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## The region and its multiple images

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### Abstract

The growth or decline of a region depends on its power to "pull" and retain both business activities and the right blend of people to run them; this pulling power depends on what we call the Image of the region. Hence, it can be argued that, at each point in time, the region "sends out" its Image and, depending on its impact on the receivers (both employers and employees), the region may be considered attractive or non-attractive. The available evidence suggests that all the receivers groups or in other words the potential movers react similarly to a basic set of factors; more precisely, a set of minimum standards, largely common to all the potential movers, must be satisfied if the region is to be considered as a potential choice by any of them. On the other hand, the potential movers may belong to a number of different groups that have a different type of interaction with a region and as result each of these groups is likely to have a different image of the particular region. Hence, a region does not have a single image, but multiple ones.

To reconcile these two views we refine the concept of a region's Image by introducing the following two concepts: the Basic Image and the Specific Image. The Basic Image of a given region measures the degree to which the region satisfies a set of basic criteria, common for all movers. A region satisfying those criteria is considered by all potential movers as worth a closer examination and as a potential final choice. On the other hand the Specific Image of a given region, as perceived by a particular group of potential movers, measures the degree to which movers belonging to that particular group consider the region as their best final choice.

A detailed exposition of the concept of a region's Basic Image has been presented in some of the authors' earlier papers. In the present paper emphasis will be placed on a region's Specific Image as perceived by the various groups of potential movers. More precisely:

- The groups of potential movers will be determined.
- The factors affecting each group will be identified and ways for their measurement will be suggested.
- The form of each Specific Image function will be defined.

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The theoretical findings will be applied to a number of regions and their Basic and Specific Images will be calculated. The main results will be presented and discussed

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## 1. Introduction

The development of an area depends on its ability to attract business units and the proper workforce to run them. Mobility, however, is largely a voluntary process. Business units and employees move into or out of a given area on the basis of their perception of the area's relative attractiveness. Their mobility is a function of a multitude of factors. In the early stages of a country's industrialization the dominant factors are economic. However, as the industrialization process progresses, the role of the social factors is gradually strengthened and in some cases becomes decisive. Environmental factors are usually the last to be considered when people realize that the rapid growth of the socioeconomic subsystem has begun to overload some of the capabilities of the ecosystem locally as well as globally.

Mankind's relationship with the environment has gone through several stages, starting with primitive times in which human beings lived in a state of symbiosis with nature, followed by a period of increasing mastery over nature up to industrial age, and culminating in the rapid material-intensive growth pattern of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which adversely affected natural resources in many ways, thus becoming a serious impediment to further growth.

Environmental assets provide various types of services to human society, ranging from simple amenities to irreplaceable life support functions and there is an urgent need for the people to incorporate the consequences of those assets' degradation into their decision making process. The scope of the present paper is to:

- Give a brief overview of the concept of sustainable development.
- Present a measure of a region's overall attractiveness.
- Identify the main groups of potential movers into and out of a region.
- Present a measure of a region's attractiveness as perceived by those groups of movers.
- Apply the theoretical findings on the 13 Greek regions and discuss the results.

## 2. Sustainable Development

The concept of development is used to express the achievements or the positive changes in the basic elements of human socio-economic behaviour. Those who seek a scientific definition for development disregard the fact that development is not only a technical subject. It has an important ideological content and reflects a strong set of values. Thereby the term "development" is identified in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the terms economic growth and industrialisation. Economic policies have typically measured development as the growth of per capita income or consumption. Discussions about the limits and implications of economic growth and the need for a social dimension of growth have been recurrent in economic history. Recently, a new environmental dimension of development has been added to the economic and social and the blending of all three dimensions in defining sustainable development has been examined.

Sustainable development is not a new concept. J.S. Mill (1883), one of the great economists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century showed his concern by focusing on issues such as the ultimate point to which society is tending by its industrial progress and the conditions mankind will have to face when this progress seizes (Nelson, 1995). Many years later, R. Solow (1991), another leading and Nobel prize winner economist, focusing on the same subject stated that sustainability must be understood as an obligation to conduct ourselves so that we leave to the future the option or the capacity to be as well off as we are. Furthermore, he urged the decision makers to take all the measures needed to ensure a distributional equity between the present and the future.

The territorial organisation of economies and societies is undergoing a dramatic change. Globalisation, technological innovation, migration and population ageing make it increasingly difficult to predict the future of

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