
Editorial

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1 Introduction

Our modern information and communication age with its global orientation has cultural roots that in most countries date back many centuries. A significant part of the cultural history of our world is mirrored in human-made remainings from the past with a unique and great social value, often coined cultural heritage. This is a broad concept that does not only comprise individual assets such as castles, museums or churches, but also complex and compound assets such as urban districts, historical landscapes and so on. In a broader sense, local resources be it natural or immaterial human resources map out the history of the local cultural endowment. These cultural resources have a high societal value, act as attraction forces for visitors and assume a prominent place in sustainable development.

Cultural heritage is in many cities an important source of tourism. Tourism in our era is also subject to drastic changes. More people spend more money on more tourist trips, and more people go more often on a tourist trip or travel even longer distances. The modern transportation and communication systems have created the conditions for a mass tourism, in which cultural heritage plays a key role as an attraction pole.

At the same time, we witness that large-scale tourism may erode the foundations of local or regional attractiveness, as it may create negative externalities, such as pollution, noise annoyance, congestion, social tension and so forth. This prompts the question whether – through dedicated human resources – a smart mix of cultural heritage and local resources can be found that may ensure the fulfilment of sustainable tourism development conditions.

This intriguing question calls for a thorough reflection and careful analysis, not only from a conceptual and methodological perspective, but also from policy and planning perspectives. Cultural heritage may be a stable source of economic revenues for the city – and hence calls for an effective policy –, but it may also be subjected to a sudden decay (e.g. earthquake floods, etc.) – and hence calls for contingency planning. In summary, cultural heritage makes up a chain between the urban past and the urban future and has to be managed as an asset with a great future potential for both economic growth and sustainable development.

The aim of this Special Issue is to assemble a collection of both analytical contributions and policy contributions (including case studies) that might shed light on the above-mentioned complex and intertwined research challenges, centring around systemic approaches, (co-)evolutionary perspectives, local self-reliance and carrying capacity and valorisation of use and non-use values in the city.

2 Modern tourism and cultural heritage

Modern tourism has to be positioned against the background of world-wide communication and long-distance transportation opportunities. Our modern world is moving towards a leisure economy, where a rising part of everyone's discretionary income is spent on culture, recreation and tourism. With an increasing share of the population that is retired, a new leisure class – often rather wealthy – is emerging. Consequently, the economic significance of the leisure industry is gaining more and more importance. Mass tourism – which started essentially after World War II, when

Pan American World Airways introduced tourist class – is the most pronounced exponent of the modern leisure economy, where culture, nature, shopping of sheer entertainment formed the main motives.

The leisure industry has created entirely new international markets. Local and national governments saw this new sector as an important source of foreign exchange, while it also contributed to sustainable development (cf. Holden, 2000). The rising demand for foreign – and often exotic – destinations was stimulated by fast long-distance transport (such as jet airplanes and more recently fast rapid trains). The investments in the leisure industry – and in the tourist industry in particular – have been formidable over the past decades.

The structure of the tourist industry is rather complex and encapsulates intertwined links between travel agencies, tour operators, airlines, railway companies, car rental firms, hotel and restaurant chains, marketing agencies, tourism bureaus and the popular media. Since the tourism industry has many specialised market niches, it is clear that tourism marketing – strongly supported by the modern ICT sector (see Giaoutzi and Nijkamp, 2006) – has become a critical success factor.

It is noteworthy that tourists form a rather heterogeneous class. Some want to enjoy a given city or a cultural atmosphere, others are oriented towards specific goods or cultural amenities, such as a lake, a mountain, a museum or a historical district. Many tourist destinations offer a broad package of facilities to be visited, so that they can attract a maximum number of potential visitors. Other tourist places have only one unique sales label, such as Agra with its Taj Mahal, or Pisa with its skew tower. An important question from a marketing perspective is now whether tourists are more interested in distinct features of a given tourist good (the ‘disjoint’ view) or whether they derive a higher level of satisfaction from the tourist good as a whole (the ‘integrative’ or ‘holistic’ view). Answers to such questions call for solid empirical field work on the motives and consequences of modern tourist behaviour.

Tourism is no doubt one of the most fast-growing industries in our globalisation era. More accessible modes of transports, an increase in disposable time and income to be used for leisure activities, faster connections, cheaper airfares and the emergence of the electronic age are among the reasons for a new widespread attitude towards international tourism. Mass tourism is certainly a major phenomenon of our time. The reasons why people travel vary, but they all have impacts on our environment and the way cities are transformed and developed (cf. Page, 1995). People travel to enjoy different types of resources, and the way they experience them has different impacts on the local economies too (cf. Tallon et al., 2006).

Cities’ cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, constitutes the central attraction that often guides people’s choice of destination. This has recently even become the excuse to transform the city and the way its heritage is presented and enjoyed into a ‘market product’ for tourists. The commodification of heritage, together with the musealisation of parts of a historic city, are among the most common problems that unsustainable tourism strategies have caused (see Law, 2000; Mommaas, 2004).

Sustainable tourism strategies for a tourist site need to account for various aspects of strategic importance: conservation of the site, citizens’ quality of life and tourism satisfaction. These are often conflicting issues that policy makers have to investigate with the relevant tools and proper guidance. There is the need to move from the assessment of current best practices to the exchange of successful tourist strategies in the context of cultural heritage policy.

Clearly, there is a tension between the beauty of a tourist site shaped by a long historical and cultural tradition and the short-term revenues that are often expected from a commercially – oriented tourism policy where tourism is seen as a catalyst for economic growth. Consequently, the issue of sustainability is at stake here. Tourist sites reflect a wealth of positive externalities for society that are hardly incorporated in any market system, but the danger is that uncontrolled tourism causes a wide variety of negative externalities that may cause a structural and irreversible erosion of cultural assets (Amelung, 2006). From this perspective, it is important to exploit and emphasise local identities and resources that may be instrumental in creating a balanced tourism development of an area. Tourism competitiveness among different destinations would then have to be positioned in the broader context of tourism sustainability, while still respecting the need for efficiency increase in the tourist sector (eco-efficiency, carrying capacity). It is evident that a balanced tourist policy calls for a professional and strategic management of tourist flows at both regional and national levels (see also Crouch and Ritchie, 1999).

It also ought to be recognised that the tourist sector is characterised by a multifaceted character, where next to the tourist sector in a strict sense also the building sector, the transport sector, the real estate sector, the energy sector and the hospitality sector play a central role. Given the leisure nature of tourism, the creativity sector (arts, communication, culture, high-tech services) is instrumental in developing a modern advanced tourist sector. An assessment of the various forces at work call for sophisticated evaluation tools, where also local communities should be involved in participative forms of planning.

The set of research questions at the interface of cultural heritage and balanced tourism is vast. This Special Issue contains only a few selected contributions, but they aim to provide refreshing insights into the nexus tourism – culture. This issue is composed of two parts, viz., a first part where the attention is focussed on the methodology of assessing and evaluating cultural assets in the tourist sector, and a second part where lessons from original case studies are drawn. We will in the following section concisely summarise some of the highlights of the various contributions in this issue.

3 A summary of various contributions

The first part of this Special Issue contains three contributions that refer to methodological questions. In the first contribution, Harry Coccossis argues that tourism has become a complex socio-economic phenomenon being nowadays a major economic activity worldwide and a priority field in policy making at all levels. He reflects also about the risks of an uncontrolled growth of tourism, which has brought forward to the attention of policy making its development potential, but also its positive and negative social, economic and environmental impacts. In his contribution, Coccossis discusses relevant policy issues for managing cultural heritage in an environmentally sound context, since the effects of mass tourism on cultural heritage lead modern societies worldwide to reconsider their development paths and options, under a common search for sustainable tourism strategies.

In the second paper, Luigi Fusco Girard puts forward his argument on cultural tourism, which emerges as a sector of growing importance for local development, and

demands dedicated promotional actions especially for its complex impacts. According to him, cultural landscape and tourism are indeed strictly connected and may produce altogether many positive impacts. On the other hand, many values may be lost as a consequence of uncontrolled tourist pressure. His contribution presents multifaceted views on possible paths towards sustainable tourism and introduces the contents of a possible strategic plan able to catalyse urban development, cultural heritage and sustainability.

The third contribution is offered by Peter Nijkamp and Patrizia Riganti, who deal with the controversial definition of cultural heritage and develop ideas on its significance when considering it in an urban setting. The authors then focus on the need to strive for a proper use of the available tools and methods for its valuation, from the perspective of sustainable city development. Particular emphasis is placed on the opportunity to foster a broader adoption of learning mechanisms based on comparative analysis and meta-analysis.

Next, the second part devoted to applications and case studies contains six articles. It starts with an empirical contribution in which Francesca Cracolici, Miranda Cuffaro and Peter Nijkamp consider tourism as a major activity in a modern welfare state, that may yet create serious consequences for environmental sustainability. Accordingly, they propose an assessment of the ecological performance of tourism systems, by developing an overall efficiency indicator based on both a sustainable tourism index and an economic efficiency index. The authors apply this framework to the quantitative assessment of the relative position of Italian tourist destinations at the provincial level and present results, interpretations and suggestions for policy making and planning.

In the next paper, Daniela-Luminita Constantin and Constantin Mitrut argue that cultural tourism may be able to solve questions of regional competitiveness for many economies, as it responds at present to a demand fuelled by more and more travellers ranking arts, heritage and other cultural activities as one of the main reasons for travelling. In this framework, the authors discuss tourist policies developed in Romania at national and regional level, with a special emphasis on the correlation between the strategies supporting tourism development and those addressing the competitive specialisation, infrastructure improvement, sustainability, institutional capacity building, financial management and control. The latter are advanced in this contribution as policies needed to contribute to economic recovery and to reduce intra- and interregional disparities.

Then Patrizia Riganti discusses to what extent it is possible to value in economic terms the positive and negative externalities brought by cultural tourism to heritage destinations, and which are the currently available valuation techniques for this purpose. She reports on a scenario development of a conjoint analysis study on the city of Syracuse, Italy, and builds on this research to analyse the role economic valuation can play in the management of cultural destinations in order to limit the negative impacts brought by the tourism presence whilst spreading the positive ones in the region.

As part of a broader analysis of international open links between cities, Tüzün Baycan Levent, Seda Kundak and Aliye Ahu Gülümser investigate city-to-city linkages and the role of urban networks in socio-economic development. The authors analyse the relationships of 'Eurocities' with their 'Sister Cities' to highlight the contributions of the mutual relationship to trade, tourism, cultural activities and investment, by evaluating the sister city experiences of 29 European cities. In this case, the contributions of sister city relations is found to depend on former relations, quality and quantity of current joint

activities, reciprocal visits and benchmarking. As a result of this study, the authors emphasise that the most important contribution of sister city relationship is the increasing number of tourism and cultural activities, and joint projects that result in an increasing cultural dialogue that will make a great contribution to the construction of a global urban culture.

In the next applied contribution of the issue, Enno Masurel, Peter Nijkamp and Lisanne Warmerdam base their argument on the observation that museums are multifaceted cultural goods with many attributes, which attract various categories of visitors. They disentangle the strategic issues linked to the complex question whether a museum offers an integrative portfolio of different attractions or whether separate constituents of a museum good attracts specific classes of customers. In particular, they highlight the tourists' satisfaction with respect to particular items and their overall satisfaction, by investigating on the motives of the visitors of the Anne Frank House, the renowned museum in Amsterdam in memory of the Jewish girl killed in the war. The analysis shows clearly that the holistic perspective of this museum good provides the highest attractiveness to various classes of tourists.

In the final contribution, Andrea De Montis and Vinicio De Montis centre their essay around the fact that contemporary planners are often confronted with the issue of recovering settlements which emerged as a necessary complement of former extraction activities (e.g. mining) and nowadays have lost their original functions. Clearly, such settlements may constitute a strategic resource endowment, since mining heritage may act nowadays as a factor of comparative advantage for a contemporary tourism destination. The authors illustrate the proposal of an Integrated Master Plan of L'Argentiera, a former mining settlement in northwestern Sardinia, Italy. They describe the opportunities of this development proposal, by referring to the tourist flows most likely generated towards a destination recovered according to mining heritage tourism led policies and planning, and to the beneficial monetary impacts induced for regional development, in terms of additional revenues and employment directly and indirectly generated by a dedicated tourism policy.

4 Concluding remarks and outlook

In this concluding section, we will revisit some of the most relevant assumptions and findings emerging from an integral reading of the whole series of papers in this Special Issue.

Firstly, both the methodological and the applied contributions start mainly from the evidence that tourism has in the last few decades become one of the strategic sectors of the economies in modern welfare states, since its direct and indirect effects on employment and income display a continuously expanding trend.

Secondly, the 'leitmotiv' of the whole series of papers in this issue is that as tourism expands its scope, in the same way the niche market of cultural heritage tourism exhibits a drastic increase, and actually is expected to grow even at a higher pace in the years ahead.

Thirdly, while the several contributions in this issue stress that cultural heritage tourism may become a catalyst for reducing disparities in regional development in various areas and countries, it ought to be recognised that tourism may have significant negative effects on the environment, especially in urban settings in relation to cultural

heritage tourism. In other words, tourism concerns may overlap with the requirements for environmental sustainability in situations where tourism's pressure exceeds local carrying capacity. As tourism may generate various negative externalities, local natural resources – conceived in their broadest meaning – may be endangered and lose their potential as attractive landmarks.

And finally, according to most contributions, the analysis of the tourism externalities should become a critical part of a balanced approach to tourism governance and planning, since currently cities are engaged in the challenge to become a worldwide competitive destination for cultural heritage tourists. This Special Issue is meant to stimulate the scientific debate and to open up further research in the field of valuation, policy and planning of cultural heritage tourism.

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