



## Cultural tourism and Europeanisation

For European policymakers: Improving EU policy

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### Introduction

The various forms of cultural tourism in Europe are important drivers of growth, jobs, and economic development of European regions and urban areas. They also contribute, to the understanding of other peoples' identities and values by driving intercultural understanding and social development in Europe through discovering various types of cultural heritage. However, although cultural tourism by its nature invites cross-border, regional, and local cooperation, its full innovation potential in this respect is not yet fully explored and exploited. The level of development of cultural tourism between certain regions and sites, including those between the neighbouring countries in Europe, is still unbalanced.

In research on Europeanisation, cultural tourism is often attributed a key role. However, little evidence has been reported on the mutual relationship between two widely used concepts: **cultural tourism and Europeanisation**. We focus here on the importance of landscape and spatial identity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Pleijte, Theano S. Terkenli, Małgorzata Pstrocka-Rak, Giovanna Rech, Milada Šťastná, Tijn Rümke and Bas Pedrolí, 2022 (in prep.). Cultural Tourism and Europeanization – A Landscape Perspective



Cultural tourism can enhance Europeanisation and Europeanisation can foster cultural tourism. To strengthen the link between cultural tourism and Europeanisation into European policy the relationship between these concepts can be understood from the concept of landscape and its values.

## 1. Evidence and Analysis

A suitable **definition of Cultural Tourism** in this context is:

*the integrated management of cultural heritage and tourism activities in conjunction with the local community creating social, environmental and economic benefits for all stakeholders, to achieve tangible and intangible cultural heritage conservation and sustainable tourism development.*<sup>2</sup>

Europeanisation is often recognised as a discursive concept in political top-down harmonisation strategies (vertical Europeanisation), but on the other hand also as an expression of a spontaneous ‘unity in diversity’ paradigm between regions (horizontal Europeanisation).



Photo: unity in diversity

**Europeanisation** within the context of cultural tourism is here understood either as:

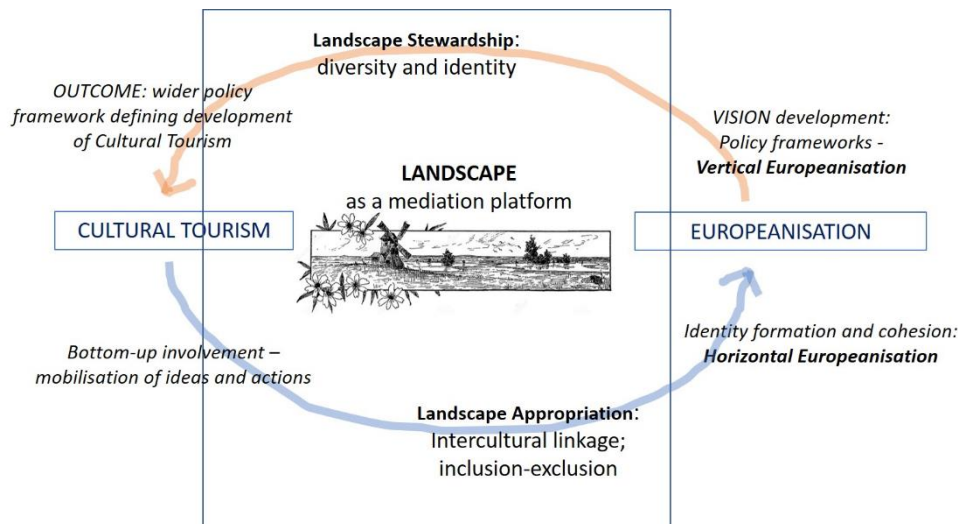
- a policy framework to harmonise strategies for regional development, accessibility and promotion (vertical Europeanisation), or as
- emerging autonomous similarities creating place-based identities grounded in similarities in culture: habits, beliefs, views (horizontal Europeanisation).

Regional development can be linked to spatial planning: accessibility and connectivity, mobility, rural development, and intercultural linking. Place identity refers to thematic routes, developing European clusters, supporting local identity, marketing, and the emerging of creative tourism. Culture deals with people’s habits, beliefs, views. Generally, **cultural tourism fosters Europeanisation through emphasizing distinctive cultural values** – often featuring characteristic landscapes – that are typical for Europe.

Europeanisation can be a responsible strategy for promoting both cultural diversity and European identity as reflected in the landscape.

Because of its strong and characteristic identity, the landscape has a crucial role as a mediation platform in representing the huge diversity of European cultural tourism destinations, as schematically illustrated in FIGURE 1.

<sup>2</sup> STC OMC, 2018. Sustainable Cultural Tourism Open Method of Coordination working group, 2018 in Matteuci, X. and J.S. Hung von Zumbusch, 2020. D 2.1 Theoretical framework of cultural tourism in urban and regional destinations. Technical report. July 2020. Smart CultTour.



**FIGURE 1: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EUROPEANISATION AND CULTURAL TOURISM**

- **Cultural diversity** – and the variegated mosaic of landscapes reflecting this diversity – is one of the major assets of the European continent, not least in terms of cultural tourism. We argue that Europeanisation – especially horizontal Europeanisation – is of great importance to fostering cultural tourism. This applies both to domestic tourism and to long-distance tourism. However, the general emphasis in European policy-making on vertical Europeanisation (economic and legislative harmonisation) and accepting globalisation’s effects are often harmful to the protection, management and planning of the precious European landscapes – in rural as well as in urban areas.
- **Cultural differences** both between and within European countries have by no means disappeared, and this can be recognised in the diversity of cultural landscapes. Ethnic minorities represent a wide variety of cultural attitudes and behaviours. In addition to cultural Europeanisation, there are also numerous examples of cultural fragmentation. This might – at a different spatial scale – be translated into opportunities for local identity formation. This may also lead to the individualisation of cultural tourism, where everyone decides for themselves what culture means and what value is assigned to it. Niches and personal canons would therefore emerge. This would greatly increase diversity and, in time, also promote a stronger sense of horizontal Europeanisation. Such niches, small minorities and regional and local varieties emerge as valuable resources that should be preserved and developed in the context of European cultural diversity.
- However, cultural tourism also contributes to the levelling out of differences between Europeans, franchising **unique cultural heritage**, while at the same time promoting differentiation and thus contributing to horizontal Europeanisation. We conclude that cultural tourism and Europeanisation should be associated with an emancipation process to the same degree that they are recognised as forms of democratisation and cultural resource management.

- **Cultural tourism** is an important economic sector and an essential element for creating local, regional, national and European identities, and overcoming the remnants of mistrust between European nations. It also fosters the personal development of its participants – both tourists and their hosts – especially if tourists are actively involved in planning, creating and implementing their trips. The concrete experience of individuals with regional geography, history, culture and art is crucial for the sustainable management of the cultural values of Europe. It can thus be concluded that cultural tourism may definitely enhance Europeanisation in the sense of a shared European identity, recalling the slogan ‘unity in diversity’.

Whether Europeanisation fosters cultural tourism depends on the purpose: many different forms of Europeanisation can be identified, but only those that take the ‘unity in diversity’ paradigm serious, especially when implemented at local and regional levels, safeguard a sustainable development of cultural tourism.

## 2. Policy Implications and Recommendations

Using the notion of the landscape for broadening the concepts of cultural tourism and Europeanisation leads to the following **findings**:

- Europeanisation can foster cultural tourism by taking due care of cultural values.
- Cultural tourism can enhance horizontal Europeanisation.
- Europe’s landscape diversity is a key asset for cultural tourism.
- Reorientation of cultural tourism is needed to prevent the degradation of Europe’s landscapes.
- Cultural tourism may help bridge the divide between Europe’s core and periphery.

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

- Focus more on horizontal Europeanisation and less on vertical Europeanisation.
- Create policies to promote individual cultural tourism. It increases diversity, prevents exclusion and encourages horizontal Europeanisation.
- Approach cultural tourism and Europeanisation as a process of emancipation and recognize them as forms of democratization and management of cultural resources.
- Involve tourists actively in planning, creating and doing their trips.
- Implement cultural tourism at local and regional levels and align this with European regional development policy. Identify EU financial support for the development of cultural tourism (multi-level financing or co-financing).



# Project Identity

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