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Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

## POST-EVENT BRIEF

# ESPON Conference : Tourism and Cultural Heritage for regional development

Synergetic relations between Cultural Heritage (CH) and Tourism as driver for territorial development

**Virtual**

**26 November 2020, 10:00 - 17:30 (CET)**



## Summary



The ESPON one-day virtual conference concentrated on Cultural Heritage (CH) and tourism in the development of territories. In many regions and cities, the COVID-19 pandemic served as a wake-up-call to rethink the role of the tourist industry and its implications for local and regional heritage, economies, quality of life and ecosystems.

The conference invited policymakers, researchers, and entrepreneurs to share their views on structural challenges and dilemmas, the impact of the current crisis, and to signal promising ways forward. Topics discussed included the following:

- How can we promote sustainable tourism based on Cultural Heritage?
- How can we use territorial capital, green innovation, and the Green New Deal to these ends?
- How can spatial planning contribute to these efforts?
- How can the various dilemmas between heritage and tourism, between scales, and within sustainability be resolved?

The discussions and reflection, particularly in the afternoon session, revealed a strong willingness among participants to look beyond the turmoil of the current crisis and examine the root problems and inherent dilemmas regarding tourism and heritage, and subsequently revealed a desire to identify structural solutions to reconcile these. There was widespread agreement that more could be done to ensure that the tourist industry does not overexploit CH and various examples were provided of how this could be done more sustainably by increasing the relationship with societal well-being, linking local tourism to global levels, and local actions directed at mitigating the negative effects of mass tourism.

CH policy provides an opportunity to modernise urban spaces via technology to reach a new sustainable economic equilibrium. New value chains and equity choices need to be applied in both metropolitan and other urban contexts.

## Objectives and target groups

Tourism in Europe finds itself at a crossroads and the COVID-19 pandemic has given a moment of respite to contemplate which direction should be taken in the future. Should cultural and natural heritage continue to be exploited to draw massive crowds and profits or should this be tempered in the name of social, economic, and ecological sustainability? And, if so, how?

### Policy background

This balancing act lies at the basis of several recent policy initiatives. At the European level, the 2018 New European Agenda for Culture, for example, provides a strategic framework for EU action in the cultural sector, while the 2018 European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage proposes four principles regarding European CH:

- Holistic and people-centred approach: CH is a resource for the future;
- Integrated approach: mainstream heritage policies and coordinate other EU policies;
- Evidence-based approach: improve knowledge and statistics on CH;
- Multi-stakeholder approach: encourage dialogue and exchange between a wide range of actors in the design and implementation of CH policies and programmes.

In addition, the EU Urban Agenda (Cluster Culture and Cultural Heritage, Orientation paper 2020) indicates guidelines for the implementation of actions in cities and initiating dialogues at the local level to draw up urban regeneration and sustainable tourism development plans. Finally, the strategic plans for tourism at the national

level (Italy, Spain, Greece, etc.) aim to provide a framework for the tourism sector and may be linked to the post COVID-19 recovery perspective for the sector.

### Objectives and participants

This ESPON conference examined synergetic relationships between CH and tourism as a driving force for the development of different kinds of territories (e.g. urban, rural and coastal zones). The conference brought together policymakers, academics and economic operators to reflect on how to build integrated development strategies for territories. The approximately 150 participants included:

- (inter)national, subnational and local policymakers in the field of territorial sustainable development strategies, planning and governance;
- representatives of city networks, intermunicipal and interregional associations;
- academics researching heritage, tourism, economics, and sustainable development;
- practitioners in the field of sustainable tourism.

The main objective of this Conference was to share expert views on the following topics:

- How can European cities and regions relaunch and implement sustainable tourism based on CH attractiveness? How to make full use of the geographical diversity economies, green innovation, and actions taken towards green new deal?
- How to elaborate and implement urban spatial planning (by Urban Agenda) to prevent new COVID-19 impacts on tourism and to increase territorial mobility? What adaptation measures could be put in place as part of a place-based anti-pandemic strategy?
- How should regions and cities cooperate to ensure the cross-border policy coordination in the matter of tourism-oriented measures and territorial governance models at wider geographic scales?
- How to reinforce sustainable tourism in multiple urban dimensions, with contradictory goals and planning complexities at urban and regional scales?
- How to match the concept of sustainable tourism with Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3)? In addition, how to align this with technology advancement in CH?

The ESPON territorial evidence gathered in previous studies, as well as cooperation with other project experiences, will serve as background and will nurture the discussion around these questions.

## Agenda: short overview of presentations and participants

The one-day conference was split into two sessions chaired by Simone Filippetti (a professional economic journalist). Each session set up a dialogue between academic reflection and policy perspective and focused on a specific theme and/or presentation of a project which provided evidence, observations, and policy recommendations. The morning sessions contained presentations by experts on spatial planning and territorial development, putting the relationships between tourism and heritage into a wider perspective of sustainability. The afternoon sessions focused on economic issues and governance aspects.

### The morning session focused on:

- 1: Tourism as driver of economic development, present challenges
- 2: Resilience of Cultural and Natural heritage for sustainable tourism

### The afternoon session focused on:

- 1: Role of Creative and Cultural sectors in sustainable development
- 2: Urban regeneration and Cultural Heritage: financial and governance issues

The conference concluded with a statement by Lorenza Bonaccorsi, Undersecretary of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, on policy implications.

## Opening words (Maria Prezioso, ECP Italy)

At the end of 2020 and continuing into 2021, several events presenting EU and ESPON evidence on tourism and CH are taking place because it is clear that CH is a powerful attractor while tourism is a driver of investments, jobs, entrepreneurship, growth, and recovery. In the regions where this duo was strong, such as in southern Europe, territories have proven resilient in the present pandemic situation and, in the framework of the Green Deal, were able to act in anticipation of NextGenerationEU.

All EU27 member states, as well as four partners: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland, produced a methodology to enable the collection of local evidence needs from territorial stakeholders which highlighted relevant national and local policy processes regarding tourism and CH. This comprised the starting point for ESPON outreach activities on the topic, starting with the topic paper that was sent with registration. This conference on the synergetic relationship between CH and tourism as a driving force for the development of territories (urban, rural, coastal zone) was preceded by several Italian and transnational seminars and meetings organised with the support of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism and the former Ministry of Economy and Finance, to exchange views on four selected themes with researchers and stakeholders.

Each part of the conference was designed as a dialogue between academic reflections and policy perspectives, taking the form of a presentation providing evidence, observations and policy recommendations. Space for questions and a panel discussion was included in each plenary session under the guidance of Simone Filippetti, a London-based journalist for the Il Sole 24Ore newspaper. The ESPON territorial evidence gathered in previous studies as well as other project experiences served as background and nurtured the discussion together with other expertise in the morning session. In the afternoon, inputs were received from practitioners and high-level policymakers such as Mr Massimo Sabbatini, director of the Agency of Cohesion, who gave a presentation on their current projects. The conference was closed by a reflection from Mrs Lorenza Bonaccorsi, Under-Secretary of the Italian Ministry of Culture Heritage and Tourism.

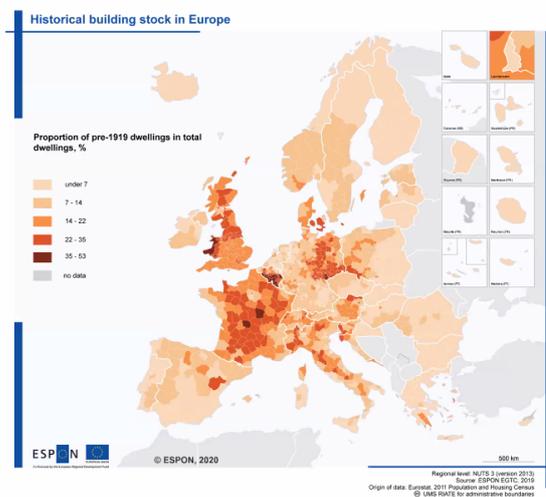
## Presentation by Zintis Hermansonis (EGTC)

Tourism and heritage are already common topics in ESPON, but COVID-19 has given them a completely different context. In particular, the ESPON HERITAGE project attempted to formulate an economic valuation of CH. The project found many different factors that contributed to the value of heritage, but tourism was highly relevant. However, this is not necessarily true for the other way around: tourists come for reasons other than heritage. The project used proxies to estimate how much tourism is related to heritage, for example by correlating tourism flows with pre-1919 buildings (because there is no pan-European definition of heritage). Although other methods may give a different picture, the resulting map reveals some interesting hotspots.

This spatial information was then correlated with employment data linked to CH. The maps correlate to a large degree, suggesting a reasonably good fit between the tourist and heritage industries. This was confirmed when taking a closer view of the estimated impact of material CH in terms of gross value added (GVA) turnover and employment: tourism accounted for over half of the turnover and over two-thirds for GVA and employment.

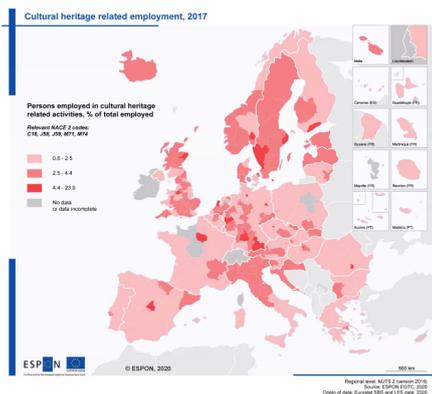
In terms of historical building stock, as there are no complete data on the stock of buildings, their age and types at the European level, the data on **pre-1919 dwellings** from Eurostat's 2011 Population and Housing Census data can be used as a proxy

High proportion of pre-1919 dwellings are concentrated in France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy, where the proportion of pre-1919 dwellings varies between 22 % and 53 % of total dwellings.



At a regional level, Eurostat's Structural Business Statistics offers the most detailed information on cultural employment; however, statistics cover mostly culture and, to a limited extent, material cultural heritage

Cultural employment is significant in central and northern Europe and regions of northern Italy (between 2.5 and 4.4 % of total employed) and least significant in regions of Romania and Bulgaria (less than 1 % of total employed).



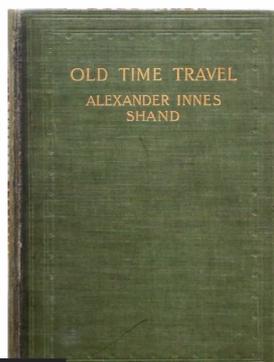
## Peter Schön on past and present challenges

A historical perspective helps to position the current debate on over-tourism. This phenomenon is anything but new. The first tourists were seventeenth-century English aristocrats and members of the German upper class (e.g. Goethe) visiting cultural sites, usually in Italy. Industrialisation in the Nineteenth Century opened tourism to the upper middle classes, and to the rest of society as time wore on. Every wave created laments of lost identity and the destruction of cultural and natural heritage.

### Good old times of tourism or: Regretting bygone times and lost privileges...

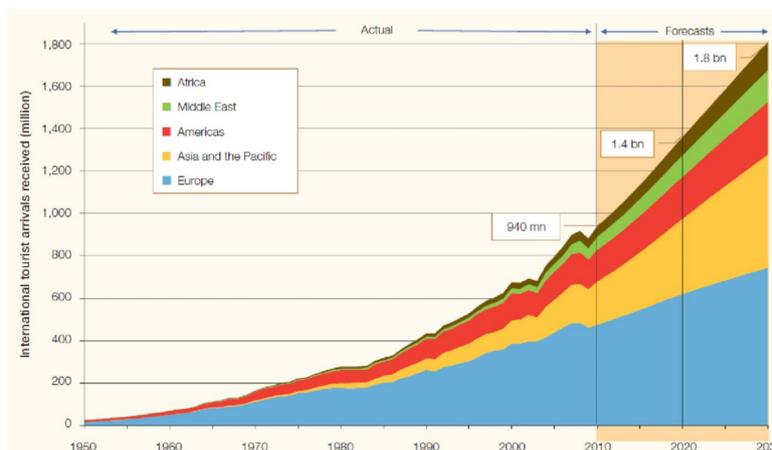
"Forty years ago there were cozy hotels, but no unruly masses. ... In those days tourists were comparatively rare, and there were no cheap trippers. ... The changes in the last fifty years have been marvellous, and the old-time tourist would feel lost and mystified were he landed now at Basle or Geneva. Railways traverse the length and breadth of the land; tunnels are being driven through the bowels of the Alps; lifts have been fitted to the hills wherever a solitary eminence offers commanding points of view; magnificent hotels have been springing up everywhere; rude shelter huts have been turned into commodious inns. ... The Playground of Europe has been swamped with sightseers."

Alexander Innes Shand, Old-Time Travel, 1903



From Matthew Howells to Everyone

This view is too simplistic. In fact, there are many different types of tourists and a complex industry catering to their heterogeneous needs; the behaviour of tourists seeking an 'authentic experience' is quite different than those focused on 'cultural highlights' or those making a pilgrimage.

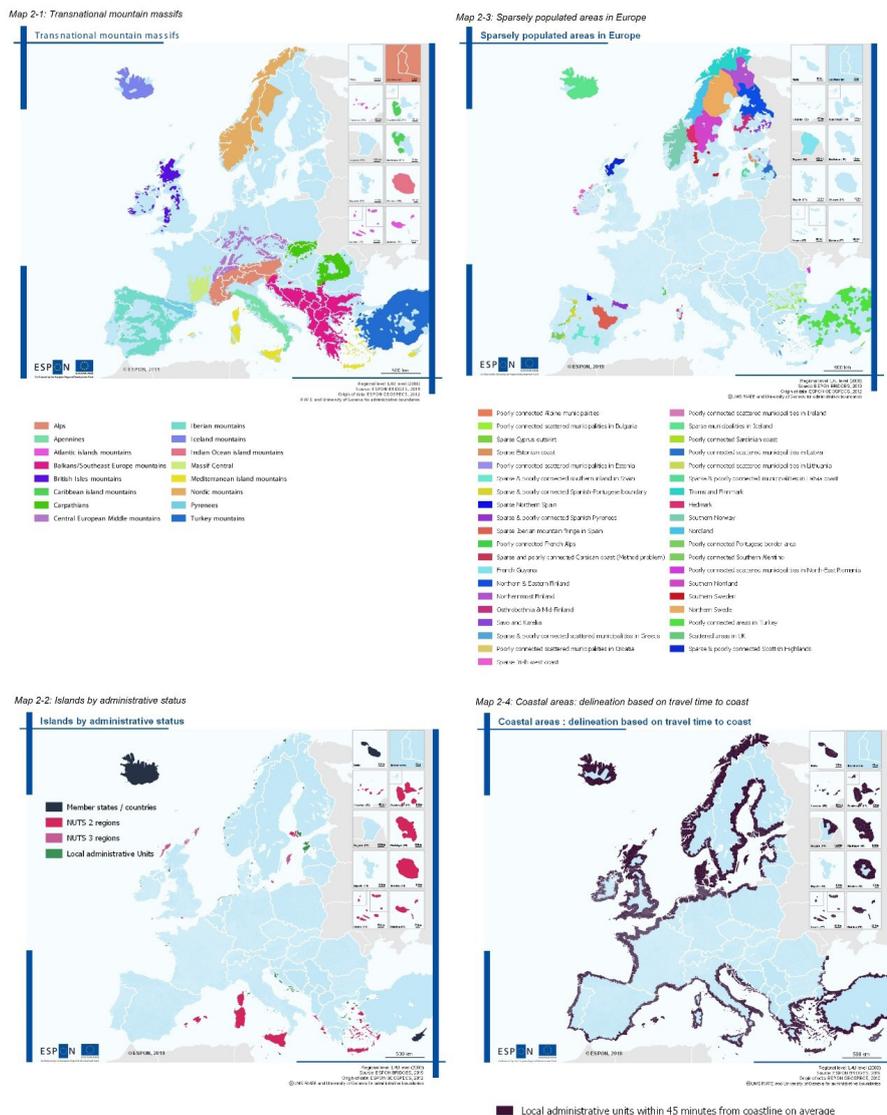


In the twenty-first century, global economic development has placed tourism within reach of billions of people. The strongly increasing levels are punctuated by major events such as 9/11 and the economic crisis of 2008. The estimated decline in tourism due to COVID-19 is far greater: approximately 40-70%. However, it is very uncertain how long this will last: in Germany many are still planning vacations, hoping that things will return to normal soon. Some think that tourism will bounce back around 2023. At the same, COVID-19 has highlighted other issues like climate change and social disparities and accelerated other trends such as digitalisation and environmental awareness, and this might result in a rethinking of the dysfunctionalities of the tourist sector. It is very important to involve citizens in this discussion, look at the backlash in Barcelona regarding uncontrolled tourism as an example. Post-COVID-19 tourism needs to be more sustainable and responsive to the needs of citizens.

## Eduarda Marques da Costa on geographic specificities

Tourism affects different territories differently. The ESPON BRIDGES project was asked to reflect on the prospect of post COVID-19 sustainable tourism from their expertise on geographical specificities, namely mountain areas, islands, sparsely populated areas and coastal areas. This was already a subtheme of the project under innovation and economic development as these regions are often highly dependent on tourism.

### ESPON BRIDGES Balanced Regional Development in areas with Geographic Specificities



Source: Gloersen et al. (2019). ESPON BRIDGES. Final Report, Luxembourg: ESPON EGTC, <https://www.espon.eu/geographical-specificities>

Many citizens avoid tourist areas and therefore no longer access their own CH. A kind of alienation process is occurring. Only non-residents interact with CH when it is mainly oriented to tourists. You can reorient the use value of heritage to citizens, but that takes work. However, it is best not to waste too much effort into changing institutions.

Question: is sustainable mass tourism possible in Portugal? There is an increasing dependence on tourism, but this was a solution to the economic crisis just like Greece. In general, Portugal is very happy about tourists visiting, despite side-effects like skyrocketing housing prices in Lisbon. It needs to be made more sustainable, but other sectors need to do that too. And not just environmentally, but socially as well given the disruption of the housing market.

## Stella Kyvelou on resilience of heritage and sustainable tourism

Culture and cohesion policy are intertwined: heritage is both economic and social and an intrinsic part of the 'territorial capital' of a city or region. According to EU cohesion policy, heritage determines attractiveness, can spark entrepreneurship, promote social inclusion and is a major pillar of the rapidly growing tourist industry. There are three consecutive approaches to the management of CH: (1) material-based, dominated by experts and public sector bodies, (2) value-based focused on stakeholders and (3) as a living monument where communities are seen as the long-term custodians of their heritage.

This does not only pertain to CH, but natural heritage as well – especially given that many CH sites are near to natural heritage sites. The view of natural heritage has also evolved, from (1) separating nature and human activity before the 1960s, (2) preservation and avoiding extinction caused by humans and (3) integrating the needs of humans and nature. This last stage has manifested itself in the recognition of ecosystem services as well as current notions of resilience of ecosystems and symbiotic relationship with societies.

A case study was discussed which shows that it is possible to implement this philosophy in practice. In the village of Arkochori in northern Greece the community helped to protect the heritage from the bottom-up through self-organisation, doing so in an adaptive manner and incorporating new elements over time. This made it more resilient. This gives hope to other areas, such as the management of underwater CH, which can become a driver of sustainable tourism if implemented well. Greece has opened up the first underwater museum in the world. The disruptive effect of COVID-19 can be used to reframe tourism in this type of sustainable manner. And the European Union can assist in this: the Green New Deal action plan and the biodiversity strategy provide a 'policy arsenal' to promote sustainability. Planners should adapt to take advantage of this opportunity.

Question: how can we avoid "Disneyfication"? It can be done through promoting ecotourism or activities like mountain biking, for example. We should recall that there are worse activities than tourism. For example, in an area where tourists once enjoyed aquatic nature, they are deciding to build a gigantic aquaculture system, which will destroy the ecosystem.

## Bernd Schuh on developing a methodology for carrying capacity for tourism

This contribution brings together many elements discussed so far such as resilience, sustainability as well as geographic sensitivities. At present, tourism is facing an "inconvenient truth" of pandemics, climate change, etc. which will need to be addressed at the local and regional level because this is the locus of the interface between tourism and the environment. The crisis won't last as there is a huge path dependency with a big tourist infrastructure in place and deeply embedded in society. It is therefore imperative to understand the systems and infrastructure in your own region to make good and sustainable decisions for the future. The ESPON tool seeks to assist in that decision making.

Like the ESPON tool on territorial impacts, the methodology for carrying capacity looks at a region's exposure to tourist flows which exerts external pressure on a regional or local system with a given sensitivity. It consists of different steps including (1) a sketch of the context, (2) identification of causal loops between tourism and the territory, (3) measurement of tourist flows, (4) identification of impact, and (5) identification of carrying capacity. This method was tested in a Targeted Analysis project for stakeholders in Slovenia. The project used some state-of-the-art methods such as dashboards of how tourists interact with the environment using big data.

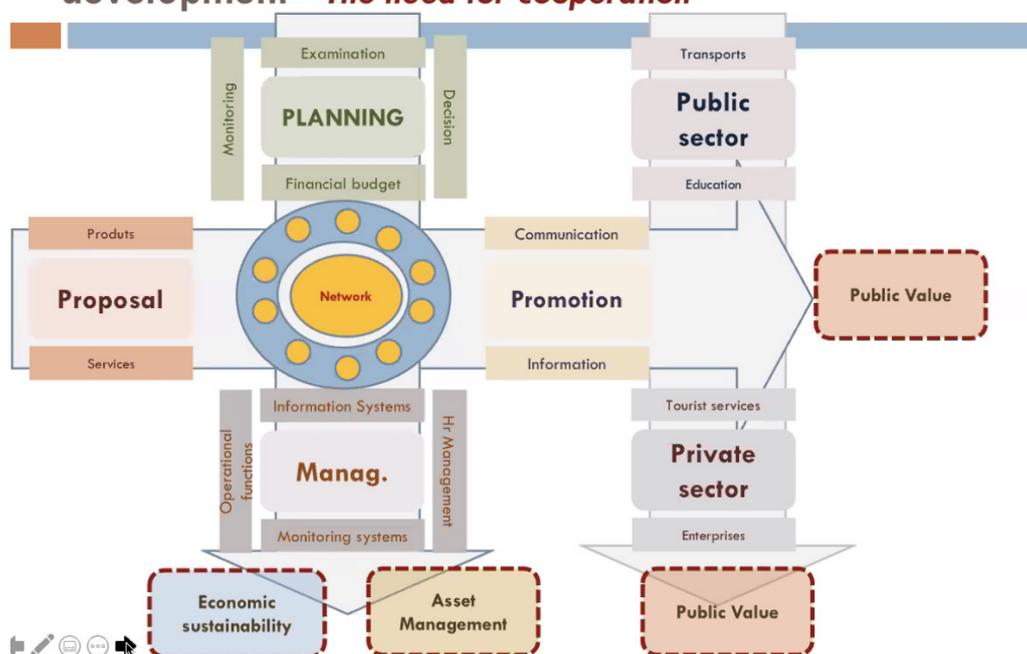
Question: How do we make tourism more sustainable? It's actually not that complex, just out of our hands. Tourism follows economic logic: it engages with local elements, so the pathways are varied. Some are oriented towards maximising tourism, as is the case on some islands, and there is an economic path dependency to this shaped by competitive capitalism (e.g. lowering costs to boost turnover like Ryanair).

### Alessandro Hinna on management and governance aspects

Whereas the morning session focused on the importance of sustainability, the afternoon session concentrated more on economics and CH management in both public and private interventions. This is important because the EU recovery funds will need to be used in an efficient manner. This also means that the focus also shifts to more procedural and action-oriented aspects of the heritage/tourism nexus: how can we move from ideas and policy to activities, what kinds of strategies are needed and how best to design projects?

Taking a look back at how the management of CH has changed can help our thinking about future institutional architecture.

## 4. Strategies for cultural policies and sustainable development - *The need for cooperation*



Evolution of CH perception from preservation to use and reuse. We see a shift from intrinsic value (preservation) to cultural value (heritage promotion) to a combination of use and non-use value in order to preserve economic sustainability. Devising strategies to create public value occurs within a network between planners and managers and public and private sectors. The quality of the network has impacts on the preservation, promotion and integration of CH.

Some projects do not sufficiently take into account institutional sustainability and management aspects, which makes them less resilient.

### Gianluca Saba on the URBACT project on tourist friendly cities

Genoa (together with eight other cities) won the URBACT bid for a project about tourism, even though it is not traditionally thought of as a tourist city. Genoa only changed from an industrial city to more tourism-oriented in the past 10 years but it is growing fast. There are some small signs of identity loss in parts of the city but these are much less intense than elsewhere. URBACT is the only EU programme on cities and this was the first project on tourism. So this was a first in many ways. The project aims to reduce the negative impacts of tourism

on neighbourhoods and promote sustainability. However, just after the project was awarded, the COVID-19 crisis hit and changed everything.

Still, as the morning session has shown, COVID-19 makes it imperative to be more sustainable in the future. Tourism will bounce back but it must be less intensive and more sustainable. Balance is a key term: between promoting heritage and preserving heritage and balancing short-term and long-term considerations. Some actions include routing and city cards in order to increase the amount of time tourists stay in Genoa, which also alleviates pressure on other Italian cities. Other cities have ‘respect the city’ campaigns, encouraging catering to individual and domestic tourists or try to make agreements with Airbnb. There is a need to involve stakeholders, but it’s difficult to get to the less-involved stakeholders: the “unusual suspects”.

### Pasquale Lucio Scandizzo on urban regeneration

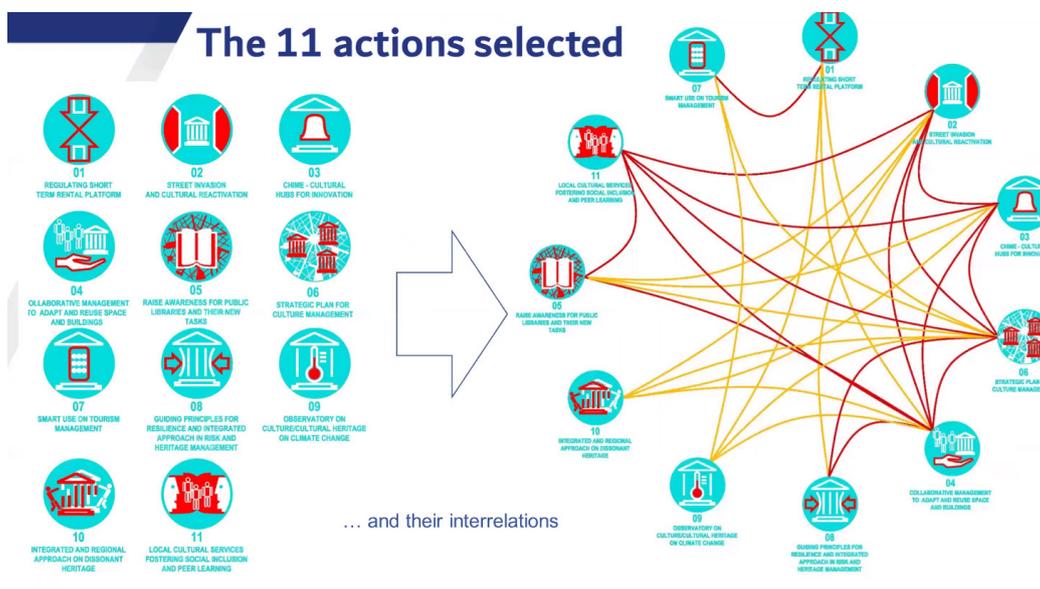
Urban regeneration can be linked to the issue of sustainable tourism and CH. We are on the verge of a paradigm shift with more attention for territorial capital. Regeneration will need to employ new smart planning modes, based on resilient local value changes and higher sustainability. Heritage could be a crucial link in this as it can provide identity and cohesion to communities while acting as a magnet for migration and tourism.

COVID-19 has affected this insofar as it has affected the perception of cities and density. The crowds of people in tourist hotspots a year ago are viewed in a very different light now. Development is being rethought and, with it, more attention is being devoted to its vulnerability to disruptions. At present, we see public areas being retrofitted to accommodate social distancing, online retail, transformation of urban transport, flexible office arrangements and expansion of the sharing economy. Will this result in building at lower densities and that are better integrated into landscapes? This might offer an opportunity to preserve vulnerable heritage and tourism could act as a transformative catalyst for this.

This new way of thinking should generate new financing and governance practices. For example, by using crowd funding, sustainability, heritage and/or social impact bonds, private or EU funding. Governance should consider community participation, competing institutions at various scales as well as interests and values under political and economic pressure. If sparked by COVID-19, these changes could potentially contribute to a more just and sustainable world.

### Massimo Sabatini on the role of Tourism and Cultural Heritage in cohesive regional development

The Urban Agenda for the EU is taking shape within the wider cohesion policy and EU aims for cities. The recent New Leipzig Charter is the new framework for The Urban Agenda for the EU. It attempts to strike a balance between the different dimensions of sustainability at the neighbourhood, municipal, and functional



urban area levels. In that context, the Partnership on Culture/Cultural Heritage is devoted to enable municipalities, Member States, EU institutions and interest groups, NGOs, and partners within the industry to work together on an equal footing to find solutions that improve the management of the historic built environment of European cities, promote culture, and preserve the quality of urban landscapes and heritage. It does so by addressing the need for good institutional infrastructure, governance and funding.

Eleven interrelated actions were selected pertaining to regeneration, tourism and heritage. For each, the main objectives, activities and outputs were elaborated. For example, Action 1 considered how to deal with short-term rental platforms like Airbnb by proposing a better EU regulatory framework that promotes sustainable tourism without incurring negative impacts on cities and their inhabitants. Another example is Action 7 which aims to collect data on tourist flows and use this information to manage them. This can also be used to suggest EU guidelines for tourism policy and planning. All this is happening within an 'ecosystem of strategies and initiatives' such as the European Green Deal, Next Generation EU, Cohesion e-policy, and the Just Transition Fund. Ample resources are available to those who can strategically access them<sup>1</sup>.

## Lorenza Bonaccorsi – reflection and look to the future (Undersecretary to touristic development)

Just before pandemic, the Italian media clamoured about Italian over-tourism and now with COVID-19 it is the reverse. Cities have lost so much revenue and have been plunged into crisis because they have become so dependent on tourism. Now lots of youth are unemployed as a result. We need to rethink this economic model. We never planned our policies with respect to tourism for the long-term in Italy. And now that everything is on hold, we can rethink what kind of tourist sector we want to rekindle. We should also talk to regions to ensure that the money that is created by local CH also benefits that locality directly. There is a need to give a bigger role to planning to make heritage work in better synergy with other policy areas.

In the wake of COVID-19, we should ask ourselves about the tourism model we wish to pursue. It would stand to reason to look at a sustainable and low-impact model given the framework of the EU Green New Deal and climate change adaptation policies.

Strategic plans for tourism development should be reformulated so that the focus is shifted from over-tourism to well-being, health, and safety. Indeed, as current expectations predict that the economy will recover in 10 years or so, it seems necessary to consider an overall rethinking of the traditional reference model that goes beyond maximising visitor flows. It would be prudent then if tourism development strategies take a more holistic approach and more careful consideration of CH as an integral part of regions' territorial capital.

## Maria Prezioso - Wrap-up

What we have seen today: it's all about territory. Each area has its own territorial capital, and this dictates outcomes. We will have some control over these outcomes if policymakers take territorial capital into consideration or if EU funds have sustainability as criterion. Still, economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis may overrule any non-economic considerations. It is therefore vital that the EU recovery fund is spent well and that some goes to CH and sustainable tourism.

The broad participation in this conference demonstrates the level of interest of countries, regions and cities for tourism and CH, and for its development in this critical time where a balance is sought between different territorial needs.

The questions emerging from this conference will nurture future ESPON TNO initiatives proposed on this topic in 2021 (Iceland, Ireland, and the Czech Republic). They will discuss in-depth about how European geographical specificities can be harnessed to relaunch and implement sustainable tourism based on natural CH attractiveness, how to elaborate and implement urban spatial planning (via the Urban Agenda) and how to reduce COVID-19 impacts on tourism and to relaunch territorial mobility.

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<sup>1</sup>Territorialisation of cohesion policy has been highlighted as an important aid for Italian development, and it is crucial for the 2030 Southern Plan. It should apply simplified mechanisms which are sensitive to developmental practice and policy needs.

These meetings will offer an important occasion to maintain the high level of cooperation seen in ESPON between countries and regions in cross-border policy coordination. Common touristic measures and territorial governance models can reinforce sustainable tourism in multiple urban dimensions, following common goals and planning at urban and regional scales, in the framework of the Smart specialisation strategy (S3) and technology advancement in CH.

### Delivered input (was the target group reached?)

A series of announcements were distributed for this conference from the ESPON newsletter and passed on by ESPON contact points. There was also a comprehensive pre-event brief and an even more extensive topic paper. Arguably, much of what was said during the conference could be traced back to these two documents. The added value is in the performative nature of a live event and the possibility to ask questions directly. There was not much interaction or debate between the speakers, but this was also not held in the format originally chosen. In the end, it seems that there was a very high level of agreement, which may be a result of the types of speakers invited – they were generally interested in holistic solutions rather than being advocates for a particular issue. The general impression is that COVID-19 has not affected the structural trends related to tourism, and therefore the pre-COVID-19 concerns regarding heritage are as relevant as ever. At most, COVID-19 has created a disruption which could be used as a window of opportunity to mitigate the most grievous aspects of the industry.

Approximately 50 people filled in the post-event survey. The results were very positive. On a scale from one (worst) to five (best) the answers were:

- Are you likely to recommend such an event to a colleague? 4.56
- How satisfied are you with the event's digital format? 4.34
- How satisfied are you with the conference content? 4.42

### The efficacy of the proposed structure

The outreach of the virtual event in Rome was at least as large as that for a physical event, if not larger. Of the 903 invitations sent out, 352 people registered for the conference, mostly from Italy (215), Greece (30), and Croatia (15). 110 of those registering were from governmental/public bodies (ministries, municipalities, regions, local authorities, territorial agencies, or a national tourism institute), 87 were students and another 66 were academics. In the end, approximately 150 attended the conference. A majority (around 60%) of these participants were Italian.

The virtual setting had some challenges and advantages. The simultaneous translation seems to work more naturally on a virtual platform than with headphones in physical meetings. One use that was appreciated by participants was the ability to send files, such as presentations, immediately. There were some technical issues which were annoying, and some messages in the chat were about this, which was seen as distracting from the content. Creating discussion by means of the chat function is an added benefit of virtual conferences, but in this case does not seem to have been used as extensively as it could have. Perhaps the language was a barrier as most of the comments were written in English and a large proportion of the participants were Italian-speaking. No real attempt was made to encourage participation in this manner, which is a pity as the participants could have been asked questions about their own regions and these collected for the reporting. ESPON might wish to consider such methods for future conferences. Some participants complained that there was not enough time for discussion and not much effort made for engagement. Another tip: speakers and chairs should refrain from using distracting virtual backgrounds. Finally, one minor problem was that the chair was not given the power to mute microphones, so at times environmental sounds from participants distracted from the presentations.

In general, most felt that the conference had a relatively clear structure and was well-chaired (despite the fact that speakers did not keep to their allotted time). The groundwork was laid in the morning with contributions putting the current discussion into perspective, such as the historical overview by Peter Schön and the territorial overview provided by the BRIDGES project. Although the morning session was more focused on sustainability and the afternoon session more on economics, this distinction was not very apparent as both topics were addressed throughout. The same applies to those presentations communicating knowledge bases, that which explained methods and tools and those advocating a way forward. Most contributions provided a mix of all these aspects.

## Main conclusions and recommendations

The conference on Synergetic relations between Cultural Heritage and Tourism as driver for territorial development presented a rather optimistic picture. Conceivably, the conference could have concentrated on how tourism undermines social cohesion, destroys heritage, and sacrifices the environment for short-term profit, but instead most speakers emphasised that a balance could and should be achieved. Instead, the tone was restrained, calm and thoughtful. The emphasis was on finding long-term solutions, not highlighting problems. In this sense, the current problem of COVID-19 was reframed as an opportunity to mobilise stakeholders and resources to achieve the perceived synergy. Some observations and conclusions included the following:

### Scale and territory matter

The forces driving the tourist industry are global, but the destinations that characterise the industry are inherently regional and local places with a specific territorial capital. The interrelationship of scales results in impacts of the global on the local, such as how Airbnb and low-cost airlines create and direct flows of people and money. At the same time, local policies and campaigns can potentially have an impact because the industry has a direct financial interest in the destination: there is an interdependence that can be exploited.

### Reclaim heritage for sustainability

Like the notion of ecosystems services, CH also performs a function for local communities by providing a source of income. It was generally acknowledged that more could be done to minimise the damaging side-effects of tourism and enhance the input of communities. A few examples show that this is possible, such as how the village of Arkochori helped to protect its heritage from the bottom-up using self-organisation strategies in an adaptive manner.

### Disruption as opportunity

The disruptive effect of COVID-19 can be used to seize opportunities to enhance synergy between heritage and tourism. The tourist industry is now in crisis and activities are temporarily suspended, which allows for a more inclusive discussion about strategic goals and collective interests, and to develop a new economic model. At the same time, bureaucracies have been disrupted by COVID-19, allowing new forms of multilevel governance to emerge. Implementation of new ideas can be greatly assisted by the European Union's 'policy arsenal' on sustainability and unprecedented levels of funding for COVID-19 recovery. So, paraphrasing Lorenza Bonaccorsi, we will leave this pandemic and face its outcomes with different perspectives on tourism and different intervention tools.



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