

Knowledge Comes Back to Heraklion: Developing a Sustainable, Knowledge-based Community in Crete, Greece

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Abstract: Until the early nineties, cities were on the margin of technological boom, as most of the technology-driven activities occurred in central suburban areas. The revitalization underway -during the early 2000s- in several peripheral urban centers around the globe represented one of the most important developments of the then new economy, given that knowledge and the innovation capacities of human and intellectual capital were at its core. The key source of competitive advantage, be it among regions or industries, was the knowledge created and embedded in people.

Urged by this reality, in 2010, a consortium of locally based authorities had been working on a project that aimed to convert Heraklion into a Knowledge City, and to create a Sustainable Community on the island of Crete. The project was drawn together in accordance with the definition given for Sustainable Communities by the Egan Review (2004) and certain guidelines provided in several policy papers developed during the UK Presidency of the European Union in the second half of the year 2005.

As then demonstrated in the paper, both the city of Heraklion and the island of Crete possessed an impressive mélange of history, cultural background, institutions of higher education and research, high-class tourism facilities and well-developed transportation infrastructure. The consortium considered that the urban viability of Heraklion was linked with the extent to which the city could manage to establish local industry clusters that would be networked into the global business community. Under this perspective, the paper took a close look at how to define and develop the skills needed for the establishment of such a Sustainable Community.

In 2011 the paper concluded that recognition of this could force political officials to adjust their strategies accordingly. Boosting local education and training and reinforcing ties with local universities and research centers would create wide-ranging urban recovery that could finally lead to sustainable economic development for the municipality of Heraklion and the island of Crete, as a whole.

Keywords: Knowledge City, Sustainable Community, Skills, Urban Development, Networking