GOVERNANCE AS A TOOL
FOR SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

June 2019

THE PROBLEM

Effective governance is centrally important in ensuring more sustainable and responsible forms of tourism. In the Mediterranean area, with its particular characteristics and challenges, a general lack of cooperation and common understanding among different actors is an issue that can be addressed effectively via better governance mechanisms. Such a situation clearly calls for collaborative partnership at different levels such as public-private cooperation initiatives and the inclusion and engagement of a wider range of stakeholders.

Governance in sustainable tourism policymaking is challenging, due to the numerous policy domains it spans, the ongoing need for sufficient funding and the high levels of complexity involved. For this reason, a coordinated, innovative, integrated, participatory approach to sustainable tourism governance that contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is timely and highly necessary.

In fact, good governance is crucial for better coordination and monitoring of tourism, as well as for destination resilience. This is important because tourism is an activity capable of underpinning regional development and enhancing competitiveness, while in parallel prioritising social, cultural and environmental concerns.

This policy factsheet on sustainable tourism governance in the Mediterranean area sets out four key messages, linked to existing local, national and supranational governance tools and mechanisms, as well as the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the different examples set out in the factsheet highlight some of the most effective responses to a range of sustainable tourism governance challenges facing the Mediterranean area.

DEFINING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GOVERNANCE

Governance can determine the kind of progress made toward securing the economic, socio-cultural and environmental goals of sustainable development in tourism destinations[1.] However, defining sustainable tourism governance is far from straightforward. This is not only due to the relative complexity of the notion of governance and of tourism activity, but also to issues of scalability / applicability between different contexts. Furthermore, these challenges are intensified by rapidly changing policy climates and shifting geopolitical situations.

Successful implementation of effective governance mechanisms in the context of sustainable tourism depends on a number of essential elements. These elements are necessary for securing lasting, positive change.

Considering these essential elements, **sustainable tourism governance in the Mediterranean context is defined as:**

"A coordinated, multi-level process involving collaboration between public, private and social actors within and beyond the tourism system. This can create policy synergies and build capacity for:

(A) Achieving shared goals, developing strategic joint projects, fostering sustainability and managing complexity, and;

(B) Achieving balance between the welfare of residents and tourists, destination competitiveness and the context-specific needs of natural, built and cultural environments".

1 - FOSSE Jérémie and LE TELLIER Julien, September 2016, Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism in the Mediterranean, Note #32, Plan Bleu

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GOVERNANCE SHOULD BE BASED ON...

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

EMBRACING COMPLEXITY

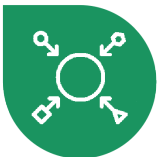| Define common sustainable tourism principles | Share knowledge and information | Identify best practice in managing complex tourism scenarios |

BALANCE WITHOUT COMPROMISE

| Reconcile and maintain a careful balance | Build a shared, multi-level vision and mission | Aim for legitimacy, effective leadership and coordination |

INCLUSIVITY

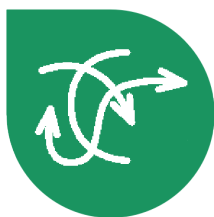| Include a wide range of concerned individuals and groups as active participants | Ensure that all stakeholder voices are heard in decision-making |

EMPOWERMENT

| Ensure the capacity and the mandate for agents to be change-makers | Build commitment and trust to underpin collaborative working |

EMBRACING COMPLEXITY

Tourism is a complex and interrelated multi-level and inter-sectoral system, undergoing constant evolution. Sustainable tourism governance needs to evolve in parallel, within a framework capable of moving beyond the immediate policy sphere of tourism.

As a complex system, tourism can be especially vulnerable to instability, volatility and external shocks, considerably exacerbating its complexity. In response, there is a need for an in-depth and context-specific understanding of tourism systems and their governance.

Consideration also needs to be given to the specific power relations, trade-offs and compromises involved in tourism governance.

Sustainable tourism governance can successfully embrace and even capitalise on its own particular complexity, achievable via a number of actions:

● **Define common sustainable tourism principles for all stakeholders within specific local / regional contexts.** This can be achievable via:

  ○ Engagement of all stakeholders in a consensual process of definition of terms, using participative methods and techniques such as focus groups and co-creation meetings with stakeholders and key agents.

● **Share knowledge and information: The need for common data, evidence, digital support and networks.**
It is important to understand the potential of digital information such as big data, particularly for long term assessment and monitoring and policy decisions based on scientific data and evidence, to help transform needs into solutions and opportunities. This can be achievable via:

  ○ Assessment of existing datasets and indicators and identification of gaps / data needs; Building partnerships for new data collection, analysis and usage; Promoting and incentivising data sharing between all stakeholders.

- Identify best practice in managing complex tourism scenarios to transfer knowledge and promote policy learning, bearing in mind that it is also important to learn from policy failures and testing / implementation results.

This can be achievable via:

- Pilot projects and testing / implementation phases to test complex ideas and different combinations / approaches in real-world situations and contexts.
- Embrace the principles of adaptive management and resilience-building within sustainable tourism governance.

CASE STUDIES

Involvement of local actors

One of the keys to embracing and managing complexity is the involvement of local actors in the reconciliation of contrasting visions and goals. The **EMbleMatiC** project achieved this via the creation of several **Stakeholder Clusters**, while the **DestiMED** project established a **Local Ecotourism Cluster** for structuring private-public collaboration and cooperation focused on coordinating product development and management. This kind of **cluster** can be built using stakeholder mapping and participative workshops for identifying strengths and synergies within the whole collective. This needs to be followed by a phase of collaboration strategies and designation of actions and priorities.

For more info: see EMbleMatiC project and DestiMED project

Common data structures

The sharing of data and the building of common data structures can underpin sustainable tourism governance, generating added value from the very complexity of tourism scenarios. One way to achieve this is to develop an online **Common Data Platform**, as implemented by the **MITOMED+** project. The platform was developed collaboratively by collating a **wide variety of data** from different stakeholders in a **single interface.** Its purpose was to underpin the monitoring of social and environmental impacts of maritime and coastal tourism. Another mechanism of the data platform was to support benchmarking in the context of other destinations, by facilitating evidence-based decision-making.

For more information: see MITOMED+ project

BALANCE

Sustainable tourism governance needs to **strike and maintain a careful balance** capable of **reconciling the environmental, economic and sociocultural dimensions of sustainability**.

This balance of both tourism activities and impacts needs to be based on a **clear commitment to avoiding trade-offs and compromises** while adopting a **strong operationalisation of the 'sustainability' concept**.

The achievement of such a balance is possible through **coordinated strategic planning and management** of tourism activities and impacts. It is also essential to **build consensus and shared visions** that work towards finding long-lasting **pragmatic and legitimate win-win solutions**.

Achieving and maintaining a balanced approach to sustainable tourism governance is demonstrably possible when destinations take a number of **key ideas** into account:

● **Reconcile and maintain a careful balance.** *Balance* should not be based on sustainability trade-offs nor should it trivialise tensions between different interests in tourism. Rather, balance is subjective and context-specific, requiring broad consultation and consensus-building in determining what constitutes a sustainable balance in each case. It calls for assertive leadership. This can be achievable via:

  ○ Participatory events / workshops with unbiased external facilitators who present an open disposition. These workshops can be organised as part of existing events where a number of stakeholders would already be present, thus maximising the possibility of wide participation.

● **Build a shared vision and mission.** Taking a 'whole of government[2]' approach to governance, based on horizontal and vertical coordination, can maximise its overall balance. This can be achievable via:

  ○ Definition of joint governance frameworks for the identification and implementation of shared approaches, policies and strategic projects, adopting a medium- to long-term perspective.

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2 - OECD, October 2017, Policy Statement – Tourism Policies for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth

● **Aim for legitimacy, effective leadership and coordination.** It is important that policy decision-making should be a long term and transparent process. It should be guided by assertive leadership and monitored via periodic ex-post evaluation of both governance processes and outcomes. This can be achievable via:

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○ The creation of independent bodies acting at regional level to ensure balanced governance systems, coordinate the process, establish co-ownership and ensure endorsement of policies by all stakeholders.
○ The use of formal and informal collaboration agreements.

CASE STUDIES

Multi-level approach to governance

A multi-level approach to governance that facilitates horizontal and vertical coordination can help to reduce the complexity of the challenges facing tourism destinations. The **CO-EVOLVE** project adopted the core principles of I**ntegrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)** and **Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)** as two complementary **multi-level governance frameworks** that involve all stakeholders in the development of transversal ICZM and MSP plans. Joint coordinated actions and participatory local studies were implemented in seven Pilot Areas. The CO-EVOLVE experience highlights the feasibility and effectiveness of an ICZM/MSP-based planning process in the context of complex sustainable tourism scenarios. Their application of ICZM and MSP was undertaken in two phases: (i) analysing and defining the state of the art at Mediterranean and pilot area scale, and (ii) testing of instruments, policies, strategies and joint plans already identified, in order to set up solutions applicable to a wider set of users and territorial contexts.

For more info see CO-EVOLVE project

Contractually-binding agreement

At times, a contractually-binding agreement is necessary to foster stronger collaborative relationships and commitment to sustainable tourism governance processes. The **COASTING** project's **Coast Contract** initiative is a strategic multi-level governance tool for sustainable tourism management. It is based on a common methodology, in which all signatory partners produce a strategy or action plan based on specific local contextual conditions and the involvement of local stakeholders, with the aim of identifying and understanding common sustainable tourism challenges. The tool was used to **develop and implement a common framework for coastal recovery and management**, while increasing coordination for sustainable and responsible coastal and maritime tourism actions in the Mediterranean area.

For more info see COASTING project
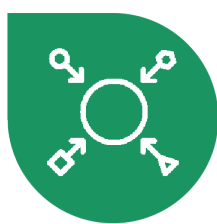
INCLUSIVITY

Sustainable tourism governance can only be effective **when an inclusive and open approach is adopted**, based on genuine dialogue and active participation. Bottom-up participation mechanisms **can ensure that stakeholder voices are heard in decision-making processes**.

Inclusivity mechanisms need to include not only those stakeholders directly involved in the tourism sector but **all concerned individuals and particularly residents**, who ultimately need to co-exist with tourism activity and impacts on a daily basis.

Success is more probable only when stakeholders have been genuinely involved throughout and where full emphasis has been placed on co-creation and the co-ownership of the process and its outcomes.

There are a number of actions that can help to ensure an inclusive and genuinely participative dimension within sustainable tourism governance:

- **Include a wide range of concerned individuals / groups as active participants.** Participation by a wide range of actors in decision-making processes can enhance a democratic sense of ownership. This can be achievable via:
  - Effective facilitation of stakeholder participatory processes, keeping in mind that beyond co-decision, participation is more about co-design and co-creation.
  - Ongoing dialogue on debates and conflicts, essential for consensus and trust-building in multi-level, multi-sectoral tourism stakeholder ecosystems.

- **Ensure that all stakeholder voices are heard in decision-making, including resident, end user and private sector perspectives.** Inclusion and engagement of public and private sector and social agents is important, including multinationals, residents, employees, social collectives and tourists themselves. This can be achievable via:
  - Active engagement of a wide range of stakeholders at all stages of the policy process via the use of emerging participatory mechanisms and methodologies, such as digital democratic
  - participation platforms. Incorporating a participative dimension into each successive phase of tourism planning and management, from diagnosis to the generation of strategic actions, as well as in implementation and testing phases.

CASE STUDIES

Complementary combination of stakeholder engagement mechanisms

A complementary combination of stakeholder engagement mechanisms can work better than a single-stranded approach. The **BLUEMED** project has adopted several different ways to engage stakeholders and build trust, including a web-based platform pilot operation to register all stakeholders and the creation of a detailed stakeholder involvement plan (including end users, the private sector and residents). In this case, the **combined stakeholder engagement mechanisms** were used to devise, test and coordinate a multi-disciplinary plan, based on a variety of management models and innovative technologies for underwater museums, diving parks and knowledge awareness centres. The plan included use of autonomous vehicles to acquire detailed bathymetry shipwreck sites and specialist cleaning procedures, as well as photogrammetric recording and detailed inventories.

For more info: see BLUEMED project

Common participation methodology

It can be challenging to get tourism stakeholders to generate and commit to realistic and context-specific proposals. For their regional/transnational action plans, the **MEDCYCLETOUR** project has developed a **common participation methodology** for their pilot actions based on the development of cycle routes. In this case, stakeholders participated in national and regional workshops, replicating the same methodology in each implementation area to increase the comparability and intraregional transferability of the workshops' outcomes. In line with the principles of multi-level governance, the common methodology included joint field work for mapping, technical specifications and photographic analyses at critical points of the proposed cycle route. GPS and mobile apps were also used in pilot areas to analyse the route and its possible alternatives, as well its development into sections and segments and potential links to existing local and regional transport infrastructure.

For more information: see MEDCYCLETOUR project

EMPOWERMENT

When **stakeholders are empowered to play a central role in tourism governance** processes, long-lasting **positive change can become a reality**.

Effective **governance relies on assertive leadership** from empowered agents with the capacity and the mandate to implement real change based on consensus.

Empowered governance also **depends on high levels of trust**, **mutual respect** and **tolerance-building mechanisms to promote shared visions and goals**.

Investing time and energy in capacity-building can not only build competence in key agents, but can also ensure that all stakeholders develop skills and become empowered to act. This kind of stakeholder empowerment can contribute to the effectiveness, durability and sense of ownership of sustainable tourism governance mechanisms, via a number of actions:

- **Ensure the capacity and the mandate for agents to be change-makers.** Destination management mechanisms often fail as they lack the resources, mandate, skills and structures to move from theory to action. A clear definition of the roles of various levels of government in tourism governance is required, as well as of the roles and functions of the various organisations involved in tourism policymaking. This can be achievable via:

  - Create new roles and mandates for sustainable tourism, based on more integrated governance structures and underpinned with evidence and data systems. Benchmarking can support this process, as can the sharing of policymaking and implementation experiences.

- Invest in competence, skills and jobs that can build capacity and empower leadership figures to, in turn, empower their stakeholders.

- Empower actors via democratic, delegated management functions, horizontal and distributed leadership, bottom-up capacity-building and the sharing of competences.

- **Build commitment and trust to underpin collaborative working. This can be achievable via:**

  - Use consensus-based formal and informal Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), collaboration agreements and declarations with signatories from multiple levels of government and across all sectors relevant to tourism activity and impacts.

CASE STUDIES

Bottom-up approach
to stakeholder empowerment

A bottom-up approach to stakeholder empowerment can be a decisive factor in the success and longevity of sustainable governance processes. In embodying this approach, the **INHERIT** project has designed and implemented a bottom-up biodiversity and nature protection mechanism. Their approach relies on self-regulation and monitoring by local residents and tourism stakeholders. In monitoring its effectiveness, the approach also designs, tests and capitalises on self-regulation measures. These innovative measures include the application of **ICZM-MSP and bottom-up waste management initiatives**, and aim to build resilience whilst protecting natural heritage assets from excess tourism activity (such as excess construction and waste, desertification and erosion, saturation of specific destinations and tourism seasonality).

For more info: see INHERIT project

Investing in awareness-raising
and demonstration measures

Engaging and empowering stakeholders requires investment in awareness-raising and demonstration measures with the aim of developing **integrated sustainable energy, water and waste management strategies**. A programme of demonstration initiatives was built into the CONSUME-LESS project to raise awareness of the resource consumption involved in tourism and show how integrated management of resources and waste can be achieved in practice at the destination and individual levels. This programme also contributed towards increasing **stakeholders' sense of responsibility and environmental stewardship**. Furthermore, their **awareness-raising** campaign encouraged citizens and tourists to participate more directly in sustainability-related actions, both while at home and when being a tourist.

For more information: see CONSUME-LESS project

How can collaboration empower stakeholders?
Networks of Governance for Sustainable Tourism

Collaboration is a more intense form of relationship than **cooperation** and implies a proactive contribution, rather than mere compliance.
Networks of collaboration – sometimes termed '**multi-level governance**' – require the explicit or implicit sharing of policymaking authority, responsibility, development and implementation at different administrative and territorial levels, for example:
- Across different ministries and/or public agencies at central government level (**upper horizontally**);
- Between different layers of government at local, regional, provincial/state, national and supranational levels (**vertically**); and
- Across different actors at sub-national level (**lower horizontally**).
- Working in this manner can significantly **improve the outcomes of sustainable tourism governance.** In addition, fostering this kind of inclusive and balanced approach contributes to the **empowerment of stakeholder networks** at different scales.

Source: based on Noel Scott & Giuseppe Marzano (2015) Governance of tourism in OECD countries, Tourism Recreation Research, 40:2, 181-193

THE VISION

Governance directly affects whether – and how – real progress is made toward securing the economic, socio-cultural and environmental goals of sustainable tourism development.
In the Mediterranean context, tourism destinations have much to gain from adopting a sustainable governance approach, whereby tourism is understood as part of a broader urban or regional ecosystem and the tourism destination is conceived of as a quality place to live, work and visit.

Effective sustainable tourism governance, underpinned by assertive leadership and strong participative processes, can help to manage and allow for tourism's particular **complexity**.

In turn, a governance approach that embraces **balance, inclusivity** and stakeholder **empowerment** can demonstrably generate win-win scenarios for more responsible and sustainable forms of tourism in places. It can also enhance destination competitiveness and create an ongoing dialogue between different interests and priorities.

Overall, the development of long-term, multi-level governance mechanisms can lead to improved coordination and monitoring of tourism activity. Such governance can also reinforce the tourism sector's relationship and synergies with other industrial sectors in the Mediterranean area. It can also counteract tendencies such the lack of cooperation and common understanding among tourism actors.

Finally, effective governance can foster the implementation of more sustainable tourism policies. This can be achieved via integrated decision-making mechanisms, use of key performance indicators, policy design processes and a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches.

The **four key messages** in this factsheet relating to sustainable tourism governance for the Mediterranean area should ideally **be taken on board by those with the policy and regulatory mandate to make tourism a more sustainable and harmonious activity.** In addition, sustainable tourism governance should be fully embedded in its local and regional contexts, to maintain the balance of tourism's impacts and benefits more effectively and evenly.

Interreg
Mediterranean

EUROPEAN UNION

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

These policy recommendations were successfully elaborated thanks to the collaboration of **external tourism experts** and the commitment of **17 EU Mediterranean projects**:
ALTER ECO, BLUEISLANDS, BLUEMED, CASTWATER, COASTING, CO-EVOLVE, CONSUME-LESS, DestiMED, EMbleMatiC, HERIT-DATA, INHERIT, MEDCYCLETOUR, MEDFEST, MITOMED+, PANORAMED, SIROCCO, TOURISMED.

Throughout a number of knowledge-sharing events, and thanks to their strong involvement, participants built a Sustainable Tourism Community across the Mediterranean region. Benefiting from the synergies created, **42 of the 149 community members** were able to disseminate the results of their projects and capitalize on them to elaborate this specific factsheet.

To promote a change on the topic "Governance mechanisms to guide stakeholders towards sustainable and responsible tourism", the living Community brought together, in a single working group, a comprehensive network of experts from 9 countries and no fewer than **2 research centres, 11 NGOs, 11 local authorities, 6 national authorities, 2 International organizations** and **1 SME**.

Their work, enriched by the diversity of people involved and the experience learned from case studies, is paving the way to greater sustainability in coastal and maritime Mediterranean tourism.

Author: Julie Wilson, Associate professor, Open University of Catalonia
Coordinator of the working group: Andrea Di Girolamo, Project officer, Adriatic Ionian Euroregion - Alexandra Froment, Junior project officer, UN Environment - MAP - Plan Bleu
General coordination: Nelly Bourlion, Programme officer, UN Environment - MAP - Plan Bleu

CREDITS
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