

PART I

SUSTAINABLE SPATIAL PLANNING OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS

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FOREWORD

DEFINITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Tourism and its related dynamics and activities are, by definition, a spatial complex of processes that shape landscapes and affect the social, economic, cultural, and political relations that characterise a specific place or territory (Shaw and Williams, 2004). To be sustainable tourism should, through its cross-sectoral

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and multi-scalar nature, contribute to promote economic growth and development, create jobs, spur sustainable agriculture, promote social inclusion, engage excluded people, promote investments in clean energy sources and regeneration, preserve cultural and natural heritage, adopt sustainable consumption and production modes, play a leading role in the global response to climate change, and foster multicultural and interfaith tolerance and understanding (UN-WTO, 2019).

In this light, the essence of sustainable tourism (and, consequently, of any activity aiming at the sustainable spatial planning of tourist destinations) inherently concerns the social and educational value of natural and cultural heritage, which needs to be considered as equally relevant to their potential to produce economic development. More specifically, the sustainable spatial planning of tourist destinations requires the promotion of civic and social responsibility for tourist destinations among decision-makers, policy-makers, and practitioners, as well as among the civil society, market actors, and the research community in its broadest sense. To be sustainable tourism planning needs to be developed as a participatory, inclusive and intercultural activity, in so doing contributing to economic development while keeping in mind the EU's overarching objective of social, economic and territorial cohesion (DE Presidency of the European Union, 2020). Thus, European values of gender and age equality, non-discrimination, promotion of diversity, and counteracting violence and racism should be included, together with more market-oriented logics aiming at the valorisation of tourist destinations, as well as approaches focusing on the protection and conservation of the natural, landscape, and cultural heritage they host on their territory.

While the above assumptions and objectives are largely shared among EU institutions and countries (Leslie, 2010; Estol *et al.*, 2018), in practice the tourism commons frequently experience problems of mismanagement, including a lack of strategic planning, and excessive and inconsistent investments (Briassoulis, 2002). On the contrary, local natural and cultural assets should be investigated thoroughly, individualised and effectively incorporated into a coherent sustainable development project. This applies to prominent works of nature, appreciated elements of tangible and intangible heritage, but also to less obvious objects, which are, therefore, particularly prone to sustain irreversible losses. Those include 'ordinary' heritage, remaining in the background of everyday life – industrial sites, barns, fences, etc. (Pielesiak, 2015). Additionally, on the one hand, appreciation and active participation of the local community in the valorisation and management of said assets is vital, as it enables one to preserve 'a sense of place' more than relying solely on the most promising, though completely external investment visions (Rama, 2012). On the other, investments should serve the purpose of raising local communities' environmental, cultural, social and economic awareness (Leśniewska-Napierała and Napierała, 2017). Hence, a European approach to innovative, sustainable, and inclusive tourism planning should be developed and matched to the objectives of a more sustainable and cohesive Europe that aims at ensuring a prosperous future to all places (DE Presidency of the European Union, 2020).

To add further complexity to this framework, the concept of sustainable spatial planning of tourist destinations implies also that (i) a specific set of institutions and instruments exists, and they are dedicated to sustainable spatial planning, and (ii) these institutions and instruments include, more or less explicitly, tourism and the related dynamics and activities in their scope of action. Although this condition may appear tautological to some, recent comparative studies focusing on spatial governance and planning systems around Europe have shown that it is not necessarily the case, with tourism issues constituting the explicit focus of spatial planning activities only in a few countries or regions, while in all remaining contexts these issues are encompassed by planning activities in an implicit manner at best (ESPON COMPASS, 2018). In these terms, the role of regional and local tourism planning institutions, actions, and practices cannot be overstated, and the same stands true for recent, more innovative yet episodic “smart” tourism spatial planning activities that incorporate the latest technology to effectively manage tourist flows and all the resources that tourist destinations offer (Leśniewska-Napierała *et al.*, 2020).

Considering the above-mentioned issues, it seems clear how any analysis of the spatial planning of tourist destinations should engage with multiple complexities. On the one hand, the characteristics of the overarching regional development multi-level governance framework, and spatial planning systems that characterise the different countries and regions should be considered (Berisha *et al.*, 2021; Cotella *et al.*, 2021). On the other, additional, more nuanced aspects ought to be studied, as the actions of destination management organisations, regional and local authorities, various tourism enterprises, NGOs, and chambers of commerce related to tourism need to be included.

RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVE

Aiming to shed light on how the sustainable spatial planning of tourist destinations is pursued in different countries and regions in Europe and beyond, this special issue brings together the introduced scales of analysis, from the framing of spatial planning activities dedicated to the management and regulation of development dynamics in tourist destinations, to the actual action and interaction of public and private stakeholders on the ground, and the impact that the differential sets of relations between the state, the market, and the civil society that characterise each local context may have on them. This special issue is an outcome of the ERASMUS+ KA2 SPOT – Sustainable Spatial Planning of Tourism Destinations research project that, conducted by a consortium of six education and scientific research institutions, focused on the collection of empirical evidence on how, in different countries and regions of Europe, a heterogeneous set of processes and

actions are in motion aiming at a more sustainable spatial planning of tourist destinations. On the basis of the collected materials, the project aimed to develop an innovative teaching method of sustainable tourism spatial planning and to implement the method within the educational organisations involved in the project. This objective was affected by the larger context of the development of the European paradigm of spatial planning for innovative, sustainable, and inclusive tourism. As the awareness of the need for innovative, sustainable and inclusive tourism spatial planning is expected to increase in the long-term perspective in Europe as well as in other regions of the world, the ambition of the SPOT project team was to develop a set of teaching materials and methods concerning tourism spatial planning that could also provide a contribution in this direction (SPOT. Sustainable Spatial Planning of Tourism Destinations, 2022).

The interdisciplinary approach of the project was ensured by the varied research and educational focus of the consortium partners. Tourism geography and spatial economy are the educational and research fields of the leading project institution – the University of Lodz. Tourism economics and tourism management are the fields of contribution of the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. The research and teaching focus of the Mersin University team lies in the field of tourism sciences and city planning, and tourism sciences is also the main focus of The Politécnico de Leiria, with particular attention to coastal areas. Territorial, urban and environmental planning and heritage management are the main scientific and educational interests of the Politecnico di Torino staff involved in the project. Finally, the research fields within the scope of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation of the Polish Academy of Science are mostly related to geography and spatial economy. At the same time, the involvement of partners located in five different countries have ensured access to direct, first-hand information in relation to tourist activities and dynamics, to the policy and planning attempts put in place to influence these dynamics in a more or less explicit way, and to the stakeholders involved in one way or another in the latter. In order to further complement and enrich the disciplinary perspectives and geographical coverage of the special issue beyond those of the SPOT consortium, the special issue has also reached out to the larger academic environment through an open call for proposals, which were then thoroughly assessed by the editors in relation to their quality and pertinence to the scope of the volume.

OUTLINE AND CONTENTS

The special issue consists of a mix of contributions developed by the partner of the SPOT research consortium and of selected papers presented to the attention of the editors following an open call for proposals.

The volume opens with an article by Sylwia Kaczmarek and Jacek Kaczmarek which approaches the challenges of urban tourism practices through the multiple dimensions that compose the sustainability paradigm, in so doing shedding light on the emerging spatial and social relations that characterise this activity. The authors conclude with a number of critical reflections and recommendations on how to pursue sustainability in urban tourism activities, highlighting the role that interactive education models and a closer relationship between residents and visitors may play. With the aim to further substantiate this introductory content, a multi-author team led by Tomasz Napierała presents the results of a bibliometric analysis focusing on the actual understanding of sustainable tourism within tourism studies, with a particular focus on the contributions published by a recognised scientific journal devoted strictly to the topic, namely the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. While rather limited in its scope, the article highlights a number of key theoretical and empirical aspects of contemporary scientific research within the field under investigation.

The next three papers provide the reader with a number of sustainable tourism planning perspectives and practices from the Italian context, highlighting both good practices and challenges, and reflecting on the possible roads ahead. Giancarlo Cotella and Elisabetta Vitale Brovarone reflect on the potentials that tourism offers for the development of remote rural areas, at the same time emphasising the necessity to acknowledge local specificity and to adopt more holistic approaches to tourism development strategies, characterised by a mix of top-down and bottom-up initiatives and by the engagement with multiple scales, actors, and funding sources. Francesca Taormina and Sara Bonini Baraldi provide interesting insights into the relationships between governance and participation in a tourist area, focusing in particular on the empirical experiences of two UNESCO world heritage sites located in the Sicily region. Finally, Vanessa Assumma and her co-authors draw on the exemplary case of the UNESCO Landscape Heritage Area of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato to reveal the undesirable effects of a rapid growth of tourist attractiveness without prior adjustment of the material base to accommodate the increased demand, and reflect on how a multi-level integrated territorial governance framework is crucial for triggering more sustainable development dynamics.

The Norwegian partners of the SPOT consortium, in turn, focused their interest on mountain tourism, and in particular to the (un)sustainable development dynamics that often characterise mountain areas. Even Tjørve and his co-authors first discuss the results of poor planning and implementation of the neoliberal approach to frame land management practices, and the construction of second homes in particular. This thread is developed further in the following contribution, showcasing the existing clashes between the discourses and agendas of the local and national levels, and once more indicating the wicked side of neoliberal planning in terms of a reduced role of the public sector in influencing development and transformations.

The paper from Tomasz Napierała and collaborators shifts the attention to the Polish context, exploring the co-evolution of tourism and industrial sectors. The authors analyse the case study of the Bełchatów industrial district to discuss the co-evolution of tourism and heavy industries, two phenomena that are often seen as mutually exclusive but which, in the context under investigation, have developed a number of synergies that are expected to be further valorised by the introduction of the EU Just Transition Mechanism. The last contribution produced by the SPOT team draws on regional data on tourist arrivals across 297 NUTS2 regions in Europe to explore the spatial concentration of tourist inflow in Europe and the relative position of the tourism economy in the various regions. On that basis, the authors develop a useful regional typology weighting the intensity and spatial concentration of tourist inflow.

The final part of the special section includes three additional contributions developed by scholars that have not been involved in the SPOT project and that approach the issues under investigation from the perspective of their own countries – India, the Netherlands, and Lithuania, respectively. The first of them, authored by Tagore Sai Priya Nunna and Ankhi Banerjee, proposes a quantitative approach to the sustainability of tourism dynamics. More specifically, taking the examples of different tourist destination across the subcontinent (i.e., natural, heritage or religious), the authors assess the sustainability of various types of tourism through the measures of land consumption and efficiency. Peter Nientied and Rudina Toto focus on the sustainable aspects of tourism and planning in Dutch cities, with particular attention to real-world practice. The article is based on an analysis of policy and local council documents and media reporting, visits and (street) interviews, through which it examines the tourism dynamics and reflects upon the policy visions developed in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Finally, the last paper included in the special issue, authored by Gintarė Pociūtė-Sereikienė *et al.*, proposes a timely reflection on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector and the instruments that were appointed to mitigate the pandemic's detrimental effects in the context of Lithuania.

Overall, the collected contributions, far from pretending to constitute a comprehensive account of the policies and actions put in place to enhance the sustainability of tourism and dynamics, provide the reader with an insightful portfolio of case studies and a multi-faceted set of practices, in so doing enabling them to reflect on the institutional and geographical context dependence of the sustainable spatial planning of tourist destinations.

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