

Declaration

“The recession of soul and mind in favour of set answers has elevated the scientific standpoint on phenomena to the par excellence mode of reality perception”. Allegedly science is the only medium through which we can look at, smell and touch this shallow, one-sided world.

The dimension of ‘depth’ relating to human reason and psyche gets lost in the flat screen of a TV set or a PC.

In such an environment, our unadorned, direct and experiential ability of cognition weakens distraughtly, while the thousands-year-old knowledge we have acquired through experience subsides under the impact of Science’s statistical data. At the same time, the “industrially-paced” production of graduates in our universities threatens us with intellectual indolence, jeopardizing the vigor of our brains.

In rural areas, soil, water and stone no longer exist for the indigenous people. As if primitive elements, they haunt present time through their emergence from a past described only in folk-songs sung at local festivals.

The residents of those marginalized societies, saturated by tedious information from the “tube” with the delusion of ‘transient prosperity’ (the leading value of modern consumerist and super-technological society), abandon their villages and none has the power to deter them from not having roots and memories, from not forgetting that old locale in which they used to play as young children in pursuit of their first stimuli. Alternatively, wherever there still remains a crucial social mass, they manifest their resistance by adopting old unwritten laws of honour, which very often – unfortunately through an easy, usually illegal and for

this, infringing wealth-acquisition – lead to the demystification of the falsely defined notion of ‘prosperity’, establishing thus a degraded regime for their own cultural/ multi-cultural heritage.

All of the above induce the deconstruction of social web and the social marginalization mostly of the rural areas, which – through an idiosyncratic, non-experiential cultural mutation – give rise to the predominance of the aloof ‘couch-potato’ and ‘plastic-money’ culture and subsequently, to their demeaning professional dependence.

At this particular time, the European dream for a multicultural society becomes more apt and essential than ever. Maintaining and enhancing “rural identity” becomes the most fundamental and effective condition for the composition of the social mosaic of a globalized European image.

The “University of the Mountains” is founded as a movement, an organization, an act of integral vertical intervention towards the grassroots of society, with the aim to:

- **Transform the role model of prosperity into one that will combine sustainable development with the restoration of lost human relationships and the cultural identity of those small societies**
- **Protect the human and natural environment**
- **Reinforce traditional economy through modern management tools for the suspension of the exploitation of natural resources**
- **Eliminate delinquency and dependence on loan finances and subsidies, and finally,**
- **Redefine the feeling of human happiness via human criteria rather than financial data.**

The above objectives will be achieved through:

- **dialogue and the combination of experiential with scientific knowledge brought together by the people that serve them within and outside academia, in the field of primary production**
- **the scientific support of activities at all levels in main fields of intervention, specifically in the fields of economy, education, culture and health**
- **the nurturing into the culture of essential consumerism and the rejection of dependence on plastic money**
- **the organization of cultural and visual arts festivals in the mountainous and the socially marginalized communities, on the basis of volunteerism.**

Especially in the region of Crete, the University of the Mountains is defined as an act of ‘peaceful revolution’ against the brutal violation of the environmental, residential and cultural identity of the island, since, in the name of easily-acquired wealth, such an identity is altered by mass tourism and the clearance of Cretan land, which result to the deconstruction of its social web, the increase of delinquency and the humiliation, both on a national and on an international level, of its traditional values and culture.

It is a call for the rallying and peaceful rebellion of all the socially alert citizens.

The “University of the Mountains” is implemented as a multi-dimensional action-project, having as starting point a human-population

basis and investing in knowledge, which will contribute to local societies which reside in the mountainous regions of Crete. Thus it is expressed as a project of meticulous intervention in the rural areas and as product of original, systematic and innovative thinking.

Its content coincides with the act and the challenge itself for the establishment of the conditions which will see to the implementation of a designed Development Vision, laying emphasis on such values as the respect towards the particularities of locality, the centuries-long cultural tradition of mountainous rural areas and the special features of local society and economy.

This ‘treaty’ founds the demand for the interaction of Locality and University, which aims at the viable development of rural areas (with pilot model and employment field the mountainous rural areas of Crete).

In the cognitive context of the aforementioned coordinates, the ecological landscape of local societies of the mountainous and semi-mountainous regions, their history, demographic stability as well as aspects of their social organization and cultural principles, and their parallel transformation, constitute a constant challenge which relates to research, whose conclusions establish principles of development.

The “University of the Mountains” accepts and undertakes the mission of an existing, real university. However, it is decreed as a University outside university facilities, carrying out its activities at the outskirts of the mountainous and isolated settlements, at the heart of each local community. Within this environment, it will implement its program based on the combination of scientific knowledge from the subjects of economy, culture, health and environment. It will produce empirical knowledge which will promote a human-orientated holistic approach of education, something that will become a “shared site” of action both for scientists and rural people.

For this reason, the mentality supporting the creating of the “University of the Mountains” is located from its very beginning beyond the familiar set development techniques and is in pursuit of new and original objectives, which will be in dialogue with the specific complex historical, social and cultural context of the region.

In the wake of the above arguments, it becomes clear that the “University of the Mountains” derives from empirical knowledge, while it invests in its interdisciplinary approach and presupposes both the mutual learning approach and the dynamic interaction of all its active members and social partners.

It is based on the creation of a real community, which derives in turn from the co-experiential education, via the condition of dynamic interaction, aiming at the creation of social bridges and the annihilation of such contemporary phenomena as social marginalization, poverty and delinquency. As a result, **the “University of the Mountains” is a project for the rallying of a dynamic community of researchers, academia, social partners and citizens of the mountainous rural areas which function in conditions of original interaction and mutual learning.**