



## COMPREHENDING THE CONCEPT OF 'TOURISM ENVIRONMENT' WITHIN THE GEOGRAPHICAL CONTINUUM

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### ABSTRACT

The article introduces the concepts of geographical, natural, living, and tourism environments, examined from a geographical perspective and based on a holistic approach considering their terminological and structural factors, which, in their causal spatial relationships, contribute to a cohesive geographical 'integrity' of identifiable tourism landscapes. Qualitative research in philosophical geography is based on an extensive compilation of contemporary literature from multiple fields, such as geography, (geo)ecology, tourism, and physics, along with the author's personal insights. The article highlights the cohesion of geography, tourism and environmental protection, indicating the role of geographical resources in tourism planning and environmental protection, including heritage preservation. The findings underscore their geographical nature, highlighting that they are essential elements of geographical space and, consequently, geographical subjects. This research advocates the involvement of geographers in their exploration of tourism and environmental conservation. Geography holds a fundamental role in both (geo)ecological and tourism research, as tourism and environmental conservation are inherently spatial, rendering them indispensable within the field of geography.

### KEYWORDS

geographical space, tourism, environment, system, components, continuum

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The research presents a comprehensive geographical examination of the 'tourism environment' within the geographical continuum. Tourism is an important modifier of the original environment since it contributes to the physiognomic and functional modification of

the Earth's landscapes by utilizing natural resources. Tourism landscapes, like others, whether natural or human in origin, are an intrinsic aspect of the Earth's topography and can be considered an integral part of the geographical continuum.

In the literature (Merriam-Webster, n.d.; Oxford University Press, n.d.a; Reinhardt, n.d.; Ritter, 2026;



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Science Learning Hub, n.d.; United States Department of Agriculture, 2025), the term ‘continuum’ denotes a cohesive whole or entity composed of slightly varied elements that are causally related and interconnected through networked processes. For example, regarding a geographical continuum, it refers to geographical areas that differ in spatial, natural, and human attributes, with transitions that are gradual and form part of an interconnected geographical space. A relevant illustration is the rural-urban continuum, which distinguishes metropolitan areas from non-metropolitan ones, where no clear boundaries are present, as transitional zones such as suburbs and peri-urban regions exist in between.

A continuum is characterized as a continuous and interrelated system encompassing the entirety of the Earth’s environment; thus, a geographical continuum embodies the integrity of both natural and human components, incorporating the environmental aspect related to the interactions between human activities and nature. This concept is close to a geographical envelope, representing a complex geographical system or continuum.

Generally, the term “continuum” implies continuity, indicating that space, time, and the movements of the Earth collectively represent natural processes that occur in an ongoing manner. In the context of the geographical continuum discussed in this paper, all natural and human processes, including the evolution of tourism on Earth, unfold continuously while simultaneously being interconnected and reflecting geographical integrity; hence, the tourism landscape constitutes a vital component of the geographical continuum, serving as an interrelated element within a complex geographical system.

The research issue for this article is to determine the environment in terms of geographical and tourism space. The term ‘environment’ is used in various contexts throughout academic disciplines, and it primarily relates to the natural environment in interaction with humans. However, depending on how it is applied, the term ‘environment’ can have a multitude of interpretations and may not even refer to geographical areas. From a geographical standpoint, the term refers to a specific place on Earth having identifiable geographical features, particularly those modified by human activity, such as tourism.

The research problematizes the concepts of geographical, natural, living, and tourism environments. The environment within the framework of geography is found at the deepest level because it synthetically and causally connects all components of space: natural and human (while, for example, in biology and ecology, it mainly focuses on the impact of humans on flora and fauna). In order to understand the role of tourism in the transformation of geographical space, it is necessary to

analyze its structure, as well as its shifting borders due to technological progress, but also due to modern forms of tourism that can be found beyond the Earth’s sphere.

The purpose of the article is to explore the concepts of geographical, living, and tourism environments while considering the altered dimensions of the geographical ‘envelope’ (taking into account connections with satellites and spacecraft), as well as the impact of modern tourism that penetrates into extraterrestrial space itself (e.g., space tourism). Tourism contributes to the differentiation of landscapes on the Earth’s surface (tourism regions), and thus it is an indispensable part of its image and a vital component of the global geographical framework. This article aims to address the key questions:

Q<sub>1</sub>: How does the geographical environment relate to geographical space and time, and what significance does the term ‘geographical’ hold in its interpretation?

Q<sub>2</sub>: Are the terms geographical and living environments interchangeable, or do they reflect a relationship defined by their interactions within specific boundaries?

Q<sub>3</sub>: How do the dimensions of the tourism environment relate to both the geographical and living environments, or do all three elements form a cohesive spatial entity?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous authors have explored the concepts of geographical space and environment. Their understanding of the environment primarily revolves around a complex system that includes interconnected living and non-living elements, as well as human activities related to production, urbanization, and technological development (Archer, 1995; NASA Scientific Visualization Studio, 2018; Oxford University Press, n.d.b, n.d.c, n.d.d; Rawding, 2013; Roy, 2014). The focus of study varies somewhat due to the diverse professions involved, as the environment is examined across various scientific fields and disciplines such as geography, biology, philosophy, and physics. In this regard, biologists and ecologists tend to observe the environment through the lens of a global ecosystem, emphasizing plant and animal life (Glavač, 2001), whereas geographers analyze it spatially as a highly intricate geosystem or geographical ‘envelope’, considering both natural and societal elements (Getis et al., 2000; Smirnov, 2016; Spahić, 1999; Włodarczyk, 2009, 2014; Žunić, 2022, 2023). Physicists, on the other hand, concentrate more on the abstract spatial and temporal factors that define the environment (Einstein, 1955; Mittelstrass, 2015), while philosophers discuss environment as a physical, chemical and biotic living set (Defrančeski, 2021). Despite these differences, all

authors agree that the Earth's environment is shaped by the natural conditions that support life, with each author also exploring how human influence modifies the natural environment, thereby introducing the concept of the human environment.

The interpretation of the tourism environment and tourism system has also been examined by various authors. Hunziker and Krapf (1942, as cited in Vanhove, 2004) point to the tourism environment as a complex set derived particularly from leisure travel, while international organizations promote the tourism environment as the global space occupied through travel, driven by various motives including economic (Eurostat, n.d.; United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2025). Mathieson and Wall (1982) focus on the tourism environment as the space facilitated for visitors, while McIntosh et al. (1995) and Tribe (1997) see tourism space as a set of interrelated stakeholders. The tourism system/ environment is complex composed of natural, sociological-economic and technological components (Anuar et al., 2012; Attia et al., 2020;

Leiper, 1983; Petrič, 2003; Žunić, 2018). Jensen et al. (1993, as cited in Sharma, 2013) additionally highlight the importance of the geographical landscape and cultural authenticity for the tourism environment, while Anuar et al. (2012) emphasize tourism space or a destination as a complex of geographical attributes and tourism products.

Various authors have investigated the relationship between geographical and tourism environments, providing works with significant insights. Hall and Page (2006) emphasize the complexity of the built tourism space in the context of the impacts of tourism on the resources and environment of urban, coastal, rural, and natural/wild geographical spaces, taking into account the experiences and continuum of opportunities for leisure, recreation and tourism, while Žunić (2022, 2023) focuses on tourism space as an integral part of geographical space, including its modern expansion into the cosmos.

In regard to this, Polish geographers (Butowski, 2014; Durydiwka & Duda-Gromada, 2014; Kowalczyk,

Table 1. Literature review of research into environmental and spatial understanding in the journal *Turyzm/Tourism* (2012, vol. 24, no. 1)

| Author                            | Environment                    | Aspect                      | Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Butowski (2014)                   | Maritime tourism space         | Geographical, tourism       | Maritime tourism space encompasses distinct zones, depending on the geographical factors, impacting tourism valorization criteria of coastal regions for nautical tourism                                                                                                                     |
| Durydiwka and Duda-Gromada (2014) | Tourism coastal space          | Geographical, tourism       | Tourism coastal space is determined by its location factor and the spatial-functional configuration                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Kowalczyk (2014)                  | Tourism space                  | Geographical, tourism       | Tourism space emerges from the "overlap" of geographical and anthropological dimensions, serving as a multidimensional aspect of geographical space; this encompasses both individual and collective tourism spaces, along with the attributive and developmental spaces utilized by tourists |
| Liszewski (2014)                  | Urban tourism space            | Geographical, tourismologic | Urban tourism space is related to geographical elements and the intended use of space for tourism                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Rydz (2014)                       | Tourism space                  | Geographical, tourism       | Tourism space is categorized by various forms of tourism related to its natural environment, which serves as a catalyst for tourism development                                                                                                                                               |
| Sokołowski (2014)                 | Tourism space and environment  | Geographical, tourism       | Tourism space as transformed rural and coastal regions with tourism functions, including congestion and environmental degradation                                                                                                                                                             |
| Świeca et al. (2014)              | Tourism space                  | Geographical, tourism       | Tourism spaces are geographical areas based on tourist potential and the views of local community                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Włodarczyk (2014)                 | Geographical and tourism space | Geographical, tourism       | Geographical space is the entirety of geospheres and the anthroposphere, including the tourism space, as the geographical area where tourism is found                                                                                                                                         |
| Więckowski (2014)                 | Tourism space                  | Geographical, tourism       | Tourism space is a novel entity within the framework of a polyfunctional, multidimensional, and multi-layered flow space; it is defined by its multi-motivational and multi-relational characteristics, which vary according to the diverse conditions that influence and shape it            |
| Zajadacz (2014)                   | Accessible tourism space/area  | Geographical, tourism       | Geographically accessible tourism area (accessible tourism) incorporating its physical and functional characteristics alongside accessible infrastructure                                                                                                                                     |

Source: author.

2014; Liszewski, 2014; Rydz, 2014; Sokołowski, 2014; Świeca et al., 2014; Więckowski, 2014; Włodarczyk, 2014; Zajadacz, 2014) have placed significant emphasis on the concept of tourism space from a geographical standpoint, exploring the development, theoretical underpinnings, and empirical research related to it. These are more comprehensive works examining the geographical, living and tourism environments through qualitative research within the frameworks of philosophical geography and holism, mostly integrating key elements of the tourism system and environment within the geographic spatial continuum.

A special issue of the journal *Turyzm/Tourism* was devoted entirely to these issues and includes ten articles that explore the development, theoretical underpinnings and empirical research related to tourism space (Table 1, see p. 201).

The analyses presented by the author are intricately linked to previous assertions, further clarifying and enhancing them with unique interpretations, illustrative arguments and demonstrative examples, while the author's original ideas, holistic approach, contemplation and perspective on the research subject all contribute to this work's originality. Furthermore, this study offers novel insights into the fields of geographical, (geo)ecological, and tourism interpretations of the geographical tourism environment, thereby contributing to the advancement of geography in the exploration of tourism as a spatial geographical phenomenon.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The article examines the system of geographical space, tourism and the environment, highlighting geographical natural space as a foundation for various human activities, including tourism-related movements and operations, resulting in landscape modifications. Geographical space is inherently complex, as it encompasses both natural and human elements (including tourism infrastructure), considering their intricate interactions and interrelations. The understanding of the environment within geography is rooted in a comprehensive approach, as it incorporates all spatial elements and global phenomena (such as tourism), collectively creating a unique representation of the Earth that distinguishes it from the environments of other celestial bodies or planets.

Since the article represents qualitative research, the examples are from geographical, natural, living and tourism environments. Terms that also include the constituent elements that refer to them in structural and interpretative senses.

The leading instrument in qualitative research of this type is a complex tourism-geographical analysis

based on deduction, which implies considering entire geographical space through its constituent components, including tourism and its impacts on changes in nature and the creation of a different living environment.

The article presents a systematic literature review based on the philosophical explanatory method of interpreting the concepts of geographical, natural, living and tourism environments. In this, it is dominated by the analytical method that is applied to interpret the concepts, structures and systems of the geographical living environment along with the tourism environment.

The forms of analysis applied in the subject elaborations are: descriptive, structural, causal, functional and comparative, as well as theoretical and content analyses, since these items have been analyzed through numerous literature examples, the content of which was viewed in parallel in order to determine the connections and differences, while deriving new, more comprehensive insights into the research issue.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. GEOGRAPHICAL ENVIRONMENT: GEOGRAPHICAL SPACE AND TIME

The interpretation of geographical space is narrower than the physical interpretation of space primarily because of the prefix 'geo' (Earth), which binds it exclusively to Earth's space. Human cognition for the highest spatial rank takes the universe as a vast natural expanse in which there are numerous galaxies (two trillion) including ours (the Milky Way – the 2nd largest galaxy in the "Local Group" cluster) in which the planet Earth is located. Nature is the physical universe as an infinite expanse that surrounds us, and space is determined by three dimensions: width, length and height, i.e. we delimit, locate and physically understand it through measurements. Einstein (1955) points out that space and time are an indistinguishable mixture, because it is impossible to imagine 'somewhere' without the indispensable 'when', which means that space and time are parallel phenomena, so every activity takes place 'in a certain space' and 'at a certain time'. It is precisely such attitudes that lead to the subject of study in geography: 'geographical space', which represents the most complex category that can be 'naturally', 'socially' and 'regionally' determined.

Smirnov (2016) defines geographical space as a set of ordered locations with key dimensions: *topos* – location of a place and its geographical characteristics, *choros* – spatial connections, and *geos* – topology or mapping a place. Location is the foundation of the geographical

determination of space, so all geographical research starts from the 'geographical position' of the observed area, so that its position in relation to other things and places is identified using three main parameters: location, direction and distance. Getis et al. (2000) listed two types of location: absolute and relative. 'Absolute location' is an astronomical or mathematical-geographical identification of a place using a reference (UTM) coordinate system (geo-latitude, geo-longitude, altitude, and zone), so e.g. Sarajevo belongs to UTM zone 34N: 43°51'N, 18°25'E, 541 m above sea level. 'Relative location' is the identification of the position of a place in relation to other places or objects, so for example Sarajevo is located on the Balkan Peninsula (SE Europe), in the central part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the Sarajevo-Zenica Basin, and mainly in the Bosna river basin.

The traditional interpretation of geographical space is identified with the geographical 'envelope' (subject of study in geography), which represents all the space on Earth in which life exists, from the Mohorovičić discontinuity to the ozonosphere.

Geographical space is also an evolutionary category, which means that it changes over time, and these changes or evolution can be tracked on two time scales: the 'geological past', which is measured in billions of years – from the initial phase of the formation of planet Earth from gas and dust (more than 4.6 billion years ago), through numerous tectonic and climatic changes, the emergence of life from water (about 4 billion years ago), the emergence of the human species (about 5–7 million years ago) and *Homo sapiens* (550 thousand years ago), but also the disappearance of certain species from Earth (e.g. dinosaurs became extinct 65 million years ago), and 'historical-geographical development', a cultural past that is measured in only thousands of years – all changes in the geographical environment that occurred with human influence and the activities of various cultures on Earth since ancient civilizations as early as 5000 years BC (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, Greece, etc.). The geological time scale delineates eons, eras, periods, epochs, and associated dates spanning millions of years, including the Holocene, which marks the age of humans, and the Anthropocene, characterized by significant human impact on the environment. The concept of the Anthropocene (from the Greek *anthropo*: meaning 'man') was introduced by Crutzen (2006, p. 13), highlighting it as a distinct epoch in the evolution of the Earth's geographical landscape over the last two centuries, due to human activities having had an increasing impact on the environment at all scales, in many ways surpassing natural processes, including their involvement in land use, deforestation, the burning of fossil fuels, and the creation of the ozone hole.

While the Anthropocene is not universally recognized as a distinct geological epoch in Earth's evolution, the ongoing human influence cannot be overlooked.

This influence manifests through significant modern assaults on the environment, such as spacecraft that extend the reach of luxury tourism into the upper layers of the atmosphere (the upper thermosphere and lower exosphere) and sonar technology widely utilized in marine and scientific tourism. Therefore, it may be reasonable to propose the term "tourismocene" to describe the epoch characterized by the predominant effects of mass contemporary tourism on the environment, particularly since 1970s, as tourism increasingly transforms the face the Earth and the global environment.

The term 'natural environment' is broader than the geographical environment, except where it refers to nature exclusively on the Earth's surface. The natural environment or living environment can refer to any natural area in space: on the Moon, Jupiter, Mars, etc., or on Earth (natural geographical environment). "Nature is something that exists and arises by itself" (Glavač, 2001, p. 14, own transl. – L.Ž.), and thus complex natural processes on Earth shape its natural environment. In contrast, human influences (urbanization, industrialization, and touristification) have significantly changed the Earth's natural environment, forming a recognizable human environment. Natural and human environments together constitute the geographical environment or geographical space. "Nature is the organization of the environment without significant human influence, or rather, in terms of cultural heritage and the level of urbanization, everything that has not been significantly changed by humans" (Glavač, 2001, p. 14, own transl. – L.Ž.). The natural-geographical environment consists of all natural landscapes and non-ecumene as primeval nature or uninhabited areas with an unchanged topographic physiognomy, e.g. Antarctica, the African Sahara, or the strict nature reserve – the European rainforest "Perućica" within the Sutjeska National Park (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Spahić (1999) defines the natural environment on Earth as the totality of natural-geographical processes and phenomena, which are characterized by self-regulation without human intervention, and the natural environment often refers to uninhabited parts of the Earth. Accordingly, the natural-geographical environment represents the foundation of the geographical environment and the supporting system of natural features, processes and phenomena on Earth.

The geographical environment is the entire geographical space on Earth in which life primarily takes place, i.e. all natural, cultural and industrial landscapes, or a mixed combination of elements of natural and human geographical environments. It is important to understand that now there is practically no fully preserved original natural environment on Earth, because through atmospheric and hydro-spheric

global circulations, human influences are transferred to remote areas of non-ecumenical or 'untouched' nature (e.g. to the geographical Poles). Mittelstrass (2015) reminds us that initially nature was only the part of the world not shaped by humans, while now, on a large scale, it has become part of the human world thanks to science and technology. The human influence on Earth has global proportions both because of natural circulations and because of the possibility of visiting the most remote locations, e.g. even harsh Antarctica has not remained completely untouched nature (e.g. resource exploitation and scientific tourism), while certain tourism activities take place beyond the borders of our planet (e.g. space tourism as "traveling outside the Earth's atmosphere and staying in space, i.e. in spacecraft" (Žunić et al., 2023, p. 111, own transl. – L.Ž.). Environmental impacts are recognized and differentiated on a spatial scale:

- planetary effects – global warming, ozone depletion, and global contamination caused by the application of technology throughout the world (regulated by the Montreal Protocol to protect the Ozone Layer and the Kyoto Protocol to mitigate climate change);
- regional effects – the impact of fishing and hunting, and previously mining (prohibited by the *Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty* [1991] and *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* [1973] to regulate international trade in endangered species, and also the *Birds and Habitats Directives* [2015]) to protect all naturally occurring wild bird species in the EU and their critical habitats) (CITES Secretariat, n.d.; European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment and Ecosystems, 2015; Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, n.d.); and
- local effects – visits by scientists and tourists (hunting, killing or human disturbing animal species, soil contamination, waste and faeces reaching the sea).

The geographical environment can be understood as the most complex system on Earth, consisting of interrelated geo-components (the lowest units in the geographical 'envelope'):

- natural: air, water, rocks and natural terrain configuration – relief, soil, flora and fauna; humans (as a natural given); and
- human: *Homo sapiens* – humans as rational, social and hardworking beings, economic facilities (e.g. industrial-technological complexes, business or tourism zones, etc.), residential (settlements) and communal facilities (e.g. traffic, water supply, sewage and energy networks, etc.), war zones, protected areas (accounting for possible negative impacts of hazardous human activities such as war, e.g., two of Ukraine's UNESCO biosphere reserves – Askania-Nova and the Chornomorsk (Black Sea) dealing with wartime challenges as they are currently

under occupation and their fauna is under threat of destruction), and anthropogenic topography (the result of different human activities, e.g., mining or even hazardous war activities).

Geo-components by their composition can be:

- non-living (air, water, rocks; material architectural heritage);
  - living (plants, animals; people); and
  - living-non-living (soil; loose, seemingly 'dead' matter in which life actively takes place, because numerous organisms live in the soil, and from which life arises: various plants, etc.).
- At a higher hierarchical level, geo-components are components of geospheres, because they participate in their formation and construction:
- atmosphere (air);
  - hydrosphere (water) and cryosphere (ice);
  - lithosphere (rocks) and pedosphere (soil);
  - biosphere (plant and animal world, humans);
  - anthroposphere and techno-sphere (humans and their material productive-constructive, constructional and technological activities).

All these spheres together and in their interactive causality constitute geosystems (natural systems on Earth; natural geographical environment) and geo-complexes (geographical environment together with production-territorial complexes and human modifying influence on both the physiognomy of space and the altered functioning regime of certain natural components). "At the highest scale, this complex integrative system of geospheres is designated as the geographical 'envelope', extending from the Mohorovičić discontinuity to the ozonosphere" (Žunić, 2022, p. 15, own transl. – L.Ž.). Nevertheless, Žunić (2022) also indicated that contemporary human endeavors, including the launching of satellites into the thermosphere and exosphere, have shifted the conventional boundary of the geographical 'envelope'.

Therefore, the 'geographical environment' is all inhabited space on Earth (humans and/or other living beings including the lowest forms of life such as bacterial spores), with different characteristics from place to place, which differ in their etymology, physiognomy and functionality. Geographical space is fundamentally natural (natural geographical environment), while the human environment is more narrowly defined because it represents a certain part of geographical space that more specifically refers to an environment significantly modified by human activities. In this regard, Mittelstrass (2015) reminded us of the traditional distinction between the concepts of creative nature (*Natura naturans*) and created nature (*Natura naturata*), including the existence of an organic, physical, and social cosmos. From the aspect of tourism geography, it is particularly interesting that, according to the 95% of the world's population is concentrated on

only 10% of the Earth's territory, while depending on the time needed for travel, people occupy 90% of the world, leaving only 10% for wilderness (Nelson, 2008).

Urbanized areas are typical examples of human environments, which represent natural environments significantly modified by human impact in physiognomic and functional terms. Such environments usually dominantly contain human and technogenical features, which have significantly changed its appearance, as well as the mode of operation of natural components, e.g. land use zones: residential, industrial, commercial, communal. Installed elements can mainly be seen as 'heavy' content, which burdens the natural foundation and interferes with normal processes of work and self-regulation, that can be limited or undergone complete change, for example, some urban watercourses are 'dead rivers' because they are so highly contaminated that they no longer have their own capacity for self-regulation due to enormous amounts of hazardous waste (sewage, industrial, etc.), and lack the vital functions of a healthy and clean river.

#### 4.2. EQUIVALENCE OR CORRELATION OF THE CONCEPTS OF 'GEOGRAPHICAL ENVIRONMENT' AND 'ENVIRONMENT'

The term environment in the literature mainly refers to the natural world on Earth, which is threatened by expansive and intensive human processes (urbanization, industrialization, and tourism). Accordingly, the environment is traditionally studied from a biological aspect (impacts of human activities on the living world of flora and fauna) or from a more comprehensive geographical aspect (impacts of human activities on nature and society), while the environment is also a mandatory subject of study in spatial planning, including tourism planning and tourism operations in space (required environmental impact assessment studies).

"Environment is the physical surroundings or conditions in which a person or other organism lives, develops, and exists" (Oxford University Press, n.d.c), or "the natural world or physical surroundings in general, either as a whole or within a particular geographical area, esp. as affected by human activity" (Oxford University Press, n.d.d). "The environment is a set of physical, chemical and biotic factors in which an organism or ecosystem lives" (Defrančeski, 2021, p. 14). Glavač (2001) elaborated environment as the global ecosystem or the Earth's ecosphere interwoven with living beings, in which the atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, pedosphere and biosphere are its constituent parts interconnected and acting together.

Therefore, the equation of the terms 'geographical' and 'environment' is generally sustainable in the context of the previous statements, especially if the environment

refers to a geographical area. However, the term 'environment' can also refer to a non-geographical environment in the context of describing the entire universe or some extraterrestrial bodies, for example, Hiesinger and Jaumann (2014) stated that important components of the lunar environment are neutral gases, plasma and ejected dust particles formed by the interaction of the Moon's surface with the space environment. Thus, in this case the environment is not synonymous with the geographical environment, since the Moon is not the subject of study in geography, but in astronomy (which goes beyond the traditional boundary of the geographical 'envelope').

The term 'environment' in the literature has resulted in several forms: environment, environs, surroundings, living environment, geographical environment, natural environment and ambience, based primarily on the environment as nature with all the changes and features that are the result of human life and activities, equates with the terms 'human environment', 'geographical environment' and 'living environment'. However, depending on the spatial hierarchy and the subject of study, the environment can also be understood very narrowly: e.g. the environment of houseplants, taking into account the pot with soil, access to light and the domestic air; the school environment as the school building with its green areas, or the class environment as the non/ pleasant atmosphere in the class; the personal medical environment as the human internal organism; residential environment as buildings with their residents and their quality of life (accounting security and good neighbor relationships); the urban environment as a modern city with a higher life standard, etc. Therefore, the term 'environment' is not exclusively geographical and is applied in different contexts across numerous academic disciplines and in different spheres of life and activity.

Since the environment on Earth is determined by the boundaries of the geographical 'envelope' within which life actively develops, with the note that its modern boundaries have been significantly shifted due to the penetration of human influence into the upper layers of the atmosphere and the exosphere, Earth is designated as a 'global ecosystem' or 'ecosphere' (the subject of research in the 'global' or 'planetary ecology'). Glavač (2001) described the Earth as an ideal planet for life and a common and fatefully connected abode of humans, animals, plants, fungi and protists. The 'ecosphere' is the surface of the Earth, interwoven with living beings, in which the atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, pedosphere and biosphere are its constituent parts interconnected and acting together in the sense of a global (planetary) ecosystem. According to NASA Scientific Visualization Studio (2018), Earth represents a complex interrelated system (atmospheric composition, solar radiation, water and carbon cycles,

ecosystems, human contribution and resources, land-use and land-cover change, climate variability and change) as geographical integrity that comprises diverse processes and systems that interact with one another in complex ways.

An ecosystem is the basic organizational unit of nature, in which living beings and their non-living environment are spatially and temporally integrated by the flow of energy and the circulation of matter, and which possesses its own information content, the ability to self-organize, self-renew and self-preserve. It is the unity of a living community (biocenosis) and its non-living environment (ecotope) with distinctive and thereby recognizable structural and functional characteristics (Glavač, 2001, p. 15, own transl. – L.Ž.).

An ecosystem is a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical (natural) environment (Oxford University Pres, n.d.b). All ecosystems and all biomes on Earth form the biosphere or global ecosystem consisting of biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) factors.

As the structure of the geographical 'envelope' is made up of geo-components, geospheres, geosystems and geo-complexes, the following participate in the structure of the global ecosystem, from the lowest to the highest:

- biotope/ ecotope/ habitat or the environment of living beings (e.g., forest is the habitat of bear);
- biocenosis or community of life (e.g. in the forest, besides bears, wolves, deer, various species of birds and other living creatures live there too);
- bio-geocenosis or ecosystem as the interrelation of plants and animals and non-living components simultaneously, where each organism has its own specific role (e.g. a spruce ecosystem with related living (other beings) and non-living components (climate, water, soil, etc.);
- biomes or grouped ecosystems with similar climate and communities (e.g. the biome of dark coniferous forests in Bosnia and Herzegovina within which two ecosystems are differentiated: 'East Bosnian spruce' and 'mountain pine', or the taiga biome all evergreen coniferous forests on Earth);
- biosphere or global ecosystem (e.g. all ecosystems or all terrestrial biomes together: aquatic; rainforests, savannas, deserts, steppes, Mediterranean scrub, forests, tundra; ice sheet).

The global ecosystem comprises the interactions of living (plants, animals, humans) and non-living (climatic, edaphic, etc.) components of the environment, which again leads us to understand the concept of the geographical or living environment as a complex system composed of living, non-living and living-non-living geo-components, which are interrelated with their surroundings.

Therefore, from a geographical standpoint, the 'environment' refers to the integrity of both natural and human elements of geographical space that are causally and interactively connected and form a complex system on Earth that operates in accordance with natural laws that are influenced and modified to some degree by human activity. The geographical environment is a complex system on Earth (geographical 'envelope') consisting of interconnected natural and anthropogenic geo-components (living, non-living, living-non-living), which represent components of the geospheres (atmosphere; hydrosphere and cryosphere; lithosphere and pedosphere; biosphere; anthroposphere with techno-sphere), and together they form geo-complexes on Earth. The geographical environment includes the natural geographical environment (nature) and social geographical (human) environment (society). The natural and human environments are a continuum of the (geographical) environment, with features that vary from one point to another (places) on Earth, and because man is constantly in interaction with his environment and various human activities (work, production, travel, etc.) significantly modify the initial landscape, we can conclude that 'geographical environment' and 'environment' are synonyms. According to Spahić (1999), the geographical environment is the mutual effect of human and natural processes, in the environment of which life takes place, so the term 'geographical environment' is more appropriate than 'living environment', because the geographical environment complexly reflects the state of interaction between humans and their natural environment.

#### 4.3. DIMENSIONS OF THE TOURISM ENVIRONMENT IN CORRELATION WITH THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND LIVING ENVIRONMENTS: SPATIAL INTEGRITY

Numerous authors have dealt with the definition of tourism, but one of the often cited definitions is from Hunziker and Krapf: "Tourism is a sum of relationships and phenomena derived from the trip and stay of non-residents, insofar as a stay does not lead to permanent residence and is not connected to any permanent or temporary gains activity" (1942, as cited in De Andreis & Carioni, 2019, p. 336). However, with the advent of mass tourism in the 1970s, the definition of tourism took on a much broader meaning, because the motives of travel are diverse and tourist trips (travel) are no longer exclusively for leisure (they can also be for work, etc.). According to the Eurostat (n.d.), tourism is a compression of activities related to travel and stay in a place outside the permanent residence for not more than one year for vacation, work or some other purpose. "In addition to a temporary stay outside the permanent

residence, tourism also includes all facilities created to serve the needs of tourists" (Mathieson & Wall, 1982), thus further emphasizing the mutual aspect of supply and demand. "Tourism is a set of phenomena and relationships that arise from the interaction of tourists, business providers, host authorities and local communities in the process of attracting and serving tourists and visitors" (McIntosh et al., 1995), while Tribe (1997) emphasizes that interactions take place in emissive and receptive areas. Cunha (2012) stated that Tribe's definition highlights the key dimensions or components of tourism: tourists, business, host community, host environment, host governments, and generating countries.

For tourists, tourism represents travel, recreation and vacation, while for people working in the tourism sector, tourism is a profession, intensive work and earnings (Petrič, 2003), and is an extremely complex, massive and heterogeneous phenomenon. The impacts of tourism are complex consequences on nature and society, which can be positive and negative, and they are mainly divided into three categories: socio-cultural, economic, environmental or (geo) ecological. Some of the good consequences (benefits) of tourism, or participation in tourism, are its contributions to the economy, employment, modernization, health, cultural and educational advancement, bringing people closer together and peacefully, which is why the WTO declares tourism as a 'passport of peace'. According to the Eurostat (n.d.), tourism is divided into: domestic – national (visits by residents within the country) and foreign – international (visits by non-residents), with foreign tourism being: incoming or receptive ('inbound') (visits to the country by non-residents) and outgoing or emissive ('outbound') (visits by residents of a country outside their own country). "Tourism refers to all activities of visitors of both categories: overnight tourists and day visitors" (United Nations, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, Statistical Division and World Tourism Organization, 1994, p. 5).

The first written trace of the word "tourist" ("tourifts") in English (a traveler for leisure) comes from the 18th century (William Cockin's *Ode to the Genius of the Lakes in the North of England*, 1780) or the 19th century (Victor Jacquemont's *Letters from India*, 1834), depending on the source, while the word "tourism" is first documented at the beginning of the 19th century (1811) and derives from the Greek *tórnos*: 'circle', 'circular itinerary' (as cited in Leiper, 1983), and is connected with the grand tours of English noblemen in France, Switzerland, Italy and Germany, as well as with the holding of knights' tournaments (likewise from the Greek *tórnos*: 'tournament'), and even religious pilgrimages (due to trips that involve returning to one's permanent residence).

Conversely, modern definitions characterize a tourist as an individual who travels to a particular location away from their regular residence for a duration of up to one year, motivated by diverse reasons such as business, leisure, health, education, or other personal objectives (Pagliara, 2019; UNWTO, n.d.; Žunić, 2022). This scope is much broader than the traditional perception of a tourist, who is seen as a traveler and visitor solely for the purpose of rest and entertainment, because it is clear today that the motives for visiting can be numerous and varied, even of economic interest. Pagliara et al. (2019) divides visitors into three categories:

1. 'Tourists' are visitors who stay away from home for one or more nights for any purpose (domestic or foreign tourists).
2. 'Day visitors', 'same-day visitors' or 'excursionists' are one-day tourists who spend min. three hours outside their permanent residences for general rest, recreation and social purposes. Many are local to the area.
3. 'Free day visitors' spend less than three hours away from their permanent residence for general rest, recreation or social benefit. Without counting (in public transport and tourism statistics values in UK), these short-term day visitors contribute directly to the local tourism economy and should also be formally recognized in destination management provisions. Most are also residents of the destination and local surrounding areas.

According to the defined dimensions of tourism, key components in the tourism system can be identified: tourists/ visitors, authorities, local community, entrepreneurs, geographical areas and their environment, as well as the channels of their connection and cooperation, tourism offer and tourism policies, considering that foreign overnight visits are the most important for sustainable tourism. The tourism system is the most complex category in which all cohesive elements have a purposeful interaction (Figure 1). In the literature (Attia et al., 2020; Leiper, 1983; Petrič, 2003) Leiper's tourism system is cited, which unites individual components into a common tourism environment: natural, sociological, technological, cultural, economic and political, providing the interrelated circulation between tourism generation and destination regions.

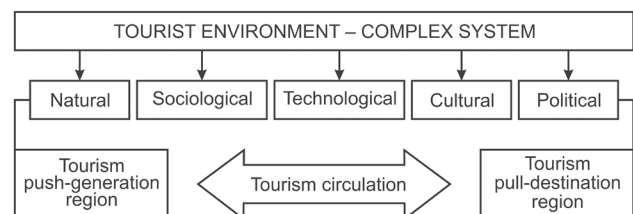


Figure 1. The tourism environment as complex interrelated tourism system

Source: author, based on Leiper's tourism system

The concept of the tourism system and the key dimensions – components of tourism, highlight tourism as a spatial phenomenon, because geographical space (generative, receptive or travel) represents the main foundation on which all tourism activities are realized (geography is considered a spatial or horological science, Greek *choros*: ‘space’). Generated regions represent emitting areas in which a greater intensity and tendency of the population to travel to other countries is observed, while destination regions are receptive areas that accept tourists to a greater extent. “A tourism destination is the final destination of a tourist trip, which, with its equipment, enables the reception and stay of tourists, and its borders are functionally determined by the influence of the tourism product” (Petrič, 2003, pp. 49–50, own transl. – L.Ž.).

According to Jensen et al.,

a tourism destination is a geographical area which contains landscape and cultural characteristics and which as in the position to offer a tourism product, which means a broad wave of facilities in transport – accommodation – food and at least one outstanding activity or experience (1993, as cited in Sharma, 2013, p. 21).

Leiper (1983) stated that a destination is a collection of interests, activities, equipment, infrastructure and attractions that create the identity of a tourism place, and the formational concept of a destination is similar in Anuar et al. (2012), which consists of elements of space (location and infrastructure), activities (cultural, entertainment and thematic) and products (services and catering).

Various interpretations of the term ‘tourism destination’ (Anuar et al., 2012; Leiper, 1983; Petrič, 2003; Sharma, 2013; UNWTO, 2025; Žunić, 2018, 2022) refer to the primary geographical area that provides a complex tourism product tailored to meet the diverse needs of travelers. This encompasses both natural and cultural attractions, along with the receptional tourism infrastructure. Furthermore, it has a spatial dimension, the significance and boundaries of which are greatly influenced by the volume of visitors and the demand and supply dynamics of tourism services.

Thus, the key elements of tourism as a complex integrative system: the area of a visit as a geographical area with recognized natural and social attributes – tourism attractions, a safe natural and social environment, tourism infrastructure and superstructure, tourism services, physical space as a reception area, tourism supply and demand, tourists as key tourism subjects, tour operators and other destination management actors, place identity or destination image, static and dynamic dimensions of the geographical area – developing tourism destinations, agglomeration of tourist agents and products, system of spatial elements, activities

and products, public or private character, destination promotion and overall destination and visit management. A tourism destination is a geographical area adapted to the needs of tourists with recognizable elements of a tourism arranged environment. A tourism destination is a specific geographical and living environment on Earth (with the recent emergence of space as an extraterrestrial tourism destination), which consists of natural and social geographical components that possess attributive properties attractive from the perspective of tourism – geographical tourism resources, potentials and attractions (e.g., mountain topography, alpine climate, clean sea, cultural diversity, urban prestige, etc.).

The geographical environment has different characteristics from place to place, depending on a multitude of geographical factors (natural and human), etymology, genesis, physiognomy, function and purpose, or depending on the degree of human utilization and ecotourism of a certain area. If the degree of tourist development of a geographical area has surpassed others and tourist visits dominate a large part of the territory, then we can differentiate tourism regions (e.g. Mediterranean tourism region). Tourism regions are differentiated landscapes, which have recognizable tourism-geographical characteristics (for example, the Mediterranean, the coastal strip is made up of a series of hotels and managed beaches, as well as other catering and tourism facilities, including numerous airports less than 100 km from the coast).

Tourism, as a complex economic activity, physiognomically and functionally significantly changes the environment of a certain geographical area due to the implementation of tourism infrastructure, tourism facilities and activities, which have certain effects on the quality of air, water, living beings, transport network, etc., i.e. on the quality of stay in a potential tourism destination, and ultimately on the standard of living of the local population. According to Włodarczyk (2014), the cognitive sphere of geographical and tourism space includes the geospheres and the anthroposphere, where the components of the geosphere represent tourism resources and attractions, while the components of the anthroposphere represent infrastructural and technological elements of tourism space, as well as a specific psychological and sociological environment of the tourism environment (Figure 2).

Tourism manifests itself and is realized in geographical space, uses geographical resources as tourism potential and attractions, and from the mutual interaction of tourism activities and operations and specific geographical features of the environment, complex processes develop that can have positive and negative impacts on individual components of the environment. The impacts of tourism on geographical space, which we often refer to as nature and society,

are divided into three categories: socio-cultural, economic, and environmental. Tourism transforms the world by encouraging globalization, urbanization and modernization geographical space, but it also preserves culture and history, and penetrates wilderness areas through visits to protected natural areas, etc. In this way, tourism can be understood as a complex geographical-spatial, tourismic, and environmental phenomenon.

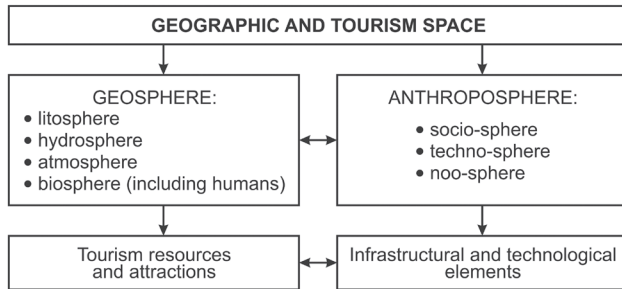


Figure 2. The cognitive sphere of geographical and tourism space  
Source: author, based on Włodarczyk (2009)

Furthermore, Table 2 and Figure 3 demonstrates the integrity of the geographical, natural, living and tourism environment through the geographical concept through its constituent components: natural, human, conserved and chorological-taxonomic, which interact in the system of establishing geographical space.

The diagram (Figure 3) illustrates a complex system of geographical space that integrates geographical (both natural and human), tourism, and sustainable environments. Within this geographical continuum, destinations that are natural, cultural, or a combination of both emerge based on potential attributive components (natural and/or human). Protected natural and cultural heritage also serve as elements within the natural and anthropogenic environment, forming the foundation

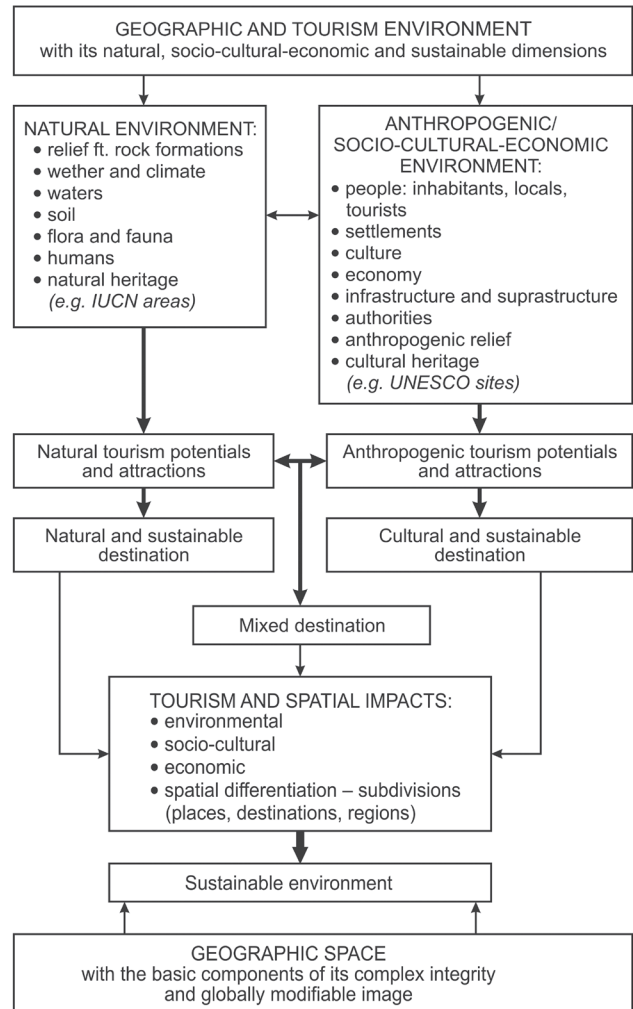


Figure 3. The concept of geographical and tourism integrity inside the geographical continuum  
Source: author

for the development of sustainable destinations in accordance with the national framework of managed tourism. Nevertheless, not every natural destination

Table 2. Integrity of the geographical, natural, living and tourism environments

| Components           | Geographical space/ geographical environment                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      | Geo(ecological) environment                                                                                                            | Tourism environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Natural              | Relief features, geologic formations, climate, water, soil, flora and fauna, humans                                                    | Foundation, tourism potentials and attractions, humans as tourism initiators, representators and consumers<br><i>Natural environment</i>                                                                                                   |
| Human                | Inhabitants, locals, tourists, culture, settlement, economy, transportation and utilities, technology and administration, human relief | Tourism resources, tourism contributors, tourism consumers, tourism distributors, tourism and space modifiers, tourism as an economic and social driver of development and globalization<br><i>Socio-cultural and economic environment</i> |
| Preserved/ conserved | Natural and cultural heritage                                                                                                          | Protected areas of WHS (IUCN or UNESCO) tourism sites<br><i>Sustainable environment</i>                                                                                                                                                    |
| Chorology-taxonomic  | Geographical place, destination, region                                                                                                | Tourism site, tourism destination, tourism region                                                                                                                                                                                          |

Source: author.

is required to be sustainable; for instance, isolated nature that does not belong to the IUCN network of protected areas may suffer from unmanaged tourism in the absence of observational monitoring and stringent legislative protection measures; this situation is similarly applicable to cultural destinations that experience mass visitation without adequate supervision. Given that the contemporary tourism framework necessitates oversight and management, the diagram underscores the significance of a sustainable environment, which consolidates the fundamental types of tourism destinations while incorporating elements that monitor the spatial impacts. As tourism development is characterized by global disparities, tourism locations, destinations, and regions emerge within the geographical space as the most intricate, spatially extensive and visually prominent areas of tourism.

The geo(ecological) environment represents a geographical holistic concept of the environment that connects elements of nature and society into a common system. Researchers (Archer, 1995; Rawding, 2013; Roy, 2014) highlight that geographical holism is evident in the spatial analysis and examination of the environment's interaction with humans, thus necessitating an integrated perspective on both natural-geographical and socio-geographical processes and phenomena in their interrelationship, and geography serves as the unique discipline that unifies physical and human geographical disciplines, facilitating a thorough comprehension of geographical space, including its global dimension. Taxonomy in space distinguishes place, destination and region, depending on the homogeneity and prevalence of geographical or tourism features. Geo(ecological) and tourism environment together form a continuum of geographical space.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The study's findings show that the geographical environment is a component of total space and time, and that is critical in the geographical interpretation of space to retain the prefix 'geographical' in order to indicate its spatial determinant on Earth, as it is a narrower term than total space, which includes the entire universe.

However, the fact that modern humanity has pushed the boundary of the geographical environment beyond the traditional understanding of the geographical 'envelope' due to connections formed outside the Earth's sphere via satellites and space travel, is also highlighted.

Furthermore, it was emphasized that the terms 'geographical environment' and 'environment' can be used interchangeably when discussing studies relating

to Earth's space, whether inhabited or uninhabited by humans, because all landscapes, natural (with flora and fauna) and human (with people and their creations), form a continuum of the geographical environment.

Similarly, the tourism environment is a component of the complex geographical environment, consisting of three layers: socio-cultural, economic and ecological (environment).

However, the scope of the term 'environment' (beyond the geographical subject of study) was also highlighted, as it may characterize the environments of celestial bodies other than the Earth (e.g. the Moon or Mars), as well as the inner state of the human organism.

The dimensions of tourism, geographical and the natural (living) environment are interrelated due to their structural organization and human exploitation, resulting in various components (natural and/or human) performing vulnerable, conservational or tourism-utilized elements of the geographical space. They have complicated cause-and-effect connections with one another, forming a complex geographical integrity and spatial continuum.

The results of the research imply new insights into the scope of contemporary geography and the subject of geographical study, thus paving the way for new interpretations of the geographical 'envelope', geographical space, and geographical environment, including its three-layer tourism environmental system.

Moreover, it is emphasized that the terms 'tourism environment' and 'environment' cannot be deemed sustainable without a necessary connection to spatial analysis, as these are fundamental aspects and essential components of the geographical environment, given that both natural and human-induced geographical attributes constitute the potential for tourism.

The findings pertaining to the three research questions are as follows:

1. The geographical notion of the environment signifies its inclusion within the entirety of geographical space and time, attributed to factors such as the evolving morphology of geographical landscapes, the human 'colonization' of the Earth through mass tourism, and the advent of innovative technologies that extend into all realms of the world (including space tourism). The term 'geographical' underscores the specific location of the environment, which pertains solely to Earth's domain rather than the extraterrestrial realm, thereby highlighting the essential role of geographers in the study of environmental issues.
2. The geographical and environmental contexts are largely interchangeable due to the anthropocentric perspective and the reality that humans coexist within Earth's space alongside other living entities (flora and fauna). This holds true even for uninhabited terrains, as primordial nature also plays a role in tourism activities (for instance, scientific explorations).

3. The tourism, living and geographical environments constitute a unified spatial entity representing a cohesive spatial system, as they are all integral parts of Earth's space, which comprises a variety of natural and human elements that are interrelated, both in terms of natural processes and various human endeavors, including tourism-related activities (such as movements, visits, and tourism infrastructure), which collectively contribute to the development of distinct tourism landscapes within the broader global context.

In summary of the earlier statements, it can be concluded that tourism, tourism spaces, or the tourism environment represent some of the most intricate global phenomena. These encompass all geographical areas utilized for tourism, which includes travel for any purpose to any location worldwide, even extravagant journeys to the farthest reaches of the Earth beyond conventional geographical boundaries. This consideration also takes into account the complex environmental processes that yield various outcomes, both positive and negative, stemming from tourist activities and their duration. The tourism environment is an ongoing component of a broad geographical integrity that is increasingly accessible.

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