

## Introduction

# Sustainability and Shifting Paradigms in Tourism

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Something important changed the world 50 years ago. It was in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s when the realization of fast approaching limits to growth came down like a hammer, striking a strong blow on business-as-usual world political and socio-economic paradigms. Of course, classical economists like Malthus had already sounded a warning 150 years before. Then, scientific and technological advances postponed the inevitable. Finally, the Club of Rome thinkers (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, and Behrens, 1972) and two oil crises dispelled the illusion of limitless growth in a small planet, with the controversy being retaken afresh in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Meadows, Randers and Meadows, 2004; Stern, 2006; Bardi, 2011).

Meanwhile, tourism was well in its way to becoming a key global activity. The landmark of 100 million international arrivals a year had been reached by 1965 and the mass tourism paradigm, inspired in the prevailing rules for industrial production (standardized products at low marginal cost), had taken deep roots. However, the complex interaction between limits to growth and tourism global figures remained generally ignored at both the domestic and international levels (Fayos-Solà and Jafari, 2010; Fayos-Solà, Alvarez and Cooper, 2014; Fayos-Solà, 2016 forthcoming).

In fact, it was not really until the late 1980s that some voices were raised expressing concern about the growing impacts of tourism activities. They first referred to mainly the socio-cultural negative impacts at micro-destination level, although the environmental large scale impacts (on the Mediterranean shores, for example) were highly visible by then. But it was only in 1995 that the first *Charter for Sustainable Tourism* was born from the *World Conference on Sustainable Tourism*, held in Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain, in 1995, undoubtedly inspired by the *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, the *Rio Earth Summit* of 1992. (WCST, 1995; UNEP, 1992).

The *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* proclaimed 27 principles, without any specific mention of tourism as a global activity with many potential and actual environmental and developmental impacts. However, principles 5 and 6 (international cooperation for development), principle 7 (international efforts preventing environmental degradation), and principles 10, 22 and 27 (inclusiveness of all citizens), could be read by the UN Member States as clearly affecting tourism policy. The *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* has received 166 Member State ratification signatures to date.

In this framework, the *Lanzarote Charter for Sustainable Tourism* of 1995 proclaimed 18 “principles and objectives” specifically referring to the ethical, environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts

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and effects of tourism. It was definitely expected at the time that the *Charter* would set a direction and a roadmap for tourism policy and governance institutions and norms, and it can definitely be stated that it has played a role in the theoretical and practical discussions on tourism sustainable development of the last two decades. However, actual translation of the *Charter* into norms and laws is what is most missing, perhaps in a way similar to the 1992 *Rio Declaration* and the *Kyoto Protocol* of 1997 (UN, 1998).

Looking back without anger, the time may be ripe for a new appraisal of tourism paradigms and a shrewd framework for governance and policy. This special issue of *Pasos* is intended as one more step in such a direction. It has been debated that the traditional mass-tourism paradigm is no longer the right entrepreneurial fabric for action. A tourism “New Age” paradigm has been the predominant governance prototype in both governments and private businesses for some years now. This paradigm considers new characteristics (i) in the tourism demand and supply (much more fragmented, to the point of “one customer-one segment”), as well as (ii) in the ancillary support systems (highly evolved because of technological innovation), and (iii) in the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental scenarios (lip-service to sustainability playing an important role here). However, a close review of both academic literature and norms of governmental legal bodies involving tourism reveals that too little has changed when envisioning intelligent futures and devising roadmaps for effective sustainable and inclusive development (Fayos-Solà et al, 2014).

Many prospective analyses of tourism simply spell growth rates and numerical targets, even up to 2030 (UNWTO, 2011). This is doubtlessly a business-as-usual guide to short-term inter-country and interregional analyses. Similarly, Tourism Competitiveness Reports (WEF, 2015) are now yearly produced for “travel and tourism”, with an index measuring a set of factors and policies for the sustainable development of these activities and their role in contributing to the “development and competitiveness” of States. However, when reviewing the set of components invoked for such “development and competitiveness” (enabling environment, tourism policy, infrastructure, and resources), the disruptive effects of greenhouse gas accumulation and ensuing climate change, resource exhaustion, biodiversity degradation, adverse cultural impacts, game-changing technologies and procedures, and governance paradigm shifts are clearly missing in the analysis. This appears as notably insufficient, and even more so when tourism is simultaneously seen as a fulcrum for long-term inclusive and sustainable development, already contributing some 10% of world GDP.

It is considered here that envisioning a new long-term tourism governance paradigm should begin with the appraisal of alternate “future of tourism scenarios”, some of them falling in the “intelligent futures” subset. The key 21<sup>st</sup> century strategic dilemmas concerning environmental sustainability, inclusive development, and participatory governance cannot be absent when considering the future of tourism.

International organizations, and very especially those in the United Nations group, have priority access to key data, information, knowledge, and wisdom regarding global trends. Thus, when recommending frameworks for tourism policy and governance, the concerned organizations would need to be extremely proactive in the building of institutional mechanisms for (i) scientific and technological innovation, (ii) socio-cultural and economic transformations, and (iii) actual participatory governance. Of course, governments, the private sector and civil society should very importantly be included in this process.

Actual practice in tourism has been somehow too distant from knowledge management institutions and even from participatory governance institutions. Sustainability is just but one of the resulting areas of concern. This business practice isolation has been maintained in the era of neoliberal economics, but is not tenable in the long-term, especially as tourism is increasingly interwoven in the social fabric. In this context, sustainability is, essentially, a prerequisite in the global governance musts, ways and means.

Thus, the participation of governments, the private sector, and civil society in the making of tourism long-term strategies and tourism policy frameworks must be somehow formulated (or reformulated). It has become a crucial element when considering sustainable development. This special issue of *Pasos* preliminarily deals with some of the theoretical and practical aspects of such “reformulations”.

In this framework, the articles of Madrid Flores, Pulido Fernández, and Alves and Ramos Nogueira present an ample, panoramic view of the state of affairs in the sustainable development of tourism, including an appraisal of achievements attained and threats and opportunities ahead. Then the papers by Falcón and Pérez Márquez, Cardona, Cuéllar-Molina, Casademunt, and García-Cabrera refer more specifically to the issues of sustainability-concerned governance. Other papers are specially focused on cultural sustainability involving tangible and intangible heritage, such as those authored by Cetinkaya, Oter, and Padin. Environmental sustainability is directly addressed by Orgaz Agüera and Morales, as well as by González Mantilla, and Neri. Finally, papers by Torres-Solá, Sala Ríos and Farré Perdiguier,

as well as by Moncada Jiménez, Sosa Ferreira, Martínez, Beltrán Pérez and Dominguez-Estrada, and by Cruz Jiménez, Serrano Barquín and Vargas-Martínez present specific case-studies.

All in all, it is hoped that this special issue of *Pasos*, in the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first *Charter for Sustainable Tourism* (WCST, 1995), will constitute a useful additional input in the right direction: That of envisioning intelligent futures and the role of tourism within, while simultaneously helping bridge theoretical and practical governance initiatives in tourism in the quest towards a sustainable and inclusive development.

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