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3<sup>RD</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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**LIVING HERITAGE: ADDRESSING RISKS  
AND VULNERABILITIES**

**Excessive Construction and Overtourism:  
Two Active Threats to the Resilience of the Environment  
and Cultural Heritage**

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**STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING HISTORIC  
CITIES' RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS**

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SEPTEMBER 10-15, 2025

KULDIGA, LATVIA



CIVVIH  
I C O M O S



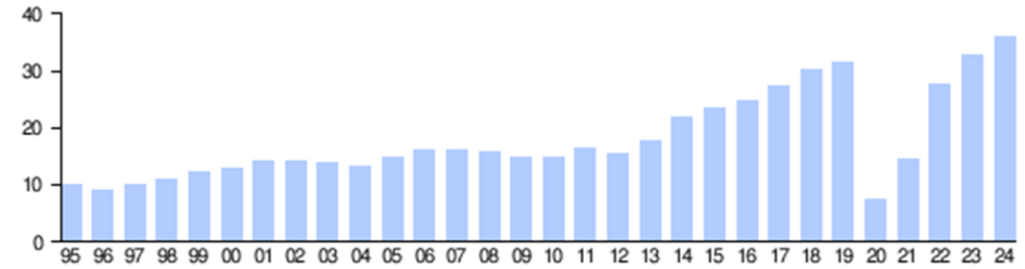
Addressing the impacts of climate change on tangible and intangible cultural heritage necessitates a multifaceted approach

- Greece has experienced significant disasters, such as last year's devastating floods in the Thessaly region and several Aegean islands, followed by periods of intense heat, drought, and fires
- Beyond natural phenomena, anthropogenic pressures exacerbate environmental and cultural vulnerabilities, thereby intensifying the climate crisis.





## Greece: rapid tourism growth among the top 5 destinations



FROM 5000

TO 40.7 MILLION INTERNATIONAL VISITORS  
4 tourists per resident

The distribution of tourism is highly uneven, placing disproportionate pressure on islands as **Santorini** and certain urban centers, particularly **Athens**.



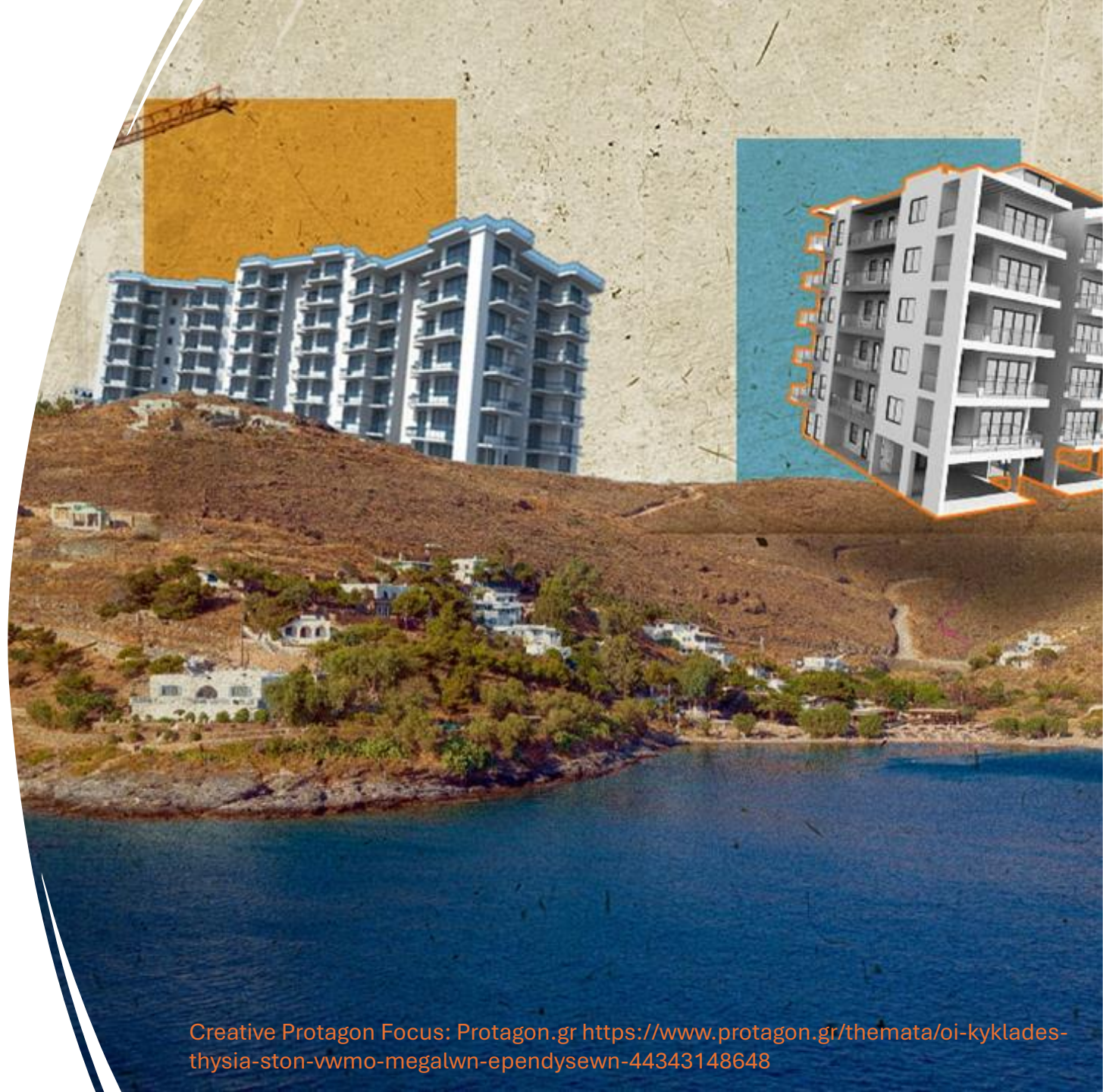


# Overtourism

## Excessive Construction

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- Number of visitors;
- Construction intensity, including tourist accommodations, holiday homes, and supporting infrastructure;
- Pressure exerted on sensitive natural and cultural resources, such as water, land, protected areas, and traditional settlements







## Important Mechanisms Underlying Environmental and Cultural Pressures

- Transformation of Traditional Land Uses for Tourism
- Accelerated “Cementification” of Coastal Zones
- Tourist Excessive Construction
- Water scarcity in an arid island landscape
- Waste Management insufficient
- Socio-economic Impacts

# Mechanisms Underlying Environmental and Cultural Pressures

## Transformation of Traditional Land Uses for Tourism

Between 1961 and 2010, approximately 13,851 hectares of forest were lost, while agriculture and livestock production declined by up to 50%.



## Accelerated Cementification of Coastal Zones





# Mechanisms Underlying Environmental and Cultural Pressures

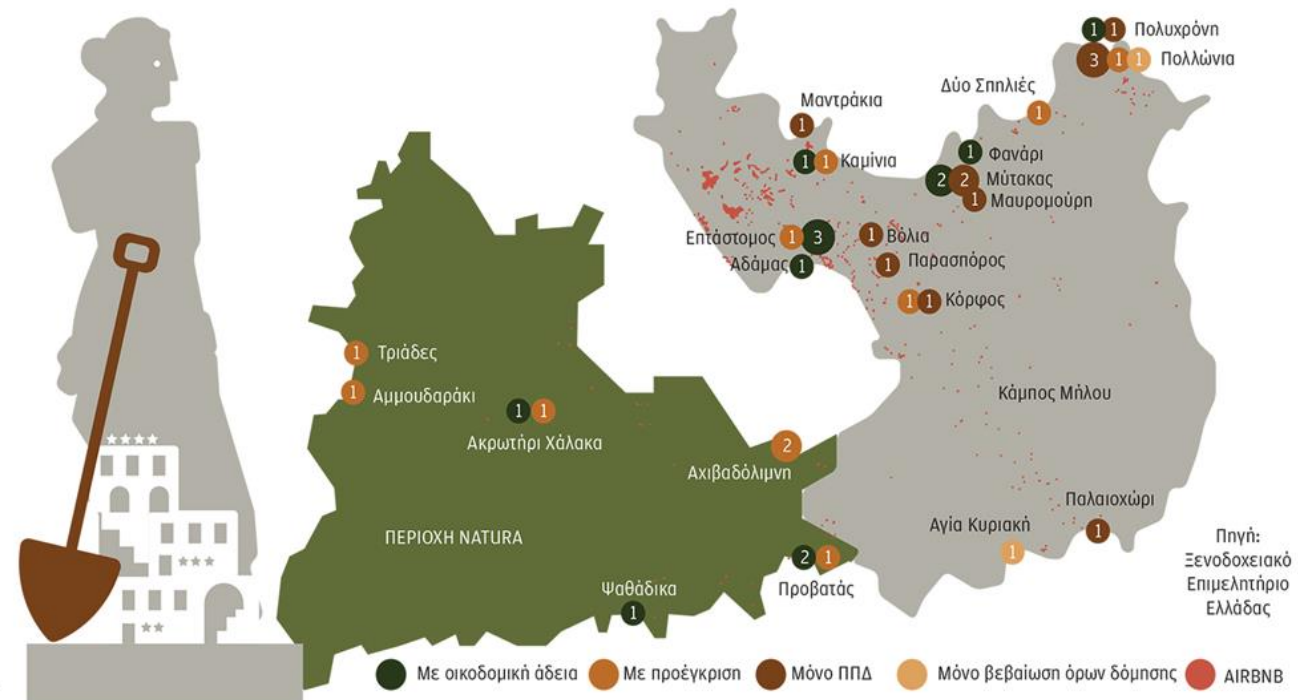
## Tourist Excessive Construction: The case of MILOS Island

Cycladic volcanic island with a population of 5302 inhabitants



# Starting in 2022, Milos, with **5.302** inhabitants, experienced rapid tourism growth

- Nowadays, the island hosts 43 hotels with **1,781 beds**,
- Approved construction plans foresee the addition of 48 hotels, increasing infrastructure by 75,013 square meters and **2,674 beds**.





The case of the Sarakiniko site, a unique landmark with white volcanic rocks formed 23 million years ago

A permit was issued for the construction of the *five-star White Coast hotel*

Eventually canceled thanks to protests by the municipality and environmental organizations, the irreversible destruction already caused remains as a lasting reminder



<https://i1.prth.gr/images/1168x656/jpg/files/2025-07-15/sarakiniko-mak.webp>  
<https://www.protothema.gr/greece/article/1608377/sarakiniko-oi-ergasies-gia-to-xenodoheio-stamatisan-alla-i-zimia-paramenei-pos-tha-diorthothei/>



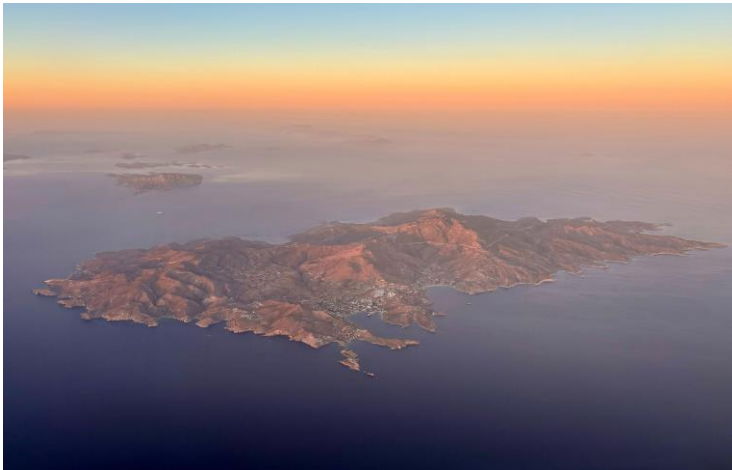
# Mechanisms Underlying Environmental and Cultural Pressures

## Tourist Excessive Construction: The case of IOS Island , population of 2,299

The island is undergoing large-scale land purchases by tourism companies, covering about **one-third of the island**.

Projects include:

- € 43 million development in the “Koumbara–Diakofto” and “Jarmaria–Faros” areas
- € 45 million a boutique hotel and holiday homes in “Pikri Nero”,
- €90 million resorts and holiday homes in the broader “Papas–Loukas–Manousos” area



Kallima at Greek Wikipedia

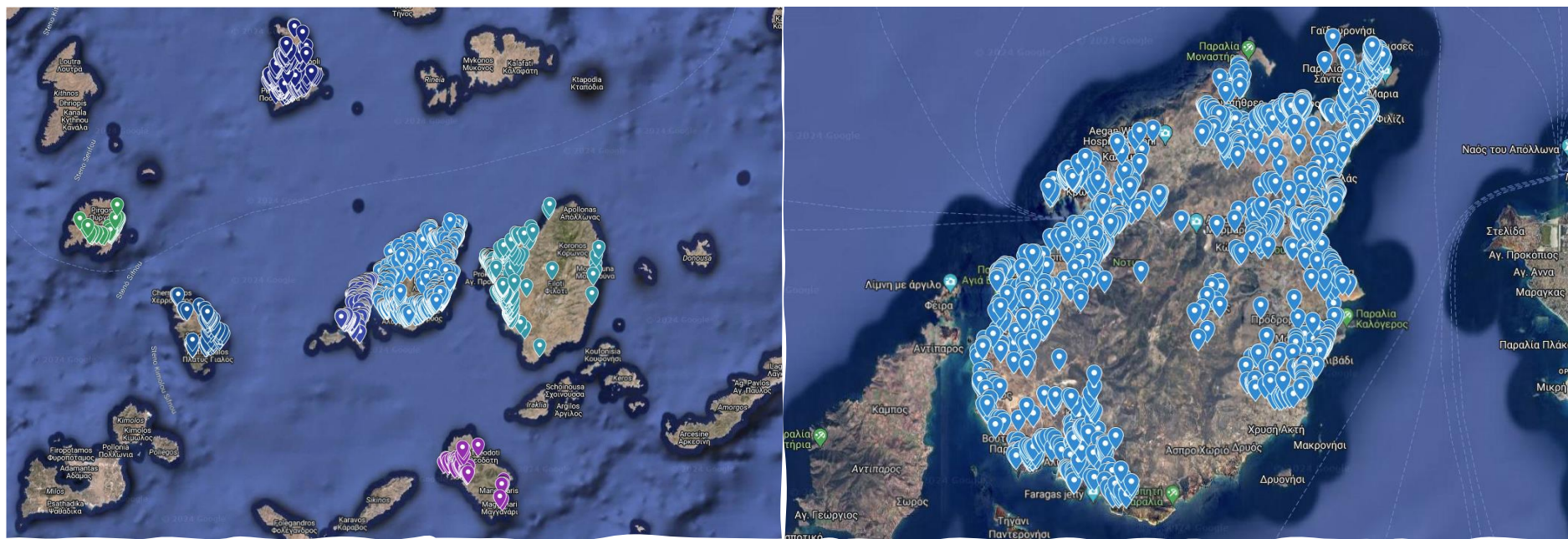


Gzseminar at Greek Wikipedia



[https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/koinonia/463955\\_epanerhontai-stin-io-oi-stratigikoi-ependytes-tis-aythairesias?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/koinonia/463955_epanerhontai-stin-io-oi-stratigikoi-ependytes-tis-aythairesias?utm_source=chatgpt.com)





Google Earth (Tripadvisor Forum, Save Paros, 2023)

- In the Aegean Islands, the rapid growth of tourism and extensive construction activity cause high water consumption.
- During the peak tourist season, islands such as Paros, Santorini, Ios, and Mykonos experience critical shortages, which are exacerbated by the proliferation of swimming pools.
- The number of **swimming pools in Paros** is estimated at least **1.200**, while other reports indicate that their number reaches **1.475**
- **Appropriate infrastructure is required, and public water management must be supported.**

# Water scarcity in an arid island landscape



# Mechanisms Underlying Environmental and Cultural Pressures

## Waste Management insufficient

- In summer, **due to overtourism**, waste volumes quadruple, while the limited infrastructure is inadequate, and recycling is not implemented.
- **91%** of the waste produced on the Aegean islands, i.e., approximately 285,000 tons per year, is buried, and **only 9% is recycled**.
- On some islands without sanitary landfills, waste is transported by sea to other islands.
- **It is urgent to create a unified, broader waste management system.**



<https://www.tovima.gr/print/society/pou-ofeiletai-lfto-adieksodo-me-ta-skoupidia-sta-nisia/>



# Socio economic Impacts

- Greek tourism relies on hundreds of thousands of seasonal workers (seasonists), whose rights and dignity are often undermined under the pressure of the "season."
- Local communities ultimately lose their cohesion, turning into theme parks for tourists, without a permanent population





An aerial photograph of a coastal town, likely in Greece, showing a cluster of buildings with blue roofs nestled among green trees on a hillside overlooking the sea. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, and the coastline is rocky.

Greece's legislative framework remains insufficiently aligned with the international 2030 Agenda and other European policy documents

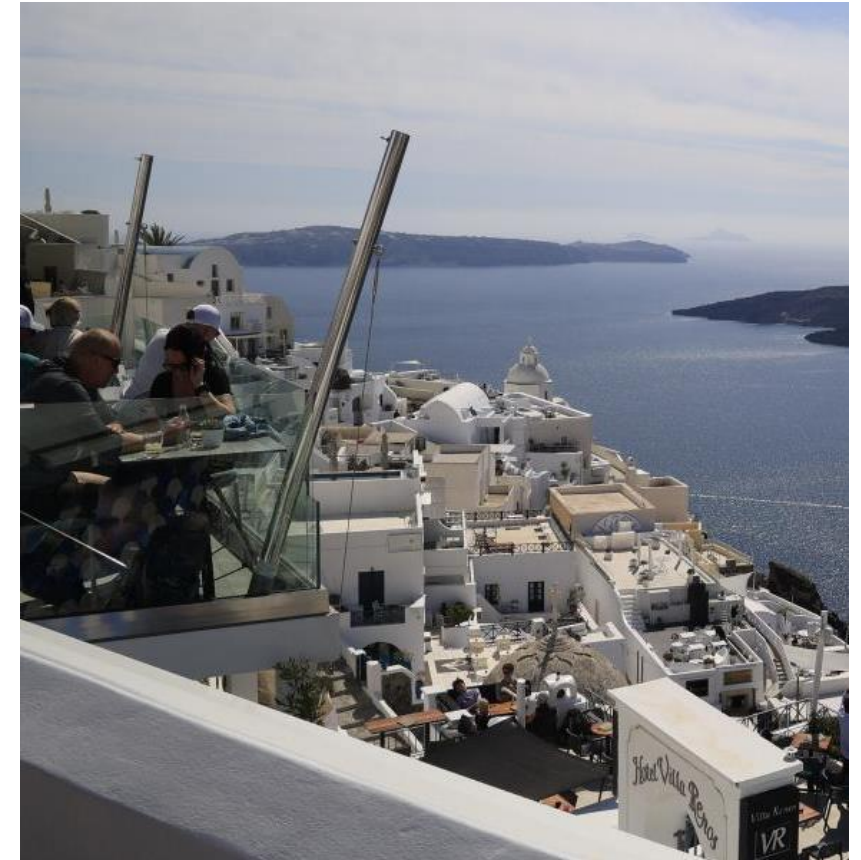
## Critical issues include:

- **Contradictions** regarding out-of-plan construction;
- **Delays** in the implementation of Local Urban Plans and broader spatial planning as a whole.
- **Expansion** and consolidation of ad hoc planning practices.



# National Strategy for the Development of Greek Territory is needed, and it should include:

- A participatory spatial planning framework encompassing all productive sectors
- Alignment with sustainable development principles, prioritizing quality over quantity, environmental protection, cultural heritage preservation, and technological innovation
- Elimination of out-of-plan construction
- Development of a national strategy for quality tourism, emphasizing strategic planning and environmental carrying capacity
- A spatial guide for investment and economic planning that:
  - a) Harmonizes with international, European, and national frameworks;
  - b) Categorically recognizes and safeguards land uses, applying environmental carrying capacity as a policy criterion;
  - c) Prevents uncontrolled development of tourism complexes, both within and beyond urban boundaries.





Thank you CIVVIH colleagues and friends !!!