

# **Outlining a sustainable future for the island of Samothraki, Greece, as a MAB Biosphere Reserve, and creating a regional showcase (“MAB Samothraki”)**

**Final Report  
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## Introduction

The project “Outlining a sustainable future for the island of Samothraki, Greece, as a MAB Biosphere Reserve, and creating a regional showcase (“MAB Samothraki”)” commenced in Spring 2011. The project aims at continuing from the achievements of two previous projects regarding the feasibility for creating a new Biosphere Reserve on the island of Samothraki, realised by the SEC, Vienna and one in collaboration with UNESCO Venice. These achievements included an extensive survey of visitors, their behaviour and preferences, the outline of economic models for tourism, a comprehensive consultation with stakeholders, several meetings during the summer of 2009 and finally the preparation of the application to UNESCO for the new BR translated into Greek signed by the Mayor and unanimously supported by the municipal council. The application was submitted by the Greek National MAB committee and is to be reviewed by UNESCO in their 2012 meeting. The current project has been instrumental in supporting the creation of a BR management and first projects towards sustainable development pathways. Thus, the present project has played an important role in an ongoing process that has been initiated by the Austrian MAB committee and was highly acknowledged, including the *Sustainability Award 2010* it received by the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research.

The project had planned the following activities for the period Spring 2011- June 2012, the great majority of which has been achieved:

- a) Familiarise with the specific local, regional and national legal frameworks and policies, as well as conventions, actions and strategies in order to support the development of a management plan, build synergisms, and to take cognizance of opportunities and constraints at various scales.
- b) Advise on a selection and establishment of a BR management in collaboration with the local administration, detailing among others, objectives, management and financing structure.
- c) Support the new BR management in adopting sustainable development standards, monitoring indicators and procedures for a sustainability assessment (BRIM/BRIA).
- d) Outline sustainable development project modules suiting to BR sustainability standards and goals in collaboration with the BR management through a set of Masters theses. Key areas of intervention include the economy, natural resource management, and infrastructure.

The only delay that has been observed is in the production of the *final* BR management plan. An elaborated explanation is outlined in section b(ii) below. Moreover, additional tasks have been undertaken, to increase the visibility of the research and strengthen the participatory character of the process

## **Tasks undertaken between Spring 2011 – June 2012**

### **a) July 2011 Field Visit**

Our three-week field stay at the island of Samothraki in the summer of 2011 has been instrumental for the smooth progress and success of the project. Based on our research, administrative efforts and networking work, an application has now been sent to UNESCO for including Samothraki in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, with the decision pending for 2012. This would make the island the first “post-Sevilla” Biosphere Reserve in Greece.

#### ***i) Generation of information leaflet and “willingness to pay” survey***

We generated a leaflet with information in English and Greek regarding the process of the Biosphere Reserve application and the project in general. 3000 copies of the leaflet were distributed to local residents and tourists on the island. Moreover, the leaflet included a short “willingness to pay” survey. Respondents were asked to fill in a short questionnaire and return it to a box provided.

*See Annex 1: Samothraki information leaflet  
See Annex 2: Report on “willingness to pay” survey*

#### ***ii) Consultation regarding the BR management***

Moreover, we had in-depth talks with many local stakeholders, especially those people who have given long-term support to this project, on how to establish an appropriate management for the further process. What came out of these talks was the proposal of a management plan to establish a formal association by Greek law, who elect a governing board.

*See Annex 3: Draft management plan for BR Samothraki*

Considering the present political situation in Greece where no public funding is available whatsoever, it would be unreasonable to push for a more advanced document at an earlier stage. In fact we consider the consensus reached amongst the stakeholders about the management outline after our summer meetings a very important achievement. The only realistic option we now have is to set up an independent association “Sustainable Samothraki” and elaborate its management structure according to Greek bylaws and then plan for a second round of negotiations, with a more mature document at hand, during our next visit on the island.

*See Annex 4: Draft Samothraki MAB Association founding statement*

### ***iii) Meeting with Mayor***

In addition, we also had the chance to talk for an hour to the newly elected Mayor and Vice-mayors and explain these plans. Quite to our surprise, our proposal met with strong support from the part of the Mayors. We even got a formal letter afterwards expressing their gratitude for Marina Fischer-Kowalski's support of the island's development and promising to make her "honorary citizen" next summer

*See Annex 5: Mayor of Samothraki decision*

## **b) Visibility of the process**

The project has also made additional efforts to gain visibility locally as well as internationally, and to share the research outcomes, and the process to a wider audience. Those prominent are mentioned below:

### ***i) Interviews/Press coverage***

In the months following our field visit, the Samothraki MAB process and efforts have been widely publicized in Greek mass media. Lazaros Xenidis gave various interviews at both local and national newspapers and radio stations, a selection of which is outlined below:

- Live interview at Hronos FM of Komotini, a regional radio station that can be heard in Samothraki
- Printed interview in "Macedonia" newspaper of Thessaloniki (see the article here: <http://www.makthes.gr/news/reportage/78079/>, in Greek)
- Interview for the Athens News Agency, later circulated in other printed and electronic media channels ( <http://www.amna.gr/articleview.php?id=2604>, in Greek)
- Live radio interview at Flash Radio, a national station broadcasting all over Greece
- Clips have been shown, among others, in Macedonia TV from Thessaloniki, and heard at the Greek national radio ET3

*See Annex 6: Selection of newspaper articles (in Greek)*

### ***ii) Presentations at international conferences and workshops***

Six presentations of the project and its outcomes were made at reputed international meetings and workshops:

- The first was given by Marina Fischer-Kowalski and Simron Singh at a workshop on "Island Industrial Ecology and Sustainability" in Hawaii, organized by the Center for Industrial Ecology Yale University, USA (5-8 January 2011).
- The second was given by Lazaros Xenidis at the International Workshop "Best Practices for Sustainable Use and Biodiversity Conservation in Protected Areas in Regards of the Biosphere Reserve Concept" in Strandja Nature Park,

- Bulgaria, organised by the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation (BBF) with the support of the UNESCO Venice Office and the Bulgarian National MAB Committee (14-16 March 2011).
- The third, also by Lazaros Xenidis, took place at an INTERREG IVC programme SUSTAIN Workshop on “*The Needs of Small Islands*” in Samothraki, Greece (13-16 May 2011).
  - The fourth entitled “Outlining a sustainable future for the island of Samothraki (Greece) as a Biosphere Reserve” was held by Panos Petridis at the “*Vienna Workshop on Sustainable Development for Doctoral Students*”, hosted by the Institute for the Environment and Regional Development of the Vienna University of Economics and Business (23-24 November 2011).
  - The fifth entitled “Seasonal tourism, critical stock-flow relations and island sustainability” was also held by Panos Petridis at the “*2<sup>nd</sup> Annual European Postgraduate Sustainable Development Symposium*” hosted by the Institute for Process and Particle Engineering of the Graz University of Technology (15-17 February 2012).
  - Finally the sixth, also entitled “Seasonal tourism, critical stock-flow relations and island sustainability” will be presented by Panos Petridis at the “*12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the International Society for Ecological Economics*” in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (16-19 June 2012).

### **c) Publications**

Two articles have been published in peer-reviewed journals in the past year:

- Fischer-Kowalski, Marina, Lazaros Xenidis, Simron Jit Singh and Irene Pallua. 2011. Transforming the Greek Island of Samothraki into a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve: An Experience in Transdisciplinarity. *Gaia*, 20(3), 181-190.
- Petridis, Panos. 2012. Perceptions, attitudes and involvement of local residents in the establishment of a Samothraki Biosphere Reserve, Greece. *Eco.mont - Journal on Protected Mountain Areas Research*, 4(1), 61-65.

In addition a working paper on the sustainable tourism of Samothraki has been initiated. Planned is a publication on the island’s material and energy metabolism.

*See Annex 7: GAIA Publication (Fischer-Kowalski et al. 2011)*

*See Annex 8: eco.mont publication (Petridis 2012)*

*See Annex 9: Sustainable tourism management report*