


Theoretical fundamentals of sustainable spatial planning of European tourism destinations

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Introduction

Tourism is a spatial complex of processes that shape the landscape and affect social, economic, cultural, and political relations (Shaw & Williams, 2004). Sustainable tourism, through its cross-sectoral and cross-spatial-scale nature, contributes to economic growth and development, creates jobs, spurs sustainable agriculture, promotes inclusiveness, engages excluded people, promotes investments in clean energy sources, encourages regeneration, preserves cultural and natural heritage, adopts sustainable modes of consumption and production, plays a leading role in the global response to climate change, and fosters multicultural and interfaith tolerance and understanding (UN-WTO, 2019). Unfortunately, the tourism-oriented communes frequently experience problems of mismanagement, including lack of spatial and strategic planning, and excessive and inconsistent investments (Briassoulis, 2002). Therefore, the European idea of sustainable spatial planning of tourism destinations must be engaged with and connected to the goals of a more sustainable development of Europe (European Commission, 2016). This is the goal of the project 'SPOT – Sustainable Spatial Planning of Tourism Destinations', implemented by a research consortium including six educational and scientific institutions representing five different countries.

Aiming to provide a contribution in relation to the above issue, this book compares the different contexts for spatial planning and how they approach tourism-related issues in selected European countries, namely Italy (Cotella, 2022), Norway (Tjørve, 2022), Poland (Leśniewska-Napierała et al., 2022), Portugal (Jorge et al., 2022) and Turkey (Levent et al., 2022). Each chapter starts with a presentation of the overall profile of the investigated country. The chapters then consider the following contexts of spatial planning of tourism destinations: legal regulations of spatial planning, long-term strategy for spatial planning, public participation in spatial planning, and the main challenges of spatial planning of tourism destinations. The book ends with an overarching discussion focusing on the various challenges that affect sustainable spatial planning of tourism destination in the countries under consideration (Cerić & Czapiewski, 2022).

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, we set the context for the book by elaborating on the reasons why spatial and strategic spatial planning activities should include tourism-related issues within their scope. A further focus then concerns the level of decentralisation of the administrative structures of the selected countries, an issue that, embedded as it is in the overall multilevel governance framework for spatial planning in Europe (Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Cotella et al., 2021), inevitably affect how the latter engages with tourism-related issues.

Strategic planning, spatial planning, and tourism development

In the investigated countries, strategic planning was used separately from spatial planning. In particular, whereas the development and consolidation of spatial governance and planning systems in the European countries dates back to the industrial revolution and has been traditionally aimed at ensuring some sort of public control over spatial development (Janin Rivolin, 2012; Berisha et al., 2021), the strategic planning of cities and territories is an activity that has emerged more recently, often in mutual relation with the programming of EU resources (Albrechts, 2004; Cotella & Dabrowski, 2022). Precisely speaking, the 1988 reform of the Structural Funds allowed for reorienting EU regional policy towards a more territorial cohesive and place-based development (Cotella et al., 2021). Since then, as a result of the progressive influence of the EU, strategic and spatial planning activities have gradually become closer and more coherent with each other in various EU member countries, benefitting from multiple attempts aimed at cross-fertilisation and the development of synergies, which led in turn to the

maximisation of the impact of the European Structural and Investments Funds (Cotella, 2020; Jorge et al., 2022).

Despite this phenomenon, serious concerns remain in relation to the progressive deregulation of spatial planning laws in several countries in Europe, for instance in Norway (Tjørve, 2022), as well as the instability of spatial planning regulations, noticeable in the case of Poland (Leśniewska-Napierała et al., 2022). Both examples are the results of the increase of neoliberal development of interests over the environmental and social considerations (Tjørve, 2022). The neoliberal, market-oriented paradigm of development characterises the Turkish context as well. In this country, this approach was officially introduced in 1980 and resulted in incremental privatisation and decentralisation. From that moment on, spatial planning and urban development have been controlled by the municipalities rather than the state, and increasingly influenced by the inclusion of private actors in the decision-making arena (Levent et al., 2022).

Between regionalised and centralised administrative structures

As Cotella (2022) noticed, since mid-1990s Italy has been considered a regionalised country. Whereas regions (NUTS2) are responsible for the promulgation of their own spatial planning laws, the coordination of spatial planning remains in the hands of provinces and metropolitan cities (NUTS3). Urban planning, housing, and the land registry are allocated to local administrative units, i.e. the municipalities. Importantly, according to the Italian national spatial planning legal framework, the so-called Municipal General Regulatory Plan is produced by municipalities to allocate particular uses and characteristics to all areas of land, hence representing the main pivotal tool aimed at the public control of spatial transformation. When it comes to the protection, management and valorisation of tourism destination, regions in Italy have been awarded a couple of decades ago a leading role in landscape planning, as an indirect consequence of the influence of supranational European institutions (Cotella, 2022).

Leśniewska-Napierała et al. (2022) argue that the last three decades of economic transition significantly affected land development in Poland. The following changes should be mentioned: decentralisation, privatisation, adjustment of legal regulations for spatial planning to the EU standards, and access to structural funds and agricultural subsidies from the EU. Spatial planning is coordinated at national, regional (NUTS2), and local levels (LAU2). The concept of spatial development of the country defines the conditions, aims, and directions of spatial planning at the

national level. At the level of Polish administrative regions (voivodeships), spatial development plans translate the arrangements adopted in regional development strategy and specify crucial natural resources and elements of land development. Furthermore, regional landscape audits identify and evaluate landscapes and their features and deliver actionable spatial planning policy recommendations. Finally, the instruments of local spatial planning in Poland should be mentioned: local study of determinants and directions of land development (strategic approach), local spatial development plan (operational approach), and landscape resolution (operational approach as well) (Leśniewska-Napierała et al., 2022).

Tjørve (2022) shows Norway as an interesting example of a country characterised by two opposing tendencies, namely: the centralisation of population and public sectors, and the decentralisation of responsibilities and political power. Rising municipal autonomy is challenged by decreasing efficiency of supplying public services. Spatial planning in Norway is coordinated mainly at the local level. Recently, spatial planning legislation allowed anyone (e.g. destination-management organisation or private developers) to propose private development plans, which the local authorities are obliged to evaluate, in so doing increasing development pressure dramatically, especially in relation to those tourism destination areas that are more prone to the development of second homes (Tjørve, 2022).

Portugal is an interesting example of an economy significantly dependent on tourism, mainly international. Sun and sea tourism, city breaks, golf tourism, rural tourism, nature tourism, cultural and gastronomic tourism, etc., altogether contribute to 17% of the Gross Domestic Product, 19% of employment, and 20% of total exports. Spatial planning of the country significantly dependent on tourism is an issue itself. Especially that implementation of a modern land management system was influenced only in the end of 1980s by the accession of Portugal to the European Economic Community. From 2007 on, decentralisation and deregulation of the spatial planning system in Portugal became a trend. However, spatial planning of specific territories like coastal line and estuaries, protected areas, and water reservoirs is a domain of the state. In general, however, spatial planning responsibilities are allocated within regional, supralocal, and municipal level (Jorge et al., 2022).

The administrative division of Turkey seems to be most complicated, as described by Levent et al. (2022). The three-tier administrative division of Turkey includes provinces (NUTS3 level), sub-provinces and villages. However, it is accompanied by the municipal system which includes metropolitan municipalities for largest cities operating beyond metropolitan district municipalities. There are also provincial municipalities referring to small and medium-sized cities that are over district and town municipalities. Spatial policy is a domain of the municipal system rather than administrative one. Turkish State has control over proposing and elaborating the following types of spatial plans: National Development Plan, Spatial Strategy Plan and, interestingly, Regional Plans. Environmental Master

Plans are set at provincial level. Finally, at local level, two types of spatial plans should be mentioned: Spatial Development Plans and Implementation Plans. Strategic planning of tourism destinations is controlled by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism which acts also as a destination management organisation at the national level. However, no responsibilities related to that field might be identified at the regional or local level. Thus, there have been no successful achievements on sustainable development of the touristic areas in Turkey (Levent et al., 2022).

Spatial planning and landscape protection towards higher tourism attractiveness

The effective spatial distribution of tourism flows became a serious challenge for both strategic and spatial planning. On the one hand, overtourism phenomena vary across time (seasonality) and space (substantial interest of tourists is evidenced in the most renowned coastal and mountain areas, and in the main touristic cities). Both natural and landscape value of most popular areas are endangered by overexploitation. On the other hand, inner peripheries characterised by a large share of natural and landscape resources, but also low level of accessibility, infrastructure, and services require both investments and promotion activities (Cotella, 2022).

In a country witnessing an economic transition such as Poland, the first significant challenge of spatial planning resulted from a common understanding of the meaning of property and individual freedom within the framework of social agreement, including spatial order. Secondly, restoring local and regional governments resulted, among others, in the growing role of citizens and social organisations in spatial planning. However, the needs of host communities are usually marginalised in the process of making spatial decisions, while the needs of tourism industry are usually overvalued. Financial selfishness of tourism enterprises dominates over social, economic, aesthetic, and ethical needs of inhabitants. This is evidenced in Poland (Leśniewska-Napierała et al., 2022), but also in Turkey (Levent et al., 2022).

Mountain areas of Norway are challenged mainly by privatisation triggered by both tourism destination sprawl and development of second-homes agglomerations. Conflicts occurred between tourists, tourism enterprises (also owned by local inhabitants) and second-home dwellers, on the one hand, and local landowners, mainly farmers, on the other. However, in these conflicts, the interests of nature are barely represented. Moreover, spatial and functional changes of central areas of tourism destinations should be mentioned. Due to the development of ski resorts in mountain areas, community centres move to the commercial centres of tourism

destinations. In consequence, commercialisation put tourism as the driving force of spatial development of the areas disconnected from local values (Tjørve, 2022).

Direct linkages between spatial planning and strategic planning of tourism destinations are usually missing. But development of sustainable tourism destinations is targeted by the running Tourism Strategy 2027 introduced by the Portuguese government in 2017. According to the document, Portuguese tourism industry is expected to achieve competitive advantage based on the principles of sustainability. The very first section of the mentioned strategic document is focused on enhancing the territory, and emphasises (however, not literally) the significance of sustainable spatial planning of tourism destinations (Jorge et al., 2022).

Difficulties in accessing both information and knowledge about spatial planning issues should be mentioned in the case of Portugal. The skills and competencies of local stakeholders (mainly inhabitants) to use this information and knowledge are significantly limited. Similar considerations are related to the willingness of locals to participate in the process of spatial planning (Jorge et al., 2022). In Turkey, the situation is much worse, as public participation in this process is completely missing. The negative effects of the lack of social participation in spatial planning of tourism destinations are strengthened by a complex and complicated system, as well as inconsistencies between tourism strategic decisions made on governmental level and spatial planning decisions of local authorities (Levent et al., 2022).

From neoliberal approach towards a more just and greener one

As Blázquez-Salom et al. (2019) suggested, the discussion of future tourism destinations needs to face a paradox of conflicting forms of growth-oriented tourism raised from the hegemony of neoliberal ideology: mass tourism (growth is achieved by increase of occupancy; with all environmental negative consequences resulting from excessive tourism consumption) and elitist tourism (growth relates to increase of prices justified by quality and luxurious character of services; accompanied by all social negative impacts resulting from increase of social inequalities). Therefore, the effectiveness of spatial and strategic tourism planning following the conventional approach to sustainability linked to the economic concept of growth is disputable (Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019). Similar doubts relate to sustainable regional development in general. While the overall objective of regional development is sustainability, regional policies are commonly focused on the neoliberal idea of fostering competitiveness (Weck et al., 2021).

Interdependence of both sustainability and economic growth of tourism destinations is evidenced only when the mediating role of national or international institutions is significant, like EU's financial support (Filipiak et al., 2020). Current discussions of sustainable tourism must lead to solving unequal negative impacts of both mass and elitist tourism, mainly to increase care about local communities and workers, cultural landscape, climate, bio- and geodiversity (Carnicelli & Boluk, 2021). As thus, social participation in spatial planning of future tourism destinations is a must. All stakeholders of tourism development have to cooperate in the preparation of spatial plans, the implementation of spatial policy, as well as in decision-making (Leśniewska-Napierała et al., 2022).

It is expected that future tourism should be both sustainable and egalitarian (Fletcher et al., 2021). Discussion on sustainable and egalitarian destinations must refer to scarce resources for tourism development, activities undertaken by tourism industry trying to optimize the use of limited resources for development, and the significant role of local communities mediating between resource-based and activity-based traditions of sustainability (Saarinen, 2006). This brings us to the question of a shift from neoliberal economy-centric approach to spatial and strategic tourism planning towards more a just and greener world. And the question that should be asked is “how”, rather than “if”.

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