Tales from two cities: COVID-19 and the localisation of tourism in London and Paris

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STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Purpose - Drawing on empirical research conducted in London and Paris between July 2020 and June 2021, this research explores whether these two global metropolises may be able to take the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity to develop more sustainable forms of urban tourism. More specifically, the study analyses whether new forms of localised tourism have developed as a result of the pandemic, how these have been nurtured and encouraged by the tourism industry in these two cities, and the implications of these trends for the sustainable development of tourism in these two cities.

Design/methodology/approach - A combination of research methods was used: an online Delphi method, followed by in-depth one to one interviews with selected stakeholders and complemented by the analysis of media articles, policy documents and secondary data.

Findings - The qualitative data analysis highlights some key findings: tourism sustainability gained a new importance after the pandemic, however the crisis did not bring the sustainable revolution some stakeholders wished or expected. Nonetheless in both cities tourism marketing adopted a new "hyper-local" approach with the objective of encouraging proximity tourism and involving local residents more, thus pointing to the need to review traditional definitions of the (urban) tourist.

Originality/value – While the blurring between tourism and the everyday in cities has been widely discussed in tourism theory, this research provides empirical evidence from two world tourism cities, showing some of the wider, practical implications of these theoretical debates for industry and policy making in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: new urban tourism, localisation, COVID-19, sustainable tourism, city tourism.

1. Introduction

London and Paris are two major European metropolises and world leading tourism cities, drawing, pre-pandemic, 33M and 38M[1] overnight visitors per year respectively (VisitBritain, 2021a and 2021b; Office du Tourisme Paris, 2021), figures that place them among the top most visited tourism destinations worldwide (Mastercard Global Destination Cities Index, 2019). Both are historic cities and national capitals, characterised by a long history as cultural and business tourism destinations, as well as hosts of global events (most recently the Olympic Games in 2012 and 2024). As for most other metropolises, a complex and ever-increasing range of mobilities intertwine in the two cities, making the tourists economically and physically less visible (Ashworth and Page, 2011) than in tourist-historic cities and deeply embedded in these cities' everyday life.

The fast – and sometimes uncontrolled – growth of tourism in many European cities has prompted discussions around overtourism in cities, and famously led, in recent years, to public protests and forms of collective resistance against the negative impacts of tourism (Colomb and Novy, 2016) – eventually drawing the media's attention to these problems and raising the prominence of tourism in cities' political agendas. Barcelona, Lisbon, Venice and Amsterdam are some of the most cited examples (Novy, 2019). While global metropolises such as Paris and London, which have a long tourism history and benefit from much larger infrastructures catering for a complex variety of (tourism and non-tourism) mobilities, appear to be somewhat less affected by these conflicts (Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot, 2016), these cities too have suffered from many of the same struggles: overcrowding particularly around tourism hotspots, spiralling gentrification of residential areas, housing shortages and poor air quality to name but a few. But as such debates appeared to have reached a peak towards the end of 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the global stage, effectively halting international travel and bringing the widely accepted notion that global metropolises are the least dependent on tourism (Ashworth and Page, 2011) into question.

As the attention of the media and the political stage quickly shifted from overtourism to the absence of tourism in cities in the first few months of 2020, tourism industry, academics and activists started to wonder whether the path towards recovery would involve a return to the old 'normal' or a transformation towards a more sustainable paradigm (Ateljevic, 2020). In this paper, drawing on empirical research conducted between July 2020 and June 2021, we explore this question from the perspective of Paris and London, looking at if and how these two global metropolises may be able to 'bounce forward' and take the crisis as an opportunity to develop more sustainable forms of urban tourism. In particular, we are interested in exploring whether new forms of localised tourism have developed as a result of the pandemic, how these have been nurtured and encouraged by the tourism industry in these two cities, and the possible consequences these shifts may have on the future of tourism in the two cities.

Three research questions have guided this study:

1) Has the pandemic encouraged wider recognition of local residents as an important market for tourism in Paris and London?

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[1] 38M for Greater Paris (Paris and the 3 departments around Paris); 29 M visitors in Paris Intra Muros (source: OTCP - Office de Tourisme et des congrès de Paris).

2) Has this shift affected tourism marketing and policy in Paris and London? If so, how?
3) What are the implications in the longer term for the sustainable development of tourism in these two cities?

2. Literature review

2.1 COVID-19 and sustainable tourism

The tourism industry is one the hardest hit by the pandemic and metropolitan destinations were particularly affected, due to widespread public health advice during the pandemic discouraging (and, for extended periods of time, banning through lockdowns) people from visiting crowded and/or indoor locations, where viruses are more likely to spread (Anguera-Torrell et al., 2021). According to the UNWTO (2020), this pandemic has caused the most extreme set of travel restrictions in history, with 100% of countries having introduced some form of travel limits, including closing borders and banning flights entirely in some cases. These restrictions, which are still largely in place at the time of writing (summer 2021), have certainly affected global cities such as London and Paris greatly. Official data on international visits to London for 2020 and 2021 are not yet available, but VisitBritain (2021c), as of May 2021, was expecting to record a decline of international tourism to the UK of 75% for 2020, as well as a decline in domestic tourism of 60% for overnight and 64% for leisure day trips. Data for Paris are similar, with Ile-de-France Region estimating that the region has lost 78% of its tourism in 2020 (Comité Régional du Tourisme).

While acknowledging the disastrous impacts of the pandemic on a human level as well as on the tourism industry, during the first few months of the pandemic particularly, the sudden slump in international travel triggered a wealth of discussions within academia, industry and the media on whether and how the crisis could be seen as an opportunity to build back better and to trigger a positive transformation of tourism towards a more responsible and sustainable path (for example, Ateljevic, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Similar reflections happened in other academic fields, including urban studies. As Chatterton (2021: *online*) for example notes, 'the lockdown has thrown us all into a real-time laboratory full of living examples of what a more sustainable future might look like. We have a perfect opportunity to study and explore which of these could be locked in to build sustainable, and safer, cities'. Examples of positive transformations that have happened as a result of the pandemic in cities around the world include changes to road design to create more space for pedestrians and cyclists, more use of green spaces, an increase in urban wildlife, and temporary road closures (Honey-Rosés et al., 2020).

Even prior to this pandemic, which has forced the travel industry to a halt, a growing number of academics and activists were calling for a shift towards (voluntary and planned) degrowth strategies, particularly in the case of cities affected by excessive growth and the negative impacts of overtourism (Romagosa 2020). But as Milano and Koens (2021: 5) have stressed, 'tourism degrowth argues for a political paradigm shift towards a more balanced redistribution of fluxes, benefits and rights among different players and agents' rather than a simple shift towards less or no-tourism, and in this sense, it represents a very different approach to what the

world is currently experiencing. Also, the claim that the world is experiencing a 'temporary de-globalisation' (Niewiadomski, 2020) has been debunked on the basis that, despite the slowdown in travel, other aspects of globalisation such as faster and more complex virtual connectivity, mobility of capital and global networks have seen a significant growth (Seyfi and Hall 2020).

Nonetheless early signs that a shift towards a more sustainable future for tourism could happen were noted, for example, airlines phasing out inefficient aircraft (Gössling and Hall, 2020) and emissions from aviation having fallen by nearly 50 percent in 2020 (The New York Times, 2021). As Gössling and Hall (2020) note, these early signs could be seen as initial steps the global tourism industry is taking towards the pursuit of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a better redistribution of resources and value. However, Seyfi and Hall (2020) pointed out that the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, and consequent reduction in foreign aid, is more likely to further undermine rather than support the achievement of the SDGs. According to Ranjbari et al. (2021) the COVID-19 pandemic has hindered global progress towards social sustainability by threatening the life quality and health of billions as well as increasing poverty and hunger on a global scale. Evidence from previous crises, such as 09/11 or the SARS outbreak, suggest that the tourism industry is more likely to 'bounce back' to its pre-crisis growth levels (Ioannides and Gymothy, 2020) rather than instigate systemic change (Milano and Koens, 2021), and indeed evidence from the present pandemic shows a strong drive in most places to restart the industry as quickly and forcefully as possible to help businesses, entrepreneurs and the economy recover (Koens, 2021).

Seyfi and Hall (2020) stress that in order to shift towards a more sustainable development of tourism, it is fundamental to strike a balance between the three pillars of sustainability (economic, social, environmental) rather than placing focus on improved efficiency, management and growth, which is instead presented as the dominant approach by tourism institutions and international organisations worldwide. According to Richards (2021), in order to achieve a radical transformation, the tourist – rather than the industry – should be the focus of this transformation. Similarly, Ioannides and Gymothy (2020: 627) reflect on whether as a result of the pandemic 'our endless neophilia and unquenching thirst for (often irresponsible) adventure in far-flung places are substituted by travel and leisure activities much closer to home'. They also suggest that perhaps this human tragedy will encourage a form of 'patriotic consumption' whereby people voluntarily choose domestic destinations over travel to far-flung places, while multinational companies may have to start resourcing their products more locally (Ioannides and Gymothy (2020: 628). Other authors have argued that one of the most likely consequences of this crisis will be the boosting of proximity tourism, not only prompted by travel restrictions but also by greater social and environmental awareness of consumers (Romagosa, 2020). These discussions, albeit fascinating, remain philosophical and mostly speculative, with little evidence having so far emerged that the tourists or the travel industry are indeed embracing proximity tourism as a long-term approach. The present research aims therefore to explore whether the COVID-19 crisis has led to new, more local forms of tourism consumption in Paris and London, and how this may affect the sustainable development of these two cities in the longer term. In the next section, we discuss the role of urban residents as consumers of city tourism experiences.

2.2 Urban residents as tourists

Research has recently begun to look at cities as laboratories for "new tourism cultures" (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2019) associated with novel practices and places (Delaplace and Gravari-Barbas, 2016). These new cultures have emerged as a result of the visitor's desire to go beyond the urban tourist enclave zones to experience the city "as a local", to interact more with local communities, to experience off-the-beaten-track neighbourhoods, to be thrilled by urban exploration activities and to be amazed by ordinary, everyday life (Frisch et al.., 2019; Condevaux et al.., 2019). Maitland and Newman (2004) describe the continuum of practices between tourists and other leisure visitors as well as the strong complementarities between the demands for urban amenities of residents, workers and tourists alike. This relates both to the will of visitors to be "like a local", as well as to the desire of urban residents to experience their own city as tourists, thus displaying their 'mobility capital' and cosmopolitan profiles. Urban dwellers are increasingly more interested in experiencing their own city touristically (Larsen, 2008), from visiting traditional heritage sites to the idea of getting lost and exploring new areas like a contemporary flaneur (Featherstone, 1998), thus blurring the distinction between tourism and the everyday (Lash, 1990; Urry, 1995).

A 'new urban tourism' (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2019; Ba et al., 2021; Gravari-Barbas, 2021) is developing progressively, one that stresses the importance and appeal of the everyday in the touristic consumption of cities and the blurring of traditional binary distinctions such as those between host and guest (Frisch et al. 2019). The development of tourism in residential areas (Freytag and Bauder, 2018) and other phenomena like Airbnb have, for example, facilitated the mixing of residents and tourists (Bock, 2015). Stors (2020), drawing on research conducted in Berlin, specifically looks at the role of Airbnb in facilitating the development of new tourism areas in cities. Similarly, tourists visiting family or friends in cities, which can represent as much as a quarter of all leisure trips in metropolitan areas, are more likely to have accommodation and experience leisure facilities in less central areas, while their hosts get to explore their own city 'as if' tourists (Edensor, 2007). In postmodern, creative areas, residents as much as tourists enjoy the arty, gritty atmosphere, exploring the everyday, and gazing at the postmodern architecture as well as at other visitors – both tourists and residents – thus 'prosuming' or co-creating their experience of place (Pappalepore et al., 2014; Pappalepore and Smith, 2016). Ethnic quarters are another example of urban areas where residents may get to experience the 'exotic' while at home, enjoy a form of 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism' (Lash and Urry, 2002), and experience a form of leisure which blurs the lines between the everyday and tourism. The transition from "old" urban tourism patterns characterized by mass concentrations in more touristic places to more diffuse models of urban tourism is, however, closely related to protests and resistance movements (Colomb and Novy 2016) since it induces problems in residential areas where tourism has developed rapidly (e.g. Novy, 2018), such as tourism gentrification (Gravari-Barbas, Guinand, 2017), disruption especially at night (Eldridge, 2019), and displacement.

The conceptual framework of the present paper lies at the intersection between the study of sustainable tourism development in cities; the concept of 'new urban tourism'; and the more recently developed idea of a 'local turn' in tourism studies (Higgins-Desbiolles and Chew Bigby, 2021). A key contribution of this research has been to analyse, discuss, and for the first

time support with empirical evidence, the mutual interconnections between sustainable tourism in cities, the emergence of new urban tourism practices, and the 'local turn' in tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles and Chew Bigby, 2021), all of which have gained magnified significance in the context of COVID-19. If tourists feeling as 'locals' and locals experiencing the city touristically is not a new phenomenon, the pandemic certainly has played a catalytic role in the need to reinvent urban tourism. Wong et al. (2021), for example, illustrate how Macau residents who were distressed during the pandemic experienced restorative benefits from local tours of Macau – which the authors refer to as 'staycation tours' – and felt more confident and optimistic about the future. The 'local turn' in tourism activities is often mentioned as a possible response to environmental and climatic issues (Urry and Larsen, 2011), the spread of which could well be accelerated by the health crisis linked to COVID-19, also reflecting the idea that nearby space can be appropriated in a tourist mode. Higgins-Desbiolles and Chew Bigby (2021: 1) argue that a local turn in tourism could serve 'to address contemporary power imbalances and injustices in tourism by focusing on and empowering local communities'. According to their conceptualisation of the 'local turn' in tourism studies, localisation involves greater engagement with local place and local communities, with a view to enriching rather than damaging destinations through tourism. Similarly and more specifically in an urban context, Koens (2021) sees new urban tourism as a 'regenerative' form of urban tourism after the COVID-19 crisis 'due to its emphasis on collaboration, giving local stakeholders collective ownership over what they want to share, and allowing for new creative tourism experiences that have arisen out of local interests' (p. 36) thus a potential transformative force in rebuilding urban tourism in a more responsible way.

3. Methodology

In order to address the research questions, we adopted a qualitative approach based on a case study design (Yin, 2013), focusing on the two metropolises of Greater London and Greater Paris. A combination of research methods was used: an online Delphi method conducted between November 2020 and March 2021, followed by in-depth one to one interviews with selected stakeholders (between April and June 2021), and complemented by the analysis of media articles, policy documents and secondary data (such as official tourism statistics) throughout the duration of the project.

The Delphi method is a research technique that involves the consultation of a selected group of individuals considered 'experts' in the subject under investigation. Its nature may be quantitative or qualitative, and since it was first developed in the United States in the 1950s, it has been particularly appreciated by academics for its potential to explore in a rigorous ways subjects that are normally difficult to investigate with traditional methods, such as highly complex social problems (Garrod and Fyall, 2005). Typically, 'the Delphi is used to address complexity and uncertainty in an area where knowledge is imperfect, where there are no correct answers or hard facts, and consensus of expert opinion is considered an acceptable second choice' (Donohoe and Needham, 2009: 417). In the context of the present study it was recognised as an effective tool to look into potential future developments of urban tourism post-COVID-19. In the context of the current study two panels were formed, one for Greater London consisting of 9 experts, and one for Paris and Ile-de-France Region consisting of 11 experts (see Table 1 for details). The participants were selected according to two key criteria: 1) they

had to work in very senior roles either within destination marketing/ planning, or for tourism industry organisations and businesses, or in academia; and 2) their organisation or business had to be based in one of the two cities under scrutiny. Ultimately the aim of our purposive sampling strategy was to select participants who were truly knowledgeable about the topics discussed, and to achieve a balance between public and private sector. Open questions were posed online to the two panels in 3 different rounds. After each round, all participants were provided with a summary of all panellists' (anonymised) answers before completing the next round of questions. The questions and themes discussed in each round were identified based on qualitative analysis of the previous round of questions, conducted by the authors of this paper. Questions in the first round were quite broad, with the intention of exploring participants' general perceptions about the policy response to the pandemic, find out about any noteworthy bottom-up initiatives within the tourism industry, and start to gauge any long-term impacts on tourism in the two metropolises. The key theme discussed in this paper, notably the development of new forms of localised tourism, was identified as a key theme for further investigation after the first round of questions, and consequently further explored in rounds two and three of the Delphi, and through follow-up one-to-one interviews.

The one-to-one interviews were conducted on-line after the Delphi study was concluded. The aim of the interviews was to investigate the three research questions listed above, which were refined and finalised as a consequence of the qualitative evidence collected and analysed through the Delphi. We conducted four interviews in each city. All the selected interviewees were people working in destination marketing/management or representatives of tourism business organisations, some of them not included in the previous Delphi study and others contacted for more in-depth feedback. A list of interviewees is provided in Table 2. In Paris we also analysed the verbatim transcripts of three forums organized in the framework of the General Assembly for the relaunch of tourism in Paris (*Assises du tourisme de Paris*), which took place between March to June 2021 and brought together major Parisian stakeholders.

All qualitative data (Delphi study answers, interview and forums transcripts) were coded and analysed by the authors of this paper in accordance with established thematic analysis procedures (Flick, 2018). All London data were collected and analysed in English, while Paris data were collected and analysed in French (this was possible because the researchers were fluent in both languages). Investigator triangulation (as all authors contributed to the empirical analysis) contributed to enhancing the descriptive validity of the results (Yin, 2013). This analysis was also complemented by the analysis of available policy documents, media articles and tourism strategies for the two cities[2]. The results of the analysis are presented in the next sections.

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[2] In Paris: Minutes of the *Comité de la Destination Paris*, 19 March 2021; Note de cadrage Assises du Tourisme Durable, Paris, March 2021; White Book of the Assises du Tourisme Durable de Paris, July 2021 (https://www.tourisme-durable.org/actus/download/717/1447/18?method=view); In London: London & Partners (2021a and 2021b); VisitLondon (2020); DCMS (2021); ALVA, 2021; VisitBritain (2021c); plus a selection of 17 relevant newspaper articles.

Delphi panel - Greater London (9 experts)	Delphi panel - Greater Paris (11 experts)
▪ 3 from Destination management/marketing organisations ▪ 3 from hospitality and tourism industry organisations ▪ 2 local government officials with a tourism remit ▪ 1 senior academic with city tourism expertise	▪ 4 from State and Local tourism Authorities (Municipality, Region, suburb conglomeration, district) - with a tourism remit ▪ 1 Regional planning institution ▪ 1 Tourism consulting organisation ▪ 1 Major cultural site ▪ 1 Tourism start-up incubator ▪ 2 from parapublic organisations for the promotion of tourism ▪ 1 senior academic with tourism expertise

Table 1: list of Delphi panel participants in each city

Interviewees - Greater London	Interviewees - Greater Paris
1. Executive from a tourism department of a central London area. 2. Senior tourism industry representative. 3. Senior tourism industry representative. 4. Senior representative from London's main Destination Management Organisation.	1.Senior officer of the Paris Tourism Office 2-3. Two directors of a Tourism Committee of two districts (*départements*) located at Paris outskirts 4.Senior officer of a Tourism Office of an agglomeration of communities in the outskirts of Paris

Table 2: list of interviewees in each city

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 The (re)discovery by tourism authorities of local residents as potential customers

In London, central areas were particularly affected by COVID-19 due to the closure of cultural/ leisure attractions, hospitality and retail during the three major lockdowns (March/June 2020; October/December 2020; and January/April 2021); the restrictions on international travel; and the requirement to work from home and avoid public transport if possible, which caused a dramatic drop in commuter trips: "*it's changed the dynamic in which people are exploring the city in the sense that people are staying locally and not going into central London*" (interviewee 4, London). Interestingly, this meant that for the first time, busy central areas like Westminster and the City of London, which are mostly business/leisure hubs with small residents' populations, became semi-deserted, and had to find ways to attract visitors while at the same time making sure they were respecting the government's advice on safe travel and 'stay near home'. This caused an interesting inversion of roles, whereby central areas became the quiet, off-the-beaten track destinations in need of promotion by destination marketing bodies, while outer London areas, particularly parks and open spaces in residential areas were at times quite busy. One of our interviewees, for example, explained how a central area's tourism department attempted to draw residents of neighbouring areas while at the same time respecting government restrictions by developing walking tours:

'we've designed curated walks both as downloadable walks and guided walks from our seven neighbouring boroughs to try and bring people into [the area]. So this is making the journey [...] a much more pleasant experience [...] that's both curated walks, and downloadable walks so that people can actually, you know, follow them in their own time' (interviewee 1, London)

The fact that central areas, particularly attractions, were void of tourists was used by many tourism businesses as a marketing tool to promote a new leisure experience for residents. Figures from key visitor attractions in London, indeed, show a reduction of up to 85% in footfall for 2020 in comparison with the previous year (ALVA, 2021). The director of the UK Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA), for example, said in a public statement shortly before the end of the third UK lockdown: "*The visitor experience this year will be phenomenal (...) it will be culture without crowds. You will be up close and personal with animals or art in a way you would never have experienced before*" (The Guardian, 2021). Also one of our interviewees noted:

'on the top of Tower Bridge walkways you can see the Thames in, you know, an amazing way. But, unfortunately, you've got 20,000 People also around you, which makes the experience less interesting... but at the moment you can stand there and see it [...] with one or two other people, you know, so it's a privileged insight into an attraction, and really I think that's our selling point [...] so, our marketing has obviously pivoted to local level Londoners. (interviewee 1, London)

Paris experienced similar trends. The city lost in 2020 approximately 75% of its visitors, compared to 2019. The spectacular decrease in international visitors encouraged the Parisian tourism stakeholders to rediscover local and regional visitors:

'*Many public and private actors have radically changed their marketing strategy, to attract, whenever possible, local customers. Their reactivity is interesting, and shows, even for large attractions, that it is possible to react quickly, despite the strict health requirements. Hotels have experimented with "multi-activity", transforming some of the rooms into temporary "offices" for co-working, or into pop-up shops, making it possible to support certain traders'* (Delphi respondent, Paris).

The development of the ExploreParis platform[3], a website aimed primarily at the people of Ile-de-France to promote the tourist offer of the Greater Paris metropolis, is symptomatic of these trends. The platform took advantage of the tax help offered by the French government to further target the Parisian market, through specific communication campaigns with bloggers, hoteliers, local guides or the culture sector : '*our target is indeed the Parisians to whom we say come here! Even with the 10 km limit[4] you can come*' (interviewee 2). The « local turn » of tourism concerns both the public and the private sector:

"*Tourism organisations such as the Comité Régional du Tourisme or the Office de Tourisme et de Congrès de Paris who, despite the discourses, have never really been interested in the residents, suddenly are interested, since it is the only tourism that exists*" (interviewee 2, Paris).

As mentioned by a hotel grouping representative in Paris, the absence of international markets and in particular of the Americans, '*customers who like to pay*', encouraged to take into consideration the French market which reputably is '*customers who don't like to pay*'. Between the two lockdowns it became clear that '*we no longer had the Americans (...) and, as a consequence, it became necessary to stick to the French*' (Assises du tourisme).

Similarly in London the pandemic placed residents for the first time at the centre of destination marketing. The recently published response strategy for London's main Destination Management Organisation, London & Partners, puts Londoners at the heart of their mission statement:

'*We have set out a new mission for the year: "We will work to keep London's global brand, our communities and London & Partners resilient, and to prepare for recovery (...) And it means an important change. For the first time, this year we will give equal weight to London's domestic audience* [including both UK visitors and Londoners], *particularly for leisure. In a global crisis, it is your domestic consumers who are able to return first*'' (London & Partners, 2021a: *no page*)

New branding campaigns were also developed by London & Partners as a result of this stronger focus on proximity visitors and Londoners specifically: 'I am a Londoner' launched after the first lockdown in Spring 2020, was aimed at Londoners with the message '*to feel confident that going out responsibly is safe and will be a great experience. Step outside and explore your city after lockdown*' (VisitLondon, 2020: *no page*). A year later, after the second UK-wide

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[3] https://exploreparis.com/fr/

[4] After the first, total, block down, a partial opening of the mobilities became possible, but limited to a 10 Km radius.

lockdown, 'Let's Do London' was launched, a £6 million recovery campaign aimed at both domestic visitors and Londoners. One of the aims of this campaign has been to '*remind Londoners what they have been missing, particularly the unique and wide variety of experiences available which they can enjoy with friends and family*' (London & Partners, 2021b: 34).

Interestingly, in Paris the geographical implications of the trends discussed above were somehow 'opposite' to the shifts experienced in London. In Paris our stakeholders noted: '*this type of promotion also makes it possible to promote districts located outside tourist centers and thus makes it possible to disseminate tourist flows and to fight over-tourism*'. The participation of the local residents in the reorientation of the targeted markets is also considered crucial : "*urban destinations would benefit from valuing their residents more, which implies engaging them more and making them active actors in tourism development decisions*" *(Delphi respondent, Paris)*.

4.2 The (re)discovery of the metropolis as a tourism destination by local residents

Changes happened not only from a supply perspective, but also in terms of customer behaviour: as metropolitan populations experienced mobility restrictions, they developed new attitudes towards their own city and neighbourhood, rediscovered through a different eye both in London and Paris. Our qualitative data provided some interesting insights in this respect. One of our London interviewees, for example, described the results of a marketing research conducted by the local DMO after the first lockdown, which showed that

> '*Londoners (...) were exploring their local communities, so places that they had on their doorstep, that they wouldn't necessarily have seen before, say parks, local shops, for example, that kind of opened up to them (...) And that's kind of built up relationships in that community*' (interviewee 4, London).

At the preparatory meetings of the *Assises du Tourisme* (April 2021), a tourism officer of the City of Paris and Parisian resident, described her own experience of exploring Paris 'as if' a tourist as an alternative to travelling abroad due to COVID-19 restrictions. She described how the pandemic allowed her to undertake a new and more playful approach to her own city:

"*I live within the boundaries of the 19 - 20th arrondissement. I booked a hotel in the fifth arrondissement and I was curious to see if I was going to feel "dépaysée" [out of place]… For a long time, I have enjoyed traveling. The further I go, the better it is, the more I get to meet people, the better I feel and I wondered if this change of scenery, around the fifth and sixth arrondissements, was going to work. I left with my backpack; from the 20th, I went by metro to Châtelet and then I walked to the Panthéon. I had a hiking app, I had a picnic in the Luxembourg area. I had a meal delivered to my room at the hotel, which was of an incredible quality. I was rested and I did a part of the Grande Randonnée trail between the 6th and 13th arrondissements. And it worked! I came home really with the feeling of being "depaysée"[in another place]*" *(Assises forum transcript, Paris)*.

The concept of *'dépaysement',* notably a feeling of being out of place, disoriented as a result of a change of scenery, was recognised by Greater Paris tourism bodies as key to attracting Paris residents to suburban areas for leisure purposes:

"*We[5] are working on this idea of a 'dépaysement' (...) You just need to be on the banks of the river Marne, two kilometers from Paris, but that has nothing to do with Paris anymore. So, as much for tourists as for Parisians, we play the Paris card, the change of scenery at the gates of Paris, the forest ...*" (Interviewee 2, Paris)

These trends contribute among others to the realisation by tourism industry and policy makers, that the way tourism and particularly 'the tourist' are defined is progressively changing:

"We will come to a definition (of the tourist), which will be less commercial and geographic... because ultimately, the definition of tourism, for me, was based on somewhat commercial criteria where you buy a travel document and buy accommodation. (...). We will perhaps come back to (...) a notion that revolves around being (...) outside of our daily life, even if we are in the geographic space of our daily life, but we experience it differently. Or a 'depaysement' (a change of scenery)" (Interviewee 2, Paris).

Public tourism stakeholders in both cities view local residents as communication ambassadors as well as a « permanent stock » of possible customers, which is seen as a crucial resource for the long-term resilience of the tourism industry:

"*We can rely on Parisians to become ambassadors. By doing this, the city and the destination can become more agile and more resilient (...) Tourists are not going to come back very soon (...) we will have to be patient before being able to see overseas customers again . So, in terms of the appropriation of the territory, I think that there is something to be done with the Parisians*" (Assises forum transcript,   Paris).

4.3 **Is there scope for a more sustainable urban tourism in the two metropolises?**

The reorientation of tourism operators towards a local, national (and in the longer term European) market contributes to the vision of *a sustainable tourism for the metropolis*. This is coherent with the policies of the City of Paris "soft mobilities, individual tourism, desaturation of tourist flows, support for the ecological transition of tourist operators, repartition of economic benefits across all neighbourhoods ...". Qualitatively speaking, promotion "*should give more value to the residents, residents' lifestyles, the places of everyday life (...) the ways of social life, the habits and customs, the places of everyday life etc. and not only the great monuments and tourist sites*" considered as more authentic. (Delphi respondent,Paris)

In Paris, local, regional, national but also European markets are identified by many stakeholders as key for future, resilient tourism development of the metropolis : *"really consider the proximity market as a priority. Stop chasing distant tourists who certainly spend a lot of money but have a very short average stay (...). Working on extending the length of stay is also an essential resilience factor. All the more so since, as European tourists, they will tend to be repeat visitors and therefore increasingly visit lesser-known sites. The issue of resilience is a matter of priority: distant international tourism or proximity tourism"* (Delphi respondent, Paris).

In London, a stronger link with local communities and a greater spread of tourism throughout Greater London was also wished for by our respondents, in order to achieve sustainability and

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[5] "We": The Comité Départemental du Tourisme (HSL)

a more equal distribution of benefits. New technologies such as virtual tours, which have developed as a result of the pandemic, were mentioned as an opportunity in this sense, as tools to promote new parts of the city and new experiences, pre, during and post-visit. Consumer choices, likely to return to what they were pre-pandemic, and short-termism of the industry, however, were seen by our respondents as major barriers to bouncing forward towards a more sustainable urban tourism model. A change of direction by national and local government and longer term considerations are perceived as necessary to achieve such changes.

It was also noted that the pandemic may have made more people sensitive to environmental concerns and human ability to manage emissions, thus possibly encouraging a more sustainable approach to travel. When expressing their hopes for the future of tourism in London or Paris, the Delphi respondents did wish for the two metropolises to become leaders as sustainable tourism destinations*:*

> '*My hope is that London becomes a leader as a sustainable tourism destination. Following the initial focus on recovery and re-welcoming visitors, I hope there is a supported shift to make our cultural and tourism businesses more resilient and balanced to Londoners, domestic and international visitors*'. (Delphi respondent, London).

> '*This shock is an excellent opportunity to rethink the tourism development model in the Ile-de-France region by working on a different mix of the geographical origins of visitors, by developing a carbon-neutral offer, by intensifying the benefits and the length of stay, by offering new tourist experiences'* (Delphi respondent, Paris).

Local stakeholders wish to use COVID-19 as a means to reinvent a more environmental friendly tourism, in particular in relation with its relaunch (*plan de relance*) :

> `*The challenge will be to seek not only a growth in tourism but also the development of tourism with positive impacts, for the environment and the destination. The priorities should in particular focus on low carbon emissions (by the entire sector), considering non-financial performance indicators, promotion of sustainable offers, fight against overtourism with the implementation of secondary circuits throughout the Ile-de-France region, environmental conditions applied to all new tourism development projects*" (Delphi respondent, Paris).

However, local stakeholders do not have illusions: this would require that the *'government and local public policies put in place during the crisis are supporting the transformation of companies towards more sustainable models (respect for environment and local populations) as opposed to only seeking to ensure the economic survival of tourism companies while waiting for a return of "old tourism'* (Delphi respondent, Paris).

London, as the main gateway for international visitors to the UK accounting for 53% of all international visits (DCMS, 2021: 51), is seen by the DCMS (the UK government department responsible for tourism), as key to the recovery of the country as a whole. The recently published UK Tourism Recovery Plan (DCMS, 2021) calls for the tourism industry to '*play its part in the overall sustainability agenda. That means pursuing a tourism industry that contributes to the enhancement and conservation of cultural, natural and historic heritage and minimises damage to the environment.'* (p. 51). However, despite a note that the negative impacts of unmanaged tourism seen in cities like Venice and Dubrovnik should be avoided and amenities should be protected for visitors and residents alike (p. 51), the focus of the recovery plan remains strongly focused on '*[building] back better with a more productive, innovative*

and resilient tourism industry' (DCMS, 2021: 17). This approach validates Seyfi and Hall's point that governments and international tourism bodies, when addressing sustainability problems, largely see the answer in 'improved competitiveness, efficiency, the market and growth […] even though it must be done "better"' (2020: 301) while 'green growth and the management of visitor growth as part of the response to overtourism are little more than a marginal reform of a socio-economic system unsustainably geared towards economic growth' (p.303). The respondents to our Delphi study, tend to agree with this view, with little hope that the pandemic will lead to the development of a more sustainable form of city tourism in the long-term. Some of our Delphi panel members for example noted:

> *'I predict a return to mass tourism trends as soon as it becomes possible…' (Delphi respondent, Paris).*

> *'The drive for economic wealth will, sadly, override any policy and strategy changes and demand has not changed. Whilst some people might have found new, rural destinations that they want to visit, an increase in short break snacking will mean that the domestic and overseas markets will still want to visit cities' (Delphi respondent, London).*

In this context, some stakeholders considered that the COVID-19 crisis was an "*occasion ratée*", a missed opportunity. A stronger focus on domestic and proximity markets is therefore seen by some stakeholders as key. Less reliance on inbound, international travel in particular was mentioned as a way forward for urban destinations [London] to become more resilient to future crises. This, according to our Delphi respondents, would involve a wider diversity of the tourism product to appeal to a wider range of audiences, including – and particularly – repeat visitors such as VFR and past residents, and residents themselves.

5. Conclusions

Our results allow us to identify a series of common trends, while also pointing at key differences in the two cities, mainly in terms of stakeholders' assessments of State and local Covid-related interventions. The findings highlight that regardless of the political and governance context, these two major European destinations reacted according to common trajectories . Despite the expectations of several tourism stakeholders, it soon became clear that the dominant approach of the regional and local decision-makers was the recovery of a particularly distressed major economic sector. In this context, '*it will be difficult to counter the return of mass tourism in traditional tourist location*s' (Delphi, Paris respondents). The COVID-19 crisis, therefore, did not bring the sustainable "revolution" some stakeholders wished or expected. However, tourism sustainability did gain new importance after the pandemic. In both metropolises, sustainability became a central narrative in environmental, economic and social terms. COVID-19 made emerging trends much more visible, such as curbing carbon emissions, inclusion of the local markets to the tourism offer and marketing, and better inclusion of local residents in decision making related to tourism policy and development. In both cities tourism marketing adopted a new "hyper-local" approach with the objective of encouraging proximity tourism. This 'hyper-local' approach goes hand in hand

with the "Quarter-Hour City" approach[6], a theme of the Paris Mayor campaign since 2019, and with the London Mayor's ambition to become a zero carbon city by 2030. During the pandemic both cities developed new tourism products based on 'soft' mobility (walking, cycling, public transport, waterways, etc.) as well as virtual tourism experiences.

This local turn in city tourism, if maintained over time, could contribute to urban sustainability in more than one way, including: a) enhancing resilience of the tourism industry through decreased reliance on international tourism; b) reducing the need to attract long-haul tourists; c) empowering local residents to become active prosumers of the tourism product; and d) d attracting a type of visitor (including local and domestic) more likely to become a repeat visitor and therefore travel off-the-beaten track away from most congested areas.

To conclude: though the pandemic did not bring the tourism revolution that several stakeholders were hoping for, it accelerated the "velvet revolution" (Gravari-Barbas et al., 2019) of new urban tourism. Paris and London will most likely have, after the pandemic, significant numbers of visitors and may face overtourism again - local authorities made clear that building back better is not about reducing the number of visitors. The pandemic confirmed however the emergence of urban tourism trends illustrated by a better distribution of tourism in time and space, by the development of alternative and local offers beyond the major tourist sights, by better inclusion of tourism in everyday life and a better inclusion of local residents in tourism and 'soft' local mobilities.

6. Wider implications for tourism industry and metropolitan destinations

The experiences analysed in the present study serve to illustrate some of the destination management approaches embraced during a time of unprecedented crisis by two of the world's most visited urban destinations . Through the assessment and discussion of these experiences from the perspective of some key tourism stakeholders, the study provides valuable recommendations for destination and tourism management.

Our discussion highlights that during the COVID-19 crisis local residents were, for the first time, recognized as a key market for tourism in Paris and London, leading to new tourism products and to marketing campaigns specifically designed for this target audience. Three key observations can be drawn from our findings: firstly, residents and proximity tourists should be considered, researched and included as a target of tourism campaigns by destination marketing bodies in the long term, for the reasons discussed in the previous section.

Secondly, in a context where tourism has become an increasingly politicised urban phenomenon, sustainability is a central concern for both tourism and urban authorities . One of the most recent manifestations of this shift is the call for a 'local turn' in tourism which will manifest itself through greater focus on the local dimension of space, empowerment of local

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[6] The concept of the "Quarter-Hour City" requires an end to a fragmented city where many activities depend on travel by car or public transport. Instead, the quarter-hour city is about limiting the perimeter of access to vital functions, such as eating, working, cultivating, etc. It advocates a new form of new urbanity, in order to limit polluting travel and improve the living environment.

communities and respect for the local ecology (Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby, 2021). While mindful of avoiding 'the local trap' - i.e. the tendency of academics and activists to assume that the local is preferable or to perpetuate unconscious positive assumptions about the local (Purcel, 2006) - we believe that these changes could take tourism in a better direction. These trends are certainly not new, but they were confirmed and gained importance after the pandemic.

Thirdly, tourism industry practitioners are coming to realise the need to update tourism definitions to align with an increasingly evolving and fluid range of tourism mobilities. While the blurring between tourism and the everyday has been widely discussed in tourism theory (Lash, 1990; Urry, 1995; Larsen, 2008), the drastic changes brought about by the pandemic have highlighted some of the wider, practical implications of these theoretical debates for industry and policy making.   This becomes evident, for example, through the development of leisure products aimed at locals by tourism authorities, leading to a break with "*tourism in the strict sense of the word, emerged with the arrival of modernity*" (Bourdeau, 2012: 43), which is based on a "*highly polarised and polarising ad hoc planning and development of spaces where the main heritage attraction (monument, famous site) and the resort are seen as symbolic*" (*ibid*.: 44). This shift highlights the need for a review of traditional definitions of tourism, which fail to take into account the ever evolving range of tourism mobilities, particularly evident in metropolitan destinations. UNWTO tourism definitions have and will continue to have great utility in terms of statistics and comparability of data between destinations. But they are outdated and do not reflect the contemporary complexities of urban tourism. The pandemic contributes in a decisive way to the development of new urban tourism paradigms. Tourism gains a quasi-anthropological meaning, centered on the personal experience of the visitor, who decides and builds its tourism experience independently from the physical distance between their 'permanent home' and the visited place.

7. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This is a qualitative, explorative research based on a case study design, and therefore the findings cannot be generalised to other cities. A degree of transferability (Flick, 2018) of the findings and industry implications is however possible, as discussed in the previous section. The research respondents in the two cities were carefully selected to ensure comparability between the two case studies, a balance between private and public sector respondents, as well as a high level of expertise. The strict selection criteria combined with the busy time when the research was conducted (soon after the end of the second lockdown) resulted in a small sample size for interview respondents: the length and depth of interviews, however, combined with the Delphi study, allowed us to achieve great richness of data. As this study exclusively focused on the perspectives of destination management and tourism policy experts, we recommend that future research should look into perceptions and experiences of consumers (local residents and proximity tourists in particular). We would also welcome insights from - and collaborations with - other metropolitan destinations outside of Europe, particularly from different cultural contexts and/or in the global south. Finally, when we eventually emerge from this pandemic, we intend to conduct a post-pandemic follow up study, which will look more

specifically at the link between tourism sustainability and the local turn in tourism with a longer term perspective.

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