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### Can cultural economy be social? Discussing about the rural heritage of Greece

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Can cultural economy be social?

Discussing about the rural heritage of Greece

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ABSTRACT

*This article examines the landscape of heritage management in Greece, as shaped by social, political, and economic factors. It deconstructs the emerging state policy rationale and its ambitions for the sectors' economic role, tuned to the neoliberal agendas of western-type economies. Considering ramifications for the future of cultural heritage, the idea of commons is analyzed as an alternative paradigm-solution. As it is argued, community-led governing models, following social and solidarity economy principles within a commons structure, could suggest a viable heritage management option that is worth exploring. This is further illustrated through the example of Naxos' rural heritage.*

Keywords: *cultural economy, cultural heritage, solidarity economy, commons, rural heritage*

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Μπορεί η πολιτιστική οικονομία να είναι και κοινωνική;  
Συζητώντας για την αγροτική πολιτιστική κληρονομιά της Ελλάδας

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#### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

*Το άρθρο εξετάζει το τοπίο της πολιτιστικής διαχείρισης στην Ελλάδα, όπως αυτό διαμορφώνεται από κοινωνικούς, πολιτικούς και οικονομικούς παράγοντες. Σχολιάζει την αναδυόμενη λογική της κρατικής πολιτικής, η οποία εναρμονίζεται όλο και περισσότερο με τα νεοφιλελεύθερα προγράμματα των οικονομιών δυτικού τύπου. Δεδομένων των προεκτάσεων για το μέλλον της πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς, το παράδειγμα των κοινών παρουσιάζεται ως εναλλακτικό παράδειγμα για την προστασία και την ανάδειξή της. Όπως υποστηρίζεται, το μοντέλο των κοινών, μέσω των κοινοτήτων και των αρχών της κοινωνικής και αλληλέγγυας οικονομίας, αποτελεί βιώσιμη επιλογή που χρήζει περαιτέρω διερεύνησης. Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, αναλύεται η μελέτη περίπτωσης της αγροτικής κληρονομιάς της Νάξου.*

*Λέξεις κλειδιά: πολιτιστική οικονομία, πολιτιστική κληρονομιά, αλληλέγγυα οικονομία, τα κοινά, αγροτική πολιτιστική κληρονομιά*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Recent years witness increasing pressures on redeeming the “value” of cultural heritage, stressing its present and potential contribution to growth across mature and developing economies. The capitalization of the past and its remains, through the exchange of its symbolic capital for fiscal and commercial gains, is facilitated through various consumption mechanisms and supporting markets (e.g. tourism, real estate) that seldom serve public interests or bear any sincere consideration for meeting pro-social goals, as those evangelized by various inter-governmental organizations that advocate for heritage-led development.

As it is argued, the concept of cultural heritage as an “instrument” for meeting economic targets forms yet another “by-product” of economic neoliberalism, which needs to be treated with scepticism. Increasingly imbued with market reasoning, cultural policy in Western-type economies and public dialogue on heritage matters intuitively promote ideas about the sector’s financial “autonomy”, profitability, and returns on investment. However, contrary to rhetoric, empirical evidence growingly shows that placing heritage under a market consumption regime does *in actu* generate several anti-social ramifications, especially for its surrounding communities.

In the case of Greece, fiscal troubles, sharp economic depression, and political turmoil caused by the recent sovereign debt crisis, contributed to the creation of a favourable environment for highlighting the economic imperatives of culture, re-orienting government intervention, and propagating the appropriation of heritage “assets”– although *de jure* non-marketed public goods – through state synergies with private investors. These developments coupled with the idiosyncrasies of heritage management practice in Greece (e.g. centralized/bureaucratic, poorly-equipped to protect recent or emergent heritage) raise great concerns for the future directions of national cultural policy.

Departing from current trends and pitfalls in the Greek heritage management landscape, in this paper we seek to explore alternative and genuinely more pro-social models for the protection, enhancement, and governance of heritage resources. In particular, we examine the commons, as structurally egalitarian and participatory arrangements that could constitute an alternative path towards the safeguarding of heritage and communal benefits. Through this lens, we elaborate on the idea of heritage governed as a common. This study by no means constitutes a fully-developed and/or exhaustive analysis of heritage commons but

rather a first but critical “attempt” to position the concept of the commons within the heritage field.

In general, commons are goods which in principle, are produced and maintained by social collectives, which control for their accessibility and use on regulated but equal terms. According to Hardt and Negri (2012), commons feature dynamic processes, whereby resources are shared and distributed in joint stewardship in ways that contest the rationale of both private and state property. Through the collective management of (public) resources, commons governance is believed to be an effective avenue for protecting the resources at hand - on this occasion, heritage monuments, sites, practices, and the like, while also empowering their user communities, promoting a more democratic distribution of managerial control and enhancing reciprocity and societal values.

The study of commons constitutes a hybrid academic discipline, combining ideas from various fields, such as political economy and social anthropology, and generating a proliferating body of theoretical and empirical literature. However, in this emerging scientific field and arena of debate and practice, culture and particularly heritage appear surprisingly rarely whereas existing work remains fragmented in terms of theoretical and practical enquiry. Thus, it is not hyperbolic to say that heritage commons are relatively under-theorized, approached quite “economistically” without accommodating critical components, such as heritage values, in their analyses (Lekakis, *forthcoming*).

This paper aspires to initiate a discussion that will fill this gap, suggesting that heritage commons can be an alternative reality in the field of heritage management. To do so, it elaborates on the commons paradigm to illustrate its potential for testing and developing alternative governance structures towards a more sustainable and inclusive cultural heritage. Getting back to the core of the commons conceptualization, the present study draws on an analytical framework inspired by Dellenbaugh et al. (2015), whereby the commons are understood through the tripartite division of resources, communities, and the management framework. “Commoning” in this schema is the participatory process for commons governance, production, and reproduction.

More specifically, the said framework of analysis is applied to the rural heritage of Naxos island in Greece and is informed empirically by our longitudinal fieldwork research on the area. Similar to other Cycladic islands, Naxos’ rural landscape features an emergent type of heritage, endangered by development pressures, the lack of formal state recognition as “heritage” and therefore inadequate protection by the relevant authorities. As it is argued, the rural landscape of Naxos carries the culture, history, traditions, and memories of the

people that lived in it, forming a network of natural, man-made and intangible heritage still present, even though defunct. However, gradually, economic rationalism and obsession for growth push for capitalizing on the rural assets of “uniqueness”, such as windmills and watermills, mainly through processes of museumification, which appropriate monuments for tourism consumption (Lekakis and Dragouni, 2019). To our view, the reintroduction of the commons in the public realm as a hybrid academic discipline and a sustainable and inclusive process to manage collectively natural, social, and digital public goods, jeopardized from the shrinking of the welfare state, offers a promising and largely unattained hypothesis to test for cultural heritage in general (Lekakis et al. 2018).

The rest of the paper is structured as follows; the following section discusses in more detail heritage policy in Greece both historically and in the present, commenting on recent developments that expose its neoliberal shift quite eloquently. This is followed by a conceptual analysis of the commons in general and the specificities of heritage commons in particular, before the case of Naxos’ rural heritage, as a potential heritage common of the future is presented. The final section discusses the concept critically, highlighting some important issues that deserve the attention of future scholars and researchers.

## 2. HERITAGE POLICY IN GREECE: TRADITION AND EMERGING TRENDS

By the term “heritage policy” we refer to the rationale and objectives of government intervention to the sector and the influence of the public, private, and third sectors in securing its protection and support. Traditionally, heritage management in Greece relied predominantly on the state, with power resting centrally, especially in the case of antiquities and medieval monuments and sites. Although the exchange of the past’s symbolic capital for financial capital is not a new phenomenon (mostly indirectly, e.g. through tourism), state hegemony had been comparatively much more eager to capitalize on heritage for political leverage rather than economic profit (Anderson, 1991; Hamilakis and Yalouri, 1996), even when the political narrative was all about the economic potential of heritage.<sup>1</sup>

As of today, the cultural heritage of Greece remains largely a non-marketed good, at least officially and according to the long pedigree of cultural heritage laws since 1834. Heritage in Greece is a state property – a “cultural property”, according to European normative documents (Lekakis, 2012, pp. 686-687). As such, it is protected as a public good, stewarded by sanctioned state-employed professionals, serving national and educational

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, the often-quoted dogma recited in the 1980s by the then Minister of Culture: “Culture is the heavy industry of our country” (available at: <https://www.culture.gr/el/ministry/SitePages/cv.aspx?CID=23>)

purposes. Nonetheless, following international trends, recent years witness increasing pressures on redeeming the consumptive and non-consumptive values of monuments and sites, emphasizing on their current and potential contribution to growth (Throsby, 2012). It is thus likely that we rest on the verge of an upcoming repositioning of local cultural policy and practice regarding the management and use of its heritage resources.

Such transition is further documented in the propagation of economic interpretations of heritage that manifest in local politics and public dialogue. An illustrative example is witnessed by the programming statements of the newly-elected conservative government in Greece and its vision for the sector,<sup>2</sup> elaborated by the present Minister as follows:

“Culture is our major [competitive] advantage. However, our country has not yet capitalized on the opportunities provided by cultural heritage [...] in order to redeem its added value at the international level. [C]ultural policies can contribute decisively to our rebranding [and to] the re-invention of the country’s identity. We see culture holistically as an export good”.<sup>3</sup>

In this parliamentary speech excerpt, one can see how marketing notions, such as competitive advantage and place branding are bluntly deployed to promote the idea of transforming cultural capital to commodity and money capital. These concepts are closely attuned to policy discourses in the rest of Europe, where culture and heritage are viewed as economic niches, generating lucrative businesses and revenues through their connection to the creative industries, cultural tourism, real estate, and other supporting sectors (Avdikos and Dragouni, *forthcoming*). Furthermore, in times of economic distress, like those experienced in Greece, the “primary aim” becomes the sector’s self-financing, set out to be achieved through the Archaeological Resources Fund (*Tameio Archaeologikon Poron & Apallotrioseon*),<sup>4</sup> that collects and manages the income generated by the country’s cultural assets. It is thus not surprising that later in her speech, the Minister continues by citing a 2014 study<sup>5</sup> on the reciprocal character of exploiting cultural products for their symbolic and “real

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<sup>2</sup> House of Parliament speech by the Minister of Culture and Sports in 21 July 2019 (available at <https://www.culture.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view.aspx?nID=2862>)

<sup>3</sup> «Ο Πολιτισμός είναι το μεγάλο μας πλεονέκτημα. Όμως η χώρα δεν έχει κεφαλαιοποιήσει τις δυνατότητες που της παρέχει η πολιτιστική της κληρονομιά [...], ώστε να εισπράξει υπεραξία στο διεθνές επίπεδο. [Οι] πολιτικές του πολιτισμού μπορούν να συμβάλλουν καθοριστικά στο rebranding, [σ]τον επαναπροσδιορισμό της ταυτότητας της χώρας. Αντιμετωπίζουμε τον Πολιτισμό συνολικά ως εξαγωγίμο προϊόν.»

<sup>4</sup> See [www.tap.gr](http://www.tap.gr)

<sup>5</sup> See <http://ep.culture.gr/el/pages/NewsFS.aspx?item=175>

economy values”, neither are her references to the Ellinikon airport in Athens and the Kastelli airport in Crete, which are both rather controversial examples for the protection of the natural and cultural resources.

Admittedly, this jargon and its underlying rationale, although not new to public discourse, expose an inclination of heritage management to conform to market economics. In particular, we argue here that similar to other Western-type economies, heritage politics in Greece exhibit a neoliberal shift in the management of heritage, expressed through insisting efforts to link the sector to the economy, by placing greater emphasis on economic imperatives and by re-orienting government intervention (Gattinger & Saint-Pierre, 2010). Neoliberalism describes an ideological stance regarding the role of the public sector in the economy and society, which prescribes for an economic system of smaller state presence and greater dependence on market forces. In turn, neoliberal cultural policy is characterized by its market focus on profitability potential (through broader culture-led economic development) and return of investment (see, for instance, Council of the European Union 2014; Council of Europe, 2015).

In general, as it is presently observed, regardless of the political ideology of the leading party, neoliberal notions of heritage appear in public dialogue systematically and are gradually mainstreamed and “naturalized”. As they largely align to current shifts of the new public management agendas that dominate the broader cultural policy landscape, they ever-gaining ground on local affairs in Greece.

We can’t help but view these developments as particularly concerning, given that they promote marketization and commodification practices that encourage the consumption of cultural and heritage resources as private goods. A neoliberal heritage policy, depreciating further the role of the state and encouraging private capital investment in the cultural sector could easily lead to the dislocation of cultural production and circulation and to the financialization of heritage (Roggero, 2010) signaled by the introduction of access constraints,<sup>6</sup> privatization policies and outsourcing schemes for supporting services going through on the nod and promoted as “good business”, such as fast-track mechanisms for development projects introduced in a climate of recession (Lialios, 2017), along with a general treatment of audiences and citizens as tourists and consumers.

Such developments are more likely to strengthen elitism and the role of culture as a social distinction mechanism (Bourdieu, 1984), instead of promoting it to a shared

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<sup>6</sup> The recent debate on the abolition of the ‘free-entrance’ scheme for various heritage sector professionals could be a forerunner (see Hellenic Republic Government Gazette, B 2666, 1 July 2019).



assemblage of goods that are commonly enjoyed and celebrated to communicate ideas of cultural tolerance, diversity, and the like, as those evangelized by international treaties and conventions (e.g. UNESCO 1972; 2001). Furthermore, the “culture-led development” thesis is highly problematic given that recent experiences during the last three decades expose in many instances the devastating spillover effects of “functionalizing” culture in the interest of consumption, including dramatic changes to the economic landscape, displacement of local communities and loss of place identities (Zukin, 1989; Zukin et al., 2009; Gainza, 2017). Similarly, heritage tourism - the special type of tourism activity, whereby visitor experiences are “heritagised” as a means to boost peripheral economies, with declined rural industries (Byrd et al., 2009; Bessiere, 2013), has repeatedly failed to materialize societal benefits while also putting heritage under threat (Timothy and Nyaupane, 2009; Su et al., 2016; Dragouni, 2017).

Thus, it is perhaps rather naive to hope that synergies between state and private capital for the sake of “development” or in essence, economic growth bear the intention or capacity to serve social and communal benefits effectively. Triggered by these concerns, as raised by this emerging heritage politics and policy landscape, the paper argues that more pro-social models of governance and utilization of (heritage) resources, such as commons arrangements, are worth exploring or at least considering as alternative solutions for economic, social and cultural development. We thus move on to explore how the commons paradigm may apply to heritage goods and their management.

### 3. APPLYING THE COMMONS PARADIGM TO HERITAGE

#### **3.1. *The commons horizon***

The commons are goods and processes used and produced collectively, administered in egalitarian and participatory ways by the communities that manage them, making them accessible on regulated and equal terms (Kioupkiolis, 2019). Even though the history of the commons goes back to Aristotle (*koinón*) and the medieval arrangements for the collective management of natural resources (such as the Magna Carta Libertatum and the Charter of Forests), the concept is mostly known in bibliography through the 16th-17th c. land enclosures in Britain in favour of the emerging bourgeoisie and the regularly cited but systematically overthrown theory of G. Hardin, on the supposed “tragedy of the commons” (Lekakis et al., 2018).

The shrinking of the welfare state during the past decades, the recent economic recession of many mature economies across Europe and elsewhere, and the calls for open, participatory processes, have reintroduced the commons horizon and their ideals to the public realm. This led to the development of a hybrid academic discipline, sharing diverse perspectives with political economy, the political sciences, management, and social anthropology. Through a multitude of theoretical studies and practical cases, the commons agenda is emerging nowadays globally, as a sensitive process of managing public resources collectively (Dardot and Laval, 2019). In this context, several discussions over various categories of commons have emerged, ranging from pastures and irrigation canals to social and digital goods, such as open-source software or common productive assets, such as co-operatives (Benkler and Nissenbaum, 2006). Even though it is difficult to sketch out a complete taxonomy, as commons are dynamic and porous processes, they always involve shared resources which are managed, produced and distributed in common stewardship and in ways that contest the rationale of both private and state property (Hardt and Negri, 2012, pp. 69-80).

Getting back to the core of the commons conceptualization, we can easily discern three main constituent elements, around which all arguments revolve: the resources, the communities that manage them, and the regulatory framework for the management process (Dellenbaugh et al., 2015, p. 13). This is also a rule of thumb to discern whether the activity we are examining or designing is actually a commons; i.e. (i) if it involves tangible or intangible resources, public or common, (ii) if it is managed by one or more communities of “commoners” and (iii) if it is protected by a framework or rules organized and actively defended by the commoners, in the participatory act of “commoning” (Ostrom, 1990, p. 30). This tripartite schema is regularly characterized as a “commons-based governance” and/or a “production system” that sustains itself, protects the resources at hand, and empowers the communities involved in several different ways (social, political and economic), caring at the same time for the common benefit (Kostakis et al., 2015).

Since the 1990s, a diverse group of thinkers has engaged with the commons, linking it with a rich tradition of political approaches that range from Proudhon’s mutualism and Bakunin’s collectivism to Ricardian and Utopian socialism or drawing on the works of Arendt, Castoriadis, and Chomsky, in arguments cutting across various aspects of political economy, such as production, dissemination, and consumption of resources, and issues of community organization in urban and rural settings. In later years, a “reformist” and a “radical” approach could be discerned from the related literature. On the one hand, we

witness the formation of a “pragmatic” school of thought, represented by scholars such as Bauwens, Bollier, Kostakis, Arvidsson, and Peitersen. This school negotiates with the traditional statecraft, proposing and building an alternative paradigm in the shell of the old world (see, for example, the concepts of the “partner state” and the “chamber of the commons”) and associated with the Social Economy sector: a diverse bundle of actors, services and products prioritizing social objectives over capital accumulation. On the other hand, a more “radical”, neo/autonomist Marxist approach can be observed, formed by scholars such as De Angelis, Stavridis, Caffentzis, Federici, Rigi, Kioupkiolis, suggesting the assemblage of counter-power for constitutive change, related to egalitarian, large shareholder formations, i.e. solidarity economies focused on the abolition of capital<sup>7</sup> (Lekakis, *forthcoming*).

The burgeoning literature on diverse cases of commons (natural, social, digital) offers grounded accounts of feasible processes of collective governance, institution-building, and participation processes, which promote the democratic distribution of power, enhance values of reciprocity while providing sustainable solutions to critical problems in the collective management of (public) resources (Auclair and Fairclough, 2015, De Angelis, 2005; Poteete, Janssen and Ostrom, 2010). Even though the impact of this body of work has not yet been drawn out in full, the results indicate the development of a broader spiral of socio-economic transformations that can protect resources more effectively, promote sustainability and diversify the products, while emphasizing social indicators and emancipatory actions rather than focusing solely on economic gains (Benkler and Nissenbaum, 2006, p. 395).

### **3.2. *Discussing heritage as a commons***

In this emerging scientific field and arena of debate and practice, culture and heritage appear in notably few discussions while the currently available bibliography can be considered rather fragmented in terms of theoretical enquiries and applications (Lekakis et al., 2018). Cultural commons are broadly interpreted as cognitive/intellectual commons, involving concepts as social structures, regulatory frames and processes of commoning, along with their immaterial products (Hess, 2012, p. 25; Bertacchini et al., 2012).

In this pluralistic but opaque approach, cultural commons reflect a number of structures/values and include as diverse goods as ethics, languages, codes, symbols, rites,

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<sup>7</sup> Apart from this socially-centred and emancipating trajectory, there are a number of cases where commons are ‘hijacked’ by neoliberal approaches for the benefit of private actors, using the commons’ semantics and perverting governance schemata or asking for open-access, unregulated resources (Hardin’s ‘commons’) in narratives that have come to be characterised as ‘commons washing’.

customs, traditional knowledge, or even the creative aura of a cultural district or the collaboration patterns between online peers over the production of open-source software. This overstretched category and its hazy interpretation do not facilitate further exploration in terms of meanings, boundaries, and affordances and may cater as a pretext to the distortion of the goods and practices involved, i.e. their economic appreciation or even monetization for market purposes (Bertacchini et al., 2012).

On the other hand, heritage commons appear even less frequently in the bibliography. When discussed, heritage commons are normally presented as similar to environmental commons or considered as cultural commons, a treasury of the community's imagined identity, part of the aspired and yet utopian democracy of the commons (Bollier, 2016; Lieros, 2016, p. 232). In some instances, they are idiosyncratically conceptualized or examined in very specific hypotheses and case studies (Benesch, 2016; Gonzalez, 2014; Gould, 2014), under-theorized or approached through economic viewpoints (Bertacchini et al., 2012). They are rarely treated as containers of values, worthy of meticulous research not only to better understand local, regional and global identities but also to inform potential arrangements for their viable management (Lekakis, *forthcoming*).

Thus, even though not yet substantially articulated, heritage commons are an emerging reality in the field of heritage management. As it is argued here, the heritage commons paradigm presents a clear potential for testing and developing alternative governance structures towards a more sustainable and inclusive cultural heritage. By focusing on this potential and attempting to read heritage as commons, we can discern:

- a. the tangible and intangible material (for example, a historic building, an archaeological site, and the social/traditional knowledge/beliefs or local practices and visions surrounding them)
- b. the communities and their values (local and distant stakeholders surrounding the resources, the public in a plural and diverse form, e.g. archaeologists, administrative bodies, locals, tourists, etc.), and
- c. commoning (namely, the present and aspired governance arrangements along with the products in the process, either in the form of (scientific) knowledge and information or as relevant tourism and education activities).

Although premature, our approach envisions to conceptualize and configure a paradigmatically top-down managed resource as a commons and through this defend and utilize its public character towards an inclusive, democratic and post-capitalist governance schema beyond the neoliberal aspirations of short-term profit-making.

## 4. RURAL HERITAGE COMMONS: THE EXAMPLE OF NAXOS

### 4.1. *The case study*

Naxos Island, the largest in the complex of Cyclades, Greece, has been our main area of focus in the last few years, exploring –among others– community discourses of rurality, the dynamics of rural heritage, current cultural management arrangements, the stakeholders and their views of this emerging and contested type of heritage in the challenging landscape of mass summer tourism (Lekakis and Dragouni, 2019).

The island largely retains its rural character documenting systematic pre-industrial activity, with land cultivation and animal husbandry that have left their imprint on the landscape. Amongst its material remains lie various historic agricultural and animal husbandry edifices and complexes scattered across its hinterland, such as threshing floors, terraces and their retaining dry stone walls (*tráfoi*), windmills, water mills, dry-stone huts (*mitátoi*), bridges, fountains, cisterns, wells, trails and cobbled paths that witness the social practices of local populations, handed down over successive generations up until the 1960s, when electricity and the mechanical means of production and transportation transformed rural economy and social life.

Rural heritage in Greece is not formally assigned the “heritage” label and thus, there is no solid legal framework to safeguard the protection of rural landscapes. According to the latest archaeological legislation of the Greek state (L. 3028/2002; Hellenic Republic, 2002), any intervention to rural edifices dating more than 100 years requires formal permission and assessment as buildings can be listed as modern monuments, if declared as such by state services for their particular historic, scientific or other values. However, for buildings dating less than 100 years that are not listed as monuments, construction works, interventions and demolitions are normally allowed without a state permit (Article 6).

Similar to other Cycladic islands, today, Naxos’ rural landscape and its heritage are endangered by development pressures mainly from tourism activity. Economic rationalism and the “growth” obsession advocates for capitalizing on rural assets of “uniqueness” (e.g. windmills, watermills) through processes of museumification, namely staged representations stripped of their social context, or the aesthetic fetishism of their distinctive traits, by appropriating monuments for tourism consumption (Lekakis and Dragouni, 2019). However, it is rather doubtful whether capital gains from associated economic activities are distributed

equally between private interests and community members; another key issue that is not addressed by the existing institutional framework for protection.

In this context, the rural fabric of the island's landscape is in significant danger, given that, if no action is taken, this emerging type of heritage might be reduced to rubble before its official accreditation as part of the modern monuments of Greece. Querying our empirical evidence and structuring our analysis on the tripartite system discussed in the previous section, and towards a commons-based governance model, we can discern the fundamental blocks of heritage commons in our case, as explained in the paragraphs that follow.

#### **4.2. Resources: *The tangible and intangible fabric of heritage***

Rural heritage needs to be viewed as a network of the agricultural/animal husbandry edifices described earlier, together with the natural resources and the socio-economic activities that shaped the economic, social and cultural landscape of the island and left their tangible and intangible marks on it. Rural heritage can be better understood as a system of manmade and natural resources, leveraged by the everyday practices of their surrounding communities. A case in point is the production of bread, which involved cultivating, and collecting wheat, storing it and transferring it -usually via traditional paths- to the mill; a series of activities that presuppose a number of tangible and intangible resources, nested in the broader socio-economic context of the island and its agricultural and animal husbandry economy. Within this system, tangible and intangible features co-exist and co-manifest. For instance, the traditional songs for the collection of wheat or the maintenance of a threshing floor are integrated into this heritage collective, creating a rich narrative that documents life in the recent past. The rural landscape carries the culture, history, traditions, and memories of the people that lived in it, forming a network of natural, man-made, and intangible heritage still present, even though defunct (Karpodini-Dimitriadi, 2009).

During the last decades, most of these structures were gradually left to decay as traditional community bonds altered towards private agricultural economic activities, served by mechanized means of production. Parallel to this, Naxos witnessed an escalation of its annual numbers of visitors and tourism receipts (Korre, 2003; SETE, 2017). Apart from the palpable shift in economic terms, these changes led to significant impacts on the social, environmental, and historic fabric of the island, with people focusing on the tertiary sector or opting for modernized means of agricultural production. This led the majority of these rural edifices to a state of disuse and abandonment, sometimes undergoing unsustainable modifications or even demolition, if in the way of prioritized activities as building for

summer tourism. This can be related to the low interest by the state authorities -especially, when compared to the measures for the protection of the ancient or medieval monuments. The insufficient regulatory framework for the protection of the rural past has resulted in ad hoc and unsystematic dealing with rural heritage cases at hand. It is characteristic that apart from five rural structures that were singled out and listed as individual monuments for their historic or scientific values, the rest (probably more than 5,000 buildings and structures) remain non-accredited. Today only a fraction of them are active in their original use, while some have been restored as educational and/or touristic sites by cultural organizations interested in their preservation. Furthermore, the development of a complete inventory is not yet available or even scheduled.

Overall, departing from the tangible remains of the past rural landscape, we consider here as a common pool resource this complex network of edifices, natural resources, and social relationships that formed the character of the traditional communities and constitute a link to the contemporary Naxian communities, holding a primary place in their identity, as we will explore below.

#### **4.3. *The communities and their values***

Our interest in Naxos' communities includes local and distant social groups surrounding the resources, such as residents, administrative bodies, visitors, archaeologists along with the values they attach to the island's rural past and its remains.

Our empirical research reveals that, in general, Naxiotes hold pride on the island's cultural resources and its past whereas, notably their vast majority acknowledges rural buildings and structures as "monuments" (*REF removed for anonymity*). Based on our fieldwork findings, the values of communal memory and identity were amongst the most important qualities ascribed to rural monuments by community members. Even though the paths of acknowledging significance at the community level are quite convoluted, reflecting grass-roots, pre-modern understandings of family and society, or passing through ideological aquifers of environmental/cultural exceptionalism of romanticized landscapes, narratives converge on the significance of rural heritage, regularly manifesting in local dialectics. Representatives of formal cultural groups (e.g. associations) translate these values mostly as educational, celebrating the recent past through museum-like restorations and occasionally hosting re-enactments of traditional processes, such as olive oil extraction. Notably, a desire for extreme tourism/commercial exploitation on behalf of these user communities is not commonly expressed in our data, as the local communities seem to opt for mild, inclusive,

and respectful patterns of rural heritage appropriation. Someone could comment that this - troubled and still unclear- vision aligns with the general aspiration of social economy (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

On the opposite side, the local administration of the island, respond to the visitors' surge during the summer months seeking to diversify the "tourism experience" of Naxos and shallowly promoting the agricultural identity and production of the island, often at the expense of the rural landscape. Cheese, potatoes, and the traditional figure of the shepherd are commonly disassociated from their historic or contemporary contexts, promoted for mass tourism consumption in an urban setting, through annual cultural festivals, featuring "traditional" food and music.

On the associated communities' canvas for rural heritage in Naxos, values typically attached to official heritage by experts (see McClelland et al., 2013), such as scientific value, bequest value, or uniqueness, feature less frequently in the rural heritage discourse. It is true, that the majority of narratives on Naxos' rural heritage come mostly from local community members, involving family memories, ways of life in the recent past, and associated stories, rather than scientific (e.g. archaeological, architectural, or environmental) approaches to the fabric.

This primary analysis of the communities at play in the rural heritage management field reveals a number of values invested in the material remains and processes, forming the tangible and intangible character of this emerging type of heritage.

#### **4.4. *Commoning: Governance arrangements for the heritage common***

The third key component of the commons is the processes of governance, the regulatory framework (formal and informal) for developing a management circuit along with the products of the process. Following the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of current management arrangements for the protection and enhancement of rural heritage, our data advocate for the promotion of a locally-based management system. Even though this is only implied and not coherently described, the participants of the study believe that such a locally-based frame is the most appropriate mechanism to accommodate collaborative management activities and procedures, for example, between local government officials, community associations, and the citizens of Naxos, as compared to centralized governance systems, led by the Ministry of Culture.

What is more, our empirical data hinted the existence of a positive relationship between place of origin and perceived capacity to deal with local issues effectively whereas



participation by “outsiders” was viewed less favourably compared to local control. This is a typical pattern commonly expressed during public dialogue meetings as a feeling of mistrust towards the national authorities and sometimes their intervention to the fabric of the monuments. Side to that discussions with locals revealed that there is also a shared sense of responsibility and guilt for not taking proper care of the past and its remains.

Governance bibliography presents several pluralistic models for multi-stakeholder collaboration and management, with various levels of complexity (e.g. nested governance; Ostrom, 1990) and also the possibility of applying these to the cultural heritage field (Lekakis et al., 2018). Towards this goal, the use of existing structures of social collectives (e.g. schools, cultural organizations) can work as local hubs of participation and a starting point for communication among interested communities to debate their priorities and form a common ground for the protection and enhancement of rural heritage (Dragouni & Fouseki, 2018). This argument was made by community members themselves during public dialogue meetings. In Naxos, we have already witnessed this entry-level stakeholder engagement for activities related to the protection of Byzantine cultural heritage, such as fund-raising, devising restoration studies, or contributing in-kind to the process with successful results (Lekakis et al., 2015).

In fact, in the recent history of the island, there have been attempts to manage public matters through similar inclusive mechanisms. Most notably, Manolis Glezos, who served as mayor of Apeiranthos during 1986-89, pursued to run the village (koinótita) in a pluralistic way by implementing a new local constitution and a regular public assembly for issues that needed majority approval. Since a number of interpretations of the processes employed and the outcomes of the assemblies still survive in Apeiranthos, this case study can provide data of how a potential local management structure could be implemented. Also, other untapped resources, as folk studies documentation and oral histories can provide further insights into processes of collective management, understanding the role of the community, and the binding forces behind it (LCMO 07, 2018).

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the rural heritage resources of Naxos are still in a transitional status (i.e. not formally assigned the “monument” status), there is presently no formal protection framework or plan for tackling current and possible threats, which is perhaps by itself the most severe risk imposed on their fate and future.

This gap might allow the materialization of contemporary heritage policy trending in Europe and focusing on the “cultural property” narrative for heritage. This heritage as a state-asset-concept has been dominant since the primary enclosure of the past by nation-states in the form of national landmarks (Lekakis, *forthcoming*; Lekakis et al., 2018). However, today, where neoliberal tenors pervade economic and cultural policy, it is being re-interpreted, denigrating heritage as a self-funded export good, whose contribution is mainly evaluated in economic terms (i.e. economic results and contribution to local economies) at the expense of cultural and broader societal values, nested on the historic fabric or the intangible socio-cultural realm surrounding monuments (see for instance, Lazrak et al., 2014; Fujiwara et al., 2014; Bakhshi et al., 2015).

In Greece there is potential for a paradigmatic realization of this pattern, eloquently expressed in recent governmental declarations, but mainly based on the lingering arguments of the economic crisis and the aftereffects of the welfare state recess. In these conditions, public resources cannot be left untapped, even when the process jeopardizes the state’s priorities on them, or when resulting in their depreciation. In the case of heritage, risks of endangering the physical fabric of the monuments or further distancing interested communities, denigrating them in the form of “customers” or respectful “tax-payers” are turning palpable in Greece.

In this paper, we have identified a viable alternative for heritage management, moving the slider towards the other side; the horizon of the commons has been recently introduced to the public realm, as a sensitive process of managing resources collectively, catering for their social and cultural aspects, and a hybrid academic discipline sharing diverse perspectives with political economy and philosophy, management and social anthropology. Focusing on this paradigm and even though the discourse of cultural and heritage commons is rather fragmented, we explored the affordances of heritage, identifying the three structural components of the commons in the form of a. Tangible and intangible material, b. The interested communities and the values they ascribe on the material and c. Processes of production and reproduction of heritage through active participation and the potential of formalizing them into action circuits.

Attempting to delve into further details, we focused on the rural heritage of Naxos, as a unique case study, preserving multiple tangible edifices in situ that attract the diverse interest of a number of local or distant communities. In fact, by applying the commons concept in our case study, we managed to discern many patterns, unavailable when approached through traditional lenses of heritage management: it seems that the rural heritage

of Naxos should be understood as a network of edifices (windmills, wells, cobbled pathways), natural resources (air, water, pastures) and social, cultural and economic relationships that together form the rural character of the island. This plural appreciation of heritage provides the interested stakeholders with a pivotal role, as it allows them to bring in and explore their diverse approaches and values ascribed. In the case of Naxos, rural heritage, even though partially explored by scientists, is central to the local community identity. However, debased from its socio-cultural surroundings, sometimes is promoted as a shallow touristic product by the local administration, in ways that resemble the predicaments of the neoliberal heritage policies in Europe.

Thus, apart from a different conceptualization and risk registering, the commons lenses allow us to discuss an alternative management arrangement for heritage commons that could celebrate their plural character and find consensus between antagonistic community values, currently at play. Empirical data generated during the project, point to a collaborative locally-based management system that will draw upon local human resources (social capital) and knowledge, encouraging the active involvement of all stakeholders towards the sustainable preservation of rural heritage. The exact formulation of the governance pattern might still be fleeting and certainly provides fertile ground for further research. However, focusing on the newly uncovered potential of heritage promises a more inclusive, democratic and viable future for the resources and the communities involved.

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