

## **Patras revisited. Revitalizing the city through reinterpreting its cultural heritage. The case of a large greek city and its 5000 years old material legacy**

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### **Abstract**

Patras is a benefited city from a geographical and historical point of view. Positioned on the northwest of Peloponnese, It is the third biggest urban area of Greece and a large port which is traditionally considered as the “Gate to the West”. Patras can be proud of a very interesting history of 5000 years, which can still be traced down in the urban landscape, shaping the city’s so called “cultural heritage”. However, the importance of this rich and valuable legacy is systematically ignored and poorly designated and so are the various economic and social benefits for the local community that could be gained after investing on this symbolic capital.

This paper will try to examine the hidden potentials of the city’s cultural heritage on the grounds of touristic attraction, economic sustainability, urban distinctiveness and community awareness. It will focus on the importance of a new approach and interpretation of the city’s cultural wealth as a first step towards a more effective heritage management. The paper intends to explain how the enrichment of the city’s cultural profile with new narratives could raise its brand awareness and make it more attractive and appealing not only to new visitors but to its citizens as well. By taking into account issues like the significance of infrastructure, the beautification of the urban space, the services offered and the cultural bodies already existing, the paper will try to suggest a more coherent cultural plan as a catalyst to the city’s multilevel development.

Patras has all the material testimonies of the past – ancient and recent – which if better lit and spotted can position the city in the Greek touristic map and contribute to its socio – economic renaissance. Offering the sense of a meaningful historic perspective to its inhabitants on the first place, attracting new visitors and creating potentials for growth on the other.