14th International Conference for Cultural Tourism in Europe
'Regenerating European Tourism through Culture Heritage & Creativity'

20-23 October 2021, Athens
ECTN- European Cultural Tourism Network

Culture and creative tourism in the Cyclades: a critical overview on regenerating tourism.

SPOT

SOCIAL AND INNOVATIVE PLATFORM
ON CULTURAL TOURISM
AND ITS POTENTIAL TOWARDS
DEEPENING EUROPEANISATION

www.SPOTprojectH2020.eu

Theano S. Terkenli, Professor, Geography Department, University of the Aegean

Vasiliki Georgoula, PhD, Senior Researcher, University of the Aegean

Purpose

- Our research seeks to analyse and discuss the variable ways in which the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) of the Cycladic Islands are viewed:

  - in their current state and

  - in their regenerative potential for cultural tourism development

by key stakeholders in the Culture and Tourism sectors of the local society, economy and government.

Purpose

- The study engages in a critical overview and SWOT analysis of the selected stakeholders' views, opinions and prospects regarding the relationship between culture and tourism in the islands of :

  ➢ **Andros**

    ➢ **Syros**

      ➢ **Santorini**

in the context of the anticipated regeneration of both cultural and tourism development, in the post-pandemic era.

Research methodology

For the purpose of the study, data was collected via:

1. a series of in-situ in-depth interviews with key informants **in the summer/ fall 2020,**

2. an intensive questionnaire survey of local businesses on the three islands, **in the summer/fall 2020,** and

3. a focus group panel discussion with our key stakeholders **in the summer 2021**

   ❑ Key stakeholders & informants were senior executives in the islands' businesses and municipalities in the sectors of tourism and/or culture, vice-mayors, regional chamber-of-commerce a representative, museum curators etc.

   ❑ Three different locations were selected on each island to conduct the surveys, as most representative of the range of different conditions pertaining to local tourism and culture.

   ❑ Questionnaires were distributed in both online and offline versions and 70 businesses' questionnaires were collected.

SPOT

SPOT Project - Social and Innovative platform on cultural tourism and its potential towards deepening Europeanization

- SPOT is 3 years EU-funded project under the Horizon 2020 program, related to cultural tourism.

- The consortium is composed of 15 partners from 14 European countries and Israel.

- A diverse team that brings in a wide range of knowledge and ideas in close cooperation with the local, regional or national stakeholders.
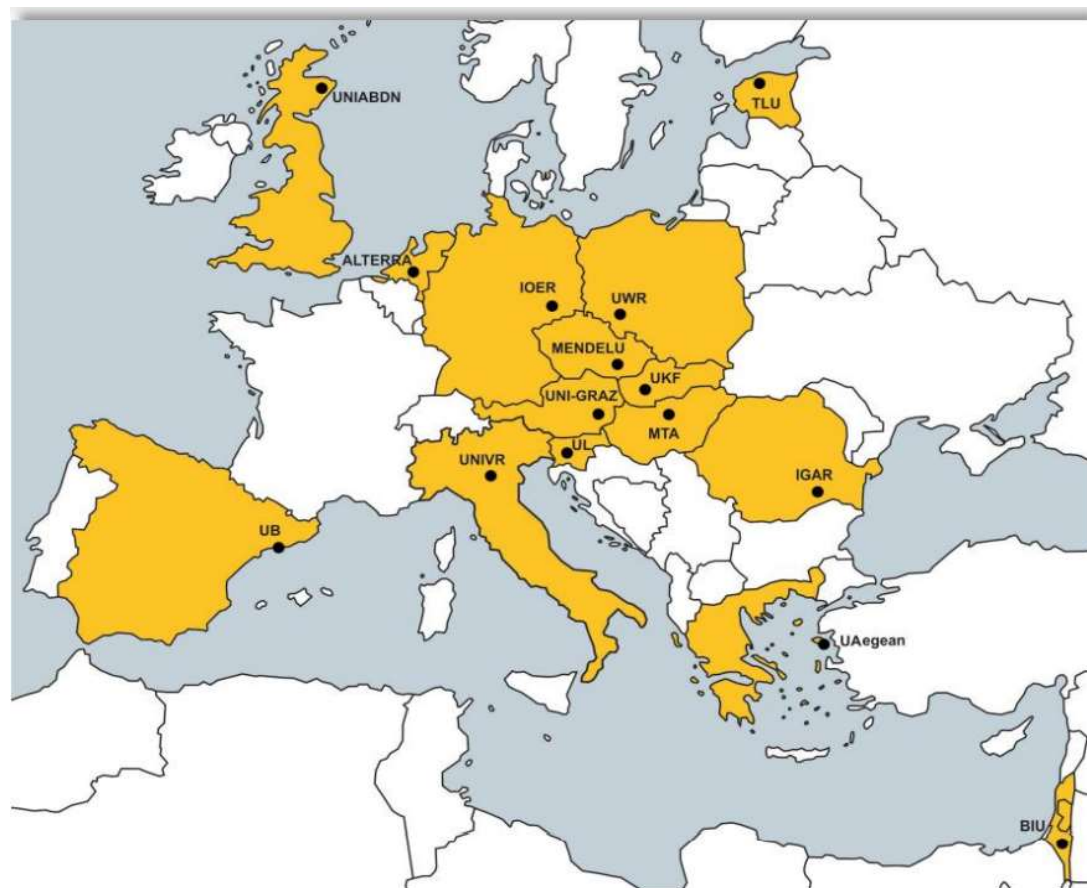
Our case study: the Cyclades
Research sites: Andros, Santorini, Syros

Athens

Andros

Syros

Cyclades

Santorini
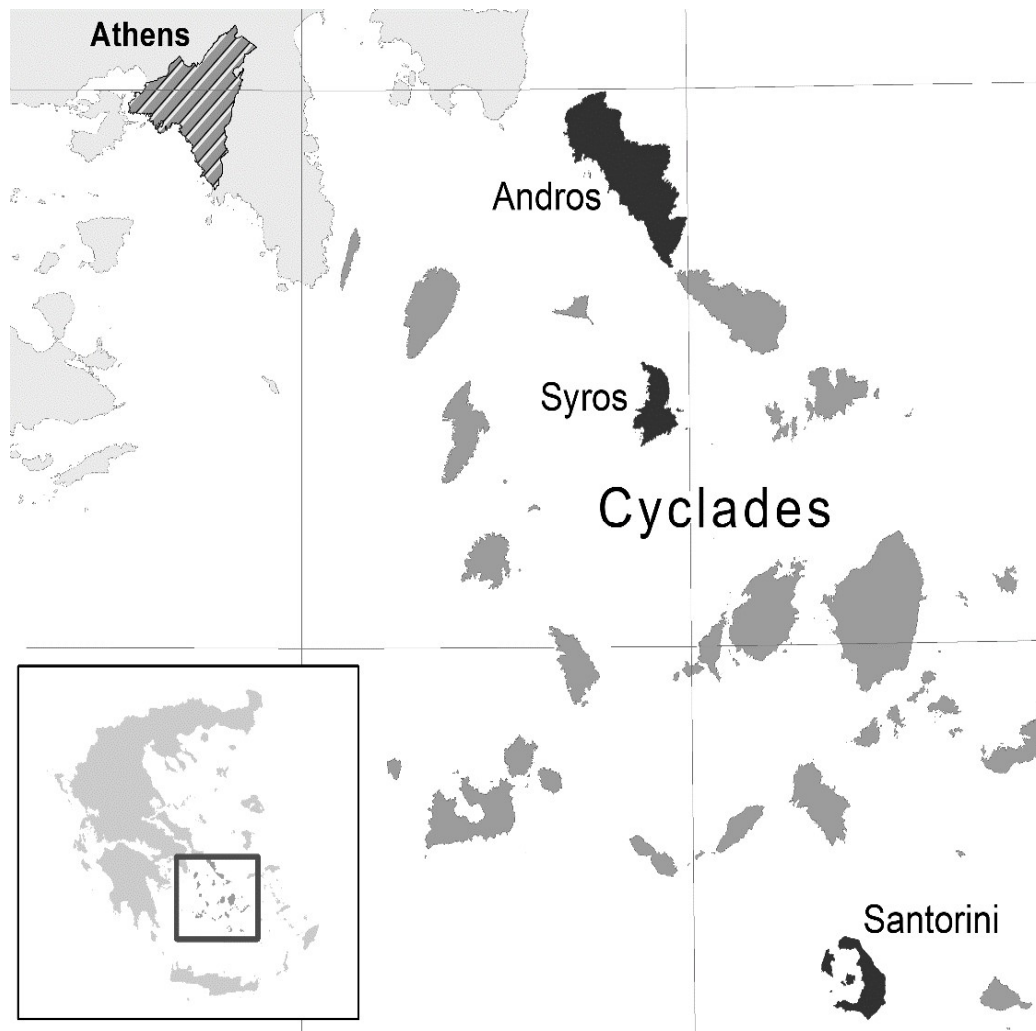
Source: Laboratory of Cartography and Geoinformatics, Department of Geography, University of the Aegean

Description: SE corner of Europe, central Aegean Sea.

Reason for selection: the most developed region of Greece as a tourist destination, world-renowned for their landscape, cultural heritage and tourism attractions.

Island cultural heritage: multifold, spanning the whole historical timeline of human existence on earth (prehistory to present). Regarding the recent past, the Aegean 'traditional architecture' is unique and famous

Potential for cultural/creative tourism: very significant for the development of all tourism types, but especially for special-interest/ purpose, cultural and alternative tourism, in congruence with the landscape.

SPOT

Findings - 1.Key informants (Summer 2020)

Special focus was placed on highlighting each island's cultural assets :

➢ **Andros**:

  ❖ Museums (Archaeological, Modern Art, Nautical etc)

  ❖ Folklore & local traditions (local religious celebrations, folklore music & dance)

  ❖ Gastronomy

  ❖ Hiking paths

Findings - 1.Key informants (Summer 2020)

➢ **Syros**

❖ International arts festivals (i.e. Classical Music, Film, Animation etc)

❖ Religious heritage (orthodox and catholic churches)

❖ Music heritage (i.e. rebetiko music)

❖ Cultural venues & theatres (i.e. Apollo theatre, open air cinemas, art galleries)

❖ 20th century architectural/heritage (industrial and neo classical buildings)

❖ Gastronomy

SPOT

Findings - 1.Key informants (Summer 2020)

➢ **Santorini**:

  ❖ Archaeological heritage (Prehistoric Akrotiri site, Archaeological Museum of Thira etc.)

  ❖ Caldera townscape and architecture (i.e. cubic-shaped houses, whitewashed terraces, windmills and blue domes)

  ❖ Wineries & gastronomy (due to its volcanic soil)

  ❖ Medieval settlements and folklore traditions

  ❖ Art galleries

SPOT

General remarks

- ✓ the pandemic imposed **serious restrictions on the frequency** and the length of stay
- ✓ tourists are concerned about the **pandemic safety measures** while travelling (i.e. feeling of being '**cautious**' or '**anxious**' while travelling).
- ✓ tourists **felt insecure and annoyed** for having to wear masks and constantly using sanitizers
- ✓ tourists **avoided public transport** and **preferred private means of transport**, when travelling around the islands.

SPOT

Findings – 1. Key informants (summer 2020)

Most specifically, it was noted that :

✓ tourists avoided **crowded touristic sights**

✓ tourists **missed was attending local fiestas** and arts events, very much tied into summer holidays in the Cyclades

✓ **local traditions & culture** were still the **main motive** to visit the islands

✓ **gastronomy and wine were also high in motives** as these islands are very popular for the quality of local food and wine

✓ tourists were veered towards **outdoor activities** (i.e. water sports, hiking etc)

Findings – 1. Key informants (2020)

✓ All key informants agreed that the islands' cultural assets are not promoted enough either nationally or internationally.

✓ There is lack of
  o cultural infrastucre (modern, renovated venues, theatre or museums)
  o public funding for the creative industries and art professionals and
  o destination marketing and promotion of cultural assets.

✓ Findings point to great uncertainty about the future of tourism and culture in the post pandemic area.

SPOT

Findings – 2. Businesses survey (summer 2020)

Type of Business (N=67)

- Accommodation (N=32)

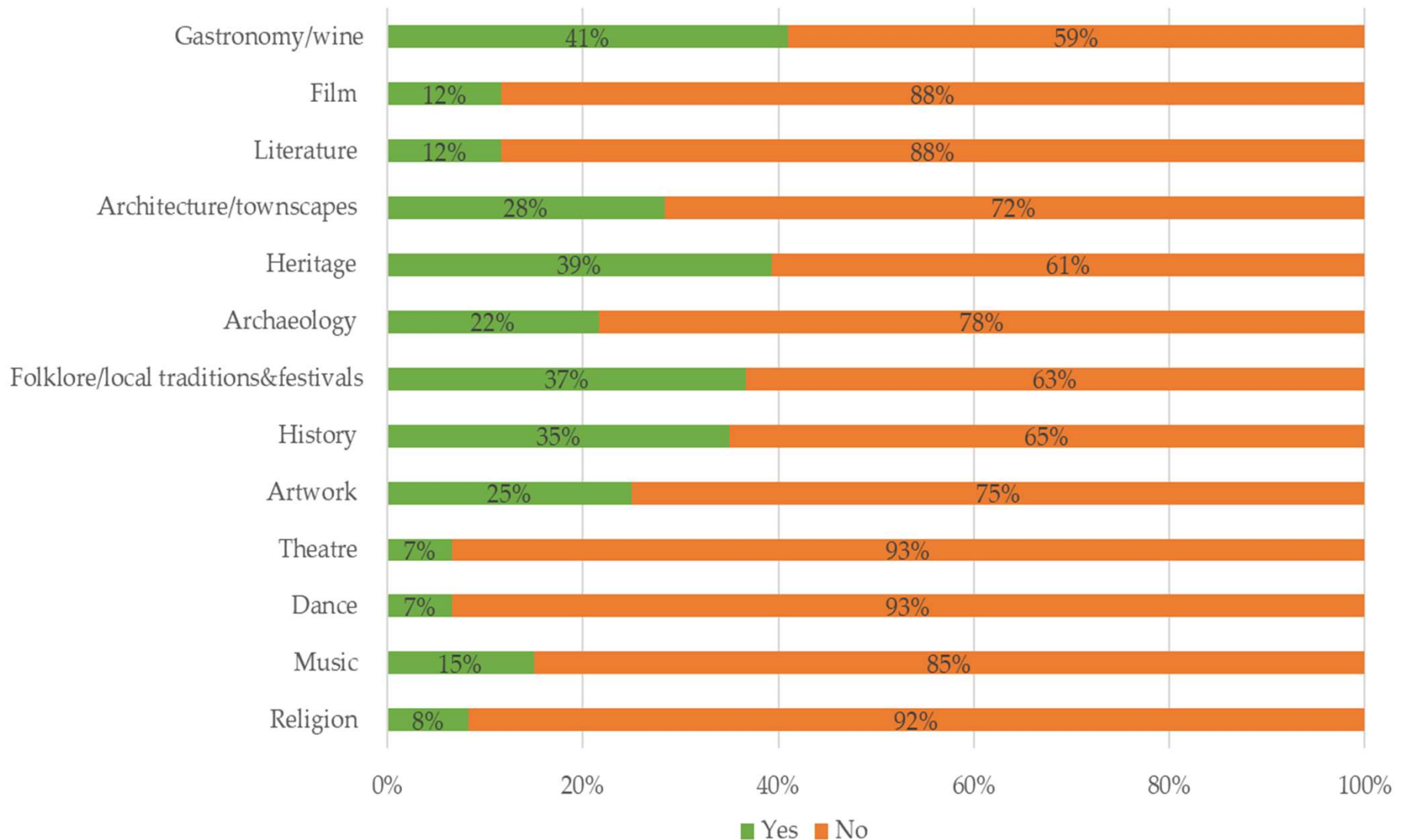- Visitor attraction, site or activity provider (N=18)

- Restaurant/café/bar (N=6)

- Other (N=11)

16%

9%

48%

27%

SPOT
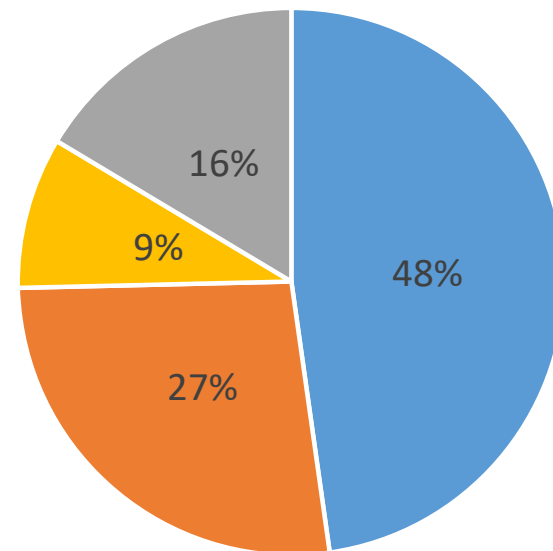
Findings – 2. Businesses survey (summer 2020)
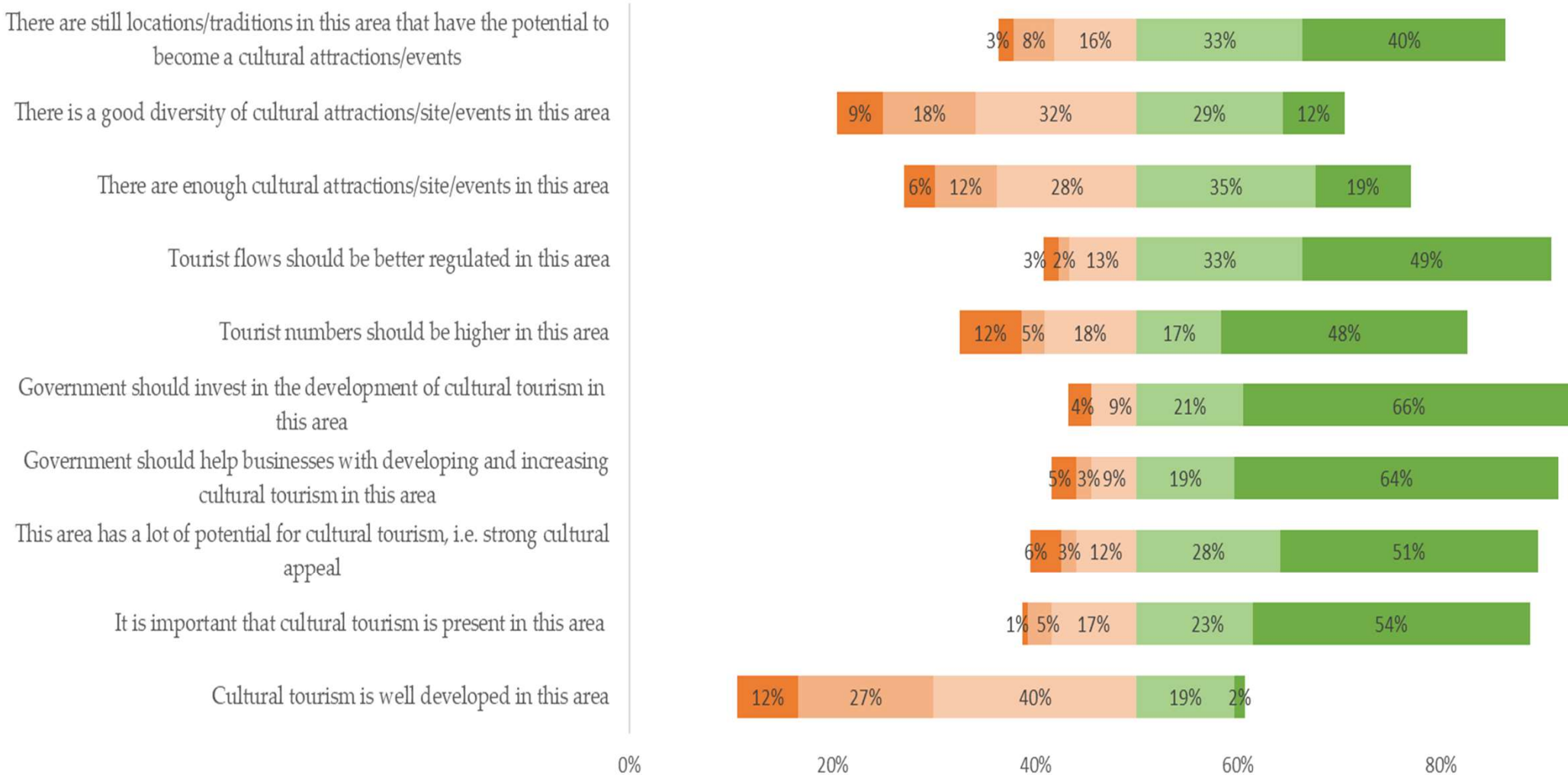
Businesses' offer of cultural themes

SPOT

Findings – 2. Businesses survey (summer 2020)

Businesses' perceptions on cultural tourism in the area

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
There are still locations/traditions in this area that have the potential to become a cultural attractions/events	3%	8%	16%	33%	40%
There is a good diversity of cultural attractions/site/events in this area	9%	18%	32%	29%	12%
There are enough cultural attractions/site/events in this area	6%	12%	28%	35%	19%
Tourist flows should be better regulated in this area	3%	2%	13%	33%	49%
Tourist numbers should be higher in this area	12%	5%	18%	17%	48%
Government should invest in the development of cultural tourism in this area		4%	9%	21%	66%
Government should help businesses with developing and increasing cultural tourism in this area	5%	3%	9%	19%	64%
This area has a lot of potential for cultural tourism, i.e. strong cultural appeal	6%	3%	12%	28%	51%
It is important that cultural tourism is present in this area	1%	5%	17%	23%	54%
Cultural tourism is well developed in this area	12%	27%	40%	19%	2%

Culture and creative tourism in the Cyclades: a critical overview on regenerating tourism.   Slide: 15

SPOT

Findings – 2. Businesses survey (summer 2020)

Businesses' perceptions on cultural tourism in the area

The majority of business representatives reported that :

1. *'Government should invest in the development of cultural tourism in the area'*
2. *'Government should help businesses with developing and increasing cultural tourism in this area'*
3. *'It is important that cultural tourism is present in this area'*
4. *'There is high potential of cultural tourism in the area'*
5. *'Cultural tourism <u>is not well</u> developed in this area'*

SPOT

Findings – 2. Businesses survey (summer 2020)

- For the vast majority of businesses, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lock-down was very strong for cultural tourism and tourism in general

  - 76% replied that their businesses were strongly impacted in terms with '**reduced international visitor numbers**',

  - 71% replied that they were strongly impacted in terms with '**Reduced levels of bookings**',

  - 66% replied that they were strongly impacted in terms with '**Cancellations of bookings**' and

  - 59% replied that they were strongly impacted with regard to '**Rearrangements/postponements of bookings**'.

Findings - 3. Stakeholders interviews (summer 2021)

o The interviews took place in the form of an online round table discussion where all stakeholders presented their views in July 2021.

o Stakeholders were all senior executives from Cyclades Ephorate of Antiquities, National Greek Tourism Organisation (EOT), Cyclades Chamber of Commerce.

o Five compound themes were synthesized and were communicated to the stakeholders in order for them to be prepared during the discussion.

SPOT

The discussion themes focused on :

➢ The **policy framework on cultural tourism**, as regards its formulation/ suitability, implementation, monitoring/ evaluation and effectiveness, but also its compliance with the goals of sustainability, innovation, employment of new technologies and creation of appropriate infrastructures for cultural tourism.

➢ The **role of cultural tourism** and its **costs and benefits to local societies** from anticipated and/or desirable cultural tourism development.

➢ The **evaluation of the future visions on cultural tourism** development in Greece and specifically, in the Cyclades.

➢ The **assessment of the new parameters** introduced to the themes above **by the COVID-19 pandemic** and concomitant government measures.

Culture and creative tourism in the Cyclades: a critical overview on regenerating tourism. Slide: 19

SPOT

Findings - 3. Stakeholders interviews summer 2021)

In general, there was overall agreement among the respondents on the following :

1. **absence of the state in culture and tourism planning**/ development/ regulation/ legislation/ management

2. **absence in the state's misguided actions in combatting the pandemic** and its repercussions towards the sustainable continuation of island life and culture,

3. **absence of the state's consistency in cultural tourism policies** has led to a pronounced and grave loss of cultural traditions/ heritage, jobs and opportunities for cultural development.

4. **the authorities (at all levels) must focus on the patronage and support of cultural tourism** in the form of funding and infrastructure provision, participatory planning, management and implementation of actions, goals and visions.

Culture and creative tourism in the Cyclades: a critical overview on regenerating tourism. Slide: 20

SPOT

5. significant progress had been instigated in the years before the economic crisis, **but all of this progress has been put to a hold by the current pandemic crisis,** with unpredictable future perspectives

6. **visions for the future of culture and cultural tourism exist**, but what is more imperative is that culture is embraced by the local side as part of its everyday practice and reality rather than becoming a tourism product

7. **optimism prevails**, on the basis of new apparent opportunities and forward-looking dynamism, from all sides involved

SPOT

SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Developed tourism destinations
- Rich cultural heritage (all historical periods)
- Local traditions, religion & culture score high on both domestic and international tourist motives
- Natural attractions (i.e. beaches town / landscapes)
- Gastronomy and wine

Weaknesses

- Insufficient cultural infrastructure
- Inadequate tourism infrastructure
- Lack of public funding for the cultural sector and creative industries
- Shortcomings of cultural tourism policy
- Lack of destination marketing and promotion of cultural assets

Opportunities

- Growing global wealth and connectivity
- ICTs/smart devices and digital transformation
- Cultural tourism on the rise as educational standards rise
- Governments investing in cultural industries and tourism
- Post-pandemic rise in tourism demand

Threats

- 'Overtourism' causing degradation of tangible and intangible heritage
- Commercialization and overuse of local culture and heritage
- Climate change & natural disasters
- Pandemic travel & transport restrictions
- Pandemic feelings of insecurity and anxiousness
- Post-pandemic economic depression

Conclusions

Consequently, it was acknowledged by both the survey respondents and key stakeholders that the role of cultural and creative tourism appears:

✓ as a dominant tourism attraction with potential to enhance the travel experience in the pandemic era

✓ as 'hope in the horizon' to help reignite and regenerate smaller scale and more sustainable types of tourism.

Thank you for your attention