port</b> |             |          | <b>Airport</b> |             |          |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------|----------------|-------------|----------|
|               | <b>2007</b> | <b>2008</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>2007</b>    | <b>2008</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Great Britain | 312,996     | 271,979     | -13.10   | 3,168          | 2,825       | -10.83   |
| Germany       | 252,814     | 224,933     | -11.03   | 3,169          | 2,715       | -14.33   |
| Italy         | 142,074     | 131,629     | -7.35    | 2,349          | 2,190       | -6.77    |
| Holland       | 87,093      | 83,049      | -4.64    | 1,153          | 1,093       | -5.2     |
| Sweden        | 61,096      | 72,271      | 18.29    | 577            | 764         | 32.41    |

Source: GNT0/EOT, National Tourist Board

As for the breakdown by nationality (see Table 3), the UK ranked first followed by Germany and Italy. With the exception of the latter which is a Mediterranean country trends were not unlike the 1950s with a prevalence of arrivals from Northern countries and now also from eastern Europe.

Table 4 **2002-2006 Figures on Tourist Business for the Region of the Southern Aegean Islands**

<sup>3</sup> Since 1986 new National legislation have made it impossible for some islands to add new beds. The legislation did not affect the Island of Rhodes. .

| <b>Sector 55 - Hotels and Catering</b> |                               | <b>Year</b> |             |             |             |             |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <i>Region</i>                          | <i>Variable</i>               | <b>2002</b> | <b>2003</b> | <b>2004</b> | <b>2005</b> | <b>2006</b> |
| GR42_ISLANDS OF SOUTHERN AEGEAN        | Number of Local Units         | 9,327       | 14,246      | 10,082      | 10,200      | 11,068      |
|  | Turnover                      | 756,536,989 | 826,404,640 | 743,334,184 | 940,595,054 | 974,715,280 |
|  | Wages and salaries            | 135,757,639 | 168,537,873 | 138,234,092 | 177,808,111 | 188,910,953 |
|  | Investments in consumer goods | 56,493,847  | 65,624,563  | 66,521,657  | 153,092,714 | 261,310,440 |
|  | Number of employed persons    | 21,870      | 21,845      | 19,824      | 24,243      | 24,448      |

*Source: GNT0/EOT, National Tourist Board*

Table 4 shows how the tourist industry has become pervasive in the islands of the Southern Aegean supplying the investment and increasing labour flows. As suggested by National Institute of Statistics data <sup>4</sup>, 2008 was a year of positive growth for tourism in Greece with an increase in the number of nights in non residential accommodation (+0.31%). The Southern Aegean was confirmed as one of the regions attracting the strongest tourist pull with 68.4% of beds taken up in 2008. Interestingly where the rest of Greece is concerned traditional visitors, such as those from Great Britain, Germany and Italy have registered a slight decline to the advantage of new national groups such as Russians, Poles, Romanians, Bulgarians and Czechs.

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<sup>4</sup> *Press release, Arrivals and nights spent at collective accommodation establishments (hotels, similar establishments and camping) YEAR 2008 (Final data)*, GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SERVICE OF GREECE, Ministry of Economy and Finance, 21 July 2009

## The tourist system in Rhodes

Authority over the tourist sector in Rhodes is shared by the Prefecture and the Municipalities which manage all issues related to tourist flows and their impact on the community and territory. In terms of the port flows the Port Authority based in the city of Rhodes also plays an important role. The City also hosts the OTEK Tourist Vocational Training School. As well as the public authorities there are also private associations which play an important role in the industry:

- a) the association of the Hoteliers of Rhodes established in 1949 by a small group of hotel owners in the old city. Currently the association does not only address problems relating to its sector but also plays an important role in promoting the development of tourism on the island in cooperation with various municipalities;
- b) Protour – the organization for the promotion of tourism in Rhodes created in 1996 by the association of Hoteliers (a), local Municipalities and the Dodecanese Chamber of Commerce. The Association is funded by the Municipalities and GNTO and its main aim is to promote Rhodes as a destination in the national and European network;
- c) The association of Rhodes Union of Tourist Guides;
- d) The not-for profit association established in the year 2000 by the Dodecanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry to help local entrepreneurs endure better services and help them take part in the, offer better services and take part in projects for the development of the Region. The Association also plays an important role offering expert assistance to public authorities needing it, and
- e) The development Company of the Dodecanese, a public agency linked to the Rhodes Prefecture and the Chamber of Commerce.

## What themes?

The meetings offered a rather complex and very varied picture of the city. A first glance offers a district clearly used to working with tourism which represents a large part of its development. However, if one looks at it more in depth there appear to be a number of issues at stake on two levels:

- the governance of the tourist system, and
- direct management of actions in the community and their impact on the tourist industry.

Let us now analyse them:

### ► Governance and policy choices

The management of tourist policies is extremely fragmented in the City of Rhodes: as far as we know there is no local coordinating body the industry corresponding to the Ministry of Tourism at a national level – although the latter gives general policy guidelines rather than anything else. Given the marked growth of the sector over the years a number of link-associations have been established, such as the association of hoteliers, of tourist guides or tourist agencies. However, the picture which emerges from these meetings suggests a lack of a direct link between these associations and the main territorial authorities. Rather than creating a comprehensive, integrated tourist system, the various actors on the tourist market would appear to act as small corporations each one dealing with a specific aspect of the sector. Many players have complained about the lack of a Regional or even a local Tourist Plan supplying the guidelines. It has to be said that the Ministry was only created a few years ago (2004) and that results will be more appreciable in a few years in terms of the fall out on the various regions. Interviewees highlighted the difficulty of collaboration between the two institutions involved in Tourism, that is to say the Prefecture and the Municipality of Rhodes.

Nearly all the interviewed stakeholders raised an issue which is closely related to the absence of an integrated coordination system: the saturation of Rhodes as a tourist destination. The enormous and often a-problematic development of the tourist sector and of tourism on the island was a problem shared by most of the Southern Mediterranean as from the 1970s and 1980s: it led to an uncontrolled exploitation of the territory, to the unregulated building of new hotel facilities and to the unlimited exploitation of resources. This in turn led to a decline of the environment and undermined the possibility of correctly managing the tourist resource.

Tourist promotion mainly fell to Protour but the prevalent model remained the all inclusive package which makes it difficult to differentiate and tailor packages to special requirements. All these features have an impact on the image that goes out of the island and city, where they appear as a mass tourist destination where people go to have fun rather than small numbers and sustainable tourism. Clearly over the past ten years the development of themes such as sustainability and the development of integrated tourist projects taking these issues on board have appeared on the European and World stages. A lot is being done in terms of training for the new professions: as two of the interviewed OTEK representatives said a number of training projects have started and will start. They include training with tertiary education (University) on sustainability, sustainable and lasting tourism and environmental education.

The Rhodes Prefecture is also moving, albeit following a different approach: it has promoted campaigns of awareness raising on energy saving, on water and on the protection of forests and woodland linked to fire prevention schemes. The Prefecture has also promoted another major step involving the territory as a whole> it has recently drafted a guide (on paper and CDROM) of the 12 Dodecanese Islands called 'Alternative Tourism Dodecanese'. The project was made possible by the joint action of a number of players and was funded by European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), by the Hellenic Ministry of Rural Development and Food (through a Leader+) and by actively involving the Association for the development of the Dodecanese. The idea underlying the project is to have a varied offer, a range of offers in fact, each one bearing in mind the specific features of the Dodecanese, with the aim of promoting alternative tourist offers. As a result, a number of alternative tourist itineraries were developed, connected to local produce and craft, sport tourism, religious, cultural and environmental tourism.

As for governance of the tourist industry, stakeholders have repeatedly said they are not aware of any regulations of legislation supporting high quality and sustainable tourism. Projects have to be developed according to the need of the moment and without a legal framework of other completed projects, a situation which many believe is the cause of the uncontrolled growth of the industry. For instance every two years the Association for the Development and Progress of the Dodecanese (DETAP) organises an International Forum on Tourism in Rhodes. The last one was held in 2008 and the main theme was managerial skills in organizing tourist destinations. Climate change and the environment in relation to accommodation capacity of the various destinations were the main topics discussed and hence also sustainability and social responsibility of the enterprises operating in the tourist and hospitality industries.

The needs arising from the European legal framework are slowly but surely pushing the tourist operators to organise consistently/ However, many of the interviewees mentioned the fact that harmonisation is often instrumental and does not generate an actual change of the tourist offer which remains linked to mass tourism. Many have complained about the lack of high quality tourism, interestingly the position of the partly government owned Agroturistiki SA which ever since it was established has been trying to develop projects to promote the territory and its excellences by focussing on nature and the environment<sup>5</sup>. The Agency for the development of the Dodecanese is also promoting projects which go in this direction: they have set up an interdisciplinary team to produce a certification for traditional restaurants using local produce and meeting a given standard. Likewise for products of the Dodecanese.

One of the most interesting features of the customer satisfaction surveys is that tourism in Rhodes is also determined by the tourist demand. The survey by hoteliers (2008) shows that a sizeable number of tourists (24%) stated they were interested in the island only if there were all inclusive package tour. In fact, 48.5% of the interviewees stated they had chosen the island as an all inclusive package tour. In time these features encouraged a fragmented tourist development shared among large facilities able to handle tourist demands separately. Low cost migrant labour is used in building these mega-structures: labour inspections are few and far apart so the all inclusive is marketed internationally at a price which damages the local economy.

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<sup>5</sup> It does not operate on the Islands of Rhodes and Kos

A number of interviews highlighted how tourists do not experience life on the island, that they do not get acquainted with the real fact of Rhodes: only a greater focus on traditions can save the wealth of the island. Unfortunately many local village dwellers are moving to the large tourist centre which is effectively destroying cultural diversity which was the basis of the tourist development of the island in the 1950s and which is slowly dwindling.

## ► Tourism and Territorial Projects : the City of Rhodes

If we now analyse the case of the City of Rhodes the overall picture comes into focus. First of all the structure of the city itself is not conducive to the creation of an integrated plan for tourist development. The old city is closed by two walls surrounding it and separating the old city from the new one. The sea and the port are in the city but outside the city walls. This in itself creates a division between the two territories and as has already been said it makes the idea of integrated tourist routes or action plans quite difficult.

Another extremely difficult aspect of the nature of mass tourism of the flows leads to a leaning towards all inclusive packages. Tourists coming to Rhodes tend to stay in facilities outside the city of Rhodes, or at least outside the old city. More generally the old city is a magnet for historical, archaeological and cultural tourism which are mostly day trips and in any case follow pre-established and planned itineraries which remain fixed in time – as the president of the Rhodes Tourist Guide Association told us.

Hotels have a limited offer in the old city as there are no major facilities but rather *hotels de charme* and pensions (B&Bs) who attract a custom interested in detail and intellectually alive: mostly these come on their own having just bought the flight. Furthermore the old city suffers from problems of urban regeneration which have only partly been solved in recent years. Many of the houses in the old city centre are crumbling or abandoned and many monuments or archaeological areas are in need of urgent repairs or need staff to keep them open. There are problems linked to traffic, to the management of waste and rubbish, to the lack of green areas or to their mismanagement, to acoustic pollution especially at night due to business premises.

One of the main issues is that the old city is still inhabited unlike what has happened in other old city centres: it's local population numbers about 7,000, mostly elderly people who have to deal with problems such as the lack of shops, difficulties in moving as the city is a complex of up and down alleys, the lack of green spaces, playgrounds and the like.

The tourist flow to Old Rhodes is standardized and internal: as an interviewee told us tourist disembark from cruise liners and in some cases they don't even know where they are, where their ship has docked into Greece or Turkey. This means there is no specific interest for the place visited and that no one is encouraged to produce new projects or integrated tours. As one woman whom we interviewed said, Rhodes discovered tourism a little by chance and has always seen it as a source of economic wealth. The presence of visitors and the increase in the number of arrivals did not stimulate a greater coordination among authorities and association, nor did it encourage a greater integrated appreciation of the resources in the area.

Furthermore, there was a lack of large private investments to upgrade the tourist industry. Resources were mainly public (municipalities, the Prefecture and the Ministries) : in most cases they fell short of large refurbishment and restoration work.

In the Old City Rhodians complain about the Mediaeval area having become too touristic and about the massive investment in night-time leisure such as bars, venues and the like and not in a network of food and craft shops. The current strategy is to favour the small businesses intended for mass day tourism. Many interviewed stakeholders said the real 'Greek' spirit no longer exists in the city of Rhodes or in other very touristic centres on the Island- such as Lindos – but that one had to go to the smaller centres in the east or South of the Island to find the authentic experience mirroring the features of the Island, such as sea snails, Glystras and fresh capers. Many have also stressed the lack of directions or boards so that tourists can define their own routes without going through a guide. A tourist information point was opened but a few months ago in the city centre but it is not yet working full time and in any case is not enough to cover the entire tourist needs for the city.

The Ottoman buildings in the Old City are an interesting case in point as they characterise Rhodes as a cross roads of the East and West as it has been for centuries. In the city there are at least two recently renovated working Turkish Baths but there are no road signs to point tourists and the various mosques are also not well indicated and often closed.

The Mandraki Port is one of the most strongly felt issues which was mentioned by many of the interviewees. As mentioned above the port is in the city although outside the city walls and every day about twelve large cruise ships dock in every day. The port is not able to cope with existing flows and above all is in a area which could be better exploited from a tourist point of view as it is close to the gate to the sea, one of the most appealing gates of the city. In the 1960s there had been already an attempt to build a new port which came to nothing. The current port should become a tourist port – especially considering the excavations and antiquities. There is a project, with the Prefecture which considers this but which requires a new Town Plan for the Port Area (see below). However, the project is coordinated by the Ministry of Public Works and currently there is no sign of the work being carried out. More generally the lack of services in the Port are a constant source of complaint at all levels although some say the area has improved greatly compared to the past. One of the complaints concerns the lack of a taxi rank at the arrival of the ships and the noise pollution.

### ► New Opportunities for Development: Projects

The modernisation, extension and appreciation of the port in connection to the water front emerged as priority. The project is being followed through thanks to the Municipality of Rhodes which has a very interesting plan. The first stage has been approved and it will focus on the afore described plan. The main idea is to create a continuous link starting with the St Nicholas Lighthouse up to the docks (underway). There will be a large car park for transport links and a promenade will start from there to the Mandraki Port highlighting the archaeological, architectural beauties on the way. A wooden walkway is planned with benches and the like. The path will make it possible to lighten the traffic on the sea front and appreciate other gates to the mediaeval City while currently the Gate to the Sea (or Sea gate) suffers from overcrowding because it is close to the point where the cruise ships dock in.

When referring to possible projects one of the other points to emerge most frequently in the course of the interviews was the need for a link and close coordination among the Agencies involved in tourism so as to increase international visibility of the various events on the island. Several voices mentioned the need to appreciate and make the multicultural multiethnic features of the city more visible. On this point, several people suggested the creation of tourist itineraries which referred to the historical and archaeological stratification of the city. For instance if one were to start from the port, continuing through the Mediaeval city stopping at the various churches, synagogues and museums, that would be an interesting itinerary.

Other suggestions included routes and/or projects linking the new and the Mediaeval cities promoting the twin culture and tourism approach – one idea included an electric train going from one museum to the next with stops at several very diverse and differently inspired cultural events and places). For instance Rhodes has a number of Mediaeval Art Festivals and Wine festivals too: several features of the Greek culture could be linked together to create and active interchange. The focus was also on food and markets as a place to be and to appreciate local and traditional produce. Some interviewees also mentioned the need to act synergically with the city fabric and the entire island, possible pointing to still existing traditions such as the Wine or the Honey Route.

Another item on the agenda is the strengthening of the tourist route along the City walls possibly with information and food kiosks, wine tastings and places to relax, all as a means of supporting and re-launching local craft.

## Final remarks

Over the years, Rhodes tourist system and its development have had a very strong impact on the Island, its economy and its choices and decisions in developing. Interviews carried out in the City of Rhodes highlighted the pros and cons of a strong tourist development which on the one hand has brought wealth, prosperity and development to the Island, but on the other it has often led to uncontrolled tourist flows.

The report highlights the critical and strong points to strengthen the development of the industry. As mentioned, development calls for a two-pronged approach dealing with:

- a) Governance of the tourist system and
- b) projects and actions on the territory (island).

A summary follows and is intended as a starting point for future developments and an 'active' development of shared itineraries of sustainable tourism:

- the need for a closer working relationship between public and private agencies, organizations and authorities involved in tourism in the city and on the island;
- the drafting of a comprehensive integrated regional tourist plan with a focus on specific local situations, so that there may be a longer term and more comprehensive approach to tourism;
- a greater awareness among citizens and tourist operators on sustainable development, which in this context means responsible and sustainable tourism;
- a greater sharing of projects with local residents (citizenry);
- appreciation of the so far unexploited strong points of the district possibly preceded by a feasibility study. Specific mention was made to local craft and to wine and food; and
- creation of integrated tourist itineraries linking cultural, historical and economic features of the territory with a special focus on the island, its need to develop while safeguarding archaeological and architectural and natural heritage.

## Interviews

- ▶ Ioannis Seimenis, Director of the Department of Mediterranean Studies and the Aegean University;
- ▶ Maria Morava, tourist guide, former President of the Association of Tourist Guides (Rhodes)
- ▶ Stergiardis, Head of the Technical Office of the Prefecture (Rhodes)
- ▶ Dimitri Kapetanios, Ministry of Tourism, Greek National Office for Tourism, Directorate of the Dodecanese
- ▶ Kostas Georgiadis, President of the Union of Tourist Agencies (Rhodes)
- ▶ Despina Diakostavrianou, President of the Tourist Division of the Prefecture (Rhodes)
- ▶ Althanasios Stamos, O.T.E.K.
- ▶ Sadi Nasuhoglu, representative of the Turkish Community
- ▶ Eleni Papavasiliou, Regional Board of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Byzantine Section
- ▶ Anna, Paraskevopoulou, Director of the Office for the mediaeval City of the municipality of Rhodes
- ▶ Rigas Andreou, President of the Rhodes Tourist Guides
- ▶ Ioannis Karagiannis, Head of the Dodecanese Prefecture
- ▶ Marc René de Montalembert, President of the Marc de Montalembert Foundation
- ▶ Emmanouil Kaseris, O.T.E.K., Lecturer in Tourist Policies
- ▶ Maria Savaidu Kaburopolu, President of the Modern Art Museum and lecturer in Fine Arts at the Aegean University/hotelier
- ▶ Stelios Koutris, Development agency of Dodecanese
- ▶ Roberta Barutti, Area Manager for Greece, Turkey and Cyprus of the Ventaglio Tour group.
- ▶ Melina Koliadi-Mary Papaioanni, Detap. Association for the Development and Progress of the Dodecanese (DETAP), Tourism/ Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Anna Haritou, NGO House of Europe

Agencies and individuals who received the questionnaire but who had not yet answered at the time the report was drafted

- ▶ Port Authority
- ▶ Crafts Association
- ▶ Protour
- ▶ Peter Giakoumis, Director of the Association of the Rhodes Hoteliers (hotel owners)
- ▶ Themis Bibas, Consultant of the secretary General of the Southern Aegean region

## Questionnaire

1. Which is the general situation of the tourist sector in the city of Rhodes regarding your division?
2. Which one have been the main transformations during the last ten years?  
In case of positive answer, do they exist relevant documents that explain all these transformations at urban, tourist and social level?
3. Do they exist documents and analysis especially referred to sustainability and new form of tourism?
4. Which one is the legal framework?

### The port/the old city: reality

5. Do they exist specific projects on the valorization of the architectonic/cultural heritage of the city in particularly in the port area and in the medieval town?
6. If yes, when and by whom have been promoted?
7. Which are, according to you, the main needs of this area?
8. Which are the main problems?
9. Are citizens really involved in the tourist city planning?
10. Do they exist local, national or European incentives especially focused on sustainable tourism (environment, local traditions, etc.)?
11. Do local operators work together and in synergy with local institutions?
12. Does it exist a tourist request on sustainable paths and projects?

### The port/old city: perception

13. Could you imagine a "tourist project" for the port and the old city? Which networks and actors would you like to involve? Could you imagine the main problems to afford?
14. Which one are according to you the main aspects to valorize? Potentiality
15. Which are the economic stakeholders to involve?