

Mass Tourism in Malia: Towards a Decolonial Model for the Lassithi Plateau

Konstantina Nikoletta Karasarini

KU Leuven

Email: konstantinakarasarini@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how mass tourism operates as a neo-colonial mechanism in the Malia region of Crete, and whether degrowth can serve as a decolonial alternative for the Lassithi Plateau tourism development, located 20km away. Combining desk and action research, the study investigates how tourism-driven urbanisation, cultural commodification, and extractive infrastructure perpetuate economic and spatial inequalities. In contrast, the Lassithi Plateau showcases that cultural background, agricultural activity, and community agency offer fertile ground for a degrowth-based tourism model. Based on local findings and international case studies, this research examines whether a community-led framework could comprise a viable alternative for future tourism development. Despite structural challenges, degrowth tourism emerges as a strategy for restoring cultural identity, reclaiming autonomy, and resisting capitalist extraction in tourism-dependent regions.

KEYWORDS: Mass tourism, Neo-Colonial, Degrowth, Community, Cultural Landscape

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been a vital part of the Greek economy since 1930, shaping its cultural identity and contributing to economic development (Karvounis, 2021). Post-war years saw significant growth in the tourism domain with US investments through the Marshall program¹, establishing a tourism industry aligned with Western Standards. The GNTO² organisation in 1951 marked the beginning of a systematic development contributing to economic reform and modernisation of the state (Tournikiotis and Monemvasitou, 2012).

The inflow of foreign currency significantly influenced the Greek economy's exchange rate and contributed to its stability (Karvounis, 2021). This affected the cultural interpretation of Greece, aiming to attract high-income tourists. Ancient Greek civilisation and local traditions were selectively integrated with the expectations of modern living standards, forming a "new cultural identity" (Tournikiotis and Monemvasitou, 2012). Moreover, constructing a "touristic brand", commodifying on landscape and planetary commons, the sun and the sea, exposed the Greek periphery, particularly the islands and areas with valuable natural beauty, to tourism development (Tournikiotis and Monemvasitou, 2012). The gradual tourism-led urbanisation transformed the landscape, especially from the 1970s, when mass tourism emerged, until its exaggeration in the 1990s (Andriotis, 2001).

Today, the legacy of early tourism strategies is still visible in Crete, where tourism remains a dominant economic force. The region of Malia has been exposed to tourism investments, intensive urbanisation of coastal areas, appropriation and privatisation of the landscape, and the commodification of culture. Traditionally based on agriculture and fishing, its local economy shifted to the tertiary sector, and mass tourism significantly shaped its cultural landscape (Andriotis, 2001).

In contrast, the Lassithi Plateau, 20 km south of Malia, remains an untouched area of natural beauty, with the economy still rooted in agriculture. Mass tourism in the late 1970s prompted internal migration from the Plateau to emerging tourist hubs along the island's northern coast, particularly in Malia (Terkenli and Bellas, 2007), impacting its cultural landscape. The Plateau, formerly known for its traditional windmills and agricultural life, is experiencing socioeconomic degradation and demographic reduction. The gap between the two regions is widening due to the coastal zone development, underscoring the need for sustainable and balanced growth in alternative tourist models.

1 The US provided economic aid to Western Europe post-war, with Greece being notably influenced by Truman's 1947 governance, bringing the country under western influence (Beckmann, 2012).

2 Greece's National Tourism Organisation.

This research aims to investigate how mass tourism functions as a neo-colonial mechanism in the case of Malia and whether Degrowth could operate as a Decolonial practice, suggesting an alternative tourism model for the case of the Lassithi Plateau. The research questions to frame are the following.

1. How does mass tourism operate as a neo-colonial mechanism, and how does it affect the spatial and cultural transformation in the Malia region?
2. What are the further implications for the cultural landscape in the Lassithi Plateau?
3. Could a tourism model based on degrowth principles offer a decolonial alternative for the Lassithi Plateau's future tourism development?

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative and interpretive methodology that combines desk research, field-based action research, and comparative case study analysis. The desk research component involved an extensive review of academic literature, statistical reports, and policy documents related to tourism development in Greece, spatial planning in Crete, and theoretical frameworks of neocolonialism and degrowth. This established the historical and conceptual context of the study and informed the critical reading of institutional strategies and tourism narratives.

The choice of Malia's case, based primarily on desk research, was necessary to understand how mass tourism dynamics impacted the Lassithi Plateau's socio-economic structure and cultural landscape over the years.

The action research occurred in the Lassithi Plateau through a two-week field visit organised within the programs of MaULP³ and IMSDP⁴ of KU Leuven. During the fieldwork, our team, comprised of 13 students, young researchers, and two supervisors, conducted semi-structured interviews, unofficial conversations, and ethnographic observation, participating in local events. Residents, farmers, craftspeople, and representatives of community associations and local authorities became part of the research. The time was limited, but the findings were valuable. The interviews were not formally coded but were treated as narrative and contextual material. They contributed to comprehending locals' perspectives and interpretations of the Plateau's cultural landscape, its transformation, the historical importance of the windmills, and their vision or concerns about tourism and development. Through a careful reading process highlighting repeated concepts, values, and tensions, these local narratives were thematically interpreted, providing findings about locals' future tourism vision and windmills' role.

This interpretative approach prioritised the lived experience and the community voice, serving as a decolonial praxis (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018) in which the lived experience adds essential value to the research. Our interaction with locals let us better understand the dynamics of the place and the community. This aided in exposing the rooted cultural logic and collective memory that formed the Plateau's identity and potential, and comprehending the locals' vision for their place.

Moreover, two case studies from Ecuador, where Indigenous communities have implemented degrowth-aligned tourism models that emphasise community ownership, environmental stewardship, and cultural regeneration, were also examined using a comparative lens. This comprehensive framework for evaluating other development models and these scenarios critically examines the potential and limits of using comparable models in the context of Crete.

The methodological elements offer a multi-layered understanding of tourism's political, cultural, and spatial aspects. They enable a grounded analysis of how local communities in Crete might resist extractive tourism through culturally embedded and environmentally conscious development models.

3 Master of Urbanism, Landscape and Planning.

4 International Module in Spatial Development Planning.

MASS TOURISM AND DEGROWTH

How does mass tourism function as a neocolonial mechanism, impacting spatially and culturally the Malia region? Neocolonialism refers to continuing colonial power dynamics through indirect economic, cultural, and spatial control (Childs and Williams, 1997). As a globalised industry, mass tourism often perpetuates these dynamics by fostering economic dependency, commodifying local cultures, and reshaping physical spaces to serve external interests (Butcher, 2020). Degrowth arises as a critique of the neocolonial practice in mass tourism, aiming to explore a decolonial alternative for future tourism development in the Lassithi Plateau.

Mass tourism as a Neocolonial Mechanism in Shaping Space and Culture

Historically, tourism has been utilised by imperial forces to maintain power, modernise economies, and legitimise colonialism in former colonies. Mass tourism, developed by a small elite in industrialised countries, was celebrated for granting access to leisure activities to the working class (Butcher, 2020). This phenomenon has expanded globally since the 1960s, driven by transnational corporations, fostering labor exploitation, cultural commercialisation, and spatial inequalities (Williams, 2012; Butcher, 2020; Linehan, Clark and Xie, 2020).

Spatially, mass tourism reflects colonial urban segregation by privatising and commodifying planetary commons, intensifying urban expansion, and internal migration (King, 1976, 1989; Karvounis, 2021). While culturally, mass tourism incorporates Orientalist⁵ narratives by romanticising and commodifying local cultures, and shaping identities through Eurocentric standards and capitalist consumption culture (Childs and Williams, 1997; Mason, 2006; Baylis, Smith and Owens, 2023). Thus, mass tourism functions as a contemporary tool of neocolonialism, sustaining imperialist values of control, exploitation, and profit extraction (Karvounis, 2021).

Mass tourism, a neocolonial phenomenon, significantly impacts space and culture by introducing a new cultural service-based economy based on foreign and domestic private investments, capitalist consumption culture, and global trends. In 2023, the economy of Crete Island depended on tourism to the extent of 70%, while it accounted for 26% of the annual revenue distribution of international incoming tourism (Ikkos and Koutsos, 2024).

The Malia region has experienced rapid growth, with the coastal area now dominated by large-scale resorts and medium-scale hotels (Figure 1). This has changed radically its cultural landscape, renegotiating its place identity to align with mass tourism's leisure and consumption culture. Malia has become a popular destination for young tourists, promoting capitalist consumption and global lifestyle trends. However, the tension between traditional values and Western culture is evident, with local cultural distinctiveness often being overshadowed by urban lifestyle or commercialised traditions (Terkenli and Bellas, 2007). The commodification of natural landscapes, historical sites, and religious architecture superficially interprets the place's history and culture, highlighting the mutual influence of space and culture.

5 Edward Said's concept of Orientalism influenced post-colonial space and culture by portraying the "Orient" as inferior, legitimising imperialist policies, and reinforcing Western self-perceptions, thereby distorting traditional cultures (Childs and Williams, 1997; Baylis, Smith and Owens, 2023).



Figure 1: Large and Medium Scale Hotels and Resorts in Malia (Hersonissos and Malia Tourism Development [Mp4], 2025)

Degrowth as a Decolonial Tourism Practice

Decolonial theory aims to expose the colonial roots of mass tourism and its impact on Western societies and culture. It advocates for placing life in the center of thinking and practice, enforcing local communities' ways of living, detached from the internalised colonial roots (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018).

Degrowth critiques extractivism's logic, the economy-centered development, and incorporates decolonial perspectives by supporting a collective shift toward post-capitalist paradigms. It prioritises well-being, ecological balance, and community autonomy over economic accumulation. The concept of "growth" is not demonized. Redistributing "growth" would allow less developed regions to evolve and overdeveloped ones to decelerate, bridging the gap between them. It suggests different political and economic structures where top-down and bottom-up initiatives complement each other (Fletcher et al., 2019).

As Latouche argues Western economic expansion, driven by extractive industries like mass tourism, negatively impacts cultural landscapes and suppresses local communities (Latouche, 2004). Decolonial features of degrowth emphasise reducing economic reliance on extractive industries like mass tourism. It suggests a collective tourism model focusing on steady, qualitative development within a post-extractive economy that measures growth in community resilience, autonomy, environmental balance, intercultural exchange, and not in GDP (Chassagne and Everingham, 2019). Thus, a "communing tourism" model involving community-driven governance through cooperatives and associations could promote a low environmental footprint, sustainable production and consumption patterns, and equal redistribution of goods and costs within the community (Fletcher et al., 2019).

Malia's cultural landscape has been dominated by mass tourism, though degrowth offers a potential alternative. It re-conceptualises tourism as a beneficial tool for local communities, preventing colonisation of pure regions like the Lassithi Plateau. This approach emphasises environmental preservation, cultural integrity, and community empowerment as key to a future decolonial tourism.

MASS TOURISM MECHANISM IN MALIA

The Greek periphery transitioned towards tourism development in the 1970s due to its reliance on the tertiary sector and growing demand for Western European holidays and leisure activities (Andriotis, 2001). The mass tourism model standardised package holidays, making the Mediterranean coast and islands attractive destinations (Butcher, 2020). Despite facing infrastructure, transportation, and connectivity challenges (Buhalis, 1999), Crete remains an attractive international tourist destination (Figure 2), consistently ranking first in global tourism revenue until 2023 (Insete, 2021).

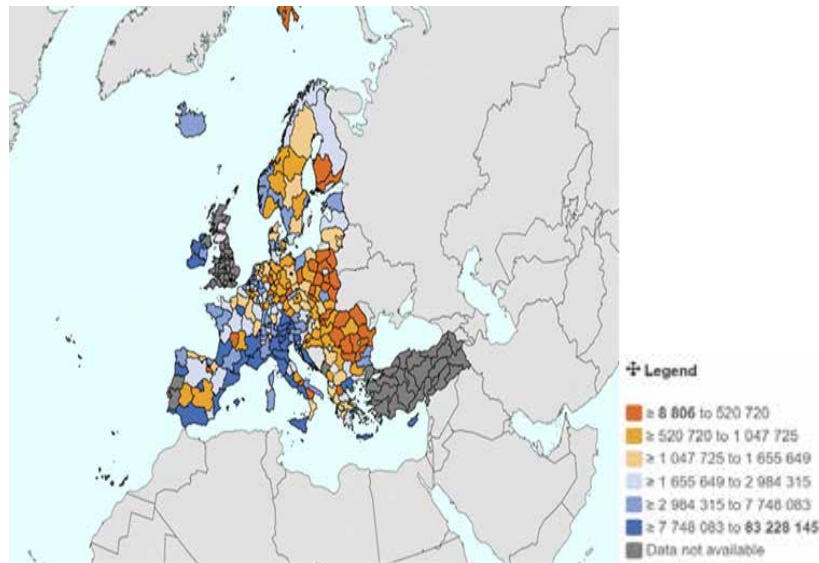


Figure 2: Foreign Overnight Stays in 2023 (Eurostat, 2025)

Tourism-Led Development and Spatial Transformation

Tourism growth in Crete has led to significant infrastructural projects, altering the island's socioeconomic trajectory and landscape. The economy heavily relies on tourism, attracting public and private investment in infrastructure to accommodate visitor flows and stimulate market activity (Andriotis, 2001).

The northern part of Crete (Figure 3), facing the European mainland, has become a focal point for such investments, including the BOAK highway, the Heraklion port, and the Heraklion New Airport (Figure 4) (Andriotis, 2001). That spatially impacted Malia Starting in the 1970s, it underwent a rapid spatial reconfiguration that grew more intense in the 1980s and 1990s. The accompanying urban expansion was catalyzed by infrastructural connectivity and tourism growth. As illustrated in cartographic materials, construction gradually concentrated along coastal zones and road networks, progressing steadily in subsequent decades (Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 3: Location of the Malia region in Crete (Ministry for the Environment and Energy and Technical Chamber of Greece, 2024)

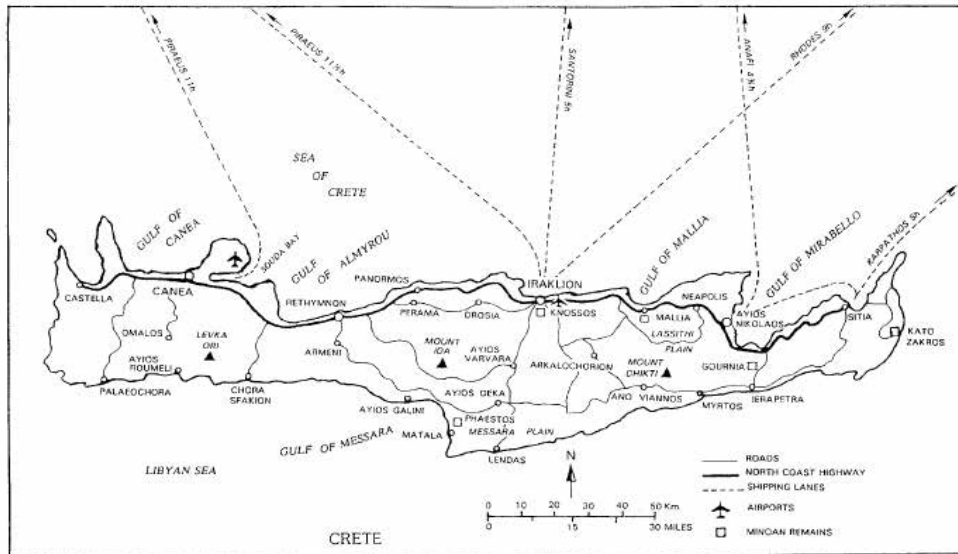


Figure 4 Map of Crete

Figure 4: Large-Scale Infrastructure Projects in the Northern part of Crete (Andriotis, 2001)

The construction of an international airport in Kastelli, is expected to accelerate development and connect Crete's northern and southern areas. The airport, strategically located at the boundary of the Heraklion and Lassithi regions (Figure 5), is the second largest in Greece (Heraklion International Airport, 2025). Such public-private infrastructure development projects reveal deeper economic dependencies, reinforcing neocolonial dynamics through indirect economic control (Buhalis, 1999). This is also indicated in the airport company's ownership, which is distributed among shareholders, including the Hellenic Republic (45.9%), GEK TERNA Kastelli S.M.S.A. (32.5%), and GMR Airports Greece S.M.S.A. (21.6%) (Heraklion International Airport 2025), with the GEK Terna Group contributing as well 55% to the BOAK highway extension in Crete (GEK Terna, 2018). It is thus questionable who these projects serve, and what criteria guide their design and implementation.



Figure 5: New Airport in Kastelli and its proximity from Malia and the Lassithi Plateau (Google Maps, 2019)

Tourism-led investments have significantly reshaped the built environment in Malia, with the first hotel built in the 1960s near the coast (Figure 6) (Explore Crete, 2014). Today, it hosts numerous all-inclusive hotels and resorts

(Figure 7), several held by domestic and foreign parties. Smaller family-run lodgings continue to exist inland, exhibiting various levels of tourism growth. Crete has consistently attracted domestic and foreign investment, particularly in high-end tourism facilities, maintaining strong market performance. Despite mass tourism's critique of seasonal limitations, Crete continues to be portrayed as a resilient market for tourism growth (Gov, 2024).



Figure 6: Malia Coastal Urban Expansion in 1966 (Hellenic Military Geographical Service, 1966)



Figure 7: Malia Coastal Urban Expansion in 2024 (Google Maps, 2019)

In 2024, the Heraklion prefecture had 509 registered hotel units, 373 of which are located in the municipality of Hersonissos (Ministry for the Environment and Energy and Technical Chamber of Greece, 2024). While the total number of accommodations on the island has grown by only 5% over the past decade, a 68% increase in 5-star hotels (Figure 8) indicates a clear trend toward luxury and all-inclusive development (Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, 2024). Although luxury tourism may appear distinct from mass tourism, its scale and capacity contribute to a high-volume, high-impact tourism consumption model.

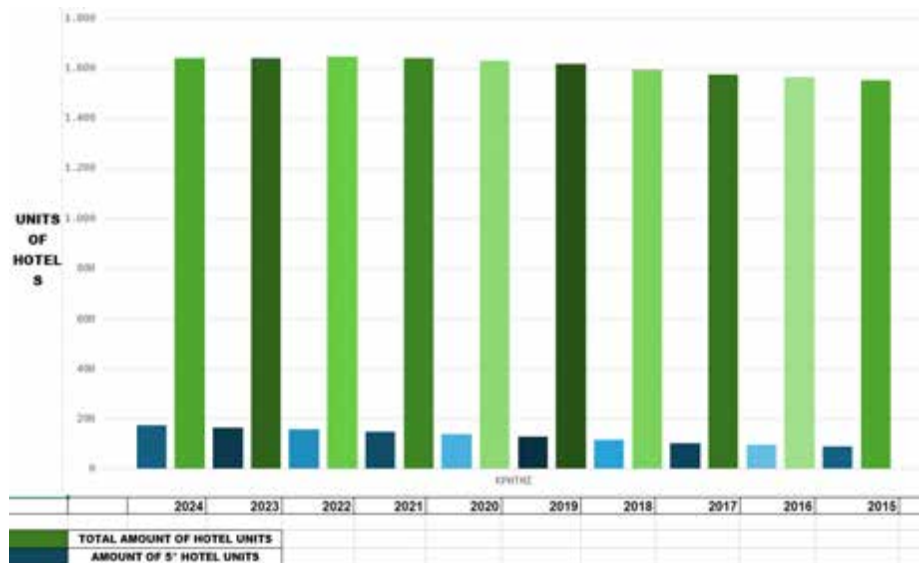


Figure 8: Total amount of Hotel Units & 5 Star Hotel Units in Crete (2015-2024) (Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, 2024)

The lack of early strategic planning allowed economy-driven tourism expansion. The spatial impact of investments increased the market interest, structuring urban growth accordingly. In the 1970s, national planning policies focused on economic gains through coastal development and construction incentives, such as grants and tax breaks (Andriotis, 2001). In the 1990s environmental considerations were introduced, but tourism investment continued in facility upgrades (Andriotis, 2001; Mason, 2006). These policies reflected centralised decision-making, detached from local community dynamics and rooted in monetised conceptions of growth.

Moreover, transitioning to the tertiary sector set tourism as a central pillar. Policies in the mid-1970s encouraged small-scale construction and hospitality enterprises, leading to internal migration of the rural population to profitable coastal zones like Malia (Andriotis, 2001). According to locals of the Lassithi Plateau, many families relocated to Malia to capitalise on land ownership and invest in tourism-related businesses. By the 1990s, nearly 40% of Crete's population was employed in the tourism sector (Andriotis, 2001), reflecting a broader rural-to-urban demographic shift (Figure 9) (Kotzamanis and Androulaki, no date).

Πίνακας 3: Ο πληθυσμός της Ελλάδας κατά βαθμό αστικότητας (%)

Έτος απογραφής	Εκατοστιαία κατανομή			
	Αστικός	Ημιαστικός	Αγροτικός	Σύνολο
1853	7.1	13.5	79.4	100
1856	6.8	12.6	80.6	100
1861	8	15.8	76.2	100
1870	9.6	13.6	76.8	100
1879	10.5	14	75	100
1889	15.1	14	70.9	100
1896	15.7	14.2	70.1	100
1907	16.4	12.5	71.1	100
1920	22.9	15.2	61.9	100
1928	31.1	14.5	54.4	100
1940	32.8	14.8	52.4	100
1951	37.7	14.8	47.5	100
1961	43.3	12.9	43.8	100
1971	53.2	11.6	35.2	100
1981	58.1	11.6	30.3	100
1991	58.9	12.8	28.3	100
2001	59.7	13.1	27.2	100

Πηγές : ΕΣΥΕ, Στατιστικές Επετηρίδες της Ελλάδας, διάφορα έτη.

Figure 9: Rural & Urban Population Transformation in Greece (Kotzamanis and Androulaki, no date)

Contemporary tourism planning acknowledges past overdevelopment while promoting new strategies for diversification models. The current Strategic Planning and Operational Program for Crete and the Local Urban Plan of Hersonissos emphasise alternatives, such as agro-tourism and mountain tourism, integrating natural and cultural assets to extend the tourism season year-round. However, they include strategies, continuing supporting large-scale investments, prioritising the upgrade or creation of 3, 4, and 5-star hotel units, and encouraging land uses related to leisure, cultural parks, and marinas (Figure 10) (Gov, 2024; Ministry for the Environment and Energy and Technical Chamber of Greece, 2024).

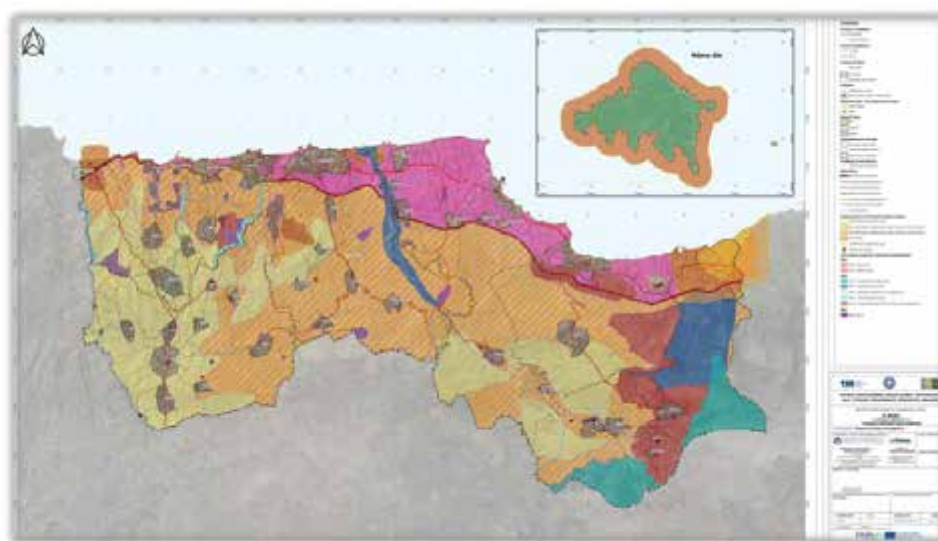


Figure 10: Tourism Development Zone, Intense Intervention Scenario. (Ministry for the Environment and Energy and Technical Chamber of Greece, 2024)

Therefore, tourism and infrastructure development in Malia reveal a spatial landscape significantly influenced by investment, policy, and market-driven demands. This sustains a tourism model still rooted in patterns of exclusivity, dependency, and unequal growth, even with strategic planning changes towards alternatives.

Tourism Labor Force and Social Dynamics Impact

Crete heavily depends on the tourism industry, embracing the imperatives of economy-led growth, perpetuating spatial and cultural inequalities. Culture is understood as the agent (Smith, 2013), the mediator that transforms space in response to the needs of local society (King, 1976). Thus, in the case of Malia, culture subsequently adapted to serve these demands.

Malia's tourism follows market dynamics, fostering a capitalist consumption culture. The local population and seasonal workers form the labour force that supports this system (Williams, 2012; Linehan, Clark and Xie, 2020). Demographic trends and the seasonal fluctuations in the population of the Hersonissos municipality underscore the role of tourism. In 2021, the permanent population numbered 27,220, characterised by a strong youth presence and a high proportion of two- and single-member households, most employed as wage or salary earners. During the same year, the seasonal population, including visitors, seasonal workers, and permanent residents, reached 59,699, doubling the local population (Ministry for the Environment and Energy and Technical Chamber of Greece, 2024).

This disparity reveals a service-based, seasonal economy where employment is precarious and tightly bound to mass production and consumption, increasing competition and raising concerns about working conditions (Andriotis, 2003). The region's 18.7% permanent population, primarily European immigrants, indicates a mobile labour force, concentrating predominantly in Malia and Hersonissos (Ministry for the Environment and Energy and Technical Chamber of Greece, 2024).

While the tourism industry generates employment opportunities, it imposes a capitalist-oriented work culture that profoundly affects the lives of the permanent population. Seasonality introduces distinct temporal rhythms, rising to two parallel realities (Terkenli, 2005). During the tourist season, places and people become commodified. Economic dependency intensifies livelihood risk throughout the year, reinforcing pressure to meet tourists' expectations and demands. This opportunistic work culture fosters impermanence, weakens local ties, and contributes to a fragmented sense of community and place.

Staged Authenticity and Capitalist Consumption Culture in Malia

Beyond its labor dynamics, tourism promotes a narrative of cultural authenticity. Local traditions, cuisine, landscapes, and heritage are commodified for tourists. Local culture becomes a curated product, projecting simplified, often romanticised versions of history and identity (Linehan, Clark and Xie, 2020).

The representation of Greece to foreign visitors has been tied to its ancient civilisation. Archaeological sites have been preserved and marketed since the beginning of systematic tourism development, forming a central element of the national identity (Tournikiotis and Monemvasitou, 2012). In Malia, the Minoan civilisation remains a major tourist attraction. According to the Strategic Planning & Operational Program for the Region of Crete 2024-2028 (Gov, 2024), Crete is described as:

"...a fusion of cultures such as the Minoan, Byzantine, Roman...which, combined with its landscapes and recreational opportunities, is often chosen by tourists...as a destination of cultural interest and holidays."

Another cultural representation that mass tourism promotes is linked to the commercialisation of the planetary commons. Regional authorities' survey confirms that visitors widely perceive Crete as a destination of "Sun-Sea-Relaxation" (Gov, 2024), which is reinforced by the promotion of all-inclusive hotels and resorts along the Malia

coastline. Current tourism development plans do not challenge this triptych; they propose strategies to extend the tourist season throughout the year. The plan states:

"The Region of Crete is aware that the 'Sun and Sea' model will remain dominant... However, the uniqueness, and diversity of the destination 'Crete' is a 'treasure', and if we reintroduce it to the world, we will gain forever."

Therefore, the Strategic Planning & Operational Program for the Region of Crete 2024–2028 suggests the "Brand Equity" strategy, aiming to promote a "new" cultural value in tourism, which taps into localised "brands" of each area's unique characteristics and products. It targets "qualitative" tourism and private investment to enhance competitiveness, diversity, and innovation (Gov, 2024). The represented culture is designed to appeal to the ideal tourist, whose preferences guide how place identity is framed and marketed to drive economic growth. Authenticity is constructed through experiences tailored to visitor expectations and reproduced by local industry actors. Thus, profit becomes a principle (Childs and Williams, 1997), and cultural expression is subordinated to marketability.

Mass tourism introduces as well a new cultural identity rooted in capitalist consumption, modernity, and Eurocentrism⁶. In the post-war period, the GNT0 employed modernity as a tool of "civilisation" for local populations (Tournikiotis and Monemvasitou, 2012). Today, it is reflected in consumerism and the adoption of globalised life-style standards.

Malia comprises a popular international youth tourism destination known for its nightlife, drug use, clubbing, and sex tourism. Foreign and Greek tour operators promote these experiences, targeting specific tourist groups. A micro-network of local business operators guides tourists to select venues and organises high-attendance events (Party Hard Travel, 2024). The often-accompanying violent behavior places considerable pressure on the local community (Terkenli and Bellas, 2007). Alternative package tours that market "adventurous" experiences, such as safari day trips to natural areas like the Lassithi Plateau, also raise concerns. The landscape and surrounding villages become spectacles for the tourist gaze, with little regard for the local community's lived reality or meaningful engagement with the place.

The Strategic Plan for Tourism Development in Crete (2024–2028) acknowledges the importance of tourist profiles, aiming to attract visitors from Europe, the USA, China, and Israel with higher educational and socio-economic backgrounds. These groups are perceived as more receptive to personalised, alternative tourism models such as agrotourism (Gov, 2024). Thus, even if the plan proposes a hybrid tourism system, incorporating alternative models to extend the tourist season, it does not address the structural issues of mass tourism, merely commodifying culture, landscape, and resources.

THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE LASSITHI PLATEAU

The Lassithi Plateau, located 20 km south of Malia, is part of NATURA 2000 preservation since 1997 (Natura 2000, 2025), with an economy still rooted in agriculture. Situated at an altitude of 820–870 meters, it is surrounded by 11 villages (Figure 11) (General Secretariat for Spatial Planning & Urban Environment, 2024) arranged in a circular formation. It is known for its unique cultural landscape, which is historically tied to the 1950s, when 10,000 wind-mills on the plateau indicated the intense agricultural activity of the period (Demelis, 2017).

6 Eurocentrism is the belief that Europe serves as the primary reference point for understanding world history, civilisation, and human progress, often evaluating other societies based on their European models (Baylis, Smith and Owens, 2023).



Figure 11: Lassithi Plateau Map (Google Maps, 2019)

These windmills were an inventive industrial accomplishment based on a design created by Emmanuel Papadakis, a carpenter from the village of Psychro. His concept significantly enhanced the irrigation water pumping operation compared to the traditional Venetian water systems. The windmills (Figure 12) supported the growth of a self-sufficient local economy, based on vegetable production, while strengthening the community's ties to the land and developing a shared cultural identity ingrained in the local memory (Zaimakis et al., 2022).



Figure 12: Lassithi Plateau Windmills (National Index of Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2025)

The locals describe this period as a milestone in their communal life. At that time, livelihood was rooted in land cultivation and farming, with nearly every family in the surrounding villages owning a plot of agricultural land. The last windmill technician of Tzermiado village mentioned that families would contact him to build a windmill on their land, which typically took up to three days. While local artisans handled technical maintenance, each family was responsible for the daily operation of the windmills (Local No 1 and Local No2, 2025).

This shared responsibility fostered a collective consciousness, reflected in social interactions and the spatial

practices of the community. For example, when wind conditions were strong, neighbors would furl the sails of vulnerable windmills, even if they did not own them. They added as well that people cooperated closely, often sharing labor and agricultural products. (Local No 1 and Local No2, 2025). They mention:

"Back then, we didn't have extra labour hands. We cooperated, helping each other with agricultural work..."

Spatially, plots of land were not fenced, which endures today, symbolising deep mutual trust and a strong sense of place cultivated through communal living (Local No 1 and Local No2, 2025).

The community's well-being, self-sufficiency, and locally rooted economy, centered on family needs, cooperative use of windmills, and a collective sense of belonging, illustrate context-specific practices adapted to local conditions. These practices align with the principles of degrowth, which emphasise ecological sustainability and social cohesion (Kallis, Varvarousis and Petridis, 2022).

Impacts of Development Dynamics on the Lassithi Plateau's Cultural Landscape

The installation of the electrical grid in the 1960s, the introduction of new technologies, the rise of mass tourism along Crete's northern coast in the 1970s–1990s, and increasing urbanisation during the same period contributed to the transformation of the Lassithi Plateau's cultural landscape.

Depopulation was the first significant consequence, affecting the cultural agents of the landscape. Larger villages such as Tzermiado and Agios Georgios absorbed populations from smaller settlements, but both have experienced over 40%–50% depopulation since the 1960s (Figure 13). A few villages, such as Psychro and Kaminaki, indicated slight increases in active population due to their proximity to the tourist attraction of Dikteon Cave, but this was not sustained (Zaimakis et al., 2022).

The evolution of the population of the Plateau over time (1900-2011)

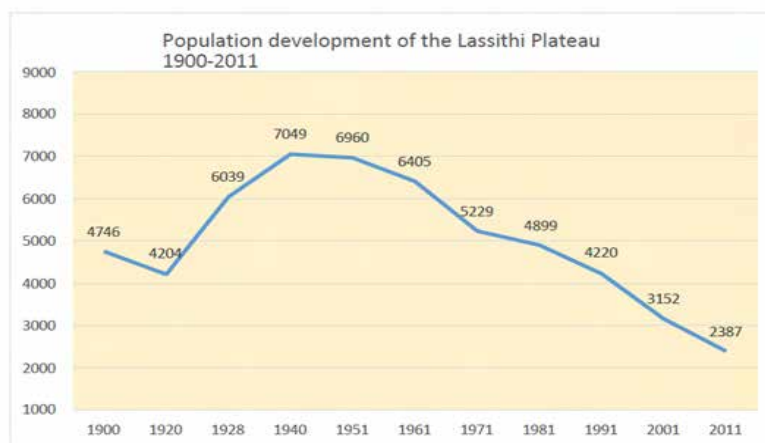


Figure 13: The Evolution of the Lassithi Plateau's population (1900-2011) (Zaimakis et al., 2022)

According to the 2021 census (ELSTAT, 2021), the Lassithi Plateau has 2,438 people, slightly increased from 2011 (ELSTAT, 2021). It has the highest employment rate among its economically active population (92%) despite having the lowest population density in the region (18/km²) (Zaimakis et al., 2022). This highlights a paradox: a productive core persists despite aging and population loss, especially in agriculture and tourism.

The second major shift came in 1965, when high-power water pumps replaced traditional windmills (Figure 14) (Demelis, 2017). The initial strong community relationships, maintained by a sustainable, circular system, were upset by the simultaneous collapse of windmills and population.

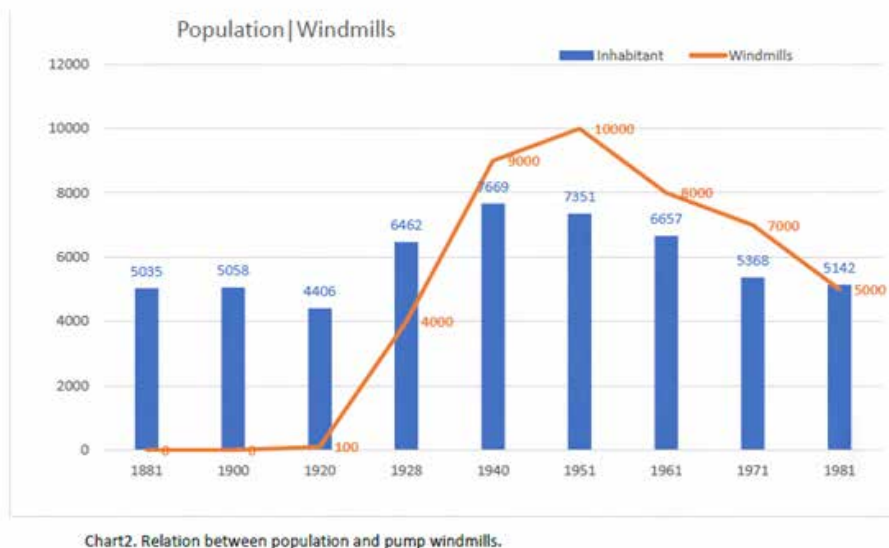


Figure 14: The Relation between Population and Windmill Transformation (Demelis, 2017)

Today, half the permanent population is economically inactive, while the active labour force is evenly split between the primary and tertiary sectors (Figure 15). However, the principles of agricultural work have changed. According to the farmers' union representative, depopulation and aging have led to the accumulation of land in the hands of a few full-time farmers. As he puts it:

"At least the plain is cultivated. Because if it's not rented, it'll be empty within a year."

Economic profitability is essential, and adopting modern irrigation technologies helps reduce costs and boost productivity.

"Being on an island increases costs for both farmers and stockbreeders... but product prices don't increase accordingly... but still, our products are worthwhile, so they sell" (Interview No.9, 2025).

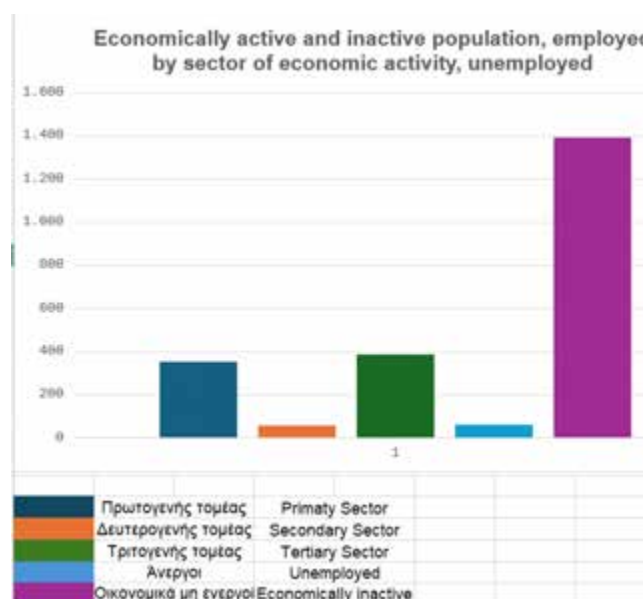


Figure 15: Economically Active and Inactive Population by Economic Sector (ELSTAT, 2021)

Few windmills remain, and most are in poor condition. According to a local mechanical engineer, only 150 have been restored to serve as tourism attractions and are no longer functional (Interview No.2, 2025; Interview No.9, 2025). The once vibrant cultural landscape of the Plateau has been reshaped by modernisation and economic growth, reflecting a detached relationship with the land (Figure 16).

Nevertheless, based on observations during the action research, the agent of culture is still present. Community ties remain visible through events and festivals organised by cultural associations and the municipality, the existence of an agricultural cooperative, and even informal gatherings at village cafés (kafenía). Most of the residents address depopulation as a significant challenge for the future. While some express hope that young people will return, others acknowledge outmigration as necessary due to limited employment opportunities and services.



Figure 16: Lassithi Plateau 2025 (Research Group's Own)

This raises questions: Are current tourism strategies sufficient to revitalise the area? And what role can the windmills play in this?

Tourism Development Strategies and Challenges in the Lassithi Plateau

The Strategic Planning & Operational Programme for Crete 2024-2028 aims to extend the tourism season by promoting alternative tourism forms based on site-specific characteristics and local products. These alternatives emphasise agro-tourism and eco-tourism, under a globally competitive tourism market branding "CRETE" (Gov, 2024).

For the Lassithi region specifically, the proposed strategies include (Karagiannis and Centre for Technological Research of Crete, 2024):

- Attracting investment for agrotourism development
- Supporting the primary sector by certifying and promoting local products within the tourism industry
- Promoting and protecting traditional settlements and fostering self-sustaining tourism centers
- Utilising areas of outstanding natural beauty
- Protecting forests and creating recreational parks for ecotourism

While expanding the tourism industry toward alternative models could benefit local employment and population retention, the current strategy remains profit-oriented, prioritising the needs and experiences of tourists. A revealing example is the phrase: "If the locals don't have a good time, the visitors won't have a good time either" (Gov, 2024). This framing subtly positions locals as a means to enhance the tourist experience, reducing their well-being to a functional index of visitor satisfaction.

Further evidence of the emphasis on growth is seen in references to large-scale infrastructure projects scheduled for completion between 2027 and 2030. The only concern noted is the potential for an "unpleasant image" of the island during the construction phase, mitigated by assurances that the infrastructure will match that of the tourists' home countries (Gov, 2024).

The SWOT Analysis included in the Strategic Plan for Crete 2024–2028 (Gov, 2024) highlights several structural weaknesses and threats accordingly:

- "Spatial over-concentration – Inadequate institutional and regulatory framework – Vulnerability of the Cretan landscape – Vulnerability of the tourism product – Fragmented actions and initiatives"
- "Deterioration of tourism resources – Exceeding carrying capacity and overtourism – Climate change – Rising costs – Abandonment – Weakening of the countryside"

At a policy level, the New Special Spatial Framework for Tourism 2024 lacks an overall development strategy and fails to address spatial over-concentration in line with carrying capacity indicators. Environmental priorities and landscape protection are also underestimated, considering promoting large-scale hospitality infrastructure in sensitive zones, such as islets or small islands. Moreover, supporting significant investments in small-scale regions redirects financial inflows away from the local economy and dismisses the long-term impacts on landscape, culture, and community (Spilanis, 2024).

The tourism development approach faces challenges due to misalignment between central and regional authorities. Lassithi Plateau's proximity to the Kastelli airport poses risks to capital-driven tourism dynamics. The lack of site-specific strategies and an adequate policy framework raises concerns about tourism's impact on local communities and landscapes. Considering that permission to install large-scale wind turbines in the Lassithi Plateau, a Natura 2000 zone, has already been approved, indicating no prevention towards extractivist processes (INSIST, 2018), increases the concerns about future development plans.

Regarding the windmills and their contribution to tourism development, local authorities and residents highlight their significant role in attracting visitors. They have shaped a distinct cultural identity, remaining deeply embedded in the collective memory of the local population. The iconic "postcard" image of the Plateau from the 1960s reinforces the community's vision for reviving the area as a thematic cultural park.

Local interviewees say restoring traditional windmills can rebuild the cultural landscape and revive local identity. This is perceived as an optimistic scenario for the future development of the villages. The municipality supports a model of slow tourism, with the proposed thematic park showcasing aspects of traditional agricultural life and windmill operation (Interview No.4, 2025; Interview No.6, 2025; Interview No.8, 2025; Interview No.9, 2025). A local stated (Interview No.9, 2025):

"The windmills are the identity of the Plateau...I would like to see the Plateau revitalised, with twice as many people living here. People from Heraklion who own property in the area should return and invest in it, maybe develop a windmill park for tourists, with cafés and taverns, so that visitors say: 'I'm going to the Plateau to stay, relax, and have a good time.'"

Although restoration efforts have occurred in the past, the lack of funding, specialised technicians, and ongoing maintenance has prevented them from continuing (Interview No.2, 2025). A complete restoration of the roughly

1,000 windmills on the Plateau could support an application for inclusion in UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Such recognition would help protect the area from unregulated tourism expansion and encourage sustainable development strategies centered on environmental, cultural, and landscape preservation (World, 2018).

The tourism industry presents potential development, but the lack of a clear policy framework and profit-driven strategies prioritise tourist needs over local community well-being. Despite windmill restoration and possible UNESCO recognition, the process risks romanticising and modifying the cultural landscape for tourism purposes, highlighting the need for a reconceptualised tourism development model.

DEGROWTH AS A DECOLONIAL ALTERNATIVE FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE LASSITHI PLATEAU

Since tourism operates within an extractive capitalist system, suggesting alternatives to mass tourism is questionable regarding their contribution to a sustainable development model. Considering the landscape transformation of Malia and the upcoming risk for Lassithi Plateau due to the new airport or the wind turbines project, degrowth tourism could prevent these implementations and benefit the community, as happened in the following cases in Ecuador.

Degrowth Tourism: Indigenous Cases in Ecuador

Degrowth suggests a post-extractive economy prioritising community resilience and well-being, environmental balance, and intercultural exchange (Chassagne and Everingham, 2019). This system could better absorb tourism alternatives. Two Ecuadorian cases demonstrate how Indigenous communities utilise tourism to boost their local economy and prevent the construction of large-scale infrastructure projects that could harm nature and the environment.

Cotacachi canton⁷, an ecological reserve in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, has implemented a tourism model based on an "anti-growth" concept to counter large-scale mining activities and protect nature and community well-being. The initiative includes eco-tourism and agro-tourism alternatives, empowering the community. The local government supports micro-scale enterprises and ensures development meets community needs. Planning strategies include strengthening ecotourism networks, cultural exchange, promoting reforestation, and environmental education. This case demonstrates how top-down and bottom-up mechanisms can promote tourism for economic and social development. (Chassagne and Everingham, 2019).

The Añangu community in the Napo River implemented a tourism model called "Community-Owned Tourism" (COT) in 2007, which aimed to reclaim full ownership after financial mismanagement with cooperative NGO's. The COT aimed to limit migration, retain youth through tourism education, and provide employment opportunities tailored to local values. Tourism also helped redefine local culture through community-curated experiences, while revenues from tourism funded conservation efforts and small-scale renewable energy projects. Decision-making was done through monthly assemblies with equal participation, communal rules, and work parties to ensure collective responsibility (Renkert, 2019).

Both cases reveal tourism's benefits to local communities, advocating for their needs and preserving environmental values. Profit becomes a means rather than a goal, supporting projects that contribute to local autonomy.

Reconceptualising Tourism in the Lassithi Plateau

Despite contextual differences between the Lassithi Plateau and the case studies, several local elements form a fertile ground for a degrowth-oriented tourism model. These include:

⁷ The subdivision of a country based on political or administrative factors.

- Historically rooted culture of sharing is still evident among locals
- Strong sense of place
- Slow pace of life
- Collective action through the villages' Cultural Associations, the Farmers' Union, and the Lassithi Mountaineering Club
- Community self-sufficiency, grounded in land fertility and local production
- Desire to reclaim and preserve the cultural landscape
- Locals' desire for youth return

Drawing on the Plateau's natural beauty, agricultural activity, and lifestyle, tailored models of agro-tourism and eco-tourism could be developed in line with degrowth principles. A community-led cooperative could manage tourism locally, ensuring that decisions prioritise community well-being. This cooperative would represent local interests in dialogue with municipal or regional authorities, mediating an autonomous and bottom-up governance.

Collaboration between this cooperative and existing local groups, such as the Cultural Associations, the Farmers' Union, and the Lassithi Mountaineering Club, could strengthen community empowerment. This would encourage participatory governance and collective agency by uniting these actors within a self-sustaining system. Such an initiative could promote cultural exchange, local food products, and ceramics, thereby supporting the local economy. Considering the environmental advocacy of the Mountaineering Club, an active voice against industrial renewable energy developments⁸ (Interview No.8, 2025), educational activities alongside organised hiking trails could be developed to raise environmental awareness among residents and visitors.

Regarding rebuilding the Plateau's cultural landscape and identity, a local mechanical engineer suggests that updated versions of traditional windmills could be reintroduced to pump underground water, a plentiful resource in the area (Interview No.2, 2025). Integrating this water system into the agricultural sector would revive the cultural landscape, serve the local economy through autonomous food production and consumption systems, and aid tourism by attracting visitors.

Collaboration with top-down governance structures is also crucial. As Vourdoubas argues, the active participation of local authorities, businesses, residents, and tourists is necessary to balance economic activity with sustainability. At the policy level, he advocates for eco-taxes, caps on tourist numbers to maintain sustainable levels, and restrictions on hotel development. Furthermore, a shift from quantity to quality in tourism could be incentivised through support to local tourism agents promoting eco-friendly models that encourage longer stays and higher visitor spending (Vourdoubas, 2025).

Thus, the Lassithi Plateau provides a promising context for a degrowth-tourism approach, enhancing the local economy and reclaiming community autonomy. Nonetheless, significant challenges must be acknowledged. As Buch-Hansen and Nesterova highlight, transitioning toward degrowth requires transformation across four interconnected planes⁹: material interactions with nature, social interactions, societal structures, and inner being. Implementing initiatives that challenge deeply rooted capitalist and individualistic structures is complex and demands personal commitment and a shared vision within the community. Degrowth, in practice, necessitates combining of bottom-up action and supportive eco-social policies (Buch-Hansen and Nesterova, 2023). Moreover, it remains a philosophical ideal rather than a widely adopted policy practice. The lack of detailed policy frameworks, concrete implementation strategies, and multi-scalar governance mechanisms presents significant ob-

⁸ Large-scale renewable energy resources.

⁹ Four planes emphasise the importance of reducing waste and pollution, promoting empathy and respect in social interactions, reducing competition and inequality, and personal transformation towards self-transcendence (Buch-Hansen and Nesterova, 2023).

stacles to a systemic transition (Fitzpatrick, Parrique and Cosme, 2022).

Consequently, the degrowth tourism model offers a promising vision, but its implementation remains uncertain. Rethinking tourism through a degrowth lens could offer locally beneficial mechanisms resisting extractivism and empowering communities for greater autonomy.

DISCUSSION

The study examines the relationship between tourism, space, and culture in Malia, revealing that mass tourism operates as a neo-colonial mechanism, reshaping the landscape and influencing local identity. The Lassithi Plateau, on the other hand, retains context-specific elements that align with degrowth principles, such as collective memory, sense of place, sharing culture, ecological awareness, and a slower pace of life. This presents a fertile ground for participatory governance, cultural resilience, and autonomy, encouraging the reconceptualisation of an economically viable and socially and environmentally recovering tourism model.

However, structural barriers exist, as current policy frameworks focus on attracting private investment and increasing tourist numbers. International case studies from Ecuador show that degrowth-inspired tourism is feasible and successful when rooted in community governance and supported by inclusive state policies. Thus, while the Lassithi Plateau faces challenges, it holds unique potential for embracing degrowth in tourism, reimagining development from the perspective of community well-being and ecological integrity.

CONCLUSIONS

The research suggests a decolonial approach to tourism, contrasting the neo-colonial mass tourism model in Malia. The Lassithi Plateau presents an opportunity for degrowth tourism, but challenges like lack of coherent policy and capitalist culture hinder its implementation. Combining community-driven initiatives with top-down policy frameworks could challenge extractivist models and promote community autonomy, offering a hopeful alternative to profit-driven tourism development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the research group for sharing this unique experience during action research in the Lassithi Plateau and for their valuable feedback throughout the research process. I am also deeply thankful to the local community for welcoming and supporting us and letting us see their place through their eyes.

REFERENCES

Book:

Baylis, J., Smith, S. and Owens, P. (eds) (2023) *The globalisation of world politics*. 9th edition. Oxford, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Childs, P. and Williams, P. (1997) *An introduction to post-colonial theory*. Harlow (GB): Longman.

King, A.D. (1976) *Colonial urban development: culture, social power and environment*. London Henley Boston: Routledge and K. Paul.

King, A.D. (1989) 'Colonialism, urbanism and the capitalist world economy', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 13(1), pp. 1-18. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1989.tb00105.x>.

Mason, P. (2006) *Tourism impacts, planning and management*. 1. ed., Reprint. Amsterdam Heidelberg: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann (Tourism).

Chapter in a book:

Beckmann, S. (2012) 'American Aid to Greece: The Marshall Plan as a Model for Development Aid', *Clocks and Clouds*, 1(1). Available at: <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1619/american-aid-to-greece-the-marshall-plan-as-a-model-for-development-aid>.

Linehan, D., Clark, I.D. and Xie, P.F. (eds) (2020) *Colonialism, tourism and place: global transformations in tourist destinations*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Mignolo, W.D. and Walsh, C.E. (2018) *On decoloniality: concepts, analytics, praxis*. Durham NC London: Duke University Press (On decoloniality).

Journal article:

Andriotis, K. (2001) 'Tourism Planning and Development in Crete: Recent Tourism Policies and their Efficacy', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 9(4), pp. 298–316. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669580108667404>.

Andriotis, K. (2003) 'Tourism in Crete: A Form of Modernisation', *Current Issues in Tourism*, 6(1), pp. 23–53. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500308667943>.

Buch-Hansen, H. and Nesterova, I. (2023) 'Less and more: Conceptualising degrowth transformations', *Ecological Economics*, 205, p. 107731. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2022.107731>.

Buhalis, D. (1999) 'Tourism on the Greek Islands: Issues of peripherality, competitiveness and development', *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 1(5), pp. 341–358. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1522-1970\(199909/10\)1:5<341::AID-JTR201>3.0.CO;2-O](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1522-1970(199909/10)1:5<341::AID-JTR201>3.0.CO;2-O).

Butcher, J. (2020) 'Constructing mass tourism', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23(6), pp. 898–915. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877920911923>.

Chassagne, N. and Everingham, P. (2019) 'Buen Vivir: Degrowing extractivism and growing wellbeing through tourism', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(12), pp. 1909–1925. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1660668>.

Childs, P. and Williams, P. (1997) *An introduction to post-colonial theory*. Harlow (GB): Longman.

Consultant Engineer, 107B El. Veniselou str., 73132, Chania, Crete, Greece and Vourdoubas, J. (2025) 'The Degrowth of Tourism Industry in the Island of Crete, Greece. Is it Desirable and Feasible?', *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 08(02). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V8-i2-21>.

Fitzpatrick, N., Parrique, T. and Cosme, I. (2022) 'Exploring degrowth policy proposals: A systematic mapping with thematic synthesis', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 365, p. 132764. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.132764>.

Fletcher, R. et al. (2019) 'Tourism and degrowth: an emerging agenda for research and praxis', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(12), pp. 1745–1763. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1679822>.

Kallis, G., Varvarousis, A. and Petridis, P. (2022) 'Southern thought, islandness and real-existing degrowth in the Mediterranean', *World Development*, 157, p. 105957. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.105957>.

Renkert, S.R. (2019) 'Community-owned tourism and degrowth: a case study in the Kichwa Añangu community', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(12), pp. 1893–1908. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1660669>.

Smith, J. (2013) 'Cultural Landscape Theory and Practice: Moving from Observation to Experience', in M.-T. Albert, R. Bernecker, and B. Rudolff (eds) *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*. De Gruyter, pp. 49–66. Available at: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110308389.49/html> (Accessed: 16 March 2025).

Terkenli, T. and Bellas, M. (2007) 'Tourism impacts on local life: Socio-cultural continuity and change in Crete', *Aegean Geographical Journal*, 16.

Terkenli, T.S. (2005) 'Human Activity in Landscape Seasonality: The Case of Tourism in Crete', *Landscape Research*, 30(2), pp. 221–239. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01426390500044408>.

Williams, T.R. (2012) *Tourism as a Neo-colonial Phenomenon: Examining the Works of Pattullo & Mullings*, jps.library.utoronto.ca. Journal Production Services - University of Toronto Libraries. Available at: <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca>.

Other documents:

Demelis, N. (2017) *The restoration and sustainable development of the traditional Aeolian Park of Lassithi plateau, Crete (Greece). Past, present, future.*

ELSTAT (2021) *Statistics - ELSTAT*, www.statistics.gr. Available at: <https://www.statistics.gr/el/statistics/-/publication/SAM03/->.

Eurostat (2025) *Nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments by NUTS 2 region*, [Europa.eu](http://europa.eu). Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tgs00111/default/map?lang=en&category=t_tour.t_tour_in-da.t_tour_occ (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Explore Crete (2014) *Malia, their History* | Explore Crete, Explore Crete. Available at: <https://www.explorecrete.com/el/heraklion-region-el/gr-malia-istoria> (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Gek Terna (2018) *Motorways* | GekTerna, GekTerna. Available at: <https://www.gekterna.com/activities/concessions/motorways/> (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

General Secretariat for Spatial Planning & Urban Environment (2024) *RES Participation Platform*, [Ypen.gov.gr](http://ypen.gov.gr). Available at: https://polsxedia.ypen.gov.gr/tps_details/%CE%923_75 (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Google Maps (2019b) *Google Maps*, Google Maps. Available at: https://www.google.com/maps/place/%CE%9A%CF%81%CE%AE%CF%84%CE%B7/@35.2433734,23.5926426,350696m/data=!3m2!1e3!4b1!4m6!3m5!1s0x149afe2f-827d98a1:0x100bd2ce2b9c630f8m2!3d35.240117!4d24.8092691!16s%2Fg%2F122zjww4?entry=tту&g_ep=EgoyM-DI1MDUyMS4wIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Gov (2024) *Strategic Planning - Crete.gov.gr*, [Crete.gov.gr](http://crete.gov.gr). Available at: <https://www.crete.gov.gr/stratigikos-sxediasmos/> (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Hellenic Chamber of Hotels (2024) *Hotel Potential in Greece 2024 - By Region - Prefecture - Island*, [Grhotels.gr](http://grhotels.gr). Available at: <https://www.grhotels.gr/ksenodocheiako-dynamiko-elladas-2024-ana-perifereia-nomo-nisi/> (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Hellenic Military Geographical Service (2025) 'Malia Coastal Development in 1966'. Hellenic Military Geographical Service. Available at: <https://www.hmgs.gr/hmgs-geoindex.html>.

Heraklion International Airport (2025) *The New Airport*, Heraklion Airport. Available at: <https://www.heraklion-airport.gr/en/the-new-airport/>.

Hersonissos and Malia Tourism Development [Mp4] (2025). Drossos Art Studio.

Ikkos, A. and Koutsos, S. (2024) The contribution of tourism to the Greek economy in 2023. Available at: https://insete.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/23_04_Tourism_and_Greek_Economy_2022-2023-ENG-1.pdf.

Insete (2021) Tourism Data by Region, Insete. Available at: <https://insete.gr/%ce%b5%ce%b9%cf%83%ce%b5%cf%81%cf%87%cf%8c%ce%bc%ce%b5%ce%bd%ce%bf%cf%82-%cf%84%ce%bf%cf%85%cf%81%ce%b9%cf%83%ce%b-%cf%8c%cf%82-%cf%83%cf%84%ce%bf%ce%b9%cf%87%ce%b5%ce%af%ce%b1-%ce%b1%ce%bd/>.

INSIST (2018) Insist_Cahier 9, Insist.earth. Available at: <https://insist.earth/> (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Interview No.2 (2025) 'Interview No 2'.

Interview No.4 (2025) 'Interview No 4'.

Interview No.6 (2025) 'Interview No 6'.

Interview No.8 (2025) 'Interview No 8'.

Interview No.9 (2025) 'Interview No 9'.

Karagiannis, S. and Centre for Technological Research of Crete (2024) Tourism in Lassithi. Apdkritis.gov.gr: Prefectural Administration of Lassithi. Available at: <https://data.apdkritis.gov.gr/resource/toyrismos-sto-lasithi>.

Karvounis, G. (2021) The Greek tourist market since 1974 to date and its position in relation to other tourist markets. University of Western Attica SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATIVE, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM MANAGEMENT. Available at: https://polynoe.lib.uniwa.gr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11400/920/tourism_03171.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Kotzamanis, B. and Androulaki, E. (no date) 'Demographic developments in modern Greece (1830-2007)'.
Latouche, S. (2004) Degrowth economics, Le Monde diplomatique. Available at: <https://mondediplo.com/2004/11/14latouche>.

Local No 1 and Local No2 (2025) Unofficial Conversation.

Ministry for the Environment and Energy and Technical Chamber of Greece (2024) Local Urban Development Plan (LDP) of the Municipality of Chersonissos.

National Index of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2025) Water Management Practices in the Lassithi Plateau of Crete. The know-how of pumping windmills. - Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece, Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece. Available at: <https://ayla.culture.gr/catalogue/praktikes-diaxeirisis-nerou-sto-oropedio-lasithiou/> (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Natura 2000 (2025) Natura 2000, Europa.eu. Available at: https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/#data_s=id%3Adata-Source_7-Layman_sites_2246%3A14184 (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Party Hard Travel (2024) What Is Malia Really Like? A Party Hard Travel Guide | Party Hard Travel, Party Hard Travel. Available at: <https://www.partyhardtravel.com/malia/news/what-is-malia-really-like> (Accessed: 1 January 2025).
Spilanis, Y. (2024) New Special Spatial Planning Framework for Tourism: Comments & Suggestions, Ena Institute. Available at: <https://enainstitute.org/publication/neo-eidiko-chorotaxiko-plaisio-gia-ton-tourismo-scholia-pro-taseis/> (Accessed: 31 December 2024).

Tournikiotis, P. and Monemvasitou, A. (2012) Policies for Tourism: The implementation of the program for tourism through the building project of the EOT. National Technical University Basic Research Support Program School of Architects and Engineers.

World, U. (2018) UNESCO World Heritage Centre - Compendium, Unesco.org. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/compendium/action%3Dlist%26id_faq_themes%3D1528?utm (Accessed: 1 January 2025).

Zaimakis, G. et al. (2022) 'Needs assessment and local value system study in Lasithi Plateau'. Κατάλογος Δεδομένων SoDaNet. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17903/FK2/3GKPVH>.