

Marathon or The Standstil

By Mr. **Michalis GLOKAS**

This article does not aim at being considered neither as a «one-way» nor as the panacea for Marathon's development, on the opposite my intention which stems from my anxiety for the future of our territory, is to put in a thoughtful mood those who, overtaken by the promises of the Great Men of Politics, «transmit» in their ignorance the same climate and the same methodology, in our little society.

The up to date financial development of Marathon is mainly owed to agriculture (and cattle-raising) and to real estate sales, usually for summer housing.

Nevertheless, can agriculture as the main productive sector, offer in the near future the percentages that it has offered in the past?

According to my opinion no: The constant increase of the price of the land, which is due to the position of the territory, makes sales more attractive than agriculture.

On the other hand in the case of real estate sales, if the outcome of this sale does not get invested back in the same area, productively, then on the one hand it will not contribute to the development of the territory while on the other it'll facilitate the movement towards other centers, where the product of the sales will be spend-either in productive work or for the pursue of a professional career.

I personally believe, that if we accept that agriculture cannot constitute the capstone of Marathon's economic development then, there is nothing left- since industry has fortunately enough been excluded- than the development of the sector of services, public or/and municipal agencies and agencies concerning the private sector.

The appropriate, organized development in this sector, will create new labor positions which in turn will need professions of a specialized and general Education, thus increasing the educational level of the inhabitants. They will contribute to the creation and development of the absent or insignificant, up to date, internal market. They will create the tendency for an increase -quantitative in terms of number and qualitative in terms of knowledge- of the inhabitants of the area, a basic element for development, but also for Municipal revenues.

The sector responsible for the creation and development of the Public Agencies is assigned to the Municipal Authority which is expected to investigate the latter and also to pursue it (city planning, Marathon mortgage registry, hospitals or any other Civil or Prefectural Services).

The sector concerning the municipal, private or mixed services shows a lot of interest. Of course I refer at this point to the development of tourism in the area. Marathon has to offer a marvelous sea and areas -public or private- which can significantly contribute to the development of the area.

The up to date sub-development of the particular sector, which creates problems rather than revenues, to our Municipal Authority (as well as to the Citizens) can be turned in to an advantage in favor of the proper development of the territory taking under consideration that the observed «anarchy» concerning constructions has reached at levels which are acceptable and under control. Let us not forget that Marathon borders with the prosperous North suburbs of Athens which, I'm sure, would gladly spend money for the same services that we offer.

Though tempted, nevertheless I will not refer to specific developmental matters concerning this sector so as to avoid to promote the interests of one or the other municipal party, something that I never do. Marathon is in my thoughts and I would hope that this would also be the case for the Municipal Authorities as well as for the Citizens of the Municipality.

Last but not least, I will refer to the most basic and neglected element for Marathon's development. Its important history and its name which is internationally known due to the Marathon race. Its history buried, «locked», not properly used, its name «butchered» by the language of the common people, «Δημοτικῆ» as if, the real issue was the debate between the language of the common people, «Δημοτικῆ» and the purified language «Καθαρεύουσα».

Marathon, is deeply rooted in the conscience of millions of people all around the world and is a freely advertised «trademark» in all the stadiums of the world, in all newspapers and magazines, most of the times with a reference to its history. Its an attraction pole. If we add to this attraction, Marathon's cultural history, ancient (tomb, museum, the Cave of Pan, etc.) and modern (Skhinas, the starting point of

the Marathon race, even if it has to be transferred to another starting point- this is an idea not a proposal), as well as the culture in relation to the development of the modern tourist establishments, as I have already mentioned above, then we will be in the position to claim that the bases have been placed for the quantitative as well as for the qualitative development of Marathon.

This Project is not easy and it cannot be carried out from a Municipal Authority. First of all, it demands respect to its history, determination, prudence and most importantly to change the mistaken belief, that culture is a necessary evil and that it requires investments without the appropriate returns.

The definition of Culture- culture constitutes the total of man's spiritual and material creations- has an indirect but disproportionately high financial return.

I presume that, there will be some people who will put forward the great problems concerning the lack of infrastructure (cleansing, irrigation, sewage system, roads, transportation, and many others), problems that do not allow for the creation of the proper financial conditions for investments of such a kind. I hope that most people would agree that this is not a basic argument. Infrastructure is not the end but the means for development and creation. Besides, that is why all over the World, in all the MDCs, infrastructure works are left behind. If the infrastructure is only realized for the improvement of the standards of living of the citizens of an area, without the simultaneous effort to preserve and increase its livability, then the infrastructure loses a major part of its substance and it also loses the purpose for which it has been created.

I think that it is a common ascertainment, that Marathon tends to lose its historical identity, in the sense that the gap between the Word «Μαραθώνος» and «Μαραθώνα»- with the symbolic and the cultural meaning of the word- is getting bigger. I would say that Marathon's evolution is a word which includes all the thoughts, that I have previously mentioned. Without this evolution Marathon will turn out to be a historical and geographical «crutch» to the development of other areas.

The city plan is getting ready, in two years our area will become a global Marathonian Way, in five years the airport of Spata will be ready and this will bring people closer to the area of Marathon, an area which we all claim to love but do nothing about it.

All the cities search and find places for a better future. Marathon needs something more, it needs a future which will be equivalent to its past. Without the tendency to connect the history of the present with the history of the future, I am afraid that Marathon's intense marks of decay are already visible.