Understanding of Cultural tourism: views of tourists, residents, and entrepreneurs

For European, national and regional stakeholders

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Introduction

This policy brief is addressed to various stakeholder groups at the same time. It advocates better cooperation between stakeholders from different policy areas, different scale levels and different actors, also referred to as multi-sector governance, multi-level governance and multi-actor governance. Any simplification through a single stakeholder approach would do the complexity of cultural tourism short. Thinking in terms of target groups is thus being exchanged for thinking in terms of collaborative structures.

Research and policy-making for cultural tourism usually imply a focus on tourists as consumers and entrepreneurs as producers of cultural tourism. This approach is a result of the traditional **definition of cultural tourism**. A strict separation of the two target groups is often used in research (also in interviews and surveys) and policy. Recently there is also an increasing focus on residents. With the growing attention for sustainable cultural tourism, the awareness of local entrepreneurs and local residents has grown.

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The experiences of these target groups are still too little used in policy and those experiences and views, which may differ among target groups, are not compared with each other.

Policies for cultural tourism could be strengthened by involving the experiences of these latter groups more strongly.

1. Evidence and Analysis

Surveys[1] were held among tourists, local residents and entrepreneurs in case study areas in fifteen different countries (Figure 1).
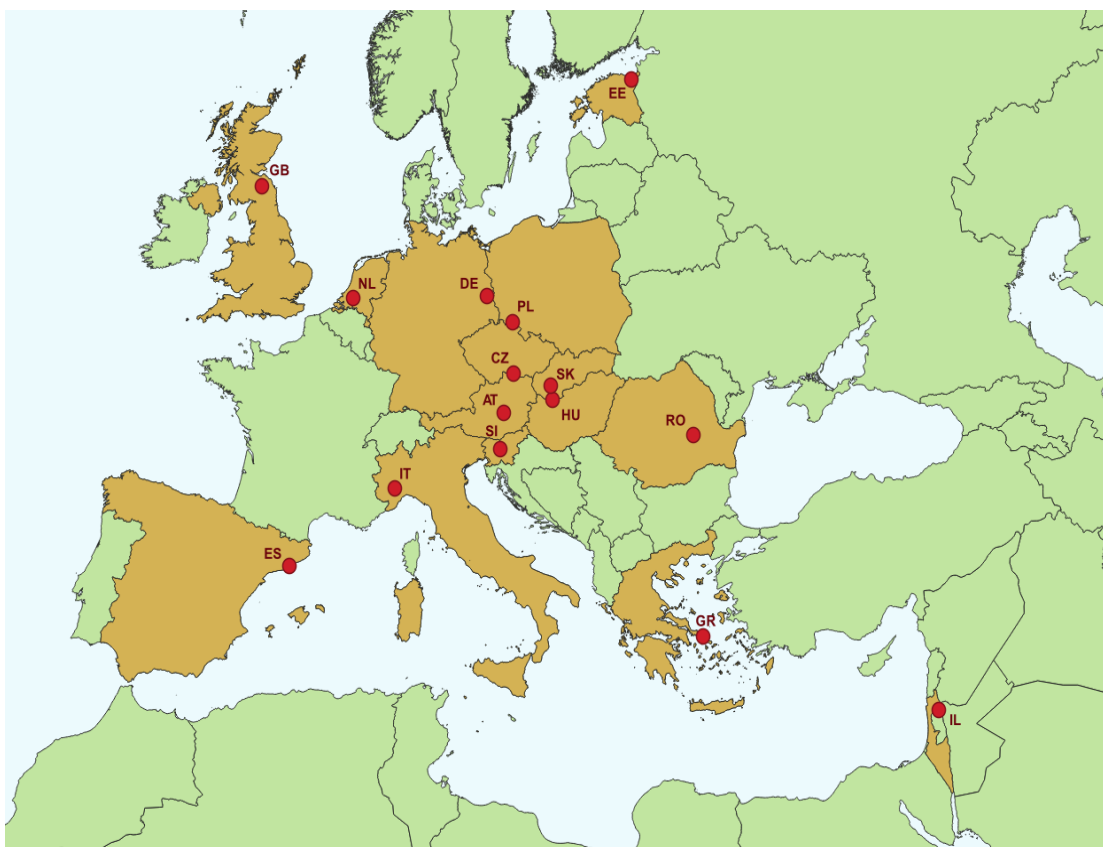

FIGURE 1: MAP WITH PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES (HIGHLIGHTED IN ORANGE) AND THE POINT LOCATIONS OF THE CASE STUDIES WITH THEIR ACCOMPANYING CODES. CASE STUDIES CONSISTING OF MULTIPLE SUB REGIONS ARE REPRESENTED BY ONE POINT.

It is interesting to see that in most areas the majority of tourists are nationals, while in others tourists are mainly from abroad (Table 1). Fact is, of course, that COVID-19 restrictions had a major influence on this, but it remains an important factor in the development of tourism in an area: what is the origin of the tourists?[2]

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[1] Most of the surveys were held in the months of July 2020 to October 2020. For some countries there were no possibilities to do the surveys in this period and they have collected the data in 2021. The surveys were conducted during a period when COVID was severe or less severe in various countries. The pandemic has influenced the results by a different composition of the tourists as a target group. There were now no tourists from other continents who would normally be target groups for some destinations. The period in which the surveys were conducted among tourists also influenced the results. Outside the summer holidays you will find other types of tourists. Also entrepreneurs and residents may also have been influenced by the Corona circumstances when completing the surveys.

[2] For almost all of the case studies 75% or more of the tourists that were surveyed come from the country in which the case study is located. In three cases, Barcelona (Spain), Kinderdijk (The Netherlands) and Ljubljana (Slovenia) 50% or more of the tourists were foreign. The large proportion of nationals is a consequence of the COVID-19 measures worldwide, that prevented and discouraged travelling abroad.

TABLE 1: *ORIGIN OF THE SURVEYED TOURISTS PER CASE STUDY: EITHER NATIONAL (COMING FROM THE COUNTRY IN WHICH THE CASE STUDY IS LOCATED) OR FOREIGN.*

Case study	National (%)	Foreign (%)	Case study	National (%)	Foreign (%)
AT	96	4	IL	93	7
CZ	100	0	IT	83	17
DE	97	3	NL	49	51
EE	91	9	PL	92	8
ES	9	91	RO	98	2
GR	75	25	SI	26	74
HU	98	2	SK	87	13

From our surveys of the views and experiences of tourists, residents and entrepreneurs, the following findings can be presented:

- According to tourists, residents, and entrepreneurs **transport infrastructure** are important with a lot of potential for improvement.
- Both tourists and entrepreneurs often feel there is not enough **information and communication** provided towards tourists. See also the world cloud presented in Figure 2, showing tourists' views on missing facilities in the Austrian case study area.

FIGURE 2: TOURISTS' VIEWS ON MISSING FACILITIES (COPYRIGHT: WORDCLOUD/AUSTRIA UNI GRAZ).

- Most residents see the **economic benefits** of cultural tourism. They can profit from an increased job offer, or by selling products and services. Improving facilities for tourism can also improve the quality of life for residents. However, with increasing tourist numbers, residents should not be forgotten as they will have a different perspective on tourism than other stakeholders such as entrepreneurs.

- On the whole, tourists do definitely appear interested in **visiting cultural attractions and sites**. Local traditions/culture is an important motivator of travelling to a certain destination and most visitors need to get a taste of local culture and traditions.
- Tourists are generally less satisfied with the **number and diversity of cultural attractions** than tourism entrepreneurs, who feel quite positive.
- Entrepreneurs often feel that cultural tourism is not well developed in the case study areas concerned. However, in the urban study areas, both tourists and entrepreneurs appear more satisfied with the cultural offer, and entrepreneurs are more positive about the state of development.
- Residents are more inclined to feel that tourist numbers are **(very) high** in their area than entrepreneurs, this is even the case for residents of areas that are seen as under-touristed. This is visible in Figure 3, where the majority of surveyed residents feel that tourist numbers are (very) high, whereas an even larger majority of tourism entrepreneurs agree (strongly) that tourist numbers should be higher in the area. However, in general, most residents (except in mass-tourism areas) do feel that the impact of an increase in cultural tourism could be (very) positive. Also, entrepreneurs see value in the increase of cultural tourism, and see an important role for the Residents' view on the number of tourists is also demonstrated per case study in Figure 3 . This is not always related to whether an area is viewed as over-or under- touristed. How residents perceive the number of tourists must of course be a very important point in the development of tourism in areas, as the perceived number of visitors can be very different from the reality.
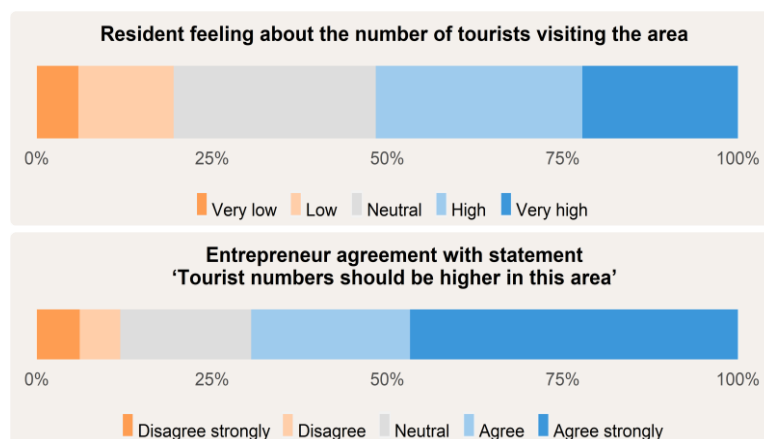

FIGURE 3: RESIDENTS' FEELING ABOUT THE NUMBER OF TOURISTS VISITING THE AREA (TOP) AND AGREEMENT OF TOURISM ENTREPRENEURS WITH THE STATEMENT 'TOURIST NUMBERS SHOULD BE HIGHER IN THE AREA' (BOTTOM).

Residents' view on the number of tourists is also demonstrated per the case study in Figure 4[3]. This is not always related to whether an area is viewed as over-or under- touristed. How residents perceive the number of tourists must of course be a very important point in the development of tourism in areas, as the perceived number of visitors can be very different from the reality.

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[3] In seven out of fourteen case studies the categories 'high' and 'very high' are over 50%, meaning that in those case studies the number of tourists is seen as high. In two case studies (Israel and Slovakia) almost 50% of the respondents feels the tourist numbers are low. From the seven case studies where residents feel tourist numbers are high or very high, only two are viewed as over-touristed: Barcelona (Spain) and Kinderdijk (The Netherlands). Four (Southern Moravia, Czechia; Piedmont Landscape, Italy; Valley of Palaces and Gardens, Poland; Buzău Carpathians and Subcarpathians, Romania) are categorized as under-touristed, which does not seem to correspond with how residents feel about tourist numbers.
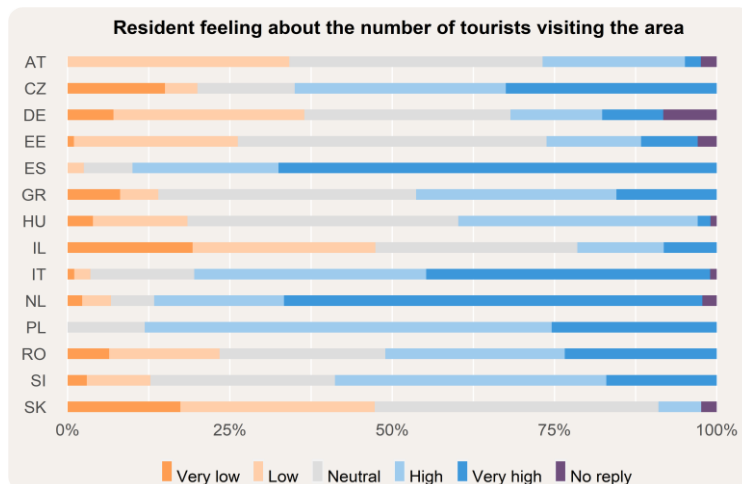
FIGURE 4: RESIDENTS' FEELING ABOUT THE NUMBER OF TOURISTS VISITING THE AREA, FOR FOURTEEN CASE STUDIES.

2. Policy Implications and Recommendations

The following recommendations can be formulated from the above signals and analysis:

- **Focus on** the **development of transport infrastructure** by using the potential for improving the experience of tourists, residents and entrepreneurs alike.

- **Provide more information and better communication to tourists** and ask tourists and entrepreneurs in which way information is best communicated and offered.

- **Increase focus on and involve local residents** in the development of cultural tourism, even if their opinion about the growth of cultural tourism differs from that of entrepreneurs.

- **Increase** the **digital offer of information** (such as a digital preview of a site or building) about cultural attractions, sites, and even local traditions and culture. **Monitor** if and how the offered information leads to more tourists and if tourists share their information and experiences with other potential tourists.

- **Show tourism entrepreneurs**, who feel quite positive about the number and diversity of cultural attractions, **that tourists are generally less satisfied**. **Investigate** what kind of attractions tourists are missing and encourage and support entrepreneurs to continuously develop new tourist attractions.

- **Organize meetings among local entrepreneurs**, to investigate how cultural tourism can be improved.

- **To promote cultural tourism**, make a distinction between urban and rural areas and between central and peripheral areas. EU policies to promote cultural attractions in rural areas and peripheral areas would be very helpful.

- EU policies should di**fferentiate between promoting cultural tourism in over-touristed and in under-touristed areas** in cases of regional development: **Create networks** for residents and entrepreneurs in under-touristed areas to promote further development of cultural tourism. Create networks for residents and entrepreneurs in over-touristed areas to enable the discussion on how cultural tourism can grow without negative impacts for residents.

Project Identity

Project name	Social and innovative Platform on Cultural Tourism and its potential towards deepening Europeanisation (SPOT)
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