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Pafos Cultural Capital of Europe 2017: Landscape interventions in the urban fabric as a tourist development tool

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Abstract

The relationship between tourism and sites of cultural and natural significance exists since the time of Greek Antiquity and strongly encourages landscape restoration of urban sites. This paper provides an up-to-date overview of the relationship between cultural landscape heritage and tourism, describes strategies that can lead to sustainable tourism where cultural heritage is a key factor, and formulates a methodology for landscape intervention, with a particular focus on the dynamics of landscape transformation and the rigorous reading of the ecological and cultural dimensions of the landscape of the town of Pafos, European Capital of Culture for 2017, as a major means to generate economic benefits from recreation and tourism. Pafos is a town with monuments of unique value from every period of its rich cultural tradition where ancient amphitheaters, agoras, and archeological sites co-exist in harmony with the unique Mediterranean seashore and the sensitive natural ecosystem of the Akamas peninsula. Pafos as European Capital of Culture for 2017 aims at developing a strategic sustainable plan to re-invent the town as a cultural landscape used as a tourist development tool. It will implement an extensive urban landscape design intervention plan, with the aim of restoring open public spaces, creating links between important sites and archaeological spaces, and recovering the lost connection with the natural environment, the land and the sea based on aspects of sustainable and eco-friendly tourism development. Such a landscape approach tempts to integrate natural and cultural heritage by recognizing that the current landscape is the product of long-term and complex interrelationships between people and the environment. This research may also serve as a basis for future strategic landscape interventions in the urban fabric as a tourism policy and cultural heritage planning establishing an exclusive linkage to the “sense of place” and landscape design.

Introduction

The relationship between tourism and sites of cultural and natural significance exists since the time of Greek Antiquity and strongly encourages landscape restoration of urban sites (Fowler, 2003). A brief overview of the relationship between cultural landscape heritage and tourism seems significant in order to better understand the bonding principles between them and introduce innovative landscape design interventions in the urban fabric which make us aware of the international dimension of the new issues surrounding the cultural heritage, with regard to upgrading and improving cities and areas of cultural importance.

Cultural Heritage may act as a valuable urban resource. In today's economic environment, the articulation and understanding of cultural heritage values have acquired a significant importance, both scientifically and politically. Cultural heritage is a resource that is as diverse in appearance as it is rich in scope. The awareness of the value and increased interest in cultural heritage plays a central role in creating new urban vitality by enhancing the quality or attractiveness of a place for visitors, with far reaching implications for the quality of life in a broad sense (Fowler, 2003). It is always interesting to look at a town and observe the way it was built along the times. In each element, at every moment always appears some scenery detail which is related with its own context.

Tourism and Cultural Heritage is a multidimensional phenomenon which over the past decades has turned into a rapidly rising international trade sector. The urban transformations of the last thirty years have been accompanied by a profound change in the concept of heritage and the relationship which residents and visitors have with it. At the same time, the resource value of place distinctiveness is receiving the attention of urban authorities and the tourism industry. Cultural tourism can encourage the revival of traditions and the restoration of landscapes and monuments (Fowler, 2003). Consequently, the presence of a great diversity of cultural heritage prompts historical and cultural areas to transform their territories in ways that generate economic benefits from visitors and tourists. What therefore are the new issues, particularly in

relation to urban development and landscape restoration, and how can we take the measure of them and find the most appropriate level of strategic landscape interventions?

Methodology for landscape intervention

The urban regeneration of the town of Pafos introduces the town as cultural landscape, extending the concepts of historical landscape. A cultural landscape perspective explicitly recognizes the history of a place and its cultural traditions in addition to its ecological value. This concept recognizes that the current landscape is the product of long-term and complex interrelationships between people and the environment and emphasizes the need for a multidisciplinary approach to understanding and interpreting a site's setting. Such an approach entails considering both the agents and dynamics of landscape transformation and the rigorous reading of the ecological and cultural dimensions of the landscape. Only such a methodology, which respects the heritage and identity of landscape, can be said to foster the long-term development of both society and nature (Desidério et al., 2012). In the context of the changeable dynamics typical of contemporary landscapes, this paper contributes to the formulation of an intervention methodology based on an ecological and cultural reading of the landscape in order to apply the proposed method used in landscape restoration of Paphos.

Case Study: The town of Pafos

Pafos, a European town of the 21st Century at the crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa, is a town with monuments of unique value from every period of its rich cultural tradition. The town of Pafos attracts a significant number of visitors every year, mainly as a result of its unique cultural heritage, and its location. Pafos as European Capital of Culture for 2017 aims at developing a strategic sustainable plan to re-invent the town as a cultural landscape used as a tourist development tool. The aim is to re-invent Pafos as an open-air space which will host numerous activities, cultural in the vast sense and artistic: an Open-Air Factory for humanity, art and culture, with events throughout the year and throughout the entire District of Pafos (Fig 1). Such a sustainable intervention may also serve as a reference case study of future urban development and landscape restoration which will introduce an innovative strategy supporting an integrated, sustainable development of historic urban areas, strengthening their attractiveness and competitiveness by capitalizing on cultural heritage assets.



Fig. 1. Satellite of 3Dof Pafos

Landscape Restoration Projects for the town of Pafos

The urban zone of Pafos has undergone several transformations, most of which were not part of a specific urban planning and design proposal for its development as part of the history of the

area and its use as an integral part of tourist development (Pafos 2017, 2014).As European Capital of Culture, Pafos will implement an extensive urban regeneration program, with the aim of restoring open public spaces (parks, squares and pedestrian areas), upgrading central areas, creating links between important sites and archaeological spaces, and recovering the lost connection with the natural environment, the land and the sea. Regarding the Landscape Architecture interventions to be made for the PAFOS 17 Cultural Capital event, these are as follows:

1. Unifying the spaces around a public garden to form the new city's main square

The Pafos 2017 Organisation aims at unifying the green spaces around the town's main green space (the Public Garden). This intervention extends to the area of the Central Fountain and the Mousallas area, unifying these in a single central walkway, which includes the Cathedral and the Ethnographic Museum as landmark (Pafos 2017, 2014). This way the green area integrates into a major public open space to be given for usage by the citizens, thus correcting a long term planning issue.



Fig. 2 The existing public garden and the surrounding space

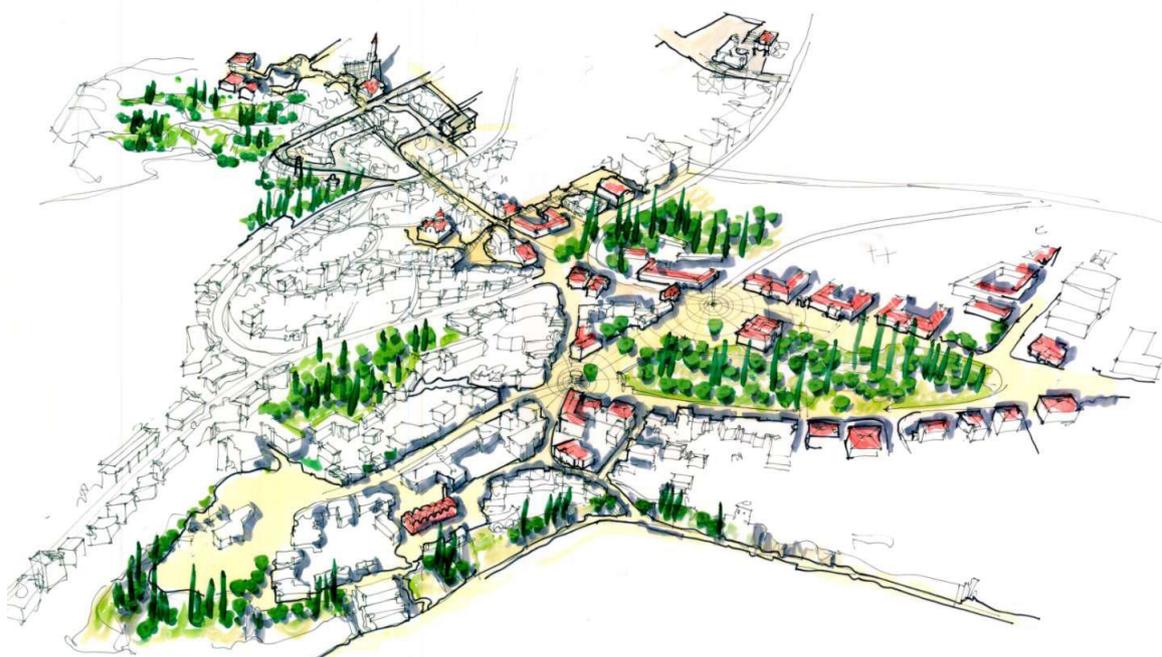


Fig. 3. Unifying the spaces around the central square. Source: Pafos 2017 (2014) sketch: I. Koutsolambros

2. Unification of Archeological Sites

The existence of such an extensive archaeological zone, closely neighbouring the modern town, is the most important detail of the identity of Pafos. Designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, the archaeological legacy of the ancient capital of Cyprus, Nea Pafos, needs to restore its bonds with history, and to enhance its new image in continuation thereof and in harmony therewith (Pafos 2017, 2014). The Unification of the Archaeological Sites represents an important change in Pafos since the archaeological sites and monuments will regain their significance, dominating the landscape, as they will become part of everyday life. By incorporating into the life of the town monuments covering the entire historical span, both citizen and visitor may experience the historical continuity of the town in an environment of improved cultural, educational and aesthetic (Pafos 2017, 2014).



Fig. 4, 5: Unification of Archeological Sites. Source: Pafos 2017 (2014), sketches I. Koutsolambros

3. Unification of green spaces and greenways creation

The lack of urban planning when developing the town of Pafos, coupled with severe degradation of public spaces, as it took place in the past decades, dictates the creation of a unified system of green spaces (Pafos 2017, 2014) which will improve the town's micro-climate, and result in achieving bio-diversity.

In order to achieve the above aims, an integrated unification of green spaces and greenways creation has to be encouraged (Georgi et al., 2006):

- The connection and the unification of all the green areas in between and with the surrounding ecosystem.
- The increasing of the percentage of the soft landscape against the hard landscape.
- The creation of a walking network with possibilities to integrate with the surrounding ecosystem.
- The restoration and the protection of all the wetland areas and its unification with the greenways system.



Fig 6.Unification of green spaces and greenways creation (Source: Pafos 2017 (2014))

Conclusion

This historic process of landscape construction contributed to the formation of local cultures, increased quality of life, and the affirmation of peoples' identities, encapsulating finally a fundamental part of national and European heritage. However, the recent process of territorial transformation and extraordinary technological development has caused severe environmental and spatial problems visible in fragmented, uncharacteristic and degraded landscapes. Despite these increased and profound changes inflicted on the landscape by human action, neither its traditional forms of organization nor the heritage values credited with its identity and character have completely disappeared. The landscape of Pafos is analyzed and read as a mosaic made up of different spaces and elements such as built, natural, archeological, and road networks. This approach allows finding tools and establishing relevant knowledge for the planning and construction of landscape based on ecological and cultural reading of the landscape in order to implement an extensive urban landscape design intervention plan, with the aim of restoring open public spaces, creating links between important sites and archaeological spaces, and recovering the lost connection with the natural environment, the land and the sea based on aspects of sustainable and eco-friendly tourism development. Such a landscape approach tempts to integrate natural and cultural heritage by recognizing that the current landscape is the product of long-term and complex interrelationships between people and the environment. This research may also serve as a basis for future strategic landscape interventions in the urban fabric as a tourism policy and cultural heritage planning establishing an exclusive linkage to the "sense of place" and landscape design.

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