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Evidence-Based Exploration as the Ground for Heritage-Led Pathways in Insular Territories: Case Study Greek Islands

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Abstract: Global key drivers—e.g., climate change, COVID-19 outbreak—have initiated critical debates as to the sustainable future pathways of many regions around the globe. Among these fall islands, as distinct types of regions that are marked by insularity drawbacks and a mono-sectoral economic profile, grounded in mass tourism. Having as a case study area all Greek islands, this work addresses: sustainability concerns that are due to the mass tourism repercussions in these heritage-endowed territories; and efforts undertaken by the Greek insular municipalities to deploy, in a collaborative manner, strategic cultural tourism plans in support of the transition from a resource-intensive mass tourism pattern to natural and cultural heritage-led future developmental trails. Towards this end, a two-stream methodological approach is used that relies on: quantitative, spatially-defined data elaboration/interpretation and visualization, highlighting the dynamics of tourism development in island territories; and qualitative data on issues related to the aforementioned plans from all insular municipalities, gathered through a web-based questionnaire. Research results unveil the unsustainable spatial and developmental patterns of Greek insular contexts and the shortage of mainstream planning expertise for collaboratively establishing attractive cultural-tourism ensembles. These factors restrain sustainability achievements and the repositioning of Greek islands in the global scenery as authentic heritage-led destinations.

Keywords: insular territories; cultural heritage; heritage-led local development; cultural tourism; participatory strategic planning; Greek islands



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1. Introduction

The 2030 Territorial Agenda of the European Union (EU) [1] sets the ground for spatial planning and territorial development/cohesion, taking into account the wide diversity of its territories; the distinct developmental challenges these are confronted with; and the priorities in spatial planning and overarching developmental strategies and policies that are relevant to territorial peculiarities. Among others, it also stresses the value of natural and cultural heritage of the European continent as a unique and assorted asset that deserves to be protected and sustainably managed. Unleashing the untapped potential of this heritage can form the ground for attaining durable and equitable, sustainable and heritage-led future development pathways for local communities [2]. Such an endeavour takes for granted a place-specific and people-centered planning effort [3–5] that aims at featuring a ‘wise’ balance between the preservation of natural and cultural reserves and their embeddedness in the economic and social realms, in order for sustainable and resilient outcomes for local communities to emerge. Concurrently, such an effort presupposes the raising of awareness as well as the empowerment and engagement of local and regional decision-making bodies, stakeholders, communities, etc. [1,6–11]. These will ensure that the aforementioned balance will be collaboratively planned and implemented; and the added value of the fully protected and respected, tangible and intangible, land and maritime, cultural and natural heritage of

territories will be grasped and appreciated by the community [12] and will be sustainably managed to the benefit of all.

Into the various types of regions that are addressed in the EU Territorial Agenda 2030 fall insular territories. These are regions that are mostly grasped as synonymous with geographically self-contained and generally lagging behind, in developmental terms, areas. Developmental lag of insular regions, as various researchers claim, is due to insularity-based structural weaknesses [13–23]. Concurrently, the majority of those regions are marked by an unbalanced economic structure, featured by a mono-sectoral, mass tourism-related developmental pattern [24,25]. Sustainability of such a pattern, however, has currently been questioned and has also been a subject of particular concern in the research community [9,13,16,23–25]. Furthermore, intensive tourism growth trends of the last decades have strengthened interest in island research [24] and particularly in small islands, i.e., those with an area of less than 10,000 km² [26]. In addition, such trends have led to the exploration of various developmental scenarios in order for more sustainable management options of island destinations to be sought [24].

The prevalence of the mass tourism model in such geographically-confined areas, as various studies show [24–28], is a source of significant social, cultural and environmental burden. Additionally, such a model further stresses the state of their fragile environment by means of intense urbanization, resource overconsumption, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss; overcoming thus carrying capacity constraints of these geographical entities [28–30]. Research literature is actually rich in publications related to mass tourism in island regions, elaborating on a number of different dimensions or repercussions of this resource-intensive model on that particular type of region. Indicative topics explored are the: environmental and socio-cultural impacts of mass tourism on islands [31]; residents' quality of life [32]; aspects related to alternative forms of tourism on islands [33]; linkages of tourism with cultural heritage [34]; cooperation, stakeholders' participation and leadership in cultural tourism planning [35]; climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic and their impacts on (mass) tourism [24], to name but a few.

Discourse on *sustainability and resilience* aspects of insular destinations for the sake of economic, social and environmental prosperity has intensified, with a specific concern on the negative impacts of mass tourism at the local level [36]. The same holds for place-based approaches, which highlight the diversifying resource base, needs and unique tourism character of each single island category, attracting visitors with distinct attributes and expectations [26], and call for planning practices that place local stakeholders and communities at the epicenter of the tourism planning process. Many studies proclaim the advantages of collaborative planning and predicate on conducting planning for featuring more sustainable and competitive island tourism profiles [37,38]. Community engagement has already been recognized as an essential dimension in articulating successful island tourism practices [27,35,39,40] with current tourism research streams highlighting activation and substantial local stakeholders' involvement in tourism planning for mediating conflicts and reaching consensus at the policy level [27,39,40]. Thus, a transition to more collaborative and visionary planning schemes is taking place [1,9,10,15,41–43], seeking to articulate tourism development decisions in insular regions that fulfill the following objectives [43]:

- ensure sustainable and equitable local development, while safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage assets [44];
- broaden resilience of insular destinations to external crises, e.g., climate change, health outbreaks;
- feature sustainable and resilient tourism patterns by promoting environmentally-, culturally- and socially-sensitive decision-making [45]; and, most importantly,
- engage local decision makers, societal groups and stakeholders in collaboratively planning future sustainable and resilient cultural tourism trails in island regions [44,46].

When it comes to territories in Greece, the aforementioned issues also fall into the research community agenda; while distinct topics are also elaborated which have a specific spatial reference—i.e., an island region—as a case study e.g., [16,47–49]. Additionally, Spilanis & Vagianni [50] have, among others, conducted a study focusing on islands of the Aegean Sea; while Andriotis [51] expanded such a study elaborating on Greek islands as a whole. However, the studies conducted so far, while delving into the tourism sector per se, lack a spatial planning perspective of tourism development in association with the spatial distribution of the islands' natural and cultural assets. Such a concomitant consideration is critical for assessing the potential, and steering well-informed decisions as to those sustainable tourism forms that fit well to Greek islands, each perceived as a distinct case study. Missing is also the local policy dimension, i.e., a certain insight into the role, capacity and vision of local administration as well as related initiatives and actions undertaken, planned or visioned towards a spatially-defined strategic tourism plan that displays tight linkages with natural and cultural capital and seeks to achieve sustainable and resilient future tourism development in their territories. Such a local plan would be of value, taking into account that uncontrolled tourism development, lack of spatial planning, high built-up densities and urbanization of coastal lands seem, according to Andriotis [51], to be the main sources of Greek islands' undesirable environmental effects.

That said, the *key research questions* (RQ) of this work are articulated as follows:

- RQ1: Do Greek islands respond to the evolving tourism demand towards authentic and memorable destinations or they are still attached to the mass model?
- RQ2: What are the current practices islands' municipal administrations follow to meet tourism sustainability objectives? Or, stated differently, do they fulfill the aforementioned objectives based on a sustainable and resilient, collaboratively-built tourism plan that is tightly linked to and is fully respecting integrity of natural and cultural heritage?

In order to delve into the above research questions, a two-stream methodological approach is utilized, consisting of: (i) a quantitative data elaboration, interpretation and visualization stream, aiming to explore the dynamics of mass tourism development in island territories, and (ii) a qualitative web-based research questionnaire, engaging all local administrations of Greek insular municipalities and aiming to assess preparedness or readiness of local decision makers by means of currently in place or planned initiatives for establishing sustainable, heritage-led tourism forms.

Evidence-based responses to the above research questions are perceived as an essential part of a planning process and a means for realizing the current spatial and developmental context of Greek insular regions as a whole; and the planning practices of local administrations with relevance to issues of culture, tourism and their successful integration. This part can then properly feed subsequent planning endeavours that can restrain anthropogenic pressures and the further deterioration of natural and cultural assets of island regions; and put flesh on planning a certain turnaround of the mass tourist model towards more authentic, heritage-led future pathways.

2. The Broader Decision Environment—Key Policy Directions

In seeking to achieve sustainable and resilient, heritage-led future pathways for lagging-behind insular communities in the Mediterranean in general, and Greece in particular, cultural heritage—both in land and at sea—and its contribution to the establishment of authentic and experience-based cultural tourism products seems to be a critical key driver. The broader decision environment, within which such a heritage-led narrative can be planned and implemented, rests upon sustainability concerns, cultural heritage management, cultural tourism and their integration upon the specific territorial context of insular regions (Figure 1). Key policy directions of the aforementioned bedrocks—either inspiring/motivating or regulatory—at the different spatial levels of policy making—from global to national—are highlighted in the following sections.

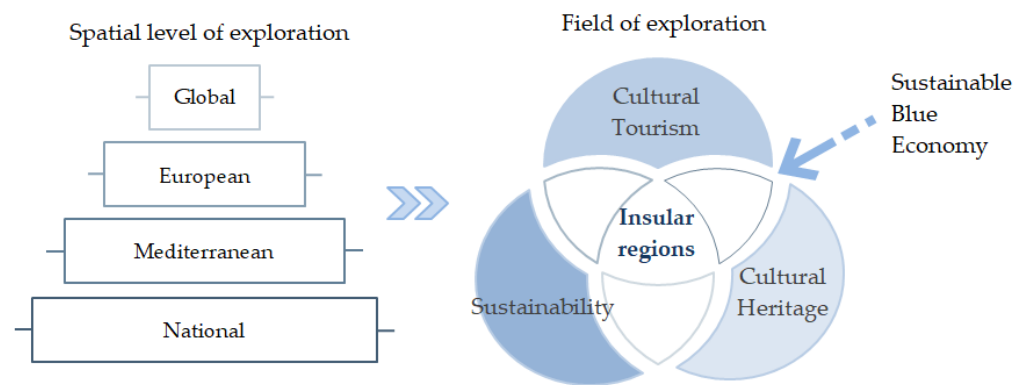


Figure 1. Key spatial levels of policy directions relevant to the main fields of exploration of this work, Source: own elaboration.

2.1. Global Policy Directions

Sustainability objectives at the global level are currently articulated through the 2030 United Nations (UN) Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that guide policy efforts around the globe towards an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and the planet [52]. Tourism in general, and cultural tourism in particular, hold a prominent position in this Agenda, both directly and indirectly; and are linked to sustainability objectives, taking into account the intrinsic local character of tourism activities and their tight connection to environmental, social, economic as well as cultural and natural destinations' assets [53]. Furthermore, cultural heritage—both in its tangible and intangible, land and underwater form—is for the first time quite clearly pronounced and is also emphasized in its role as both a key driver and an enabler for achieving SDGs, by establishing local culture- and identity-based visions and facilitating their successful implementation through relevant policy decisions [54]. In more detail, cultural heritage is directly pronounced in SDG 11—'Sustainable Cities and Communities', specific target 11.4 and SDG 8—'Decent Work and Economic Growth', specific target 8.9 [52]. The latter endorses the culture-tourism dipole as a means for: attracting sustainable tourism investments to the benefit of local prosperity [55]; and coping with unexpected, of global reach, 'black swans', e.g., COVID-19 health crisis as well as steadily evolving global threats, such as climate change.

2.2. European Policy Directions

At the level of the European Union (EU), several post-pandemic policy documents and reports have been announced, pointing out the need to re-evaluate current tourism policies and move from 'quantity to quality' [56]. Keeping pace with the global trends in a highly competitive and rapidly evolving tourism market, the cultural tourism model in Europe seems to be a driving force for moving forwards to more resilient, sustainable and place-specific developmental practices. This model illuminates sectoral, spatial, developmental etc. issues, the most important of which are displayed in Table S1.

In addition to these policy directions highlighting culture, tourism and insular territories, special attention is given to policies introducing an integrated planning approach of the marine world that is strongly related to spatial and developmental issues of insular communities. The currently overcrowded marine environment and the overconsumption of marine resources give rise to new planning orientations in the marine and coastal world in order for conflicts among maritime uses and sectoral activities to be properly managed [57]. These orientations call for a more integrated and multi-sectoral approach in maritime planning, introduced by the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) [58]; furnish a strategic and comprehensive planning and management approach for maritime activities; and set sustainability as an overarching goal. Adoption of these orientations has resulted in the articulation of the Marine Spatial Planning Directive in 2014 [59], with Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) being perceived as a cross-cutting planning and policy tool as well as a

comprehensive framework for consistent, transparent, sustainable, and evidence-based decision-making in the marine environment. MSP is of outmost importance when it comes to insular regions, since it sets the ground for reaping the benefits of the blue economy in an effective, integrated and sustainable way [60].

However, various researchers claim that sustainability barriers, faced by insular territories, are not really well reflected in the existing EU policy arsenal [22,61]. In fact, a common European insular strategy, based on the specific geographical peculiarities of islands, is missing, with the exception of the Outermost Regions [62]; while respective policies are mainly fragmented by field or sector, e.g., cohesion-, agriculture-, fishery-related etc. directions. In addition, insular territories are most commonly addressed in water basin macro-regional strategies and in national/regional strategic documents [62].

Speaking of the macro-regional level, worth mentioning are the IMP-related sea basin strategies, initiated by the European Commission and addressing the specific economic, social and environmental objectives of all its seas and oceans. These region-tailored approaches aim at strengthening collaboration on the ground of common challenges and opportunities for the maritime economy and the protection of the marine environment. For the Mediterranean Basin, two initiatives have been put in place, as these are presented by the following EU Communications:

- “Towards an Integrated Maritime Policy for better governance in the Mediterranean” [63]. This, among others, sketches the remarkable cultural tourism profile of the Mediterranean Region and the need to safeguard, inter-link and sustainably manage coastal and maritime heritage in tandem with economic and environmental interests;
- “Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean” [64]. It highlights the dialogue about the tourism’s position in the blue economy, while including concrete actions for promoting new theme-based maritime and coastal tourism products and services.

The study of both the institutional regulations and the European policies in force gives rise to a number of key issues, relative to the European island regions, which are shortly presented in Table S2.

2.3. National Policy Directions in Greece

Greek islands, as unique and highly reputed, naturally and culturally endowed, mass tourism destinations [12], are currently confronted with significant challenges in overturning this model, with the most important of them being the outdated policy directions regarding tourism and cultural planning, the time-consuming bureaucratic procedures for reviewing and updating current policies; and the lack of a robust and integrated insular policy.

In more detail, the current General Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development (GFSPSD), already institutionalized since 2008 [65], gives a rough direction towards the need to diversify the tourism model while emphasizing the role of cultural heritage towards this end. This currently outdated General Framework is accompanied by a series of sectoral (special) frameworks, one of which is dedicated to the tourism sector. However, withdrawal of the latter’s revision in 2013 [66] renders it obsolete and non-harmonized with contemporary challenges. Currently, the specific spatial framework for tourism at the national level is under review. However, the first signs of the revised framework do not signal a major departure from the past. That said, at present there is no clearly stated and spatially-defined tourism policy in force in Greece, a country that falls into one of the most highly-rated tourism destinations at both the European and the global level. This deficit has caused significant delays in formulating coherent, place-specific (islands included), sustainable tourism practices. In addition, an effort to articulate a Special Framework for Coastal and Insular regions remained in draft and has not received an institutional legitimization [67].

In fact, tourism planning is currently implemented through regional and local developmental and spatial plans [68]. In particular, regional and municipal administrations, in

accordance with the power offered by Law 3852/2010 [69], are able to plan and implement regional and local developmental plans within the framework of Regional Operational and Thematic Programs. Such efforts are complemented by entrepreneurial incentives, provided by the respective nationally-defined Developmental Laws [68,70]. Within such a framework, municipal administrations—addressed in the qualitative research of this work—are able to draw up tourism and cultural development plans and be part of decisions that have so far formed the current Greek tourism reality in a rather spontaneous manner. Municipal regulatory arrangements and interventions are supplemented by several laws and ministerial decisions that sketch the decision environment within which locational and investment decision-making of the tourism sector is made. Currently, a number of important national initiatives are undertaken that set the ground for a more coherent and integrated national decision-making context for insular communities to blossom. These are presented in Table S3.

3. Materials and Methods

In this section, the methodological steps, the study area, as well as the quantitative and qualitative data of the empirical part of this work is discussed.

3.1. The Methodological Approach

Having in mind this study as a part of a planning process for realizing the current state of insular territories in terms of: (i) mass tourism destinations and related repercussions, (ii) local cultural tourism planning endeavours undertaken so far; and (iii) current perceptions as to contemporary planning directions in implementing that kind of endeavours, the steps of the two-streams methodological approach of this work are presented in Figure 2.

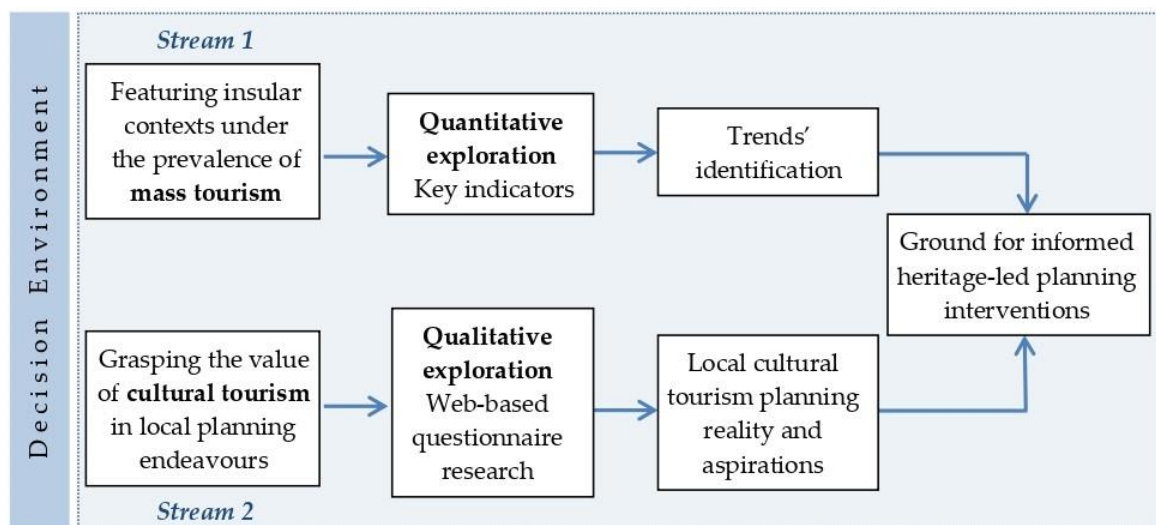


Figure 2. Steps of the methodological approach, Source: own elaboration.

More specifically, this approach consists of *two main streams*:

The *first stream* attempts to sketch, by means of quantitative data elaboration, interpretation and visualization and a number of related indicators, the implications or pressures—in demographic, economic, environmental and spatial terms—exerted by the long-lasting mass tourism developmental trajectory of Greek insular territories. The scope of work in this stream is to illuminate trends with respect to the: mono-sectoral pattern of insular economies and the strong dependence on tourism; pressures exerted on these geographically-contained land parcels and especially in their coastal parts; and risks inherent in this developmental model that call for trend-breaking by properly informing policy decisions in alignment with evolutions of the external environment.

The *second stream* undertakes a web-based qualitative questionnaire research that addresses all Greek insular municipal administrations (71 local administrations in total) and aims at exploring the planning rationale at the local level as well as the role of cultural assets and cultural tourism in local priority settings. More specifically, the scope of this second research work stream is to: identify maturity, understanding and positioning of local decision makers against more proactive, resilient, cooperative, integrated, people-centric and heritage-led tourism practices; and assess their capacity and readiness to render their islands future-proof destinations. The distributed web-based questionnaire contains a set of thematic entities and respective questions that are addressed to local municipalities' representatives and aim at featuring the: current state of cultural tourism development in their territories; cultural tourism planning practices; ways these are realized from a methodological point of view; and future aspirations towards an alternative cultural tourism paradigm, the way these are sketched by representatives' responses. Key Thematic Areas (TAs) of this structured web-enabled questionnaire are:

- TA1: Current status of each island's cultural tourism development and attributes of cultural tourism planning in terms of its strategic and participatory nature;
- TA2: Identification of alternative forms of tourism currently in place;
- TA3: Future aspirations towards alternative tourism forms that can be well adjusted to the distinguished and abundant natural and especially cultural wealth of islands.

Integration of the quantitative and qualitative research work, carried out in these two streams, provides a more profound and evidence-based assessment of mass tourism repercussions and related local policies in these fragmented spatial territories; and can form the ground for featuring pathway hints in support of a reorientation of planning approaches and related local policies towards collaboratively-built heritage-led narratives and future developmental trails. Furthermore, it provides input for assessing the way locals realize and adjust to the external decision environment and its key directions, as presented in Section 2.

3.2. Study Area and Data Used

The study area incorporates all insular municipal administrations of Greece, located in the Aegean and the Ionian Sea (see Figure 3), with the exception of the islands of Crete and Evia in Central Greece Region that are classified as large islands (3655 km² and 8336 km², respectively). It should be noted here that, for the purposes of this research, classification of islands according to their hosting population is adopted [49], distinguishing islands into: (a) Very small (≤ 750 inhabitants), (b) Small (750–5000 inhabitants), (c) Medium (5000–50,000 inhabitants), (d) Large (50,000–500,000 inhabitants), and (e) Very large ($\geq 500,000$ inhabitants). In addition, NUTS 3 classification (corresponding to the administrative level of Regional Unit) is used to define the spatial context of reference. Based on this classification, highly populated islands establish separate NUTS 3 units; otherwise NUTS 3 units are defined as clusters of nearby islands.

Quantitative elaboration—first stream of work in Figure 2—explores recent developmental trends in Greek insular territories, based on a list of socioeconomic variables related to (Table 1): (i) population and employment data, emanating from the National Statistical Service of Greece [71]; and (ii) tourism capacity and overnight stays' data, extracted from the database of the Institute of Greek Tourism Confederation (INSETTE) [72]. It should be noted here that, in certain cases, INSETTE database aggregates data of certain islands (e.g., Thasos, Samothraki, Sporades Islands, Gavdos and Skyros) with mainland areas. Therefore, the corresponding variables are excluded from the analysis and are reported as “no data”.

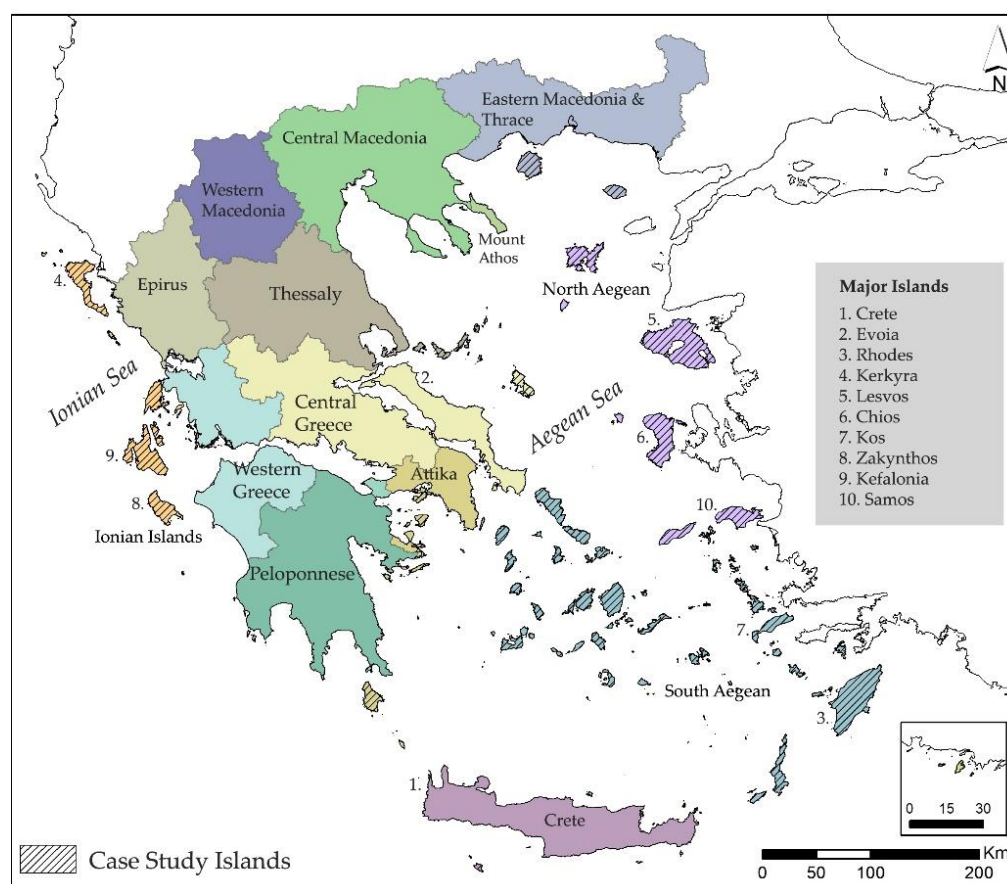


Figure 3. Islands incorporated in the study area [each colour in the map represents a NUTS2 level (Region); while islands that are part of a mainland Region are marked in same colour as the respective Region], Source: own elaboration.

Table 1. Selected socioeconomic variables and relevant data sources used in the first work stream.

Variable	Data Source
% Population change 2001–2011	ELSTAT
% Employment in the tourism sector 2011	ELSTAT
Hotel capacity in beds 2021 *	INSET
Hotel capacity change (in beds) 2011–2021 *	INSET
Overnight stays 2019 *	INSET
% Overnight stays change 2011–2019 **	INSET

* divided by the area (in square km) of each island territory; ** 2019 is used in order for the 2020 COVID-19 disturbance to be avoided.

Additionally, cultural data regarding land and underwater cultural sites of the study area are reported, originated from the Archaeological Cadastre of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture [73]; and the Joint Ministerial Decision 92225/2022 [74], concerning shipwrecks' locations in Greece. These data unveil the remarkable and abundant natural and cultural assets of insular regions and related potential for sustainable, heritage-led future development. Mapping of shipwrecks is approximated according to the relevant location descriptions of the aforementioned Joint Ministerial Decision. Furthermore, built-up areas distribution in insular municipalities is studied. Towards this end, the Global Human Settlement Layer [75] is used and particularly the GHS built-up grid (GHS_BUILT_LDS2014) [76], in order for the spatial repercussions of the mass tourism model in insular territories to be

roughly sketched. Finally, recent Airbnb data for 2021, extracted from the Inside Airbnb Platform [77] complements the quantitative data set used in this work. However, Airbnb data are available only for the Southern Aegean Region and are used in combination with data on tourism facilities, available from Open Street Map (OSM) [78], in order for the spatial distribution of tourism accommodation in insular territories to be identified. All data are projected in the Hellenic Geodetic Reference System 1987 (EPSG: 2100). In addition, it should be noted here that despite the different time spans of quantitative data used in this research work (e.g., Census 2021 data are not yet available), certain inferences as to the prevailing trends of studied aspects in insular regions can be clearly drawn.

Speaking of the *qualitative elaboration*—second stream of work in Figure 2—this is based on data collected through an online questionnaire survey that is conducted in the time span September 2021 to March 2022. This online questionnaire research addresses all 71 Greek insular municipalities located in both the Ionian and the Aegean Sea, as above described. A high response rate is reached in this respect, engaging 55 out of the 71 insular municipalities (namely 77.5%) and covering both the Aegean and the Ionian Sea (Figure 4). The 55 insular municipalities, which have taken part in this research, represent islands that, according to their population, can be classified into small and very small (54.5%), medium (41.9%) and large ones (3.6%) (Figure 5a). Furthermore, the majority of them fall into the three, purely insular, Greek Regions, namely the Region of Southern Aegean, the Region of Northern Aegean and the Ionian Region (Figure 5b).

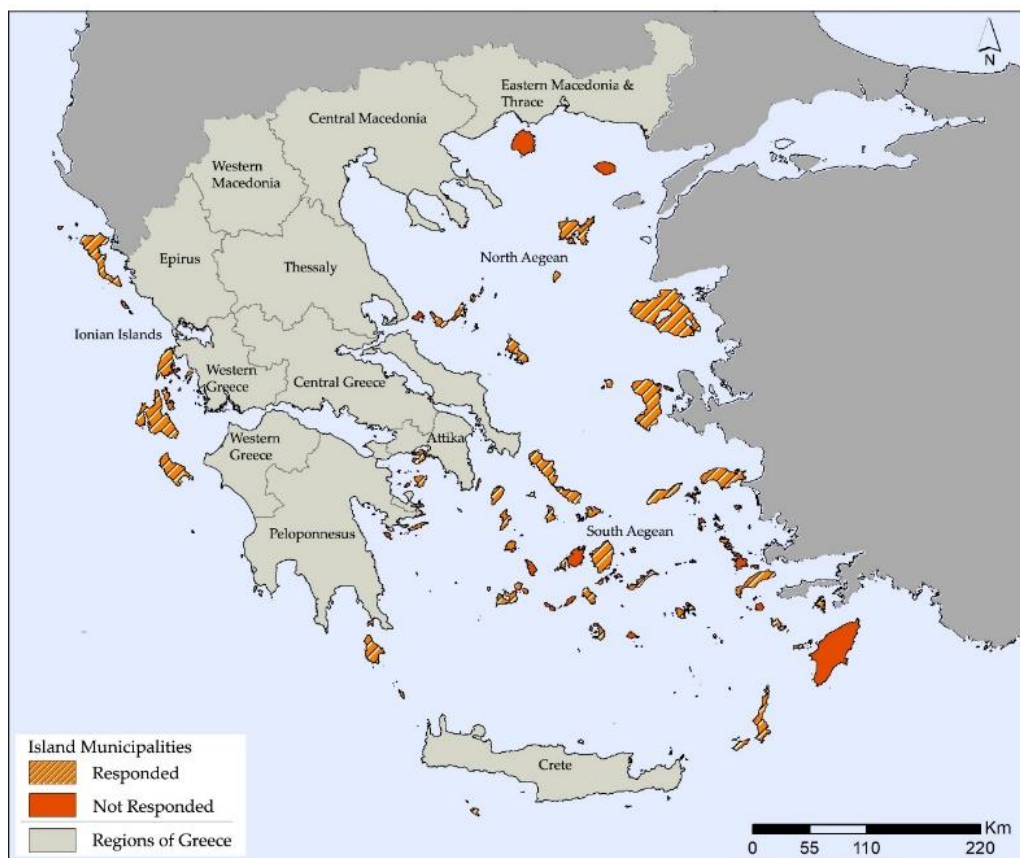


Figure 4. Insular municipalities incorporated in the qualitative web-based questionnaire research, Source: own elaboration.

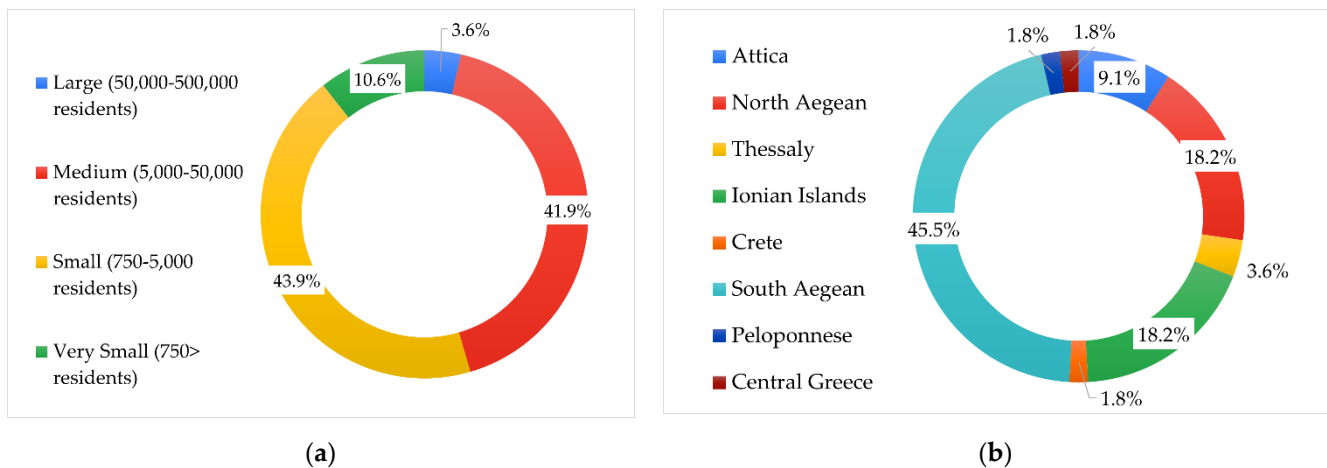


Figure 5. (a) Classification of Greek insular municipalities by population size, and (b) share of studied islands by Greek Regions (NUTS2 level) in which these administratively belong. Source: own elaboration.

4. Results

Results obtained from the two main streams of this work are discussed below. More specifically, changes in population and employment as well as spatial patterns of population distribution and the evolutions of the built environment as a result of the prevalence of the tourism sector are sketched, while the outcomes of the online questionnaire research are also considered.

4.1. Featuring Mass Tourism Repercussions in Greek Insular Regions

The study of the evolution of islands' population in Greece displays a declining trend in the time span 1951–1981 and a certain reversal of this trend since the 1980s [79]. Furthermore, the total population in the case study area has grown by 1.7% in the period 2001–2011 (from 797,819 to 811,177 inhabitants) (Figure 6a). Population growth in 2001–2011 is much faster (between 8–13%) in globally highly-rated Greek tourism destinations, e.g., the Southern Aegean islands of Mykonos, Kos, Paros, Santorini and Syros; while it is also high in the Attika Region islands (15.8%) and the Ionian island of Lefkada (8.2%). In Cyclades Regional Unit, smaller islands present population growth rates of between 4–7%; while in most Northern Aegean Islands (e.g., Lesbos, Limnos, Chios, and Samos), Southern Aegean Islands (e.g., Karpathos and Andros) and Ionian Islands (Corfu), the population has slightly decreased in the 2001–2011 period (Note: 2021 Census population data not yet released).

Population growth in insular territories is directly related to tourism development, which has demonstrated an accelerated pace in the past decades. This leads to a certain increase of the share of the tertiary sector in insular economies [80] and a respective increase in employment in the tourism industry. In fact, the share of employment in the tourism sector (accommodation and food services) in insular territories in the year 2011 is remarkably higher than the national average of 7.8%, reaching up to 30% in Santorini, 30.3% in Mykonos, and 35.4% in Kos (Figure 6b).

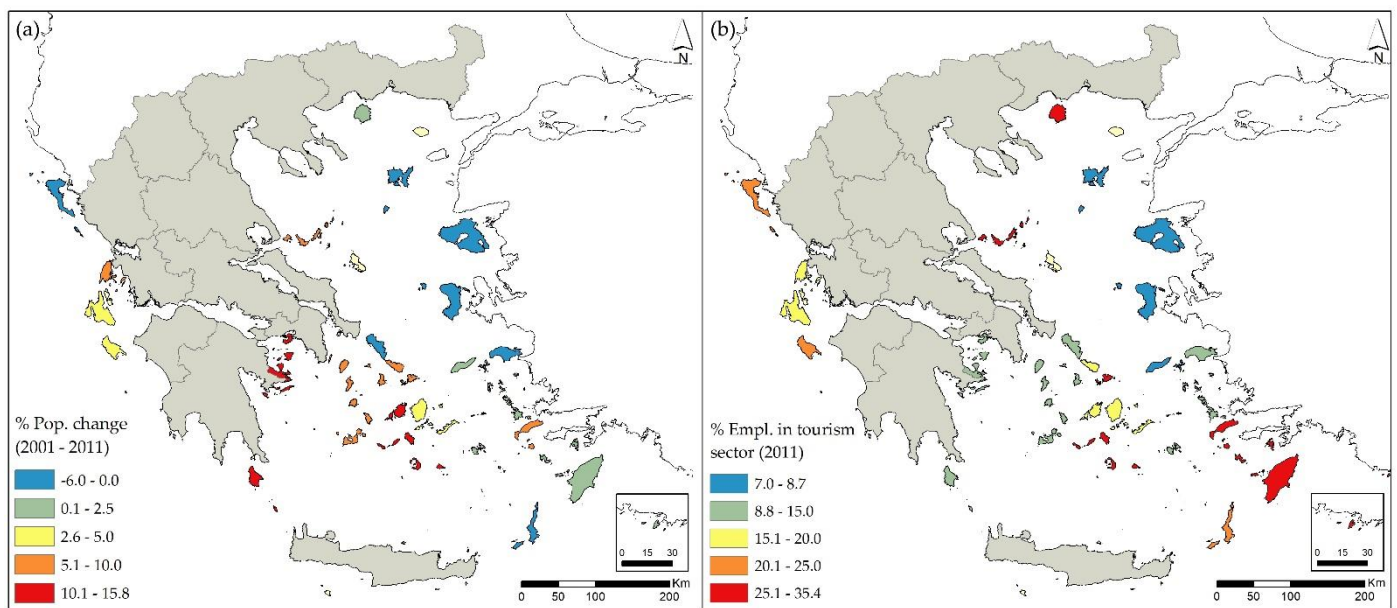


Figure 6. (a) % population change in 2001–2011; (b) share (%) of employment in the tourism sector in 2011, Source: own elaboration.

Hotel capacity as a total has increased by 19.8% between 2011–2021, rising from 306,646 to 367,509 beds. Figure 7a demonstrates hotel capacity change, weighted by each island's area. The largest index values are observed in Mykonos (48.6 beds/km²), Kos (42.3 beds/km²), Zakynthos (19.1 beds/km²), Santorini (14.5 beds/km²), Rhodes (10.4 beds/km²), and Corfu (8.6 beds/km²) (islands in red in Figure 7a); while considerable increase is also observed in the islands of Paros, Naxos, Karpathos, Syros and Kefalonia (islands in orange in Figure 7a). In highly-rated tourism destinations like Rhodes, Mykonos, Kos, Corfu and Santorini, the majority of tourism infrastructure concerns 4-star and 5-star hotels, this fact showing the dominance of a higher-class mass tourism model.

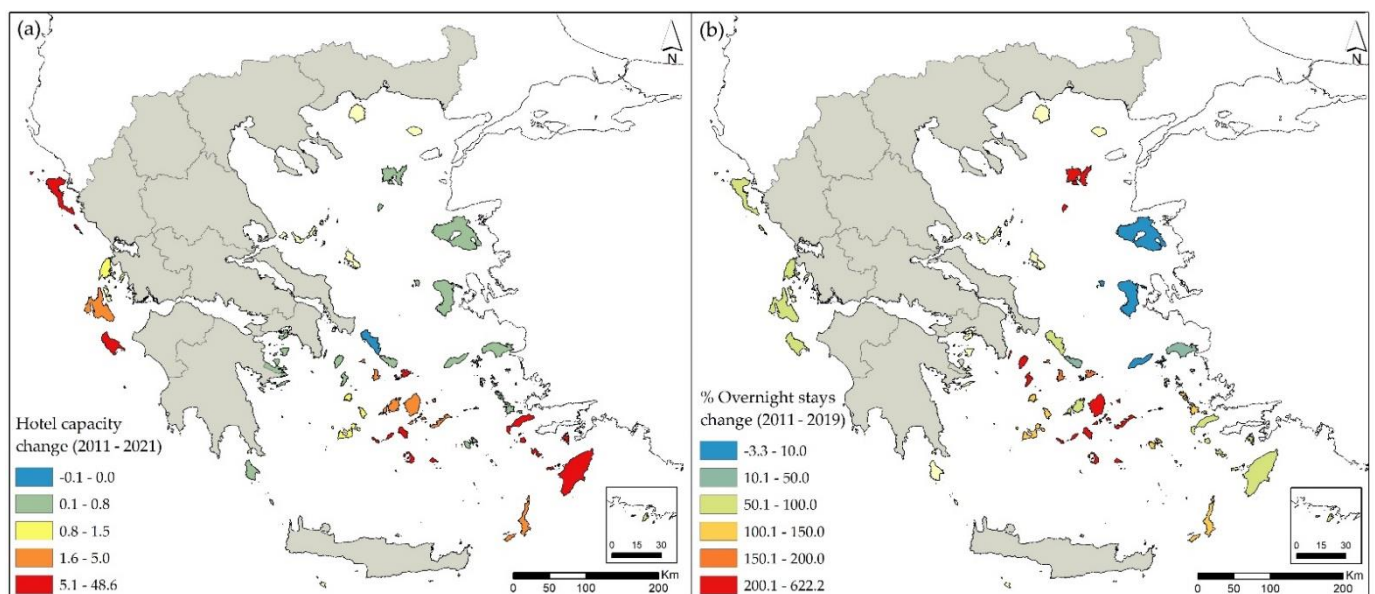


Figure 7. (a) Hotel capacity change in beds (2011–2021) weighted by each island's area; (b) Overnight stays' change in % (2011–2019). Source: own elaboration.

In addition, in the period 2011–2019 (just before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic), the total number of overnight stays grew from 26.2 to 45.3 million (+72.6%), this

fact showing a highly dynamic growth of the tourism sector. In a specific group of islands, namely Naxos, Paros, Karpathos, Milos, Syros, Limnos, Kalymnos and Kea (islands in red in Figure 7b), overnight stays in 2019 are raising more than double, compared to 2011. However, the strong dependency of islands on national and mainly international tourism leads to a strong seasonality, with international tourist flows being mostly concentrated over a 5-month period, namely from May to September [81]. In 2020, restrictive measures against COVID-19 have led to a dramatic decrease in tourism arrivals by over 70%; and respective losses in tourism-related businesses in the accommodation, food services and travel agencies' sectors [82]. This fact is highly representative of the strong reliance of island economies on tourism, a sector that is particularly vulnerable to external crises.

Further to the aforementioned vulnerability of tourism against external crises, seasonality and spatial distribution of the sector's entrepreneurial activities and infrastructures result in considerable pressures upon islands' natural, historical and cultural resources, raising thus severe sustainability concerns. As to the spatial distribution of the sector's activities, such concerns are justified by elaboration of GHSL data, demonstrating a built-up land expansion in the period 1975–2014 that reaches an overall rate of 30%. Noticeable also is the fact that new built-up developments and major infrastructures are mainly concentrated along the coast, giving prominence to another critical issue, namely the one of coastal urban sprawl to the detriment of natural and agricultural land as well as the deterioration of coastal and marine ecosystems [83]. Figure 8 displays built-up density in a characteristic set of islands namely: (a) Kefalonia, (b) Kos, and (c) Kea. Furthermore, it displays location of: protected areas, including Natura 2000, wildlife repositories and landscapes of exceptional natural beauty [84]; land and underwater archaeological sites as well as monuments provided by the database of the Archaeological Cadastre; and tourism accommodation data (Airbnb and Hotels/Guesthouses). Mapping of these data definitely reveals the strong pressures exerted mainly on the coastal parts of insular territories that are marked as mass tourism hubs of global reach, like Kefalonia and Kos islands (Figure 8a,b respectively). However, the same holds for less known islands or "emerging destinations", like the island of Kea (Figure 8c), displaying a rapidly growing popularity during the past decade, as witnessed by the overnight stays' index that has, since 2011, increased by 259.1%.

4.2. Delving into Greek Island Municipalities' Cultural Tourism Planning Reality

The aforementioned islands' features raise the vital question as to the ability or readiness of islands to adapt to sustainability concerns but also evolving tourism market trends and cope with challenges and opportunities emerging in the external decision environment. Can Greek islands overturn current unsustainable mass tourism patterns, established for several decades now, in order for their natural and cultural assets to be preserved and be sustainably exploited for paving heritage-led developmental trails? Such concerns have guided this second stream of work, acting as a motive for exploring the ground and preparedness of Greek islands to compete in a rapidly evolving and quite demanding decision environment.

An attempt to respond to the above-mentioned critical concerns is undertaken by use of a qualitative research that elaborates on the previously mentioned key Thematic Areas (TA) (see Section 3.2). Results obtained out of this research are accordingly presented below.

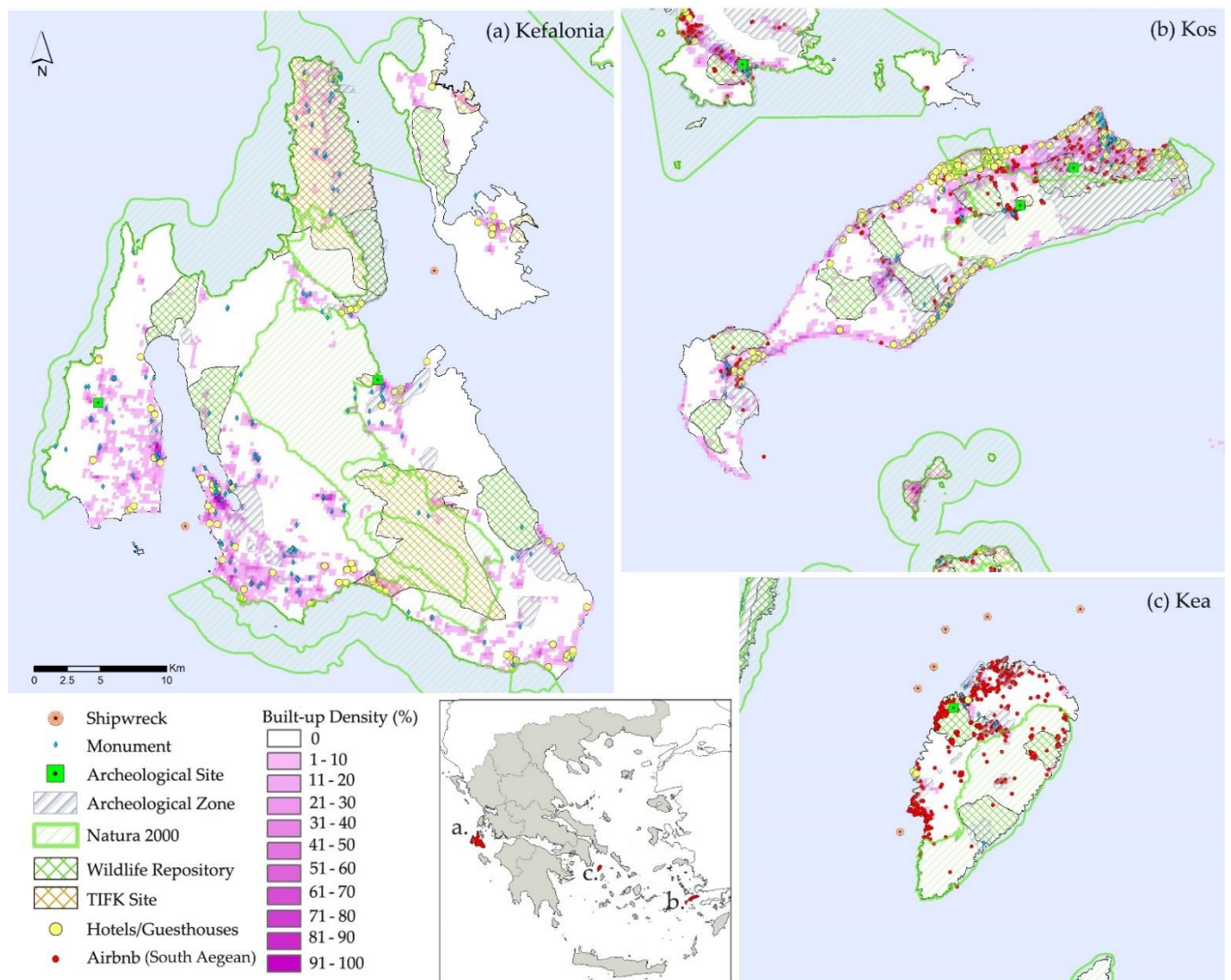


Figure 8. Spatial distribution of natural/cultural resources, tourism accommodation and built-up density in the islands of: (a) Kefalonia, (b) Kos, and (c) Kea; Source: own elaboration.

4.2.1. TA1: Current Status of Islands' Cultural Tourism Development—Cultural Tourism Planning Approach

A. In this Thematic Area, municipalities' representatives are requested to express their opinion as to the extent to which local cultural heritage (CH) assets are being exploited and integrated into the respective tourism products, forming thus an inseparable part of destination's attractiveness. A five points Likert scale is used in this respect, representing: 1—fully unexploited CH, 2—merely exploited CH, 3—exploited CH, 4—satisfactorily exploited CH, and 5—fully exploited CH. Based on responses gathered (Figure 9), a diverse range of CH exploitation rate seems to emerge, with the majority of responses being accumulated at scale levels 3 (38.2%) and 4 (38.2%). This result witnesses that culture is perceived as a significant aspect of islands' tourism identity and is being exploited at a satisfactory level; while its role to steer destination's attractiveness is recognized, although not reaching its highest potential.

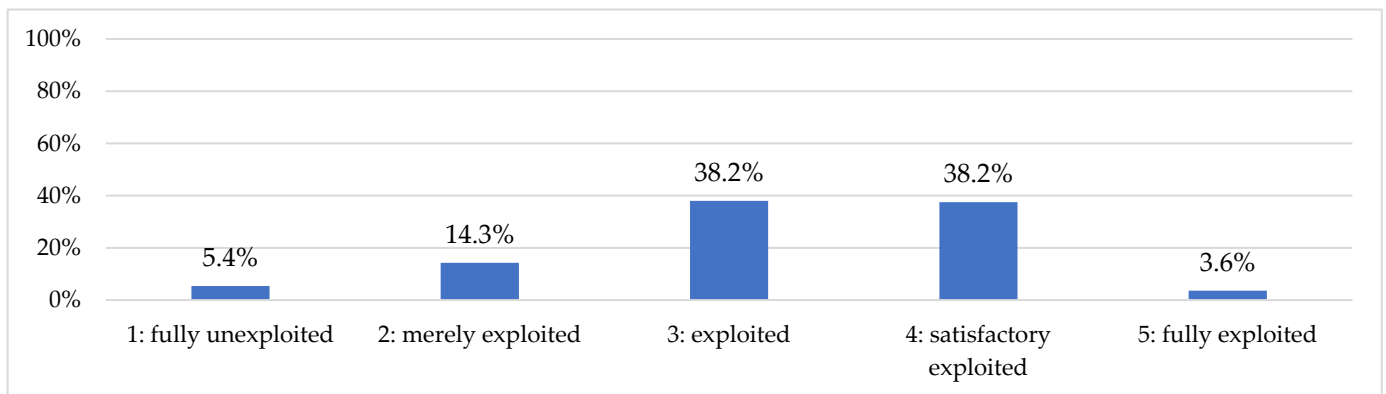


Figure 9. Level of cultural heritage integration into local tourism products, Source: own elaboration based on Web-based questionnaire responses.

Worth noticing are also certain regional differences as to the degree of CH integration into islands' tourism profile. The most indicative difference can be observed in the Attica Region (Figure 10), where a significant percentage of responses fall into levels 2 (40.0%) and 4 (60.0%); demonstrating significant internal inequalities in terms of cultural tourism offering among neighboring island entities.

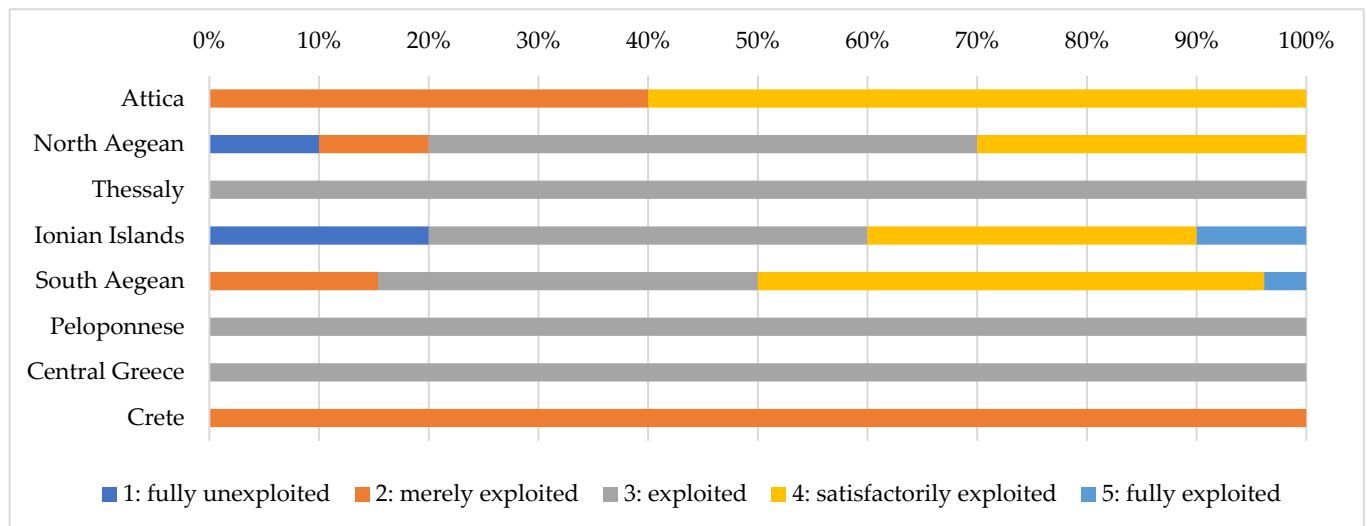


Figure 10. Level of cultural heritage integration into local tourism profile at the different Greek Regions, Source: own elaboration based on questionnaire responses.

B. It is also essential to highlight the way local cultural tourism policy is articulated. Towards this end, municipalities' representatives are requested to provide information as to whether the cultural tourism policy implemented is the outcome of a strategic developmental plan. Relative responses show that 65.5% of islands espouse a cultural tourism development plan; while a significant share (32.7%) lack such a plan. The lack of a coherent and integrated cultural (and) tourism policy has, so far, resulted in an unplanned tourism model that is far from sustainability concerns as well as local needs and expectations, while emphasizes the 3 'S's, i.e., "Sun, Sea and Sand". Such a model is vulnerable to a variety of current challenges (e.g., climate change, health crises); and it also represents a harmful choice that affects the stability of natural, cultural and social capital. Furthermore, it lacks a visionary approach that is grounded in the local comparative advantages—natural and cultural—and can support the identity-building of insular communities. These aspects are of utmost importance, taking into account the rapid increase of tourism flows in Greek

islands during the last decade (see also Figure 7b); which also poses significant risks to the highly fragile insular environments.

C. Taking into account that, currently, public participation in decision-making is the prevailing trend; and recognizing the importance of participatory approaches when it comes to cultural planning [12], the issue of stakeholders' engagement in islands' cultural tourism planning is explored. In fact, according to the municipal representatives' responses, gathered through the questionnaire research, it seems that insular municipalities do not consider public participation as an integral part of their local cultural tourism planning endeavours. As a result, almost 50% of the insular municipalities do not implement relevant initiatives when it comes to cultural tourism planning.

At this point, it is also worth exploring the pattern of public engagement in islands' cultural tourism planning exercises at the regional level, where significant differences are noticed. More specifically, in the Attica Region that hosts the islands of the Argosaronic Bay—i.e., attractive tourism destinations for both foreigners and domestic visitors due to their proximity to Athens metropolitan area—public participation practices are extremely low and are implemented by only 20.0% of these islands (Figure 11). Similarly, low performance in terms of public participation is noticed in the Northern Aegean Region (40.0%). On the contrary, in the Ionian Islands and the Southern Aegean Regions inclusive planning practices are integrated into cultural tourism endeavours, although there is still enough room for improvement. In addition, the few islands that fall into the Regions of Peloponnese and Central Greece are exceptional examples of highly inclusive cultural planning approaches, as opposed to the one falling into the Region of Crete, where such approaches are completely lacking.

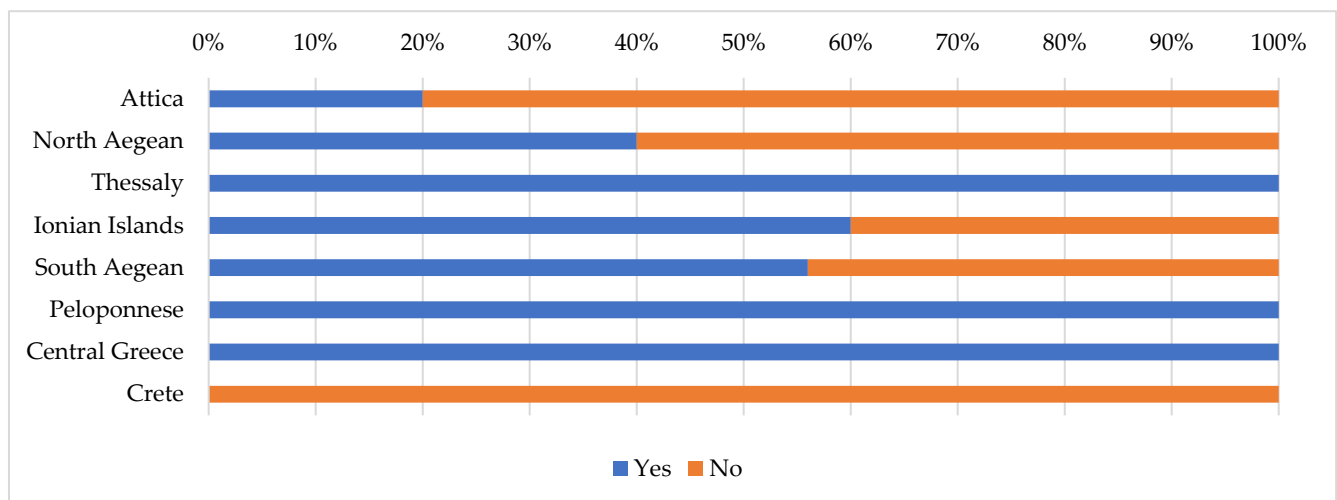


Figure 11. Comparison of local stakeholders' engagement in islands' cultural tourism planning at the regional level, Source: own elaboration based on questionnaire responses.

D. It is also essential to explore the relationship between destination attractiveness on the one hand and cultural tourism planning endeavors on the other. Towards this end, questionnaire results presented in Table 2 with regard to destination's attractiveness, strategic planning and participatory approaches, reveal some interesting key points.

Table 2. Linkages of tourism attractiveness of Greek islands with (collaboratively) deployed cultural tourism plans.

Famous Tourist Destinations	Cultural Tourism Planning	
	Does your island municipality have a cultural tourism plan?	
Yes 83.9%	Yes 65.2%	No 34.8%
	Are citizens engaged?	
	Yes 66.7%	No 33.3%
No 16.1%	Does your island municipality have a cultural tourism plan?	
	Yes 66.7%	No 33.3%
	Are citizens engaged?	
	Yes 83.3%	No 16.7%

Source: Own elaboration based on questionnaire responses.

More specifically, 83.9% of the total sample of the 55 insular municipalities that responded in this research falls into the category of famous Greek tourism destinations (Table 2). In 34.8% of these municipalities, tourism development is not the outcome of a strategic cultural tourism plan. In these cases, the typical Greek islands' mass tourism model that is purely grounded in economic profit is promoted, seeking to satisfy the specific market niche attracted by the typical Greek 'summer myth'. On the contrary, a considerable part of them (65.2%) already espouses a strategic cultural tourism plan. However, in almost one third of these islands (33.3%), strategic cultural tourism plans are top-down products, lacking any concern about public engagement in relative planning processes. As a result, the way such plans can fulfill local needs, expectations and beliefs is questioned.

Surprisingly, 66.7% percent of the islands that fall into the non-highly rated destination group (Table 2) espouse a cultural tourism plan, probably reflecting the desire to steer attractiveness or pave more sustainable tourism development trails. Furthermore, 83.3% of these plans are the outcome of participatory planning approaches.

E. Gathering information about public participation in general is not always adequate for assessing the actual stakeholders' engagement and the way this is realized in practice. To further explore the way public participation is grasped by the representatives of the Greek insular municipalities, a question on the way participation is achieved is included in the questionnaire, asking participants to indicate some examples of participatory practices in use. The responses are not so endorsing of the practices. In fact, they reveal a significant lack of knowledge as to the meaning and the very essence of participation and co-creation in cultural tourism planning and the way these can be accommodated in relevant planning processes.

More specifically, participatory aspects and understanding are limited to the provisions of the Greek Law 3852/2010 [69] predicting the establishment of the so-called Local Advisory Committees (LACs), playing an advisory role with regard to municipal affairs. Such a Committee is formed by representatives of various groups of the local ecosystem, e.g., local commercial and professional associations, scientific associations or academics, sports and cultural associations, to name but a few. LAC establishment is obligatory for municipalities with a population of greater than 10,000 inhabitants; while those disposing less than 10,000 inhabitants can, optionally, establish a LAC through a decision of the Municipal Council. The latter is the case of the majority of Greek islands, falling into very small, small and medium-sized islands (see Figure 5a), where creation of a LAC is not obligatory and, in many cases, is rather neglected. This is also reflected through

this particular research, revealing that only eight islands out of the 55 dispose a LAC, the members of which are actively participating in monthly municipal meetings, covering also cultural and tourism issues. Further to the LAC activity that is perceived as community engagement, there is also a quite false perception as to the actual meaning of participation in cultural development. In fact, this is mainly interpreted as community involvement in local cultural events either as audience or as parts of events' organization on a volunteer basis. Significantly low also is the integration of digital means and platforms when it comes to the way locals communicate with municipality at a decision-making level.

Finally, it is worth noticing the active role of local cultural associations in small island communities. These seem to have a prominent and quite active role in: preserving and sustainably exploiting the local cultural capital; actively engaging in the aforementioned LACs; organizing and promoting local cultural events; and contributing to the preservation of both the tangible and intangible aspects of land and underwater cultural heritage and local identity.

4.2.2. TA2: Already Established Alternative Forms of Tourism

TA2 focuses on the identification of alternative forms of tourism currently in place in the study region. Municipalities' representatives are requested to provide information as to whether alternative forms of tourism are already developed in their island; and, if so, which of them are currently in place. Relevant responses demonstrate that out of the 55 municipalities' participating in this research, 72.7% of them have already developed alternative tourism forms that are integral parts of the local tourism scenery.

Actually, a wide spectrum of such tourism forms is already in place, as shown in Figure 12, with the most prevailing ones being the: cultural tourism (in 49.1% of insular municipalities), nature tourism (in 47.3%), gastronomic tourism (in 40.0%) and diving tourism (in 36.4%). These forms reveal the tight relationship of island's tourism attractiveness with the cultural capital, the sea as an inseparable aspect of the islands' natural environment (fishing and diving tourism), and the local gastronomy as an integral dimension of the intangible cultural heritage and a valuable asset of the Greek tourism narrative. However, the share of cultural tourism in insular municipalities is perceived as rather low (49.1%), compared to the remarkable natural and cultural wealth of Greek islands, both in land and at sea (indicative examples of this wealth is presented in Figure 8 for the islands of Kefalonia, Kos and Kea).

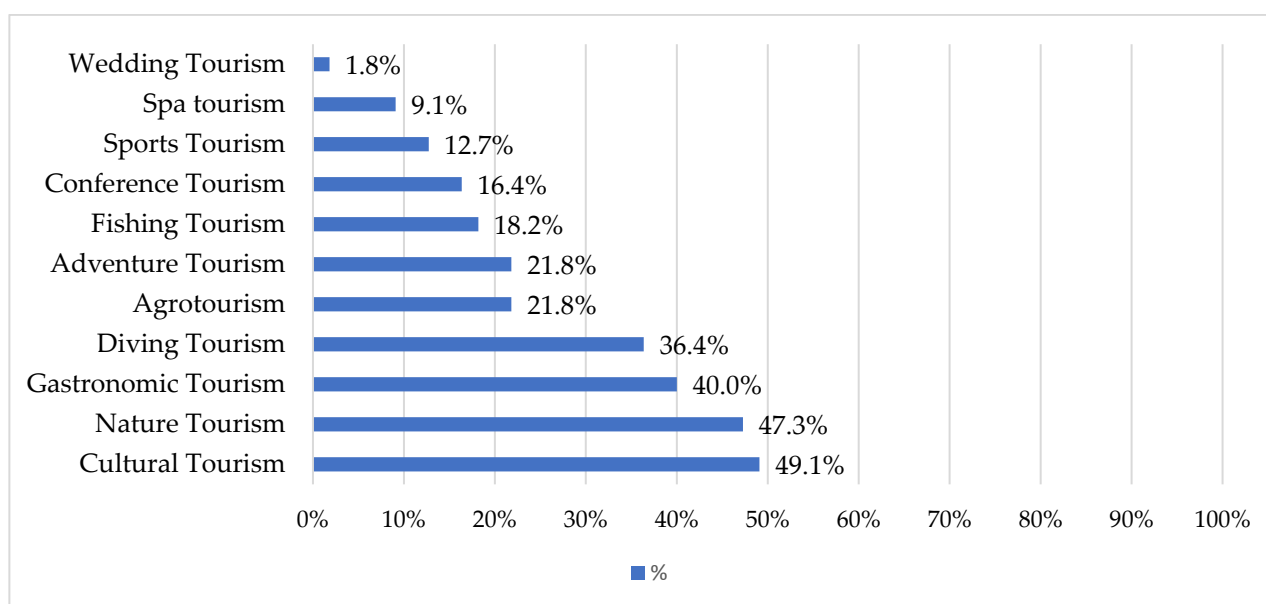


Figure 12. Penetration (%) of currently in place alternative tourism forms in Greek insular municipalities, Source: own elaboration based on questionnaire responses.

4.2.3. TA3: Future Aspirations and Expectations towards Authentic and Experience-Based Tourism Trails

By realizing the strong dependence of the Greek islands' economy on a seasonal, resource-intensive mass tourism model and the need to pave more sustainable, resilient and heritage-led tourism trails, in TA3 of this questionnaire research, administrative representatives are asked to express their aspirations towards a more promising, resource-respectful and heritage-led future tourism paradigm. 98.2% of them go for alternative forms of tourism as a highly relevant option for gradually shifting towards more sustainable and resilient tourism pathways in insular contexts. Their responses reveal that there is enough room for improvement as well as promotion of tourism forms and practices that are in alignment with islands' historical and social trajectory through time and their local cultural identity.

In more detail, according to their preferences (Figure 13), cultural tourism seems to be the prevailing form, gathering 74.5% of responses; and is perceived as fully supporting a naturally- and culturally-enabled narrative of the Greek insular regions. This is also endorsed by the predominance of nature, agrotourism and fishing tourism, tightly linking the islands' spectacular natural environment and proximity to the marine one. The aforementioned forms are further enriched by islands' intangible heritage, such as gastronomy and related tourism forms. Additionally, adventure and conference tourism forms are marked as preferable options, showing that islanders, although confronted with significant administrative and policy constraints, are keen on exploring tourism offering that can both excel the summer season and extend it by means of promoting authentic, locally driven, sophisticated and specialized tourism forms to interested niche tourist segments.

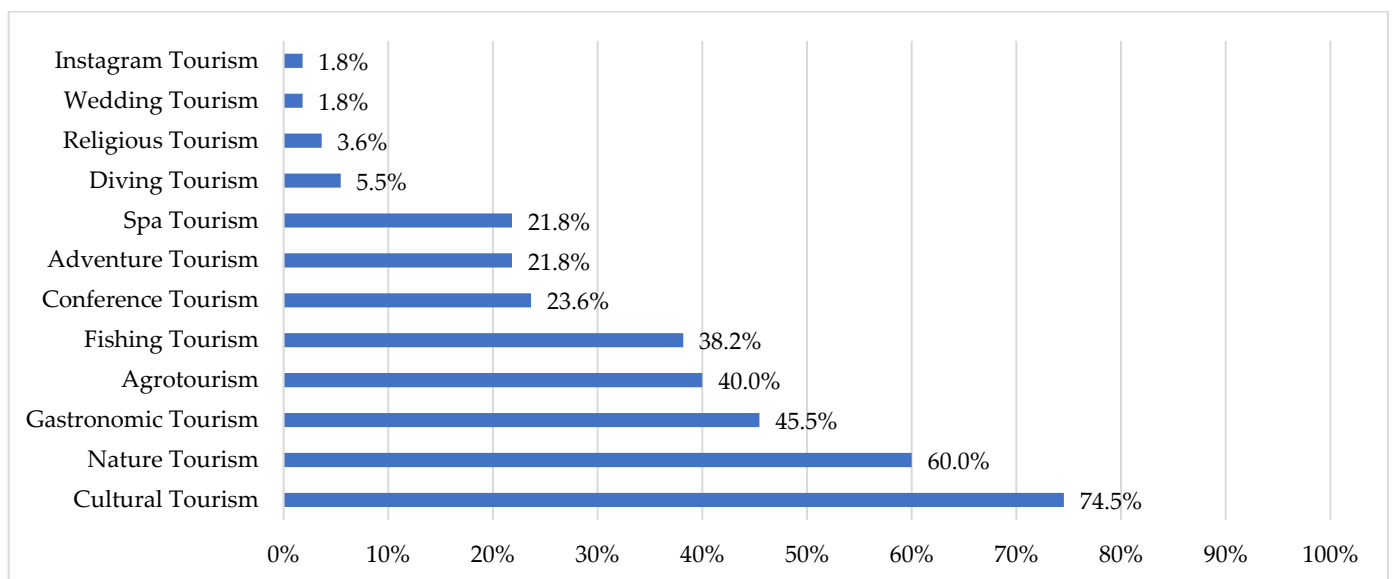


Figure 13. Visions of representatives of insular municipalities as to the heritage-led tourism forms that are more relevant to local specificities of their islands, Source: own elaboration based on questionnaire responses.

5. Discussion

The prevalence of mass tourism in the trajectory of insular economies in Southern Europe in general and Greece in particular has undermined territorially-integrated and sustainable forms of development. Additionally, it has exacerbated developmental and spatial intra- and inter-insular inequalities; while has led to an intensive, beyond carrying capacity, exploitation of coastal and marine resources [29]. The aforementioned evolutions have largely affected well-being and quality of life of local population [32]. Furthermore, efforts towards shifting to more sustainable tourism pathways in alignment with indigenous population's visions and expectations seem to fail in certain insular contexts [85], mainly due to the dominance of market-based approaches as well as the powerful and strong interests of big external investors, having different priorities and policy objectives [40,51]. These have, in most cases, rendered insular economies the subordinates of an externally oriented and controlled tourism sector [85]. Today, however, the issues of sustainability, resilience and soft utilization of natural and cultural, land and marine resources, lying at the top of global policy agenda, are opposed to such resource-intensive and market-oriented approaches, particularly in the geographically-contained insular contexts. Shifting to a more sustainable tourism model that meets islands' economic, socio-cultural, and environmental concerns as well as preserves own identity and the unique natural and cultural assets [86,87] calls for collaborative policy making that engage local authorities, governmental agencies, local businesses and host communities [39,88,89].

That said, natural and cultural wealth of insular regions is currently perceived by planners, regional scientists as well as policy makers as the lever for overturning ominous repercussions of the unenviable developments of the external environment (e.g., climate change) and mass tourism (e.g., overtourism), while effectively weakening insularity drawbacks and isolation by promoting islands as authentic, experience-based, world class destinations. Such a transition, however, presupposes that these regions succeed to exploit their extraordinary natural and cultural wealth in a sustainable, collaborative, resilient and equitable manner; and attain to shift disadvantage of their unique geographies and remoteness into a competitive advantage, using as a mainspring the authenticity and quality as well as the natural/cultural uniqueness and values these areas can offer. These are critical aspects for rendering insular regions attractive and competitive alternative tourism destinations in the tourist arena; and go hand in hand with the newly emerging demand of travelers for experiencing, in a deeper, more sensational and personalized way, both the destination and the indigenous community [90]. Such a demand is also identified by Kim and Jamal [91], who state that a remarkable shift in travelers' choices is gradually noticeable, replacing the former 'escape daily routine' model by the aspiration to 'be a part of' a certain destination; or search for the 'real' and 'authentic' experience [92]. This transition is also in alignment with the 'experience economy' concept that is being established by Pine and Gilmore [93] and is subject to extensive discourse within the research community [94–97].

In the present two-stream research work, the way Greek islands respond to sustainability concerns and the evolving tourism trends towards sustainable, authentic and memorable destinations is explored. This exploration unveils that, despite a certain progress, the current state is still far from desirable.

More specifically, as the work in stream one indicates, the current developmental landscape of Greek islands is largely defined by: the high seasonality and overtourism as well as the respective pressure exerted on the natural and cultural reserves—land, water, biodiversity etc. both in land and at sea—due to the prevailing mono-cultural resource-intensive economic orientation; and the expansion of mass tourism beyond (in most cases) their carrying capacity, accompanied by a steadily expanding coastalization pattern. Both trends identified are placing local socio-economic prosperity and stability at risk, as is indicatively demonstrated by the current COVID-19 health pandemic and its repercussions in insular destinations. Such a developmental landscape is, additionally, in contrast to

the already noticeable global tourism market trends that feature consumers' preferences towards more peaceful, authentic, experience-based and less crowded destinations [91,92].

Results obtained in the first stream of this work also reveal that the majority of Greek insular regions are still largely identified as highly rated mass tourism hubs and, in most cases, overcrowded ones. This holds even truer in their coastal zones, a fact that demonstrates rather escalating trends in the last decade. As relevant studies from the Greek reality reveal [83], this holds true for the majority of coastal areas, both in mainland and in insular territories. Indeed, coastal zones in Greek insular territories, despite hosting quite fragile terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems (see indicative examples in Figure 8), are highly stressed by multiple sources, as 'home' to a large share of local population, urban settlements and tourism-related economic activities and infrastructures, both in land and at sea. As such, they constitute the scenes of notable anthropogenic pressures as well as severe competition for space, especially in areas in close proximity to the shoreline. These are distinct results of the currently ongoing discussion, related to 'touristification' and the resulting 'coastalization' and 'coastal urban sprawl' pattern for serving, mostly, the rapidly expanding mass tourism demand; and are noticed in other heavy tourism-related Mediterranean island territories as well [83,85].

Furthermore, results obtained in the second stream of this work, reveal that traditional decision-making pathways—top-down, decision-making schemes—are currently the main-stream in the local policy arsenal. This denotes that adequate attention is not paid to the adoption of more strategic, collaborative and of long-term decision-making processes with respect to sustainable and resilient management of culture and its integration into tourism. In addition, it mainly reflects a certain human resource deficit and capacity constraints of local municipalities in order for challenges and evolutions of the global decision environment to be appropriately grasped; and relevant adjustments to decision-making processes to be made. Such a human resource deficit and capacity constraints pertains to the small population size of the majority of Greek municipalities, the insular ones included. Indeed, in Greece, despite the three legislative reforms in 1997, 2010 and 2018, aiming to establish a new architecture of local administration by consolidating adjacent municipalities and ending up with larger, more dynamic, and functionally related administrative units, the resulting outcome still lacks a critical population threshold and a relative strength. This is indicated by the fact that in 2011, 29% of Greek municipalities count for 20,000–50,000 inhabitants and 51% of them for less than 20,000 inhabitants) [98]. As a result of the small population size, a sort of deficient workforce and adequacy of local government structures or even the existence of certain services/capabilities is the 'rule'.

Co-interpretation of quantitative and qualitative results of this work provides critical insights for roughly illuminating the steadily evolving mass tourism developmental trends in the fragile environments of the Greek insular municipalities that need to be reversed. It also unveils knowledge and capacity constraints of local decision makers to collaboratively feature more effective mass tourism trend-breaking. Finally, it also illuminates the power asymmetry between local decision makers and the strong well-established tourism interests. Such issues, as related research works claim [27,85], are common in mass tourism-dependent insular communities, Greek islands included, as shown by the results of this work. In addition, results obtained establish a fertile ground for assessing maturity, understanding and positioning of local decision makers of Greek insular municipalities against a more proactive, cooperative, integrated, people-centric and strategic stand as to the future heritage-led developmental trails of those frontier regions in the periphery of the Greek state. As the results depict, certain deficits are present in this respect that are associated with the: (i) lack of strategic cultural tourism plans in a number of Greek islands; (ii) absence of bottom-up processes in developing such plans in those islands that own one, demonstrating the insufficient capacity and particular knowledge or value of collaborative (bottom-up) decision-making at this level. Such an overall assessment displays the need for deepening democracy in planning a visionary local identity- and heritage-led future that should feature the decommmodification of space and nature as well as the promotion

of a just, inclusive, sustainable and resilient future islands' trajectory. Ways of improving collaborative efforts, both horizontally (within stakeholders falling into each single island) and vertically (among different decision-making levels) is a critical aspect and a field of future research of the authors in the Greek island scenery.

6. Conclusions

Insular regions nowadays are in front of hard decisions and great dilemmas as to their future developmental perspectives, particularly when it comes to islands in the Mediterranean region, i.e., a hot spot area in many respects. The highly appreciated natural and cultural resources and sceneries of these places have, in most cases, been harshly commodified, mainly by the tourism sector, in order for economic profit to be gained. Thus, little or no concern is taken about issues of scale, carrying capacity and local identity/visions. Such a growth model, however, follows a rather short-term and opportunistic view that largely ignores the qualities upon which such tourism economic outcomes are based, i.e., the flavor of islands' distinct identity, historical path and traditions, distinguishable landscape, as well as natural and cultural qualities. The model violates, by means of overtourism, the 'rights' of both nature and island communities for a durable development and leaves aside thinking about the rights and opportunities of future generations.

Furthermore, in many insular regions but also in states as a whole, Greece included, mass tourism has been perceived as the only way to serve the local development objectives of these distinct and fragmented insular territories and sustain the economic livelihood of local population. In addition, mass tourism is grasped as a means for fixing financial deficits and an injection to declining and debt national economies. Thus relevant, long-lasting, policy decisions have delimited islands' developmental trajectory through time as 'tourism hubs'; and, as evidence shows, have definitely led to a highly unsustainable and, in many cases, beyond carrying capacity resource-consuming model of development; while, concurrently, a model that is highly vulnerable to a range of external risks. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically illustrated the risks of such a mono-sectoral, profit-based and identity-ignorant mass tourism model and its vulnerability to a global health crisis; while also evident in many insular territories around the globe are the stiff impacts of the ongoing climate crisis. In fact, discussions as to the steadily evolving external decision environment—e.g., climate and energy crisis issues as well as water scarcity, especially in Mediterranean insular destinations –, brings to the forefront new realities and emergencies. These render the—vulnerable to climate change and highly dependent on energy (transportation, local consumption etc.) and water resources—mass tourism model at stake; and, by extension, undermine the sustainable future of the tourism-dependent insular territories.

Thus, there is a need to rethink the mass tourism model as well as the way tourism 'success' and its contribution to local development is assessed, factoring into the economic benefits of the 'few' the stability and good status of land and marine ecosystems as well as the social and cultural 'health' of insular population. Towards this end, an integrated approach to managing the remarkable resources of such territories is absolutely vital; stressing also, apart from numbers of visitors and net income—more does not mean better [86]—the medium- and long-term repercussions of such a monocultural developmental approach in social, cultural and environmental terms. Such an effort calls for a quadruple helix model approach [99], engaging the scientific and policy community, the entrepreneurial community and the civic society; and needs to handle tourism as one sector of a diverse insular economy, which, furthermore, follows a just pattern and spreads its benefits sectorally, spatially and temporally. This seems to be the responsibility of islanders, who must manage local affairs in a way that ensures the 'rights' and integrity of the islands' nature, culture and community.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/heritage5030143/s1>, Table S1: Key policy documents with regard to tourism and culture in the EU; Table S2: Critical issues rising with regard to policies supporting the European insular regions; Table S3. Recent key initiatives in Greece in support of insular regions (references [100–116] refer to Tables S1–S3 of the supplementary material).

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