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Peloponnesus: a unique example of unorthodox regional development: Can the gastronomic tradition show the right path?

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the case of the Peloponnese region in southern Greece, as a characteristic example of unorthodox regional development. There are two main obstacles: First, the Peloponnese is divided administratively the wrong way in the Region of Western Greece – which also includes a prefecture of Central Greece, the Region of Peloponnese, while a third section in the east belongs to the Region of Attica. Second, the Peloponnese is treated as a peninsula instead of an "island" that even its name indicates. Its name derives from the first mythical king of the region, "Pelopas", plus the word "island" and it means "the island of king Pelopas". Peloponnese could easily benefit from all the economic advantages enjoyed by an island, due to successful marketing, and rapid tourism development that could achieve as a tourist destination while being characterized as "the largest island of Greece". At the same time, because of its unique geographical position, Peloponnese maintains the entire comparative advantages of a mainland, once before the creation of the Isthmus, it was a peninsula.

Thus, making the most out of this unique blend of advantages and characteristics, Peloponnese could be driven towards sustainable tourism development and economic prosperity. The entity of Peloponnese as an indivisible and integrated whole could be better demonstrated by other components, common throughout the entire region, such as the unique biodiversity, culture, gastronomy and history that the region shares for centuries. These are elements which characterize Peloponnese from one end to the other.

It is also worth noting that through history, all the civilizations that concord or lived in Peloponnese, despite the diversity of their origin and culture (eg. Franks, Byzantines, Turks, Greeks, etc.), never dared to divide Peloponnese, and managed it sufficiently by respecting its natural borders in order to achieve the best possible administration, while treating it as a single and homogeneous area. To the contrary, the practices of the Modern Greek state, have divided Peloponnesian administration, practically into three deferent regions the last three decades, with catastrophic results. So, other models of efficient administration should be studied in order to facilitate Peloponnese to return to sustainable growth. In

particular, food & wine tradition in the Peloponnese, as a guide which unite the whole region, could indicate the proper way and a future model of regional development. Traditional products, such as wine, and olive oil “embrace” the whole Peloponnesian territory through the “Wine and Olive oil trails”. The traditional areas of wine and olive production and the great potential of food tourism show the unity of Peloponnese. The benefits of such a holistic administrative approach that faces Peloponnese as a single entity would be better highlighted through a comparison with another neighboring region, Sicily.

Keywords: Gastronomic tourism, Regional development, Peloponnese, Greece

JEL Codes: R58, R11, Z19

1. Introduction

Greece has many advantages because of its huge unexploited natural and cultural resources, which could be used significantly, with appropriate planning, in order to support tourism entrepreneurship and economic development. These advantages reinforce the tourism activity decisively and may generate income and increase employment. However, it appears that during the last few years there has been a gradual decline in the competitiveness of Greek tourism product, increasing dependence on mass tourism and a relative loss of revenue. There were also difficulties: a) in the capacity of infrastructure, b) in modern efficient and organized promotion, c) and the development of new, attractive tourist activities and products that will significantly affect the economic and tourist development of the region (Tsartas & Lagos, 2003). Many of these problems reflect the internal structural weakness of the administration in Greece, (see regions) which, however, could be more effective in tourism development by creating some stronger administrative bodies, consolidated into larger shapes, according to their common cultural and geographical features which would increase significantly their potential for tourism and economic development. The Regions therefore play an important role in everyday life and in the management of the European Union, through close partnership with citizens (Andrikopoulou, 1995). They can help improve the quality of European policy, adjusting it to the reality of each area. Thus, they can communicate the benefits of European integration and improve the credibility of the “European project” to the citizens (AER, 2006).

It is undeniable that the institution of the region can contribute to the strengthening of public confidence in European integration. On the other hand, in order to operate effectively the complex model of European governance and to gain the citizens’ acceptance, it is absolutely vital to support the institution of the region with substantial powers which will improve the citizens’ lives. The Regions as one of the most democratically elected levels of government closest to the citizens, plays an important role in the process of reconnecting the EU with its citizens. The regions are administrative organisms, vital to the rapprochement between citizens and the European Governance, and to the attempt made in order to reposition the citizen at the heart of the European project.

2. The Regions

The regions are the cornerstone of the local government and in times of recession must be efficient in order to serve in the best way possible the central administration in order to achieve local development (Papadaskalopoulos & Christofakis, 2002). A basic assumption in this study is that the administrative division of Greece's 13 regions which was applied in 1987 (N. 1622-1686) created fatal inequalities and false administrative formations such as the Regions of Western Greece and the Peloponnese, which are not effective administratively, constituting a hindrance towards the development of the areas of their responsibility (Besila-Step, 2007). As ineffective administrative formations, these regions, deprive from their citizens the opportunity to achieve their full potential by improving their quality of life, placing these regions at the last positions, rated according to their development rate expected among the EU countries. Based on this premise, the aim of this paper is to identify and assess the extent of false administrative formations and through concrete examples, to demonstrate the potential benefits that would be achieved if these regional structures were reevaluated and redrawn based on realism, common geographical, historical, cultural characteristics, common needs and opportunities and finally, the homogeneity of the local population.

The added value in this article is summarized to the contribution of existing literature in the dialogue about the issue we address, concerning the modern role and operation of the regions in Greece, towards the balanced and sustainable development of Greece and Europe in general.

In order to meet the requirement mentioned, our paper uses as a case study, the region of Peloponnese which is divided administratively into three regions: (Western Greece, Peloponnesus and Attica). Then we compared the case of "a proposed unified Peloponnese" as a potential regional formation, with the Italian region of Sicily, in order to highlight a best practice of effective regional management. Through this study, we demonstrate the results and benefits that prove why Peloponnese should be a unified region in order to develop and prosper. In our effort to highlight the importance of Peloponnese's natural unity and its proposed existence as an undivided region, we examined elements of culture such as gastronomy and traditions, the primary production sector, agro manufacturing and other characteristic goods and products. Also, examples such as the "trails of wine and olive oil, highlight the reason why Peloponnese can not be composed of two or three entities in the most representative and faithful way. This is achieved when presenting their common geographical structure and thematic homogeneity. When divided, Peloponnese gets disarmed by its own comparative advantages that would have in its disposal if been unified, since divided in three parts it becomes weak to face, the new highly competitive, globalized environment without a clear vision for the future.

3. The institution of «the Region»

The national and regional planning system is configured based on the administrative system of a country, as the latter provides, among others, the division of responsibilities between central, regional and local administrative bodies. By definition, the Region has important territorial meaning, and constitutes a

geographical unit with certain limits, land area, population and location. It possesses organizational importance, as an administrative body consisting of institutions and services (Petraikos - Psycharis, 2004). Within the decentralized system, the Region constitutes an autonomous, single administrative unit of decentralization of the state administration, with planning, coordination and implementation of policies responsibilities, for the economic, social and cultural development of its geographical area of responsibility (Papadaskalopoulos & Christofakis, 2005). The institution of the region was first introduced in the country's administrative system with the law N.1622 / 1986 "Local Authorities, Regional Development and Democratic Programming." Based on article 61 of Law, 1622/86 and the Presidential Decree 51/1987, the country is divided into 13 regions with the territorial concept. Tables 1 and 2 below shows that European citizens have great confidence in local and regional authorities that reaches (50 %), while at the same time the citizens feel that regional or local public authorities are not sufficiently taken into account in EU decisions. A belief widespread in Greece (77%) (Eurobarometer, 2009).

Table 1

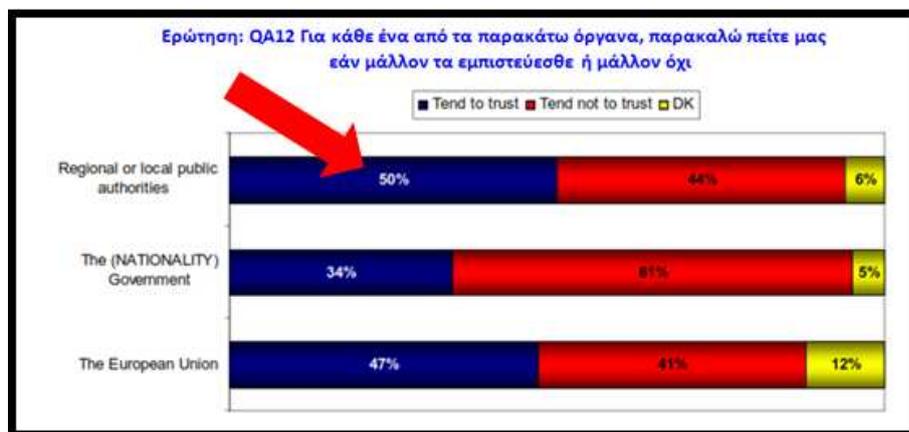
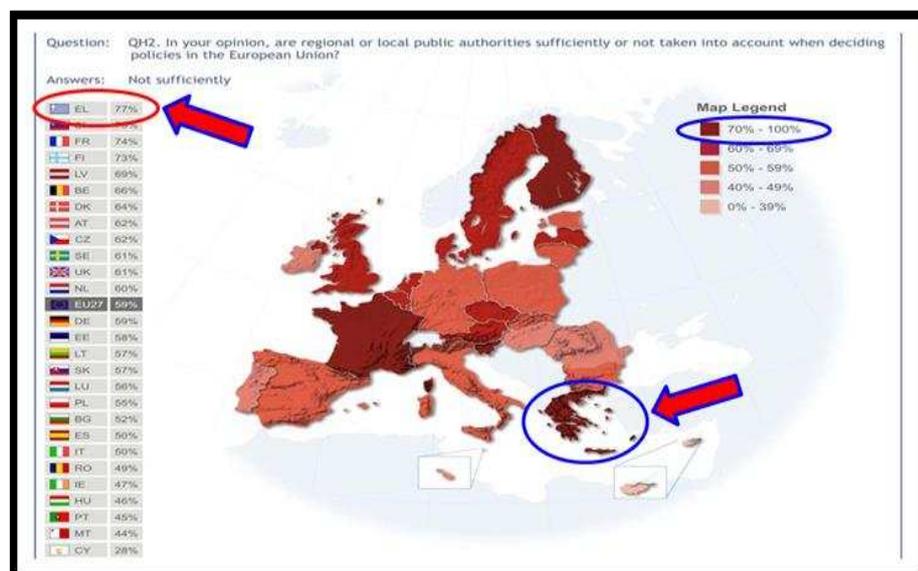


Table 2



5. Peloponnese (Case Study)

Peloponnese (known as Moreas or Morias) is the largest peninsula of Greece and one of its nine geographic departments (Figure 1). It is located in the south of the mainland and is connected to mainland of Greece by

a narrow strip of land, the Isthmus of Corinth, which in 1893 the canal was built, **turning Peloponnese virtually into an island**. Peloponnese is administratively divided into seven prefectures (Achaia, Ilia, Messenia, Arcadia, Laconia, Argolida and Corinth, **and since 1986, in three regions, the Western Greece, the Peloponnesian and a small area under the jurisdiction of the Region of Attica**). It has an area of 21 439 sq. km. and a population of 1,086,935 inhabitants. It constitutes a historical cradle of Hellenism and is inhabited since prehistoric times. Peloponnese also shares common characteristics throughout its territory such as history, language, and culture. Besides, the morphology of its landscape, such as rivers and mountains, spread through its territory from end to end, clearly demonstrating its geographical and cultural unity.

Figure 1: Suggested "Unified" region of Peloponnese



6. Theoretical background and previous studies

6.1. "Wine gastronomy" - Tourism -Regional Development

Nowadays a new global demand for gastronomy and authentic local cuisine is marked within a context of a contemporary tourist experience. This is an opportunity to revitalize local production that brings to the surface "*the authentic taste of a destination*", tradition and the need for empirical food consumption by the visitors-consumers. Globally, fresh, seasonal agricultural products and local foods are essential elements for the success of a variety of businesses such as local restaurants, farm markets, visited farms and family inns. In addition, local events related to the culinary tradition and traditional, authentic restaurants, highlight the importance of pure and fresh agricultural products (Hall et al, 2003).

Tourism and local foods have great potential for cooperation in a symbiotic developmental relationship (Hjalanger and Richards 2002). Gastronomy can play different complementary roles in tourism development especially in agritourism and enogastronomy tourism (Hall & Sharples, 2003). Food is often considered as a successful unique “symbol” of local diversity. When tourists choose local food and drinks, have an opportunity to a vibrant experience through taste, and a better understanding of the individual elements and local character of the visiting area (Bessière, 1998). One can say that by eating locally produced food and enjoying local drink, a site can help the visitor to 'absorb' in the best way possible indigenous flavors and delights that incorporate “the terroir of the destination” while experiencing a place completely and multidimensional with the unique assistance of all human senses. In many tourist destinations, local gastronomy is considered as an important part of the local intangible heritage and regional food culture while it has been interpreted as a unique multidisciplinary advantage for local businesses (Tellström et al 2005).

Wine gastronomy tourism is considered to add value to local products and to enhance the quality of the tourist experience of a region, adding local uniqueness (Yi-Chin et al 2011). Today, tourists are looking for uniqueness in places they visit. Food and beverages can be used as means of memorable experiences and efficient advertising tools, both essential elements of modern successful tourism marketing for each tourist destination (Fonte & Grando, 2006). The correct branding of the local food can be used positively for the successful marketing of the local destination brand in a gastronomic related touristic region, adding the characteristic "flavor of a place" i.e. the unique terroir which differentiates it from the competition worldwide. Local cuisine is a powerful "tool" in promoting the cultural heritage of a region or even a country, facilitating the producers and the stakeholders of tourism to shape the appropriate profile of a destination with the help of flavors and fragrances. At the same time it contributes decisively to the formulation of “the holistic experience of the place” (Bessière, 2001). Locally produced and cooked dishes support the local economy and provide "added value" while strengthening the local farm producers (Telfer, David, Wall, 1996). The gastronomy, in the context of sustainable tourism development, can also be an important tool in order for the local economy to be strengthened and for a tourism destination to create added value through its uniqueness (Yi-Chin et al 2011).

6.2. The relationship between wine, cultural heritage and tourism

Likewise, local products, especially local food and wine, are considered appropriate items so that someone could characterize and evaluate the local tourism supply chain of a destination, while in many cases, food and wine are themselves major attractions. These products contain a strong reference of the region they are produced and share its DNA. At the same time, they represent the market, the geographic area, traditions and cultural heritage, while diversifying a local community from others and highlight its unique identity. Therefore, typical products can be defined, in free translation as (**Territorial Intensive Products' -TIPs**) (Bonow & Rytönen, 2012). Specifically, wine tourism is considered as an innovative phenomenon that was created around TIP products. Wine tour include a target population consisting of

individuals sensitized not only on expensive famous wines, which are known only to culinary experts (connoisseurs), but also to people interested in the reference area, the local traditions and cultural characteristics of a place, which represent what is called “**the new defensive localism**”(Winter, 2003). It has been observed that in many countries, wine is simultaneously an expression of the region’s culture and a tank of national traditions with roots in antiquity.

Thus, as confirmed by Asero and Patti (2009a), the wine, like many traditional products, can be defined as (TIP-Territorial Intensive Product), once it contains a strong relationship with the place where it was produced. Therefore, it is possible to argue that “the local products and the place of their production and consumption, mutually and continuously, supply bilaterally a relationship of emergence among each other that connects them and equally benefits them: from the product to the place of production and vice versa” (Asero and Patti, 2009a), (Becattini, 1989). Local wine and other TIP products are part of the cultural heritage of a place. Consequently they represent cultural values, because in turn they become tourist products, expressing in the best way possible the true character of a cultural experience. Notable are also some cases of thematic trips which have been implemented under the program of the Europe Council on cultural routes, such as " Routes of the Olive Tree" or the «ITER Vitis - the Wine Routes in Europe", which encourage the thematic tourism as well as contribute to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage through the use of these traditional products (Asero and Patti, 2009b).

The relationship to the cultural heritage is particularly more pronounced when the wine and the traditional products are identified by acclaimed and official quality certifications such as PDO, PGI, DOC, DOCG etc, while the unique characteristics of these products depend on the uniqueness of the soil and the microclimate in which produced (see terroir). The wine and the interest around it can be effectively used as a tool in stimulating new tourist flow to a destination whose only strong motive is to discover the source of the product itself, as well as gaining knowledge of these special wine producing places, and the authentic, traditional production methods. Nevertheless, as confirmed by Charters & Ali-Knight (2002), expectations of Eco tourists are likely to vary from region to region. The wine gets different meaning playing sometimes dominant, complementary, marginal, or even exclusive role in the offered tourist mix of a region. But in all cases, it is a significant factor that decisively affects the competitiveness of a tourism destination (Asero and Patti, 2009b). Moreover, Getz (1998) confirms that wine tourism has the potential to provide a competitive advantage in areas with developed grape and wine industry and also tends to create wine related business, such as liquor stores, wine stores, wine bars, wine cooking and wine homemade stores and shops with other related products. Of course, the most exclusive and particular the products, the greater are the opportunities in the tourism market. On the other hand, the increasing volume of world wine tourism has significantly increased the competitiveness of ecotourism destinations and in this context wine has become an additional strategic advantage for such places (Williams, 2001). Wine tourism or ecotourism is a clear example of a tourist experience created around a typical intensive product (TIP). Often, it is promoted under the classification as a “new–outdoor” or “neo-rural”, product which means : new agricultural entrepreneurship, new rural life style, new tourism activities in the farm, including the characteristics of

sustainable tourism development model that respects environment, culture and hospitality (Asero and Patti, 2009b). Williams (2001), notes that lately it has been a significant shift with respect to the characteristics of the wine tourism from the absolute interest of visitors to wine production processes and related winemaking facilities, towards the emphasis on the aesthetic part of the visit, and the combination of the visit with demand for products and services that enhance the entertainment and recreation part of it (see combination with thematic wine gastronomy, wine spa & wellness etc.). (Mitchell, 2006). Similarly, it has been observed that wine motivates tourists to visit wine related destinations and wine-growing regions which tend to be especially attractive because of their exceptional vineyard terrain, as most of them are found near rivers, hill slopes, ponds with amazing view and excellent microclimate (Cambourne et al., 2000).

On the other hand, the local agencies related to winemaking routes, should create a system of relations between the wineries, organizations, wine associations and enterprises, so that this wine related network to become sufficient, and the offered experience at the site successful, with benefit for all involved (Van Westering , 1999). Therefore, they themselves are the main factors for the successful promotion of the local wine brand, (which includes the wineries and wine-producing areas of destination). There is also the mechanism that guarantees and assures the premium quality of their region's wine tourism product.

7. Peloponnese and Sicily

7.1. Oenological description of the Peloponnese

Peloponnese in terms of wine is the Greek national champion with many producers, wineries, codes, and vineyards. It possesses the 29.1 % of the wine producing land in Greece while generating 1208 wine codes. The common wine varieties in terms of cultivating land and production percentages embrace the entire Peloponnese region, ignoring ostentatiously the ephemeral and inefficient, administrative trisection imposed. The thematic routes based on wine and gastronomy, which cross Peloponnese from end to end, are inseparable from each other and indivisible, indicating the reason why Peloponnese should be allowed to exist and prosper as a whole in order to thrive economically but also as a tourism destination, based on the common values, interests, culture and history. Table 5 that follows summarizes briefly the wines, the winemaking sections of Peloponnese, its future potential and characteristics:

The Wines of Peloponnese (Table 3)

PREFECTURE	TOTAL	WHITE	ROSE	RED	CHATEGORIES (Onomasia Proelefsis Anoteras Poiotitos (O.P.A.P.), i.e. an Appellation of Origin of Superior Quality Onomasia Proelefsis Elenxomeni (O.P.E.) ie (PDO) Protected Designation of Origin • Topikos Oinos,(T.O.) i.e. a Vin de pays • Onomasia Kata Paradosi (O.K.P.) (Named according to Tradition)	TABLE WINES .i.e. Vin De Table
CORINTH	542	136	69	338	OPAP 122, TO 264, OKP 3	153
ACHAIA	223	108	15	100	OPAP 16, OPE 50, TO 83, OKP 6	68
ILEIA	60	10	7	34	TO 27	33
MESSINIA	126	49	12	65	TO 91	35
LAKONIA	79	39	11	29	TO 48	31
ARCADIA	120	98	5	17	OPAP 48, TO 29,	43
ARGOLIDA	58	27	6	25	TO 39	19

7.2. Sicily

Sicily is an autonomous region of Italy and the largest island of Mediterranean Sea with an area of 25.708 km². The island's capital is Palermo, (657,935 residents) and is subdivided into 9 prefectures.

Figure 2: The Great Wine Regions of Sicily and the Peloponnese



Source: <http://worldwidequest.com>,
<http://www.aegeanwineselections.gr/pages/winemap.aspx?lng=el>

7.3. Oenoculture and the wine trails

According to the National Italian Tourism Board, Sicily is **the third largest wine and food destination in Italy, after Tuscany and Piedmont!** Compared to other types of mass tourism, oenotourism and the wine routes of Sicily have not grown immensely, so independent travelers need to explore the wine regions basically themselves. Seventy percent of the wineries are located in the western part of Sicily, so it would be wise for any potential wine enthusiast tourist, to start his wine adventure, by tasting and wandering from the city of Palermo, and then to continue his wine journey to the other wineries who would like to discover (Larner, 2008), (Jepson, 2005)

7.4 . Comparative data between Sicily and the potential "Unified" region of Peloponnese

The following brief comparison between the regions of Sicily and the "integrated" region of Peloponnese intends to highlight a triple fold conclusion:

- I. *The high growth potential of gastronomic tourism in both regions, as economic development tool that accentuates their thematic homogeneity.*
- II. *The need and benefits for geographical and thematic 'Unified' promotion of tourist product (Case of integrated Peloponnese).*
- III. *The need for unified planning and management (Case of integrated Peloponnese)*

Table 3: Comparative data Sicily vs "Unified" region of Peloponnese

CHARACTERISTICS	PELOPONNESE	SICILY
Number of Regions	3	1
Territory	21.439 km²	25.708 km²
Population	1.086.935 residents	5.036.666 residents
No. Prefectures	7	9
(Number of Wine Regions)	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Nemea (Korinthia , Argolida) ✓ Mantinia (Arcadia) ✓ Patra (Achaia) ✓ Rio (Achaia) ✓ Aigialeia ✓ Leftrina (Ileia) ✓ Pisatida (Ileia) ✓ Pylia (Messinia) ✓ Tryfyllia (Messinia) ✓ Monemvasia (Lakonia) 	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Agrigento, ✓ Catania, ✓ Caltanisseta, ✓ Enna, ✓ Messina, ✓ Palermo, ✓ Ragusa, ✓ Siracusa, ✓ Trapani.
(Number of Wine Regions) ie Protected Name of Origin (PDO)	7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Nemea (Korinthia, Argolida) ✓ Patra (Achaia) ✓ Mantinia (Arcadia) ✓ Monemvasia -Malvasia (Lakonia) . ✓ Muscat Patra (Achaia) ✓ Muscat Rion Patra (Achaia) ✓ Mavrodaphni 	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Alcamo ✓ Cerasuolo di Vittoria ✓ Contea di Sclafani, Contessa Entellina, ✓ Delia Novolelli, ✓ Etna, ✓ Faro,

		✓ <i>Malvasia delle Lipari.</i>
No. Active Civil Airports	2 (385.000 visitors /year.)	6 (13.300.000 visitors /year.)
Sectors that Regional Economy is based on: (Agriculture , Livestock , Tourism)	X	X
GDP per capita (EU27 per person in 2014, €27,300/100%)	Region of Western Greece:€12,900/57% Region of Peloponnese:€13,600/60% Greece:€16,300/72%	Region of Sicily:€16,826/61,6% Italy:€26,600/97%

Table 3a

	Characteristics compared	PELOPONNESE	SICILY
1	Developed "common" local consciousness and identity by the inhabitants.	X	X
2	Area related with negative bias and stereotypes (such as Mafia).	O	X
3	Common language/culture/customs	X	X
4	Wide range of "common" traditional dishes that characterize the whole region.	X	X
5	Existence of several unique dishes and products that are found only in this region and consist part of the local gastronomic identity of the region.	X	X
6	Existence of ' common ' wine varieties that exist in the whole region and distinguishes it from the rest of the country	X	X
7	The wine roads and wine-growing regions are formed in such a way that unites the whole region regardless of the existing administrative subdivisions.	X	X
8	There is capacity of combining oenogastronomy with other forms of tourism which will "connect harmonically" the tourist product of the entire region (e.g. Winetourism with rural tourism, cultural tourism, religious etc).	X	X
9	Wide recorded historical background of the culinary traditions and cooking recipes) which documents their authenticity and their specificity?	X	X
10	Availability of fresh, local and seasonal products all year round.	X	X
11	Organization of food and wine fairs, open markets (farms markets) and various gastronomic festivals and events throughout the area of interest	X	X
12	Extensive use of "common" raw materials across the region to create local traditional dishes prepared throughout the region.	X	X
13	Good transport infrastructure system across the region that may promote development and tourism	O	X
14	Widespread use of new technologies in tourism and promotion of the region as a single thematic unit and a tourist destination.	O	X
15	Easy for tourists to find traditional authentic dishes	X	X
16	Promotion of local cuisine in order to make the region as a destination for agro tourism while gastronomy and culture primary motivation for visiting the area.	O	X
17	Increased awareness and promotion of agro tourism and wine road network throughout the region.	O	O
18	Tourism is plagued by intense seasonality problems that gastro tourism could soften if the region was promoted organized and systematically, as a single entity.	X	X
19	Existence of monuments with global awareness and prestige that attract tourists (See Ancient Olympia).	X	O
20	Existence of monuments and landmarks of common origin and historic era scattered throughout the region that could be promoted as part of a single tourism product, contributing to the thematic integration of the region and its tourism development.	X	X

Source: The analysis for Sicily was conducted with the assistance of data from the research of Benjamin (2006), and Moskvina, (2010)

8. Discussion

Considering that Sicily is situated in an extremely better position in terms of tourism development comparing to the Peloponnese (by accepting a multiple number of visitors per year while featuring many common characteristics with Peloponnese), we will try to analyze the reasons behind this development deficit of Peloponnese and possible ways that this inequality could be rectified. From the data previously

presented, we can observe the following: Peloponnese and Sicily possess many **common features**. First "technically speaking», they are both "islands". They are both situated in the south of their countries, with the same mild climate and friendly weather conditions. Their land is about the same size, with Sicily being a little larger. The number of prefectures is approximately the same (7 Peloponnese, 9 Sicily), which is justified by the slightly larger size of Sicily. The basis of their economy is common: (agriculture, livestock and tourism), while with respect to wine production, they have approximately the same number of wine regions (Greece 10, Sicily 9) and PDO regions, (Sicily 9, Peloponnese 7).

There are also a number of common features through each region that enhance internal unity, such as the common regional consciousness, long history, common culture, common food dishes and wines that are unique for each of the two regions. The wine roads are distributed in such a way that "embrace" the entire region in both countries, there is a rich tradition regarding the local gastronomy while there are often folklore, food exhibitions and farm markets with common produce that follow seasonality and locality.

Finally, there are local, traditional products throughout the territory of each region in both countries, accessible by the visitor year around, while their popular food dishes utilize commonly used local ingredients and cooking techniques (curing, preserving, smoking, marinating etc). Tourism in both regions is plagued by extreme seasonality, regardless of the fact that there are famous sights and attractions of common origin and historic era, scattered throughout the region in both cases that could be promoted as a single thematic tourism product in order to enhance their attractiveness and bust further tourism development.

The two regions have some marked differences as well, such as: The native population of Sicily is five times that of Peloponnese. Extremely important are also the differences in tourism infrastructure such as the number of active airports: (6 for Sicily and only 2 for Peloponnese). This translates into about 13.5 million tourists visiting Sicily annually and only 385,000 for Peloponnese, which stands for only the 29%! Being aware of the enormous importance of airports in the modern tourism development models, particularly in its alternative forms, among the comparison between Sicily and Peloponnese, we realize the significant shortfall arising against Peloponnese. Additionally, we should note that Peloponnese still possesses seven existing but basically inactive for tourism facilitation airports (three military in - Andravida , Araxos , Tripoli, and four closed in Epitaleio, Kalamata , Porto Heli, and Sparta!). Among other major differences, we shall mention the per capita income (PCI) between them, since in **Peloponnese** (in both Greek regions), PCI is ranging in an **average** of **€13.000**, or **47.5 %** of the EU PCI average which is **€27,300/100%**. Meanwhile in **Sicily** the respective PCI is around **€16,826/61.6 %** of the EU average per capita income. The average per capita income in **Italy** is **€26,600/97%** & in **Greece** is **€16,300/72%**. Sicily also possesses a better inland transport system than Peloponnese, (best example the airports). Additionally, Peloponnese is suffering from the **«eternally under construction»** national highways (see Olympia & Ionian national roads). In relation to Sicily, Peloponnese lags in using new technologies in the area of

tourism advertising, which will help Peloponnese to introduce itself worldwide as a single tourism entity. Sicily has already organized oenogastronomy tourism across its territory at a fundamental level, utilizing local gastronomy heritage and its wine wealth, compared to Peloponnese, where the development of this alternative thematic tourism form is still in a fetal stage.

On the other hand, Sicily has also several disadvantages compared to Peloponnese, such as the accessibility. As an island, it has no land access and this burden the visitor's costs for transport and incoming goods supply. At the same time, access is getting considerably more complicated during the winter months due to bad weather. Besides, Sicily has a fairly impaired reputation regarding security, due to its timeless scourge of mafia. However Sicily took advantage of its mafia related reputation in a creative way (via Hollywood), and turn this handicap into a useful promotional tool for attracting tourists worldwide. Finally, it is rather contradictory that even if Peloponnese, unlike Sicily, possesses some of the best worldwide known historical monuments and attractions such as Ancient Olympia, Mycenae, Epidaurus), this is not able to strengthen its tourism brand and visitation rates by itself, without proper planning.

9. Conclusions

The basic problem of the developmental delay in Peloponnese is the incorrect and inefficient administrative model (divided in 3 regions instead of one), which consists of a “**notorious worldwide administrative example to be avoided**”. This inefficient model of administration applied for the last thirty years, weakens the multidivided Peloponnese, and this policy becomes a hurdle for further tourism and economic development and it had become a self-perpetuated source of problems for the proper operation of the region and the daily life of the residents. The region must meet the essential features and prerequisites of a successful and functional local government organism which will be able to serve and inspire its citizens; however, this is not the case in Peloponnese. Under these counterproductive conditions, administration becomes ineffective without substantial role in policy generation, incapable in fulfilling its basic purpose, which is to defend and promote the rights and the interests of its citizens while improving their quality of life through just and effective governance. So, as a natural result, the citizens lose confidence in “the region” as an administrative institution, once it is proved as an ineffective governmental entity that has neither voice, authorization nor perspective. Their differentiation in the later administrative division of Peloponnese in the three regions have expressed clearly many governmental and administrative experts, with last characteristic example, the ex-Anti-Governor of the Region of Western Greece responsible for the Ilia prefecture, Mr. Charalambos Kafyras, where in 2012 in an interview stated boldly that: *“the inefficient segmentation model of Peloponnese which divides the region in 3 different administrative entities, emerged from the administrative division of the country into 13 regions with the Law 1622 of 1986. The unification of Peloponnese in a single, powerful Region is necessary because Peloponnese constitutes an indivisible territorial unit, incorporating many preconditions for achieving comprehensive development. Peloponnese is a complete economic unit, ideal for a modern labor in the context of a national developmental strategy.*

*The great wealth of “Aiakos” civilization in Peloponnese creates excellent conditions for the operation of a large archaeological park, with Ancient Olympia as a cultural lighthouse and guide. The unification of Peloponnese into a single strong homogenized region is feasible and necessary. **Peloponnese meets all the requirements of a dynamic region that could achieve sustainable economic development, and base it among others characteristics, on social cohesion.** In addition, there are other features that promote the unity of the region such as **the historical tradition and continuity, the vibrant culture, and the sense of common identity that remains strong to its inhabitants.** All these must be expressed and translated in administrative terms in order for Peloponnese to operate as a single socio- political entity”.*

Tourism and in particular some popular alternatives forms, such as food and wine tourism, further highlight this erroneous administrative conception, since even the wine and olives routes, "embrace" conceptually the entire Peloponnese territory, creating exceptional tourism products and travel packages, which administratively speaking, they are separated by incorrectly drawn regional borders that "sabotage" since decades the perspectives of a unified Peloponnesian promotional campaign but also a sustainable tourism and economic development. Gastronomy and tourism can function as a beacon of reason and a guide into drawing the next peripheral administrative model of Greece, enabling Peloponnese and its residents to achieve their maximum potential once the two sub-regions (Western Greece & Peloponnese) are the least developed among all regions in the EU, because of these administrative errors. Over the years, airports play a vital role in the development of incoming tourism. Tourism can generate large revenues and stimulate employment in underdeveloped regions of Europe such as Peloponnese and Sicily. Even in major European cities, air travel is considered responsible for over one-third or more of their foreign visitors, (Cristureanu, Bobircă, 2007). In particular, the advent of low-cost air carrier services has speeded up the development of tourism in many destinations (see Araxos, Kalamata). However, the most important role of airports is their association with the connectivity they provide, the increased capacity of mobility, their contribution in the improvement of the human's living standards and quality of life, which collectively enable the European economy and society to develop and progress (York Aviation Study, 2004).

The fact that there is seven (7) existing, but long-term unutilized airports in Peloponnese, is still a proof of inefficient administration, false resource utilization and lack of proper tourism planning.

The comparison with neighboring Sicily highlights that one of the poorest regions of Italy, Sicily, can manage to attract many more visitors, while achieving better income per capita in relation to Peloponnese, because it operates effectively as a single region, and that makes it achieving economies of scale that divided Peloponnese cannot. Note that the assuming comparison has been made in relation to the “proposed unified» region of Peloponnese.... If we had tried to compare each of the two existing regional units of Peloponnese, to Sicily, the results would have been disappointing, against Peloponnese!

This alone proves that the time has come for Greece to move into larger, sustainable administrative schemes, if we want to move forward and emerge through efficient management from the economic crisis.

Finally the ineffectiveness of the Greek regional architecture, has further negative implications, once it is suggested that citizens, while realizing representational weaknesses, governmental inefficiencies, and negative impacts on their life, they would degrade regions even further as administrative institutions in their conscience and their accumulated frustration is recorded in many different European researches.

This, besides been counterproductive, is also catastrophic for the European project. The consolidation, and the unification of Peloponnese into a single region, will make it more effective and operationally sustainable and thus the institution of the region will regain once again its lost value and prestige and will also regained the citizen's confidence in the context of integrated European architecture.

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