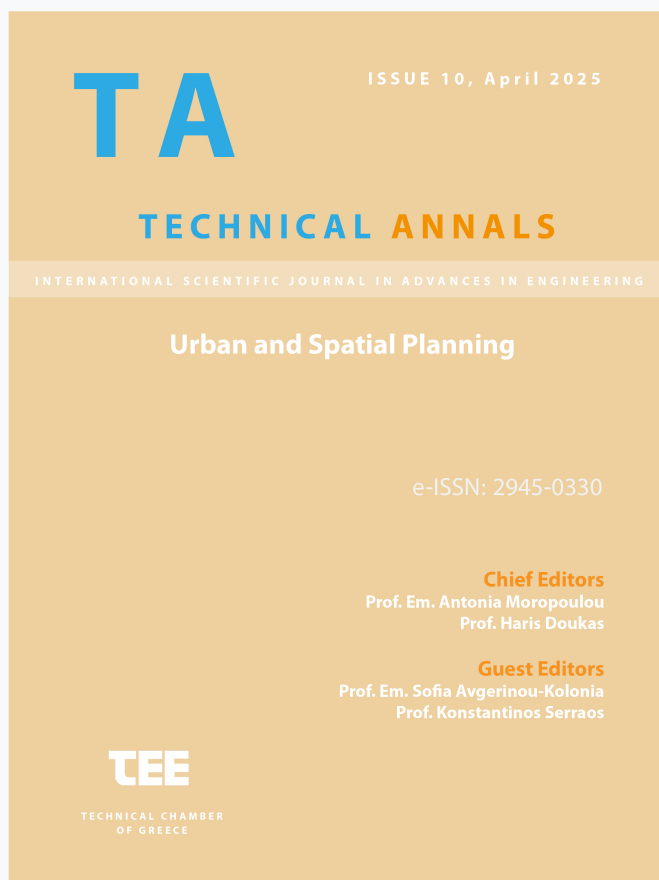


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The multifaceted role of spatial planning in the sustainable development of Greek tourist destinations: challenges, observations, and proposed directions in today's era of continuous crises and shifting conditions

Efthymia Sarantakou

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The multifaceted role of spatial planning in the sustainable development of Greek tourist destinations: challenges, observations, and proposed directions in today's era of continuous crises and shifting conditions

Efthymia Sarantakou^[0000-0002-5035-5964]

University of West Attica, Hellenic Open University
esarantakou@uniwa.gr

Abstract. The article analyzes the multifaceted role that spatial planning must play in supporting the sustainable development of Greek tourist destinations in an era of continuous crises and rapid change. It focuses on five key functions of spatial planning: regulating tourism development, promoting sustainable investments, creating attractive destinations, enhancing resilience, and coordinating the involved stakeholders. Through a systematic review of the literature and an evaluation of applied policies in Greece, it records the dominant typologies of tourism development and highlights critical weaknesses such as the fragmented implementation of policies and the lack of strategic coherence in the spatial planning of tourist destinations.

The article proposes the formulation of a national strategy with an emphasis on the redesign of mature destinations, landscape management, and the adoption of ecosystem-based approaches, aiming to achieve a balance between competitiveness, environmental protection, and social welfare.

Keywords: Spatial planning, sustainable tourism development, Greek tourist destinations.

1 Introduction

Spatial planning plays a pivotal role in achieving sustainable tourism development, particularly within a society striving for the long-term rational organization and preservation of environmental, social, and cultural balance. Despite the wide variety of planning traditions across countries, it is widely acknowledged that spatial planning in relation to tourism has primarily functioned as a regulatory mechanism, providing a framework for balancing competing land uses. However, the increasing complexity of social phenomena, the rapid technological transformations, and the urgent need to manage the impacts of climate change have exposed the limitations of such static, conventional approaches. Research on the relationship between spatial planning and tourism remains relatively limited [1-4] highlights common themes and concerns shared by scholars of both tourism policy and spatial planning, including governance structures, sustainability challenges, and the understanding of tourism's multiple policy impacts.

Recent scholarship in tourism planning emphasizes the tourism destination as the primary spatial unit for policy intervention. As several scholars have pointed out [1,5-7], a key contemporary challenge lies in effectively integrating spatial and development planning into destination management processes — a complex issue faced by planning systems worldwide.

This article aims to contribute to this debate by analyzing the multidimensional role that spatial planning must fulfill to support sustainable tourism development, focusing specifically on Greek tourism destinations. The research is based on a systematic literature review and an evaluation of applied spatial policies, examining the link between spatial planning and the patterns and types of tourism spatial development in Greece. Initially, it reviews the international literature on the spatial planning of tourism destinations, identifying four key roles that spatial planning must perform at the destination level to promote sustainable tourism: regulatory, promotional, creative, and coordinative.

The study then focuses on the Greek case, applying a methodology of documenting and mapping the spatial planning policies that have been implemented. This process involves recording the key typologies of tourism spatial organization and identifying the mechanisms that shaped them, while pinpointing critical periods and shifts in the objectives of spatial strategies and policies. Finally, a synthetic analysis categorizes the main challenges facing spatial planning in Greece and proposes strategic directions for more effective planning and sustainable tourism development of Greek destinations in today's era of continuous crises and rapidly changing conditions.

1.1 The Distinct Roles of Spatial Planning in Promoting Sustainable Tourism Development

Following the widespread acceptance of the initial definition of sustainability in the Brundtland Report (1987) and the global influence of the Rio Declaration (1992), the concept of sustainable development progressively dominated academic, business, political, and governance discourses. Over the past thirty years, an international dialogue has developed systematically around the principles that should guide sustainable tourism, through conferences, reports, and global declarations, such as the Charter for Sustainable Tourism (World Conference in Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain, 1995), the Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, and, more recently, the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All these initiatives frame sustainability as a balance between economic growth, environmental conservation, and social ethics [8-10].

In the context of a rationally organized and well-governed society, spatial planning is considered a prerequisite for sustainable tourism development. Within this strategic goal, spatial planning is positioned as a complex and multifaceted process, encompassing economic, environmental, social, cultural, and political dimensions. A review of the relevant literature [2-4, 11-12] indicates that spatial planning can contribute to sustainable tourism development by assuming five key roles, which are analyzed below:

1.1.1 The Regulatory Role of Spatial Planning

Spatial planning assumes a regulatory role by promoting a balanced distribution of tourism activities and safeguarding the natural and cultural resources that underpin the long-term sustainability of tourism development. This approach emerged in the 1980s, notably through seminal works such as Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) [13] model which highlighted the adverse impacts of unregulated tourism expansion on local environments. In the following decades, spatial planning was increasingly recognized as a crucial mechanism for regulating tourism development to protect natural and cultural resources and to preserve the well-being of local communities [14]. This regulatory function was operationalized through tools such as zoning systems with graded levels of protection, land resource conservation measures, restrictions or controls on tourism development in specific areas, limits on the number of tourism beds, special building regulations, visitor management models, and tourism development monitoring indicators. Despite the diversity of planning traditions across different countries and destinations, the regulatory dimension consistently forms the foundation of destination planning, as it is essential for ensuring the long-term viability of local systems, of which tourism is a part. Regulation remains the fundamental policy instrument available to spatial planning systems, securing legal certainty and sustainability over time. Nevertheless, regulatory approaches to spatial planning have faced criticism for being overly rigid and static, often assuming an unrealistic level of public control over land use and development processes [15].

1.1.2 The Promotional Role of Spatial Planning in Supporting Healthy Tourism Entrepreneurship and Attracting Desired Investments

In this context, spatial planning assumes a promotional role, facilitating the development of desirable tourism patterns and the attraction of sustainable investments. Spatial planning can contribute by:

- Rationally distributing tourism infrastructure, based on investment performance evaluations and the sustainability of public-private partnerships.
- Protecting key tourism resources such as forests, archaeological sites, and beaches, ensuring the harmonious coexistence of tourism activities with competing land uses.
- Safeguarding the availability of public land resources suitable for tourism development.
- Creating an investor-friendly environment through mechanisms that support investors, simplify permitting and land-use procedures, and offer spatial, planning, and economic incentives for sustainable tourism investments.

The global financial crisis of 2008 prompted a reorganization of national spatial planning systems in several European countries, including Greece, to respond to the needs of an increasingly globalized economy and the promotion of tourism and real estate investments [16-17]. Regarding tourism entrepreneurship, spatial planning has focused on strengthening and promoting investment activity as a means of supporting economic recovery and enabling regions to capitalize on opportunities arising from the

crisis. However, planning must ensure that private investments serve the public interest and align with the goals of sustainable development.

According to the Allen Consulting Group [18] the facilitation of tourism investments should meet several conditions:

- Investments should address identified market failures and support national and local sustainable tourism development goals, such as spreading tourism demand and strengthening disadvantaged areas.
- Investments should represent a sound use of public funds, measured against their social and environmental benefits, with effectiveness evaluation mechanisms integrated into policy and program design.
- Private investors should bear an appropriate share of the risks associated with the proposed investments.
- Investment facilitation processes should be fair, equitable, and conducted transparently for all parties involved.

1.1.3 The Creative Role of Spatial Planning in Shaping Attractive and Competitive Tourism Destinations

This approach emphasizes the creative role that spatial planning can play in either creating new tourism destinations or enhancing the attractiveness of existing ones. Since the 1980s, strategies aimed at improving the competitiveness of mature¹ destinations or repositioning declining cities and regions in the global market have been developed under the broader framework of rejuvenation strategies [19-20]. A core element of such strategies involves interventions in urban planning, urban design, and landscape design, aiming to upgrade the built and natural environment and enhance the physical attractiveness of destinations. In the early decades of the 21st century, emphasis shifted towards strengthening the identity of destinations through placemaking and place shaping approaches [21]. In this context, spatial planning and place branding are closely interconnected, as the physical environment plays a critical role in shaping a destination's image. In the strategic objective of enhancing a tourism destination's attractiveness, modern spatial planning can contribute through mechanisms that support multiple goals, such as:

- Highlighting the destination's architectural heritage, including landmarks, buildings, and public spaces that contribute to its character and identity [22 - 23].
- Creating attractive and innovative public spaces by ensuring high-quality urban design in parks, squares, and upgrading the built environment through façade improvements or the removal of incompatible structures.

¹The concept of a "mature tourist destination" is closely linked to the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model, as formulated by Butler (1980) and further developed by subsequent scholars. A mature destination is considered one that has completed a full cycle of tourism development and may be in a stage of stagnation, in a transitional post-stagnation phase, or even entering a new development cycle. In all cases, such destinations face complex strategic challenges that must be acknowledged and addressed through specialized and context-sensitive planning approaches.

- Facilitating the development of flagship urban projects, supporting flagship urban projects that can serve as symbols of a destination and strengthen its international image [24].
- Promoting accessible destinations, emphasizing the redesign of public spaces to improve pedestrian accessibility and encourage sustainable mobility [25].

1.1.4 Spatial Planning Must Contribute to the Creation of Resilient Tourism Destinations

Spatial planning serves as a key tool for enhancing the resilience of tourism destinations. While the concept of a resilient destination encompasses a broad interdisciplinary field, this article focuses on the role of spatial planning in adapting to natural disasters and the impacts of the climate crisis. This is achieved through three main approaches: preventive interventions that guide destination development, regulatory measures that control tourism activities, and strategic coordination that ensures stakeholder participation and policy convergence [26].

To address the challenges of climate change, spatial planning must incorporate uncertainties, anticipate risks and impacts, and provide mitigation and adaptation mechanisms to prevent or minimize damage. This necessity has led to the adoption of ecosystem-based planning approaches [27-29], such as the Green Infrastructures framework, which has gained prominence in planning theory and policy over the past decades [30]. Ecological restorations represent one of the primary strategies for promoting Green Infrastructures [31]. Investments in Green Infrastructures are believed to enhance the image of a destination by attracting and retaining high-value facilities, new businesses, and skilled workers, while strengthening the cultural and historical landscape identity of a tourism destination. At the same time, the promotion of Green Infrastructures can create unique opportunities for attracting new visitors to the city.

Moreover, in recent years, research has increasingly focused on addressing sea-level rise (SLR) in coastal and island areas. The Shoreline Adaptation Plan (SAP) provides a comprehensive framework, including vulnerability mapping, risk analysis, and the development of adaptation measures to mitigate the impacts of these phenomena [32].

1.1.5 Spatial Planning as a Coordinating Mechanism in Tourism Development Governance at National, Regional, and Local Levels

In this approach, spatial planning can enable a variety of interest groups—representing different sectors, stakeholders, and levels of governance—to engage in dialogue on issues of sustainable tourism development within a specific space and time [2]. Consultation is a critical aspect of spatial planning, aiming to identify solutions that address the needs and priorities of local communities. Such consultations, typically organized by municipal authorities or planning bodies, are conducted at various stages of the tourism planning process. Depending on the level of participant engagement in the participatory planning process and the intended outcomes (e.g., capturing opinions or achieving consensus), consultation mechanisms can involve various forms of communication [4, 33-35].

In the early decades of the 21st century, new forms of governance and collaboration between the state, local authorities, and the private sector have emerged within the framework of strategic spatial planning. The role of spatial planning is to promote the involvement of the private sector and to ensure the integration of environmental dimensions across all levels—national, regional, and local. It is important to highlight that, although consultation procedures are embedded within spatial planning systems in all democratic states, in practice, spatial planning often becomes an additional arena for conflicts rather than serving as an effective coordinating mechanism [4].

Depending on the identified problems and articulated objectives, spatial planning may place greater emphasis on one or more specific goals. However, it is important to stress that comprehensive spatial planning should balance all the needs of a tourism destination: enhancing its competitiveness and attractiveness, protecting its resources, and ensuring the prosperity of the local community. The five key roles highlighted in the international literature are not merely theoretical guidelines; they have been institutionally established through contemporary national and transnational spatial planning frameworks. A comparison of European spatial planning systems reveals that in most cases, sectoral planning for tourism has been integrated—at varying degrees—into regional spatial planning, with the notable exceptions of Greece and the Czech Republic [36].

2 The Characteristics of Greek Tourism Destinations as a Result of Applied Spatial Planning

The Greek tourism space has historically been characterized by uneven spatial distributions, with five coastal and island regions (Crete, South Aegean, Central Macedonia, Ionian Islands, and Attica) receiving 84% of the total number of inbound tourists and concentrating 79% of the country's hotel beds as of 2023 (Bank of Greece, 2024), while also displaying significant geographical differentiation.

The regional distribution of tourism activity has been shaped by the interaction of endogenous and exogenous factors. During the first period of tourism development (1965–1990), the shift toward the heliotropic model, reinforced by tour operator policies, generated strong concentrations of demand and supply in specific coastal and island areas [37–38]. Efforts to achieve better regional dispersion—through incentives (e.g., development laws) or disincentives (e.g., spatial regulatory measures such as "saturated areas" and Zoning Ordinances, ZOE)—were applied inconsistently and failed to substantially transform the dominant spatial patterns.

A structural feature of Greek tourism destinations is closely linked to the fragmentation of land ownership, stemming both from specific historical and socio-economic conditions and from the spatial policies implemented over time [39]. As a result, Small and Very Small Tourism Enterprises dominate the Greek tourism landscape, following a "craft-based" tourism model.

The term "craft-based" refers to the organizational characteristics (i.e., small, family-run establishments), rather than the intensity of tourism activity, which can be very high. Tourism has been "industrialized" only in a few areas (e.g., Rhodes, Kos, Crete,

Corfu, Halkidiki, Athens), where large-scale tourism facilities coexist with a significant number of small/family-run units. The average size of hotel capacity in Greece is 82 beds (41 rooms), while approximately 80% of the country's hotel beds belong to establishments with up to 50 rooms. Hotels with over 200 beds represent only 7.8% of the total stock. The average size of all tourist accommodation facilities (including non-hotel types) is even smaller, reaching approximately 31 beds (15 rooms) [40].

An additional characteristic of Greek tourism destinations is the blending of second-home and tourism uses. More than half of the tourism beds in Greece operate in typical or informal accommodation units originally designated as residential buildings. In several regions, hotel beds are either comparable to or fewer than those found in secondary or informal accommodation [41].

2.1 Key Typologies of Tourism Spatial Development in Greece and the Spatial Mechanisms That Shaped Them

From the analysis of the spatial development of tourism in Greek destinations [42] three dominant typologies of tourism development have been identified. The 2nd and 3rd types represent the most typical models of spatial development, mainly in coastal and island destinations, shaping an endogenous "artisan-like" organizational model, often of high intensity, and sometimes coexisting with the 1st type:

Type 1: Focused development of medium and large hotel complexes outside urban plans at the edges of settlements, in coastal or forest areas.

Type 1 is always associated with the implementation of specific favorable policies for large tourism investments, which consistently combine financial facilities and spatial privileges, such as the ability to exploit prime locations (coastal zones, forest areas), the compulsory expropriation of public and private land for the establishment or expansion of hotel units, and construction exemptions allowing especially advantageous terms for exploiting tourism plots. These policies encouraged the creation of large, high-category hotel enterprises.

This type is mainly found in destinations that developed during the initial period of tourism growth in Greece (1960–1980), such as Attica, Rhodes, Halkidiki, and Corfu.

During the 1990s, policies promoting larger tourism investments were also implemented, though rather fragmented, targeting specific areas (such as Crete).

In the more recent period of the Greek economic crisis 2010–2019 (2010–2019) in Greece, a new spatial and developmental framework was shaped, promoting the introduction of new tourism real estate products and the attraction of major tourism investments. This framework was supported by the policies of the bailout agreements (memoranda) [43]. These new investments are mainly oriented towards emerging tourist areas where sufficient land is still available, such as Messinia, Laconia, Thessaly, Kea, and Milos, or in already developed tourist areas where land reserves with special status existed (e.g., ecclesiastical land, Natura 2000 areas in Crete, etc.) [44–45] (see Fig. 1).

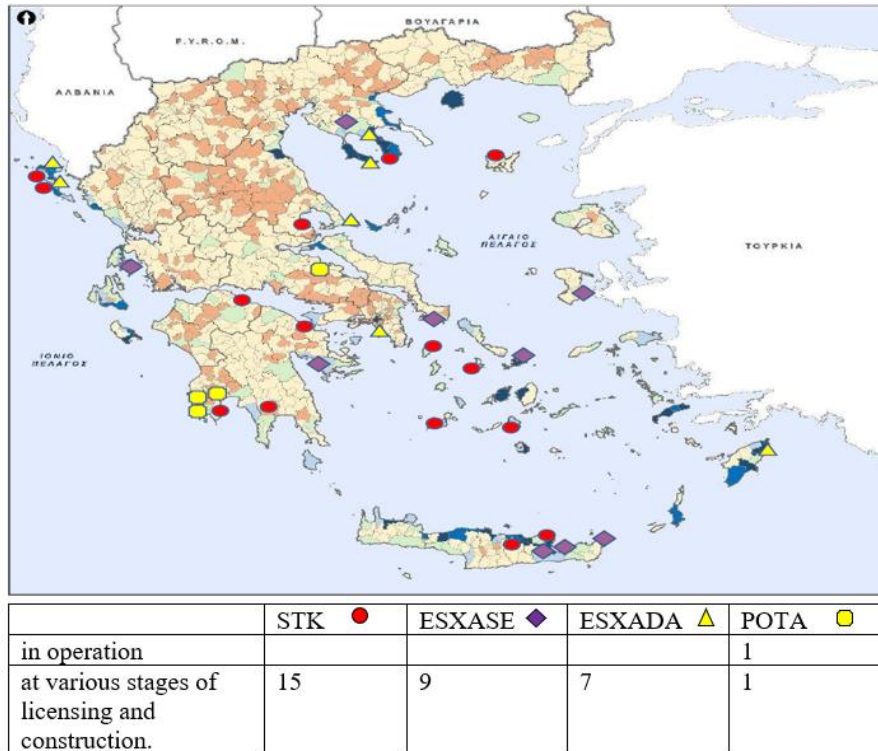


Fig. 1. Figure 1 Integrated Tourism Development Projects in Greece, 2022.

Source: Tsartas & Sarantakou 2022,

STK: Mixed-use tourist accommodations established by Law 4002/2011

POTA: Integrated Tourism Development Areas, a planning mechanism of an entrepreneurial nature established by Law 2545/1997

ESXASE: Special Spatial Development Plans of Strategic Investments established by Law 4179/2013

ESXADA: Special Spatial Development Plans of Public Estates established by Law 4179/2013

Type 2: Focused, dense development of small formal and informal tourism units within the boundaries of newer settlements.

During the second period of tourism development (1980–1990), tourism in Greece grew at a very rapid pace and underwent a qualitative transformation, as a cheaper mass tourism model became dominant. In this critical period of tourism expansion, a spatial and developmental policy was implemented that favored the dominance of a small and medium-sized model. Gradually, Type 2 prevailed: a focused, dense development within new settlements created through the delimitation of coastal areas. Type 2 represents a "typical" model of spatial development in many coastal areas of Greece and is associated with endogenous "artisan-like" high-intensity tourism.

Type 3: Unplanned, extensive development of tourism and vacation uses, largely along coastal and roadside areas at the edges of settlements on agricultural land.

The third type concerns the unplanned, extensive development outside urban plans and settlement boundaries, largely along coastal and roadside areas, and has appeared dynamically from the 1990s to the present. Type 3 is largely characterized by the mixing of vacation and tourism uses in properties built under residential construction regulations. This type is linked to the significant building allowances outside city and settlement plans, the absence of defined land uses, and often very small minimum plot sizes [46-47].

2.2 Evaluation of the Role of Spatial Planning in Greek Tourist Destinations During the Period 1980–2025

Since the late 1980s, spatial planning in Greece has primarily had a regulatory role regarding tourism, with uneven medium-term results. This effort began with the regulation of "saturated areas," which imposed restrictions on the entry of new businesses. At the end of the 1990s, an integrated spatial planning system was established (Laws 2508/97 and 2742/99). Based on this system, from 2005 onward, spatial plans were drafted that set general development guidelines. The regulatory logic of "saturated areas" was maintained within the framework of the Residential Control Zones (ZOE), which essentially constituted the main spatial tools applied to tourist destinations up until the 2010s [48]. A maximalist and "strict" spatial planning model was developed, aiming at environmental protection and the upgrading of the tourism product, but it was accompanied by a weak enforcement mechanism, leading to results opposite to those expected [42]. The first Special Spatial Framework for Tourism in 2009 aimed to establish a national strategy for the spatial organization of tourism but was heavily criticized by stakeholders. In 2013, a revised version was approved. Subsequently, however, the Council of State (Decisions 3632/2015 and 519/2017, Section E) annulled both versions of the framework [37]. Additionally, regulations from the EU structural funds created a parallel, unofficial system [49].

Due to the absence of a targeted spatial tourism policy, no comprehensive rejuvenation and upgrading strategies were implemented for mature Greek destinations. Instead, fragmented upgrading policies at the business and infrastructure levels were applied, yielding moderate effectiveness [50]. In conclusion, the 2010–2020 period aimed at regulating and upgrading Greek tourism qualitatively, but the lack of coherence, the involvement of multiple bodies without a common vision, and constant administrative changes limited the effectiveness of these policies [51].

During Greece's economic crisis (2010–2019), under the pressure of the country's bailout obligations, a radical revision of the spatial planning philosophy regarding tourism investments occurred [52-54]. A strongly pro-investment framework was established, with a specific focus: the introduction of new tourism products emphasizing tourism real estate and the attraction of large-scale tourism investments, which were notably lacking in Greece. This new model was supported by the creation of a special fast-track licensing mechanism for large-scale investments ("Strategic Investments") and the introduction of new flexible urban planning tools for the creation of large-scale tourism developments, featuring special provisions [43]. These new spatial tools have

successfully attracted larger integrated tourism development projects (Figure 1). However, the absence of a strategic special framework for the spatial and developmental organization of tourism at the national level during the critical period of its recent second growth (2013–2025) reduced the ability to manage the increased demand rationally. As a result, regional inequalities, historically characteristic of the Greek case, have been further exacerbated. The doubling of tourist arrivals (+102%) during the 2012–2019 period was not matched by a corresponding increase in hotel beds, which grew by only 11.5% by the end of the period [55]. This means that the significant growth in tourism largely fueled the expansion of informal and essentially unregulated tourism accommodation through sharing economy platforms [44].

The issue of accessibility in Greek tourist destinations has only been seriously addressed in the last decade. At the urban planning level, initiatives for drafting Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) with European funding were developed, but implementation remains limited [55]. Examples of good practices include Kos, Rethymno, and Komotini, which was awarded at the 2021 European Access City Awards. Despite the provision for accessible destinations in the legal framework (Articles 52–54, Government Gazette A250/2021), the relevant initiative has not yet been fully implemented [57].

Today, the resilience of Greek destinations represents the most critical challenge for sustainable development. Climate crisis management was introduced into spatial planning mainly in general terms towards the end of the previous decade. For instance, the new Special Spatial Framework for Tourism (EXPT), which was put to public consultation in July 2024, refers to climate change adaptation only at a general objective level, without incorporating operational actions. Provisions for the protection of coastal zones have not been effectively implemented, while Protocol 7 of the Barcelona Convention has not been ratified by Greece [58]. Finally, during the period 2022–2024, the evaluation of Carrying Capacity was introduced into Local and Special Urban Plans (Article 64 of Law 4964/2022 and Government Gazette 200D/2024), aiming at assessing the maximum tolerable pressures in sensitive areas. Despite its early stage of implementation, this development represents an important step towards more resilient and sustainable spatial planning.

3 Conclusions: Challenges and Directions for the Spatial Planning of Tourism in Greece in the Current Period

This article contributes to the ongoing discussion regarding the analysis of the multidimensional role that spatial planning must serve in the direction of the sustainable development of tourist destinations, focusing on the case of Greece.

From the longitudinal analysis presented earlier, it emerges that spatial planning implemented in Greece has mainly served two successive and contradictory roles: strongly promotional during certain periods and strictly regulatory—sometimes even hostile—toward large investments in others, depending on the objectives of the political leadership at the time. Spatial planning tools were applied fragmentarily, with limitations, and with significant delays [48–49]. Due to the lack of planning, small property

ownership and endogenous small-scale entrepreneurship were greatly favored. At the same time, the state displayed tolerance, and sometimes even impunity, toward various forms of irregularities and poor entrepreneurial practices [16-59]. Since 2011, there has been a shift toward a flexible spatial development model aimed specifically at attracting large-scale, integrated tourism investment projects through urban planning procedures [60-61].

In reality, spatial planning in Greece did not constitute the basis for tourism and development processes but instead lagged behind developments with considerable delay. The lack of political will to implement spatial planning meant that the profound transformations of the Greek tourism landscape during both the first (1970–1995) and the second growth periods (2013–2025) occurred largely outside the scope of spatial planning.

By the mid-2020s, the need to establish a national strategy for the spatial planning of tourist destinations becomes urgent, capable of managing the rapid transformations of tourism activity under conditions of successive crises such as the financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this framework, the following challenges emerge:

- *The proven difficulty of achieving a consensual approach to spatial governance of tourism in Greece.*

Sustainable tourism requires open and participatory spatial governance processes and promotes bottom-up tourism development. During the period of the Greek economic crisis 2010-2019 (2010–2019), a relatively structured policy among competent ministries was formed, positively received by professional tourism bodies. However, these emergency-driven policies did not secure broad consensus among scientific and environmental organizations. A notable example is the Special Spatial Framework for Tourism (approved in 2013, Government Gazette B' 3155/2013) which was annulled by the 3632/2015 decision of the Council of State for violating essential consultation procedures. Analysis of the 13 Regional Spatial Frameworks [51] highlights the lack of coherent policy for tourism development and entrepreneurship, with particularly contentious issues being the siting of large investments and unregulated building outside town plans. Environmental and scientific organizations have criticized the Strategic Investments framework as abusive when it does not serve national and local goals for sustainable tourism development, such as the dispersal of tourist demand and the strengthening of disadvantaged areas.

- *The need for rapid adaptation to rapidly changing global circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or global warming.*

Flexibility in spatial planning allows authorities to adapt regulations to new opportunities and challenges in tourism, such as the development of new forms of tourism or the incorporation of sustainable practices. Greece's spatial planning system, shaped since the late 1990s, remains centralized and of limited maturity due to the lack of evaluation and control processes, making it rigid and static [62]. Efforts to revise the system between 2010–2020 aimed to shorten plan approval times, manage conflicts between planning levels, and promote entrepreneurship. According to the ESPON COMPASS [36]. project, the adaptability of the Greek system improved from "weak" to "moderate," mainly through new urban planning tools based on development initiatives rather

than predefined land use plans [60, 63-64]. Nevertheless, environmental and scientific organizations have pointed out risks, criticizing the new framework for favoring large investments at the expense of integrated planning. Achieving a balance between legal certainty and flexibility is critical for dynamic activities like tourism. This requires a combination of flexible institutional arrangements with strong transparency and consultation mechanisms to meet developmental, social, and environmental demands.

- *Strengthening the participatory and coordinating role of spatial planning.*

Sustainable tourism development depends on open, participatory spatial governance processes. There is a persistent risk that difficulties in achieving consensus may result in an inability to make decisions and take responsibility. Therefore, it is essential to establish stable participation structures to cultivate a culture of dialogue and consensus [65]. Strengthening the coordinating role of spatial planning can be achieved through the emergence of strong bodies for integrated governance at the regional and local levels, in cooperation with private and public stakeholders. Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) could play this role, provided they are granted appropriate responsibilities. It is also crucial to integrate monitoring mechanisms into the tourism, developmental, and spatial planning processes through Tourism Observatories in collaboration with academic institutions and professional bodies.

- *The need to redesign mature Greek destinations to enhance their competitiveness and resilience.*

In the post-pandemic period, destinations that used the crisis period to redesign their tourism products have taken the lead. Most Greek tourist destinations are "mature." To maintain or regain their competitiveness, they must be redesigned to become attractive, sustainable, accessible, and resilient. This restructuring requires significant funding and the synergy of tourism and spatial planning, alongside strong incentives to restore investments in the tourism sector. Greek destinations must offer tourists high-quality experiences throughout their journey, from entry points to accommodation and mobility within urban and rural spaces. For this purpose, introducing place-shaping strategies is necessary, combining spatial planning tools with tourism product development to transform destinations into attractive experience spaces. Spatial planning can ensure the appropriate density of points of interest, create thematic and multi-thematic networks, contribute to the upgrading of degraded built environments, and strengthen local identity. Spatial and developmental planning must meaningfully integrate key issues increasingly important for sustainable development, such as landscape management [66-67]. A shift toward an ecosystemic approach in spatial planning is becoming necessary [68-69] and ecological urban regeneration projects can serve as a strategic advantage for Greece's green marketing, showcasing environmental responsibility as a competitive edge.

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