

## Ways to Increase the Effectiveness of Cultural Tourism in Albania

**Ma. Risena Xhaja, Ma.**

*Head of the Legal Sector, Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports*

**Ma. Ryisim Xhaja, Ma.**

*Inspector at the ALSAI*

**Prof.Dr. Hysen Xhaja**

*Dean of the Faculty of Economics in Private High School "Vitrina"*

Doi:10.5901/ajis.2013.v2n8p728

### Abstract

*Albania, as a result of the democratic developments, based on the market economy and on competition as well, has achieved satisfactory results in the development indicators. We are in the stage of sustainable development as an important goal, which will lead us to the parameters of a developed country. As it already known and often emphasized, sustainable development means sustained high rates, environmental and cultural monuments protection, these last as integral elements of cultural heritage. The number of cultural monuments, the level of their physical condition, of their restoration, maintenance, and valuable use of them is a responsibility not only of the governmental authorities to turn these into an added value to the national economy and local individual. Cultural heritage is an important element that expresses the identity of a nation or of a human community. It is a precious unpredictable asset almost non-renewable. This is why the care for preservation and restoration of cultural heritage elements remains a permanent task of the specialized institutions and beyond. Monuments constitute a key element of cultural heritage. Their value is of pleni-dimensional, i.e. scientific, archaeological, historical, tourist, and why not economical and beneficial. In terms of market economy, this element of national wealth takes a special importance in the approach of a sustainable economy development. Besides, it is a source that may generate incomes by developing cultural tourism, without prejudice to other important aspects.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural heritage, the cultural monuments, maintenance, restoration, revitalization, cultural tourism, politics concession, leasing, economic benefit.*

### 1. The Need to Increase the Effectiveness of Cultural Tourism

Cultural monuments in Albania are numerous. Their discovery, preservation and maintenance, including the possible revitalization, should be conceived as a permanent obligation of specialized governmental institutions, by exploring other possibilities of expanding their multi dimensional value. In the contemporary world, the cultural monuments are considered a way of expressing the level of sustainable development of each country. The policies on tourism that the Albanian government is applying in the field of cultural tourism, aim at achieving this objective. This means that the cultural monuments should be treated in light of economic benefits. There exists controversial viewpoints on that. In a modest way, we try to shed lights on these views, prejudices and try to argue the need to change the so far mentality of the beneficiary character of cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism in Albania as a profitable activity by making use of cultural monuments, works for a long period of time. The content of this benefit is conceived only as a benefit of amusements judging by the archaeological, historical, scientific values of the cultural monuments as object of cultural tourism. Today the range of economic benefits goes beyond. It is already accepted by well-known experts even in Albania that cultural tourism is an "equation with two legs." On one side there are the tourists with money in their pockets greatly wanting to consume and on the other hand it is the product being offered to them.

The cultural monuments, as a very important element of the diversity of cultural heritage' values, constitute the more convenient product that may be offered to local and foreign tourists. In order to have this product playing its proper role, so as to maximize the availability in terms of satisfaction and benefit from the economic perspective, it requires a

new concept on their management and use. Such requirement is related to the need to avoid the current character of tourist guide practice. Nowadays, it is not only required to improve the so far organizational but also the further development of road infrastructure and, what is most important, the expansion of full and functional identification of those elements that lead to maximizing of revenues. We mean the ongoing work for further discovery of cultural values, their conservation and maintenance, revitalization and other elements that make possible the realization of this objective. The above-mentioned components make the cultural tourism a value-added product.

In the developed and sustainable economies, the cultural monuments along with indicators of economic growth and of the environment, take into consideration a third indicator that characterizes a sustainable development of the economy. The strategy that the Albanian government has worked out to transform the Albanian economy into a developed one requires a stable conception of cultural tourism related to organizational, methodological and procedural aspects to build-up a new tourism policy.

By passing-by the first two indicators, i.e. the pace of economic growth and the environment, we will try to give, in a modest way, some thoughts on the wide range of possibilities to profit as much as we can by cultural tourism.

## **2. The need for new notions and practices.**

Albania numbers about 2400 cultural monuments of various categories and different physical condition in its inventory. There exist movable and immovable cultural monuments estate in every territorial units. To this viewpoint, besides archaeological museum parks, Albania can be considered as a park, archaeological oasis taking into consideration its small space restrictions. In its archaeological structure there can be evidenced various elements according to time period they belong to. Figuratively, they represent a mosaic of tourist and color values. Unfortunately, the situation of this large inventory of tourist value is not in the required level for better functioning as a contemporary tourist product. The worst is that in most cases, there began the process of damage lacking the restoration, maintenance, caused by erosion of natural factors and unfortunately by intervention of evildoers hand. At the same time the "invisible hand of the market" is not performing its own function. Here we are not dealing with market distortions, but with conceptual problems that deny the use or application of European positive experiences in terms of wider use of monuments of culture as a mere product that offers genuine added value.

Currently, the tourist product "cultural monument" offered cognitive value, historical, archaeological and scientific values. We think it is time to consider another aspect of the economic benefit without damaging the above mentioned values. This means gaining an added value as a result of offering other services of purely economic nature, of product service character. This service product will meet the current needs of tourists for their recreation, personal needs and various amusements. All these express what in economic theory is called utility or satisfaction level deriving from the consumption of a particular product.

WE think that it is the above approach that made the Albanian government to work out the cultural monuments concession policy. Such practice in our country has an early start. It began 20 years ago with leasing "Lekursi" Castill, not mentioning here a few services of this character before '90. Nowadays, it is laid down the problem of having a completed comprehensive strategy better organized and managed, at least so it is launched in the political and media market. Does it stands or not or is this policy fair and defensible or is it a wrong one matching the interests of certain individuals, it need time to prove itself.

Unfortunately in Albania everything is prejudiced, everything becomes public and media issue by avoiding the experts thinking and viewpoint and the positive contemporary experience. It is natural that every step done in important aspects such is the increase of the efficiency of monuments as tourist product, be viewed with distrust. The bad thing is not the hesitating approach of the aspect but the prejudice.

Unfortunately the above argument is used by politics following the particular interest of the development of the society.

## **3. Contemporary experience in terms of increasing the usefulness of cultural tourism.**

The strategies of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports and the establishment of specific projects in terms of raising the level of work for more efficient use of monuments of culture as a multi-dimensional tourist product, we think that is a good asset.

Their use in a sustainable way for economic benefit, is the optimal way to restore, maintain revitalize the values of the cultural monuments. We are convinced that here aims the policy of giving by concession certain monuments of

culture, which is the program designed by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports. We emphasize the word "concession", because such a policy has nothing to do with alienation (sale). Out terminological confusion is intentional and is done on purpose to raise public sensibility and create the idea that such national property is being sold out. Without prejudice on the debates that has long started in this direction, we feel it reasonable to present some problems related to the concept and the experience existing today in various countries.

To better clarify the interested readers we point out that there is a wider European experience in terms of private management of cultural monuments without changing its owner 'the state'. Such experience exists in Austria, Spain, Germany, France, Portugal, Belgium, but also in countries of Eastern Europe and wider. The relatively long experience in this field can be summarized in terms of economic theory in three models that generalize the private state relation.

*The first model* is the unique state administrator, who does everything and takes over everything. This atavist totalitarian model has been used not only in socialist countries, but also in capitalist ones. Due to the importance the monuments have as indicator of national identity, such treasure is administrated and managed for a long period of time by state authorities, despite its character.

*The second model* is the mix one, which means establishing a partnership between the state and the individual based on certain interest relations expressed in well-defined contracts. It is a positive experience and used effectively.

*The third model* is the type of administrating certain monuments by private entity, in the form of lease/concession for a certain period of time.

Spain is the model where the state cooperates with private and from where one can get a positive experience. Forms of cooperation, called "Parador" model, comprises the highest and beneficial quality results from an economic standpoint.

Leaving aside the first two models, we tried to follow strictly the third model. Why?

First, this model has to do with private state report, where privatization has advantages in terms of the general theory. The question is should or should not monuments be administered and used by the private entity? This is not for residential buildings cultural monuments administered and used by their owners. We mean cultural monuments like fortress/castles that in their entirety are still administered by the state. The Albanian experience in this regard is limited and problematic. The use of accessories in the territory of natural monuments as bars and restaurants began before 1990, in the castles of great tourism potential such as of Shkodra castle or the underground bar in the castle of Gjirokastra. After '90, such practice was applied in Lékurs castle. In its first phase such experience was considered as positive, but as time passed, the terms of the agreement establishing the rights of tenants were deformed. Greed for profit led to indiscriminate interference in unlicensed premises of cultural monuments (castles), and the same thing happened to the fortress of Lezha, even worse, where tennis courts are projected to be built.

These two cooperation agreements with private entity were characterized by lack of state control. In 2004, this practice was considered as law offense because the law "On Cultural Heritage" of 2003 did not anticipate such a practice.

Leasing contracts on Bashtova Castle, the premises on the terrace of the Porto Palermo castle, Acropolis in Berat Castle, the North Tower of Preza castle, an area of the fortress of Shkodra, Tower B in Durres castle and the Turkish Baths in Durres, reflect the Albanian experience with its good and bad aspects.

Lack of visible state control, with or without purpose, is no less important subject. Following up the line of our analyze, we emphasize that instead of awareness of positivity and regulation of the distortions in the functioning of state private partnership in the Albanian market, it is cultivated a biased opinion even counterproductive leading to political allergies in the concession aspect of certain objects cultural monuments. In the Albanian politicized environment prevail views three viewpoint group representing two political positions.

*The first group* includes all those individuals who think that the practice of leasing or concession of certain cultural monument is wrong and is treated as a sale of national assets. According to them, providing cultural monuments under private administration will result in cultural monuments degradation, loss of archaeological and artistic value up to their physical damage. According to this group of people, not less in number, generally representative of the left wing, private owner would consider only the economic benefit and not the preservation of multidimensional objects (accessories) that will be used by them as beneficial business. There are among them who think that it is not the time to implement such practices as they lack the legal basis. When referring to world experience, this group of people underlines that in countries where such practices do exist, it is possible due to the fact that the state is stronger and it operates with all its power. In addition to the above, refusal or disagreement on such practices argue with the fact that the time period for providing the private use are very large. But in this regard to this group of people encountered individuals who own correct position, thus underlined the necessity of making agreements and projects with defined tasks for prospective holders. However, it is evident an ideological political position when it said that this practice is national property sale. The

problem is that we accept the market economy as system and deny the instruments used for the operation of a market economy as such.

*The second group* includes experts who hardly recognize such a practice and support the idea to carefully consider this partnership. According to them, it can be done with limited agreement on the number of items and the time and the observance of the state should be powerful. They recommend drafting comprehensive legislation and the creation of appropriate specialized institutions that will supervise the implementation of the agreement and will have the full right to apply penalty policy in case of contract violation, therefore are required an institutions of independent integrity.

*The third group* comprises governmental representatives who in opposition status did not ho nihilist and prejudicial attitudes towards leasing contracts. They argue that the time has come that the cultural monuments, without losing state ownership and their of multiple values, be subject to greater economic benefit. The use of accessories of cultural monuments for service purposes and bars would be an opportunity to implement a preservation, maintenance and revitalization of their economic benefit without excluding the holders. According to them, the relatively adequate legislation, being amended, will create the conditions for the functioning of this mechanism, whereas the specialized institutions which nowadays are weak can be empowered. Their argument that the current Albanian state in is weak seems sound, therefore it is justified even the practice of concession. The contemporary experience with positive values should serve for the perfection of everything that has to do with the economic instruments enabling the market functioning.

Without prejudice to the economic laziness we are in favor of the best defined and well controlled concessional policies. The rapid development of tourism and cultural tourism in particular in Albania pose the task that by maintaining the traditional values of cultural monuments as a basis to cultural tourism, to further work on the increase of new values of cultural monuments by improving the legislation and building the necessary institutions.

#### **4. The problem of regulating the legal framework**

Today the cultural monuments should not be treated as a thing in itself, but as an important element of national wealth, cultural tourism and of policies for sustainable development at the national or smaller territorial administrative units.

To achieve this objective, inter alia, it is important to make improvements in the legal framework which should provide for a right relationship between the state and private entities. In this regard a good orienting is the recommendation 1730 for private management of cultural heritage, issued the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for a better balance in the state private partnership. According to it, the private sector can be a part of the services entrusted to the monuments, the administration of separate parts as shops, museums and conservation of museum funds. The bias in this direction, which means the state or a private conceived only as an imbalance. This imbalance directs an unsustainable model of development. Current legislation does not appear to meet these requirements. For this reason it should expand the content and have no restrictive when it comes to a partnership with the State PRIVATE cultural monuments in view of cultural tourism.

Referring to the point 'e' of the article 29 of Law 9048, dated 07.4.2003 "On Cultural Heritage", as amended, "monuments of culture of category I and II in the historical center, museum city and museum ensembles can also be used to other functions that do not affect their values. It can be set public or private institutions, such as museums, libraries, monuments workshops, phototeques, art galleries and exhibitions. "And Article 39" 1.

Cultural monuments can be revitalized for administrative and socio cultural, provided that the new function should not affect the value of the monument. 2. In any case, the use of cultural monuments is allowed only after signing the contract between the user and the owner, who is asked to inform the Institute of Cultural Monuments. "Shows that he has character limit activity on the ability of subjects private service in several activities that can generate income. Here we do not consider the provision of hotel or sports projects.

Based on experience to date is important in law to define an optimal timetable which does not create the idea of property alienation, which allows a private entity to make unlawful interference gradually in line with the country's political rotations. These changes should be followed by restructuring the activities of the institutions responsible for the protection and management of cultural monuments. Creating more flexible structures which provide an optimum territorial coverage, creating efficient structures that provide not only protection but also beneficial management of monuments, creating modern structures that ensure maximum coordination between central government bodies and local governments, communities and local civil society organizations, are among the important objectives that determined sectoral development strategy for the period 2007-2013.

We think that these tasks pose as the requirement elements of public and political consensus. We do not mean

mass measures but a consensus on strategic problems of long-term development issues so that laws and regulations be made in favor of better functioning of specialized institutions and of not political change rotations.

A stable legislation is a key weapon in the regulation of all anomalies and strengthen legal accountability.

Its ongoing improving need to seek legal unification of the EU countries, to establish higher standards governing the relationship between state and individual. Legal unification seen as a process of openness and integration will serve as a means of legal protection.

## **References**

- Iris Pojani "Reform of heritage, a non-visionary compromise" January 2011;  
Iris Pojani "State of the World Heritage Sites in Albania, Issues and thezer management"  
Emin Riza "Protection and restoration of monuments in Albania" Tirana Dituria, 1997;  
Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports "Legislation on cultural Herirage" Tirana 2005;  
Law 9048, dated 07.4.2003 "On Cultural Heritage", amended;  
Direction of Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports' no. 1, no. 05/03/2013 "For lease monuments";  
Web Page [www.mtkrs.gov.al](http://www.mtkrs.gov.al)