



ATLAS

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AND LEISURE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

# **ATLAS**

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**ATLAS Tourism and Leisure Review****Volume 2022 – 1****Tourism and the Corona crisis: Some ATLAS reflections 2**

The Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research (ATLAS) was established in 1991 to develop transnational educational initiatives in tourism and leisure. ATLAS provides a forum to promote staff and student exchange, transnational research and to facilitate curriculum and professional development. ATLAS currently has members in about 60 countries. More information about ATLAS can be found at <http://www.atlas-euro.org/>.

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**ATLAS Tourism and Leisure Review****Volume 2022 – 1****Tourism and the Corona crisis: Some ATLAS reflections 2****Field editors**

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## Introduction

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Two years ago we started the introduction to a special issue of ATLAS Review with a quote from an essay which Yuval Noah Harari wrote in the Financial Times of the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2020:

*Humankind is now facing a global crisis. Perhaps the biggest crisis of our generation. The decisions people and governments take in the next few weeks will probably shape the world for years to come. .... Yes, the storm will pass, humankind will survive, most of us will still be alive — but we will inhabit a different world<sup>1</sup>.*

Overwhelmed by the potential consequences of this pandemic, in May 2020 we invited 12 tourism scholars to write an essay in which they were asked to reflect on how tourism might change as a consequence of the pandemic and find an answer to the questions how and which forms of tourism could fit in this 'different world'.

Now, two years later, it seems that the storm has indeed passed, although uncertainty about new variants of COVID-19 remains. Although a new storm has entered the European continent – the war in Ukraine – which might also lead to a 'different world', we now first reflect again on the relation between tourism and COVID-19. What did we learn and what has changed?

## Tourism and COVID-19

Already in April 2020, Gössling, Scott and Hall (2020) – in one of the first published articles on tourism and COVID-19 - predicted that the impact and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic would be unprecedented. Indeed, it has. The latest data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) show that international tourism arrivals in 2020 and 2021, compared to 2019, decreased on average 75%, varying between 90% in April 2020 to around 60% in September 2021. In many developing countries, arrivals were down by 80-90 per cent. These figures equate to more than 1 billion fewer international arrivals compared to pre-pandemic levels, keeping the tourism industry at levels last seen in the late 1980s. Although especially the beginning of the year 2021 also has been very difficult for most destinations, with an average global decline of almost 90 per cent as compared to pre-pandemic

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/19d90308-6858-11ea-a3c9-1fe6fedcca75>

level, the northern summer and autumn in 2021 has seen an improvement for some destinations, in particular for domestic and regional travel. For 2022 most commentators expect that, at a global level, international arrivals will recover some ground, but still remain 30% below 2019 levels.

### **Business as usual?**

Looking at these projections for 2022, the first observation that comes to mind is that in spite of expectations, we are nowhere near a full post-pandemic scenario. However, if the 'return to business as usual' scenario, augured by some and dreaded by other authors, is not there yet, we are equally far from having undertaken a decided move towards a transition in tourism which would have used the temporary breakdown of international mobility systems as a moment for reset and generalised adaptation of regulatory, planning and management framework to the imperatives of sustainable development (Niewiadomski & Brouder, 2022).

New waves, Deltas and Omicrons, and also the uncertain pace with which vaccination campaigns have progressed throughout the world (including their politicization), depict an early 2022 landscape of sustained uncertainty. For some countries like Spain, where the reactivation of tourism is almost a question of State given the economic dependency from this industry for most regions (Arias, 2021), it is now hoped that the progress with vaccinations will allow a certain degree of recovery for the Easter week, which generally marks the start of the high season. On the other hand, new dark clouds from the political crisis in Ukraine are gathering; again, in the case of Spain's coastal destinations, in which Russia is a major market, one disaster could easily follow another.

It is not, however, that tourism sat totally still during this last year. We have been seeing signs of a certain recovery in the summer season of 2021, pre-Delta, which have led to a (at times, incautious) reopening of activity at major destinations. For example, Venice was in July 2021 at pre-covid tourism pressure levels, though one could easily spot a remarkable difference in the flows attracted, in favour of short-term visits from the proximity rather than prolonged stays, and high rates of occupation of short-term rentals apartments –while a sizable part of the hotel supply was still non-operational or severely constrained by social distancing regulations. Besides, it has been widely noted that there has been a notable 'transfer' of tourism activity from urban and coastal areas to rural and mountain areas, possibly the result of an increased societal wish to reconnect with nature and bond with friends and relatives, or the consequence of a lesser perceived risk from social proximity in non-urban environments (see for instance Marques et al., 2021; Saladié et al., 2021).

Referring to discussions about the risks of and future challenges for overtourism in between re-and post-covid trends, overtourism in certain locations has been back, although briefly and depending on specific contexts of regulation and promotion which have varied conspicuously across countries and also regions therein. In any case, we do have some testing grounds to discuss how overtourism plays out in a pandemic context and what is to be expected for the future, when progressively the international mobility system will be restored and constraints to mobility and social activity will be levied. Referring back to the debate that the ATLAS review has aired (the main dimension of which are nicely illustrated by Higgins-Desbiolles,

2020), we can wonder if the prepandemic trends are bound to be back with a vengeance or if what we have seen during the pandemic is already signalling some change in terms of footprint, practices, implications for social justice, distributional aspects, geographic spread, which could be equally related to the temporary slump in tourism activity or to episodic moments of reprise, in between waves. Data that allow a systematic analysis of these situation is scant to say the least, so we have to rely on single case study-based evidence or regional outlooks.

### **This Volume**

This Volume offers some of these case studies and regional outlooks. 18 months after the first collection of essays which presented quite eloquently the key dimensions of the debate on COVID-19 and tourism, this Volume starts off with one of main controversies: growth or degrowth. In response to those in favour of degrowth, in the next chapter Jim Butcher argues that “the advocates of degrowth are correct that growth is not the sine qua non of a free and fulfilled society. But whilst growth is not a sufficient condition for a better tourism, it is a necessary one. Effectively proposing the reversal of economic growth is unrealistic and misguided”.

Similarly, in Chapter 3 Laura James and Carina Ren also address a central debate. Many researchers saw the pandemic crisis in tourism as a way to ‘build back better’. In contrast to this transformative view, other voices in the industry and in policy discourses were concerned with getting tourism ‘back on track’, back to an economic situation similar - or even better - than before the crisis. Laura James and Carina Ren used these contrasting perspectives as a springboard to explore the concepts of change in tourism and to reflect on whether the COVID-19 pandemic will turn out to be a transformational moment. Drawing on empirical material from Europe and the Nordic Arctic, they have tried to give a sense of what kind of change we have seen so far during the pandemic. Looking at the experiences and perceptions of destination organizations, they present a rather complex picture and observed in most places modest reconfigurations - as new practices and products emerged not as part of a path-defining moment but were instead embedded within an ongoing concern for tourism.

The next two chapters examine some of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Antonio Paolo Russo uses some insights from an ongoing project to argue that pre-pandemic forms of social exclusion unfolding in tourism places are bound to get amplified in the immediate ‘recovery landscape’. Focusing especially on the position of tourism workers in the case of Barcelona, it is argued that for this collective, the drivers of labour precarity and social disadvantage have not been substantially altered by the pandemics, not even in the discursive and policy arena. The paper of Melanie Smith examines some of the mental health issues that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and considers the role that tourism plays in human wellbeing under the current challenging circumstances as well as some of the possible options for healing holidays during the post-COVID period. Although this, according to Melanie Smith, might include those people who are suffering from the physical impacts of long COVID, the recommendations are rather to seek professional medical help for such symptoms. For those, who are feeling physically well but emotionally stressed or exhausted, retreats might offer

the ideal space in which to rest and recover, whilst coming to terms with both the 'new normal' and the uncertain future.

In the sixth chapter Luqi Yang, Ana Beatriz Hernández Lara and Xiaoni Li present their results of a bibliometric study to illustrate the current state of knowledge within the fields of tourism and sustainability during the pandemic. They also aimed to find future research potentials and opportunities.

The two final chapters include reflections from Asia and Africa respectively. Chin-Ee Ong takes the Chinese city of Zhuhai as starting point and narrates the experiences of travel between 2020 and present. Drawing on his personal observations, he has sought to show the resilience of travels within China in spite of the challenges the coronavirus presented. For much of 2020 and 2021, residents in China (including Chinese nationals and foreigners working in the country) have been able to travel. These travels were made within the context of a policy of maintaining zero covid case rates and has necessitated a host of biopolitical technologies for the custody and care of the population – China's huge domestic market and massive workforce. In the final chapter Rene van der Duim briefly reflects on Covid's disturbing impact on tourism and nature conservation in Sub-Saharan Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic has once again revealed how dependent many conservation areas and local communities are on tourism. But it has also shown how vulnerable tourism is to forces beyond its control. Although tourism will remain an economic activity that supports conservation, more diverse and stable revenues are required to sustain protected area management.

All in all, these contributions tackle, from different angles and using different methods and languages, the key challenges of the post-covid scenario. Beyond the contingencies of this specific crisis, however disruptive and pervasive, these reflections offer an advantaged viewpoint on the resilience of places and communities, the urgency of change and adaptability, in the face of a global system of mobilities and socioeconomic relations which cannot be given for granted.

With these 8 essays and the 12 essays in the Review 2020-2 ATLAS has aimed to contribute to the intense debates in and outside academic circles about the consequences of COVID-19 for tourism and society more generally. Clearly, the pandemic has devastated global tourism and provoked powerful discussions about its future. As many of the articles in this Volume and the Volume 2020-2 suggest, for many going 'back' to the previous status quo is no longer an option. Others, however, hope and expect tourism will bounce back and soon numbers will equal or surpass those of 1999.

In the coming year ATLAS will continue the debates through a number of webinars, engaging industry professionals and academics to discuss, debate and share their views on what tourism currently is and what it will look like into the future. Already in early July 2020, a webinar organized around Review 2020-2 allowed wider discussion of the papers included that Volume. In April 2022 we will offer a second webinar in which the authors of the papers in this Volume will discuss the main issues as presented in this Volume. Together with webinars focusing on the situation in Latin America, Asia, Africa and a number of destinations in Europe in 2020 and 2021, all available on the ATLAS YouTube channel, these online discussions provide an important source of information and inspiration for



academics, lecturers as well as tourism professionals and also shows how ATLAS has been able to remain relevant and continue their work online as a replacement for offline conferences and meetings.

A very special thank you must go to the authors who have contributed to this Special Issue. The positive response and willingness to work on this Review illustrates the significance of this topic and perhaps more importantly, the collegiality of tourism scholars across the globe.

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## **Why the pandemic's aftermath is a good time to broach a critique of mass tourism's critics**

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In the previous ATLAS review I wrote about what we have missed (and are still missing) during the Covid 19 pandemic – conviviality. In this one I want to briefly challenge what has rapidly become an orthodoxy in the journals; that a 'new normal' post-pandemic should be informed by degrowth, or at least adopt a wary approach to mass tourism and a more leisure mobile society. Many writing on this see Covid-19 as an opportunity to challenge 'overtourism' or 'travelitis', and hence see some sort of silver lining to the pandemic: a lesson for hubristic humanity. I don't agree. It has been an unmitigated disaster for the tourism and hospitality industries, and in every other respect.

The lesson that we are supposed to learn from the experience of Covid-19 is that we can get by with less, that having stuff is overrated and that 'degrowth' is needed to rebalance the relationship between human culture and the natural world. I see the lesson in very different terms. The pandemic reinforces the need for systematic economic development, which will involve a future oriented, optimistic and liberatory vision for a richer society in which more people can travel to see the world and enjoy all it has to offer.

The expansion of travel and leisure are a product of, and integral to, modern economic development. It is through modern development that pandemics and natural disasters no longer devastate in the way they have in the past. Look at a table of the deaths through pandemics (or fires, floods or famine for that matter) and it becomes clear that, contrary to the purveyors of doom currently lying in the road to stop traffic in the UK, and the elites fawning over Greta Thunberg's calls to decimate the economy in the formerly great industrial city of Glasgow, systematic industrial development has some redeeming features.

Economic growth (for all its faults and limitations – I am no Panglossian), is less of a problem than lack of economic growth. It is lack of economic development that means for many furlough payments are a pipe dream, vaccines are in short supply and modern healthcare is not available. It is poverty that means so many people live cheek by jowl with nature, relying on wet markets lacking proper refrigeration facilities to buy their food, multiplying the risk of animal to human viral transmission. It is also poverty that means an illegal trade in Pangolins continues despite the possibility that one of these creatures may have been a link in the viral chain. Richer nations, and the growing wealthier classes in poorer nations, go to the supermarket, not a red tooth or claw in site.

Yet it is degrowth, not growth, that has become a motif of modern 'critical tourism studies', and an orthodoxy in journals keen to go green with little regard paid to global underdevelopment. For the Political Ecology Network: 'we cannot afford to return to levels of travel experienced previously, particularly by the wealthiest

segment of the world's population. This is not only because of the social unrest overtourism provoked, but also because of the industry's environmental damages [...] which were already beyond unsustainable' (Fletcher, Mas, Blázquez-Salom, & Blanco-Romero, 2020). They argue for 'voluntary tourism downsizing beyond the current crisis as part of an overarching society-wide degrowth programme in pursuit of post-capitalism' (ibid.), and call for 'direct restrictions on the quantity of mass transport– and especially airplanes – reaching a given destination' (ibid). Other tourism scholars echo degrowth guru Serge Latouche: '[d]egrowth must apply to the south as much as to the north if there is to be any chance to stop southern societies from rushing up the blind ally of growth economics' (2004).

Yet the World Food Program points out that a 'hunger pandemic' could eclipse the effects of COVID-19 (Anthem, 2020). Tourism and hospitality employment looms large in this. The economist and poverty expert Branko Milanovic (2017) and Marxist science writer Leigh Phillips (2015) concur that degrowth involves extreme austerity, neither feasible nor beneficial to anyone.

Others make a cultural case for degrowth, highlighting a corrosive 'culture-ideology of consumerism' (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Pernecky argues that 'our momentary loss of tourism may bring with it a renewed appreciation and care, which has been eroded by rampant commodification and comatose consumerism' (Pernecky, 2020: 657). Everingham and Chassagne (2020) also see COVID-19 as an '[o]ppportunity to both politically and publicly change our lifestyle, and the failing economic model that supports it' (Pernecky, 2020: 564).

But tourists are not 'comatose consumers' - objects propelled by growth obsessed companies. They are autonomous decision makers, with desires and morals of their own. As I wrote in the previous ATLAS review, the conviviality and pleasures of tourism are worthy of celebration, and will be important in getting society back on its feet post Covid-19.

COVID-19, in particular the impact on regions with a large tourism economy, is also seen as a reason to '... re-localize economic activity to make destinations less vulnerable to vicissitudes of global markets ...' (Fletcher et al., 2020). Whilst there is a case for reigning in globalisation (Gray, 2020), COVID-19 has hit all forms of tourism and hospitality, local and national. Relocalisation also carries disastrous implications for societies currently benefiting from international tourism. Better to confront the unequal and uneven growth that characterises the world economy than to stand against growth itself.

The advocates of degrowth are correct that growth is not the *sine qua non* of a free and fulfilled society. But whilst growth is not a sufficient condition for a better tourism, it is a necessary one. Effectively proposing the reversal of economic growth is unrealistic and misguided. It would contribute greatly to poverty, adding to the dire effects of COVID-19. It also involves a retreat from mobility, economies of scale, division of labour, specialisation and scientific innovation. The aftermath of COVID-19 is a good time to broach a critique of the critics.

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## **All change? Reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic as a transformative moment for tourism**

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There is no doubt that the covid-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the tourism industry. On a global level, it brought international travel in 2020 back to numbers similar to 30 years ago (UNWTO, 2020) and UNWTO data show that between January and May 2021 international tourist arrivals were 85% below 2019 levels. The pandemic forced tourism businesses across the globe to close and has had serious economic consequences, particularly for countries dependent on international tourism. At the same time, some regions and destinations, often nature-based, coastal or rural, experienced a large increase in domestic visitor numbers.

Our reflections in this review revolve around innovation in tourism and the evolution of destinations over time. We consider the short and longer-term impacts of the pandemic on tourism and the prospects for more sustainable tourism futures. The central question is whether COVID 19 will prove to be a transformative ‘moment’ for tourism. Sanz-Ibañez, Anton Clavez and Wilson (2017, p. 82) define moments as “path-shaping evolutionary inflection points that cause a destination's path (trajectory) to shift in direction and focus”. From the very beginning of 2020, there has been a lively debate about whether the pandemic will prove to be such an inflection point for individual destinations and for tourism as a whole.

Our reflections tap into a wider intellectual conversation in tourism studies, where researchers have attempted to describe, make sense of and extrapolate insights from events as they were happening. These include publications such as ATLAS’ first COVID reflections published in the summer of 2020 as well as special issues of journals such as *Tourism Management*, *Tourism Geographies* and *Sustainability*. Many of the contributors to these special issues see COVID 19 as an opportunity for change and transformation. For instance, Ioannides & Gyimothy describe - in the context of policy - how the pandemic has “brought us to a fork in the road – giving us the perfect opportunity to select a new direction and move forward by adopting a more sustainable path. (2020). In a similar vein, Brouder presents COVID 19 as a once in a generation opportunity where the institutional pump is primed for transformation, while Gössling et al (2020) see the pandemic as an opportunity to “question the volume growth tourism model advocated by UNWTO, ICAO, CLIA, WTTC and other tourism organizations” (p.1). Also, Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) describes COVID 19 as “a transformational moment opening up possibilities for resetting tourism” (p. 612). This shows how hopes and visions were

attached to the pandemic as a vehicle for rethinking, greening or socializing tourism.

If we look elsewhere in the tourism landscape, however, the rhetoric is quite different. Although some tourism industry organizations have joined academic researchers in perceiving COVID 19 as an occasion to 'build back better', mainstream industry rhetoric often presents C19 as a bump or temporary hurdle to be overcome, calling for 'back to business' strategies and jumpstarts to economically rebuild a sector. These multiple and only partially coherent visions of transformation prompts us to reflect on and discuss the conceptualisation of change in and through tourism, as it has unfolded in the last pandemic years.

We begin by reviewing some key contributions to the literature on change in tourism, and considering how they can help us to understand the impacts of the pandemic. We then present findings from three projects that have explored the impacts of the pandemic from the perspective of destination organisations, tourism businesses and individual entrepreneurs. The first project, *Bouncing Back or Bouncing Forward* researched how regional tourism organisations in seven European countries have responded to the pandemic. The second project, *Culturally sensitive tourism in the Arctic* (ARCTISEN), looked at the impacts of COVID 19 on small Arctic entrepreneurs in Greenland and the Northern Norway. The last project, *Kickstart Danish Tourism*, aimed at delivering insights on the dynamics and innovations within the Danish tourism and broader experience economy during the pandemic lockdown. In the final part of our contribution, we discuss if COVID 19 has been a moment in tourism and whether and how insights may be taken forward in building more sustainable tourism futures.

### **Conceptualising change in tourism**

There are many different ways of conceptualising tourism dynamics: in terms of visitor numbers, changes in experience profiles and markets, the natural and built environment, governance structures and so on. Change may be studied at different scales – from individual entrepreneurs creating new tourism experiences to social and economic transitions at a global scale. At the level of individual destinations, one well-known model is Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), which conceived of tourism destinations as products which develop through a series of stages culminating in stagnation and then either decline or rejuvenation.

One of the key features of the TALC model was the path dependent nature of destination development - driven by positive feedback loops that eventually lead to lock in and stagnation. However, the causes of change are multitudinous and debates about the TALC model raised a series of questions about the nature and causes of change in tourism destinations. Some have argued that destinations should be conceptualised as mosaics composed of multiple components, each with their own individual life cycle (Agarwal, 1999; Ma and Hassink, 2013; Chapman & Light, 2016). Others have focused on the way that destinations have responded to global shifts in technology and modes of accumulation and regulation, with waves of change or transitions from one regime to the next (Garay & Cànoves, 2011). Butler himself has argued that "A uni-directional linear model is relatively unlikely to give an accurate prediction of the future of a complex product subject to rapid change and great competition" (Butler, 2009, p 348). However, we

do see recurring themes and issues regarding the nature and causes of change in tourism.

One key question is the relationship between incremental, path-dependent development, and more rapid change precipitated by some kind of crisis or shock, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The importance of incremental change has been emphasized in recent years by the adoption of theoretical ideas from evolutionary economic geography. The notion of path dependence has been particularly influential, stressing the importance of historical conditions and feedback loops in establishing development paths and shaping the possibilities for future action (Ma and Hassink, 2013). The notion of incremental change has also been developed through other path metaphors; for example, path plasticity and path branching, which emphasize gradual shifts in direction and endogenous processes of diversification from existing activities (Brouder and Eriksson, 2013; Brouder et al, 2017).

But what of the impact of sudden crises and shocks - recessions, terrorist attacks, natural disasters or pandemics often leading to very dramatic alterations in tourism activity - at least in the short term? Such events have often been analysed within an engineering or ecological resilience framework, where the key questions are how resistant the tourism activity or destination in question is, and whether it bounces back to its previous path (renewal) or is restructured more fundamentally and shifts to a new trajectory (reorientation)(Hamzah and Hampton, 2013; Orchiston, 2013). Tourism scholars working within the complex adaptive systems tradition have advanced a different perspective. Here, tourism systems are conceptualised as complex and uncontrollable and characterised by non-linear, non-deterministic chaotic behaviour (Fasari, Butler and Szivas, 2011; Halkier and James, 2017). Rather than conceptualising tourism development in terms of identifiable trajectories that are disrupted by external events, complex adaptive systems are understood to cycle constantly through dynamic states, with varying periods of stability and turbulence (Farrell and Twining-Ward, 2004), creating unexpected consequences.

### **Human agency**

The role of human agency is a central element in most accounts of change in tourism and the actions of individuals, firms and policymakers in implementing change have been the focus of countless tourism studies. Sanz Ibañez, Anton Clavez and Wilson (2017) noted that transformative moments are not just the result of spontaneous triggers but also the result of tourism actors deliberately changing existing paths. Writing from a Chaos/Complexity theory perspective, Russell and Faulkner (1999) also emphasised that individual entrepreneurs - whom they termed 'movers and shakers'- are able to spot opportunities for innovation during periods of turbulence and can have a disproportionate impact on the trajectory of destinations. Thus, shocks and crises may also be opportunities for deliberate destination upgrading and mindful deviation from existing paths through policy interventions and innovation.

While evolutionary approaches have typically emphasised that the choices of tourism actors are limited by path dependence, more recent work in economic geography has explored the importance of human agency in creating new paths.

Steen (2016, p1606) argues that “path creation relies on (collectives of) entrepreneurs, spin-offs, diversifying firms and other actors that more or less strategically recombine and transfer knowledge and resources from different sectors as they act on new and expected opportunities (Garud and Gehman, 2012)”. Similarly, Grillitsch and Sotarauta (2020) emphasise the importance of looking forward, using the notion of the future opportunity space to argue that not only the past but, crucially, perceptions of and expectations about the future shape path development.

### **Covid 19 and change in tourism**

How may these different perspectives on change in tourism help us to make sense of the impacts of the pandemic? COVID-19 has clearly been a huge shock for tourism destinations around the world, but will it turn out to be a *transformational moment*? And, if so, will it be transformational for the sector as a whole or only for some places and some parts of tourism?

The pandemic is unprecedented in terms of its scale and scope. The whole world has been affected but not in the same way. History and geography matter and destinations have been impacted by the pandemic in very different ways depending on their existing profiles. For example, their relative dependence on international tourism, their geographical location (more or less developed, urban vs rural) and policy responses to the pandemic itself – including level of state aid, degree and length of lockdowns and other restrictions on mobility and social gatherings. All of these factors will affect whether the outcome is the *renewal* of previous development paths or *reorientation*, but there are also likely to be unpredictable outcomes.

Russell & Faulkner (2004) described policy makers and regulators as holding back change. In case of the pandemic, policy has played a central role. In many countries, the most negative impacts on tourism are related to the policy measures intended to stop or slow the spread of the virus - border closures, lockdowns, and social distancing, for example. At the same time, we clearly see policies which support the status quo (underwriting airlines, financial support for businesses) and perhaps indicate a *lock-in* to existing development paths. We also see, however, many examples of innovation prompted by the pandemic. We need to understand how individual entrepreneurs and place leaders have reacted to pandemic. What resources do they have and how do they perceive the future opportunity space?

Paths and moments are heuristic devices that help us think about the direction and nature of change. We do not yet know what the long-term consequences of the pandemic will be, and – two years after the pandemic began – we are still in the middle of this particular moment. But we do have some indications and in the following, we present some data and analysis from three projects that have explored how the COVID-19 pandemic has - and has not - changed tourism in European and Arctic destinations and what the prospects are for the future.



### Take 1: European tourism destinations

Our first take is to consider changes at the scale of destinations. A key question is whether responses to the pandemic have been characterised by short term crisis management with the aim of recovering previous trajectories as soon as possible, or whether there are signs that the pandemic might lead to more fundamental changes and new values in the longer term. This question inspired the project *Bouncing Back or Bouncing Forward* project that investigated the responses of 102 tourism destination organisations in seven European countries through a survey and follow up interviews. The issues and activities that destination organisations focus on indicates how they have responded to the pandemic and how their priorities have changed. Survey respondents were asked what destination issues they focused on in 2019 and in the coming 12 months (2021-22), with a scale ranging from 1 (not relevant) to 5 (very high priority).

The findings show that many more issues are considered high priority since the pandemic started. A comparison of the mean scores for 2019 and 2021/22 show significant changes in 15 of the 18 items. Thirteen of those show increases and two - international marketing and accommodation capacity - have decreased.

**Table 1:** Tourism destination organisations' strategic priorities in 2019 and 2021/22

Strategic destination issues	Mean value		Ø difference (2021/22 - 2019)
	2021/22	2019	
Undertourism (too few visitors)	3,5	2,6	0,9**
Overtourism (too many visitors)	2,1	2,2	-0,1
Extended Season	4,0	3,9	0,1
Increasing profitability of businesses in destination	4,0	3,8	0,2**
Domestic marketing	4,5	3,4	1,0**
International marketing	3,1	3,5	-0,4**
Accommodation capacity	2,7	3,0	-0,3**
Destination infrastructure	3,3	3,4	-0,1
Experience innovation	4,1	3,7	0,4**
Service quality	3,9	3,6	0,2**
Health and safety	4,3	2,7	1,5**
Competence development, workforce skills	3,7	3,3	0,4**
Market research	3,6	3,1	0,5**
Digitalisation	4,3	3,9	0,4**
Collaboration with private stakeholders	4,2	4,0	0,2**
Collaboration with local/regional government	4,3	4,0	0,3**
Sustainability	4,4	3,8	0,6**
Collection of data on tourists and tourism activity	3,9	3,5	0,4**
1=not relevant; 5=very high priority			
**significant p<0.05			
n=102			

We can also see that there are some very specific and dramatic changes in the issues rated as 'very high priority'.

**Table 2:** Percentage of respondents rating destination issues as very high priority in 2019 and 2021/22

	% rating as very high priority in 2019	% rating as very high priority for 2021/ 22	Increase/ decrease in percentage points
Under tourism (too few visitors)	10%	26%	+16
Over tourism (too many visitors)	6%	7%	+1
Extend season	28%	45%	+17
Profitability (of businesses)	22%	33%	+11
Domestic marketing	19%	66%	+47
International marketing	21%	9%	-12
Accommodation capacity	7%	9%	+2
Destination infrastructure	12%	13%	+1
Experience innovation	19%	37%	+18
Service quality	17%	25%	+8
Health & safety	9%	56%	+47
Skills	12%	19%	+7
Market research	7%	22%	+15
Digitalisation	28%	51%	+23
Collaboration with private	32%	44%	+12
Sustainability	27%	50%	+23
Collaboration with local regional government	34%	52%	+18
Data collection	12%	31%	+19
n = 102			

Before the pandemic, collaboration with the public and private sector were the top two priorities for destination organisations. In 2021/22, domestic marketing and health and safety were the most important priorities and were also the two issues that saw the biggest increases. 66% rated domestic marketing as a very high priority in 2021/22 compared to 19% before the pandemic. We see very clear and perhaps unsurprising changes in the short term as destinations have adapted to the closure of international borders and the implementation of policies to help prevent the spread of COVID 19.

However, there are also signs that the pandemic has strengthened existing trends. Sustainability and digitalisation were in the top five very high priorities in 2019 and 2021/22, and there were substantial increases in the number of destination organisations that rated them as very high priorities. We also asked whether (and how) the long-term development vision for the destination had changed as a result of the pandemic. Here, we see a mixed picture. Of the 102 respondents, 38% said yes, 45% said no, and 17% were unsure. While some destinations saw the pandemic as an event which had completely changed their ideas about future development, others had not changed their long-term goals or thought that the pandemic had simply strengthened or accelerated existing trends. Despite the limitations of a relatively small sample, the survey does suggest some clear short-term changes in the overall priorities of European destination organisations, and a rather mixed picture in relation to how the pandemic has influenced their perception of future opportunity spaces.

**Take 2: Pandemic innovations - a view from entrepreneurs**

Having looked at some general trends at destination level, we would now like to explore the complexities of change in different contexts by examining the practices of individual entrepreneurs in specific destinations to tease out the ways in which geography and history have combined with the shock of the pandemic to create new opportunity spaces for tourism actors. In our second take on pandemic innovations, we therefore zoom in on some of the very many concrete initiatives, products and experiences of businesses and entrepreneurs in tourism witnessed during C-19. We do so in order to explore the actions and outcomes of individual entrepreneurs, small business and organisations in terms of reacting and adapting to - making the best of - the crisis.

The material generated for this draws from two research projects. The first, *Culturally Sensitive Tourism in the Arctic*, is an EU Norther Periphery Arctic program working with tourism development in Arctic Finland, Sweden and Norway as well as in Greenland. During the pandemic, the project set up a small 'task force' to look further into the pandemic consequences for culturally sensitive tourism. Insights were collected among small tourism businesses and entrepreneurs through interviews, surveys, webinars and case studies. A second project is the *Kickstart Danish Tourism* project set up by the Danish Agency of Business Development, where we worked with colleagues to collect, analyze and disseminate knowledge from Danish and international cases on a broad array of tourism related innovations during the pandemic and lockdown. In both of these projects, what we were curious about was *what* the small tourism businesses and entrepreneurs did and changed as the crisis struck and *how*?

**Innovating on the ground**

As we all know, the pandemic and subsequent lockdown across the globe came as a surprise to everyone. The impacts on the tourism and service industries were very quickly - and severely - felt and already shortly after the European lockdown in early Spring of 2020 did we see reactions in the shape of business transformations. Restaurants offering delivery, take-out and pop-ups to make up for the spaces now closed or restricted. Hotels rethinking their empty rooms as spaces for quarantine, for working away from home when offices were closed. And destinations, which had perhaps been a bit off usual tourism trails before - all of a sudden welcoming guests in need of space, quiet and solace into their rural, coastal or mountainous spaces.

Many festivals and other culture, sports and music events saw their business disappear almost overnight, as did the MICE industry. While cancelling and postponing events was a common strategy, others also re-conceptualized their offers, re-scaling them into small, intimate events or multiplying them in many different venues. Many events, festivals, museums and conferences went online to meet and engage with usual guests and attendees - and possibly also to find and reach new virtual audiences.

What we saw here, was something that most literature and policies often fail to recognize, namely *swiftly adaptable* micro and small tourism businesses. What characterised many of the cases from our field and desk research was in fact a

high level of creativity and ingeniousness. Not necessarily in elaborate or costly new set-ups, but often in rather frugal and modest reconfigurations of components in space and time and with an often surprising outcome.

Another tendency described by many entrepreneurs and quite opposite to the quick and forced take just described was how the sudden lockdown had provided time - although by many uncalled for - for rethinking their business. This way of innovating is not characterised by swift transition, but rather by what we might think of as a *slowing down of reasoning*. Many tourism entrepreneurs talked of new initiatives and products not only as forced innovations - a desperate need to rethink their business under a crisis - but also as enabled due to a break from a busy work life. The lockdown had naturally caused frustration and worries, but also created time and opportunity to reflect on the future for their business and for some, their community, and to translate these reflections into concrete actions.

Some described it as an opportunity to do things that they had thought about for a very long time, for instance to implement new sustainable measures within their business, or to move all or some of their business online. An opportunity - not only necessity - to align products and practices with visions and, we might say, to bridge the attitude - behavior gap and 'do something about it'. In a Danish context, this is exemplified by 2020 becoming a record-breaking year for the Green Key certification. While we might have expected a costly and time-consuming certification process as the last thing one would do in times of crisis, the opposite was in fact the case for many businesses.

### **Pandemic innovations: local, green and digital**

A next question is then what kinds of services, products and experiences were developed during the crisis. In both projects, many of the actions undertaken by tourism actors align with the suggested outcomes of the destination surveys, where sustainability and digital innovation were prominent. An overall tendency was – unsurprisingly perhaps - the initiatives connected to what we might term as a local turn in tourism. As borders closed, destinations found themselves all of a sudden catering for entirely new markets: domestic and some, even local, markets.

A first outcome of this massive disruption were staycation or domestic marketing initiatives, which we saw emerging across the globe. In Denmark, it emerged under the hashtag of *#baredanmark* ('just denmark'), a humorous reference to having to make do with staying within the Danish borders. In the island nation of Greenland, usually visited by tourists from across the globe, a hard lockdown forced DMOs to launch *#nunarputnuan* (our beautiful country), offsetting a previously almost non-existing domestic leisure tourism trend over the summer of 2020. These marketing initiatives were supplemented by destination and product development to cater for local or domestic guests, who often came with other expectations or motivations. As argued by a tourism actor in Arctic Norway about the foodie preferences of the new Norwegian clientele: "The cruises were not used that much, but the kitchen was used a lot. And so, [the entrepreneurs] realize that Norwegians have to be treated in a different way."

In Greenland, domestic marketing and domestic transportation subsidies led to a swift development of tours and packages based on the credo 'With no guests from

the outside, now is the best time to explore and support local tourism'. Offers included new products such as a weekend 'city break' by boat from Nuuk to the neighbouring city of Maniitsoq - not previously well-known as a tourist destination or an extended weekend in Kangerlussuaq, seen predominantly in Greenland as a flight hub. In developing tourism products and experiences in Kangerlussuaq, many local tourism businesses voiced relief to be finally recognised as a destination rather than merely a waiting room. Across many other rural or 'remote' destinations did we see extensive destination development activities and the emergence of nature based-products, closely related to disappearing and emerging markets, spaces closing down or opening up and voids to fill or rethink. To the surprise of many, staycation tourism turned out successful, as argued by this destination manager: "I think this summer, we actually had more guests than we had normally, because we did a lot of things on the staycation activities". In this context, COVID 19 offered, we might argue, a certain 'local' transformative moment for tourism.

For many Arctic, often indigenous tourism companies usually catering for foreign guests, targeting their products to local or domestic markets was a real challenge. Some expressed doubts and difficulties with balancing exotic and mundane components as well as culturally sensitive issues in new narratives and stories: "can you really sell hikes to people who have hiked in the same spots since their childhood?". Can we tell stories of strong relations to land to non-indigenous compatriots, when they also experience similar strong connections? With small changes, many came to witness that there was in fact a market in this area. With modest adjustments - regular self-catered camping converted into glamping, upgrading reindeer tastings to a full 5-course gourmet dinner, or downgrading day-long hikes with shorter ones - tourist companies were able to welcome local and domestic tourists - often willing to let themselves be surprised and taken by the seemingly mundane and well-known.

What characterises most of these innovations is however that they connect to already existing tourism destination or business strategies focusing among other things on local product development and more generally on rural development or on implementing more sustainability.

### **More than innovation?**

An important question in all of this is of course to understand the logics or drive of these entrepreneurs. As already argued by Hjalager (2010), there is a research gap in the area of entrepreneurial innovation on what motivates entrepreneurial innovators. As already previously described, entrepreneurs are often perceived to behave according to an economic rationality or the system logic of capitalism and unsurprisingly, many of the businesses were struggling to make ends meet during the lockdown. In this context, it is crucial to pinpoint how the situation looked very different depending on the availability and size of national rescue packages made available for SMEs across Europe.

Regardless of this, motivations are rarely singular, and many entrepreneurs described many other reasons for doing what they did - as we saw in interviews with Danish hotels and restaurants who used the time of lockdown to apply for Green Key certification. For some of them, greening the business was not only

based on a rational or calculated decision or a business strategy but also considered as a meaningful thing to work towards on a personal, more ethical level. For others in Arctic destinations, working within tourism was also a connected to personal well-being, lifestyle choices or a means to communicate and share local or indigenous culture.

Others again, for instance in small or remote Arctic areas, staying in business - and remaining so during the crisis - was also a question of keeping the community alive. As argued by a Samí entrepreneur: "The tourist industry is an important business. And if we leave, there will be a missing link in the community". This confirms previous research on indigenous entrepreneurship (Wennecke et al., 2019) suggesting that it is often the result of a meshwork of intertwined motivations and more than a singular question of money.

### **Relational Innovation**

What we have seen in the above is the emergence of a different temporality and of new opportunity spaces. During the pandemic and lockdown, entrepreneurs worked to innovate based on and within these new spaces. Examples from the small businesses suggest that at least some experiences of the pandemic act as a potentially transformative moment. For some entrepreneurs, the pandemic crisis has been characterised by immediate and forced innovation on the one hand. On the other hand, it provided space and time for others to reflect and work on plans and issues that previously had not been addressed due to time constraints within the daily grind.

What we saw emerge then was a lot of creativity as local bottom-up innovations came together through the reshuffling or reconfigurations of local and global actors, resources and components depending on the local context and history of tourism. These entrepreneurial innovations were typically not radical shifts from 'business as usual' but most often a more focused approach of things already integrated in tourism destination or business strategies, such as local product development, sustainability and digitalisation. Lastly, local entrepreneurs connected not simply to an economic rationality, but also to a variety of other logics.

A question is now - and this is of course where we put ourselves out on a limb - whether these local, sustainable or digital transformations will last. Is it a *moment*? Will these reconfigurations last beyond the pandemic? Or, rephrasing - what will it take for them to persist, to have longer-lasting effects and, perhaps, work towards a perhaps more local, more sustainable - tourism future. To answer this, a relational way to think about innovation and change might be instructive. A relevant resource is actor-network theory, an approach and ontology in which innovation is seen as a re-configuration of people, organizations, technologies and the environment allowing something to work differently (van der Duim et al. 2012, Paget et al., 2010).

In our material, we saw the reshuffling of people, spaces, time and the functionality of idling objects and resources and drawing on different meanings, ideas and aspirations. Components or non-human actors such as certificates, hotel rooms, boats, hiking routes and digital platforms were assembled in tentative new modes of tourism ordering, between already existing and new actors. In these new

configurations, issues of sustainability, digitality or locality, as well as safety and security played a role next to economic recovery.

By tending closely to how 'things get done', ANT provides an understanding of innovation as highly relational. In his work on entrepreneurship in Iceland, Jóhannesson (2012) explored entrepreneurship and innovation within a tourism development project. He did so through the practical process of relating, associating or connecting. In the case of entrepreneurial agency, the narratives of the hero manager and their metaphors of defeat and victory are replaced with a new understanding of agency, which accounts for multiple actors, affinities and marginalities within a network. This view sees entrepreneurs as only being so due to their ability to create relations and opens up avenues for exploring how economic rationalities or logics weave together with others. Drawing on our material, these could be local, sustainable or digital rationalities, which also contained noneconomic, civic and affective modes of transforming and ordering tourism, its destinations or products.

In order to understand change, we need to consider the ways through which particular things are accomplished and stabilized and new orders are installed. One such way could be through the emergence of so-called 'sparks' - we might also refer to them as moments. Empirically, we might think of such a spark as COVID 19, but also - on a smaller scale - as the local, as sustainability. The spark refers to the flickering practices that may prompt or ignite connections to new ideas and projects. The presence of some things or activities (staycation campaigns, hotels for locals, online concerts) are dependent on or configures through the absence of others (international tourists, massive gatherings). Sparks express an ability to intervene into the network and a set of new or reshuffled elements that prompt action in a particular place. Sparks are continuously at play, even only as unrealized potentials. They point to possible openness towards alternative connections affecting the usual order of things.

From an ANT perspective, innovation is understood as re-configuring people, organizations, technologies and the environment, as emerging bundles of supposedly relevant components and to make them work differently. Our data showed how COVID 19 created an innovative reshuffling or reconfiguration of sustainable, digital and local components in tentative new modes of tourism ordering, between new sets of human and non-human actors, in which issues such as locality, proximity and distance, security and safety played in next to economic recovery.

Just as new tourism ideas or concepts must necessarily be inscribed into tourism practices, products and materials to become effective and durable - new products, materials or technologies have to be translated into existing institutions, policies and practices in order to gain permanence and efficiency (James, Ren & Halkier 2019). Clearly, this is a taxing task. Tourism is embedded in, or is a continuity of, historical processes. The practices and strategies of producers are related to what has historically proven to be possible or not. The 'universe of the possible' is informed by past situations stored in individual and collective tacit skills, inscribed in utilized everyday tourism technologies and institutionalised in destination development strategies. However, things can always be done otherwise by adding actors and practices to already existing networks or by forging new or reconfiguring

existing alliances in the collective of human and non-human actors that make up tourism.

By introducing a view of change as relational, a transformation towards more sustainable futures would most likely *not* happen through a clear break. Rather, it would take place through the , ongoing tinkering with work and the everyday - in which and through which tourism is continually assembled, disassembled, re-assembled as socio-material practices. Transformative change entails a reordering of existing distributions of possibilities and constraints and the mobilization of human and non-human resources into sometimes unconventional, new alliances. From a practical point of view, robust transformation must be flexible towards different rationalities beyond the economic and translatable into different modes of ordering. Getting things done requires the engagement of multiple logics. This opens up avenues for exploring how economic rationalities or logics weave together with others. Drawing on our material, these include noneconomic, community-oriented and affective modes of engaging into, transforming and ordering tourism, destinations or products.

### **A tourism moment in time? Discussion and future prospects**

So, in conclusion, let us return to the question that we posed at the beginning of our presentation: will the COVID-19 pandemic prove to be a transformative moment for tourism? As proposed in the introduction, some tourism researchers and institutions have argued that the crisis offered a unique opportunity to shape the sector to ensure, as argued by UNWTO that “it not only grows but it grows better, with inclusivity, sustainability and responsibility prioritized (UNWTO, 2020)”. Many researchers saw the pandemic crisis in tourism as an opportunity to turn tourism into something better, discussing among other possibilities for a more socially just and fair tourism development, the role of policies in generating and supporting more sustainable development paths and to environmental and mobility- related green transitions. To build back better. In contrast to this transformative view, other voices in the industry and in policy discourses were concerned with getting tourism ‘back on track’, back to an economic situation similar - or even better - than before the crisis.

We used these contrasting perspectives as a springboard to explore the concepts of change in tourism and to reflect on whether the COVID-19 pandemic will turn out to be a transformational moment - for tourism as a whole or only for some places and some parts of tourism. Drawing on empirical material from Europe and the Nordic Arctic and using an institutional destination take and one on innovations ‘on the ground’, we have tried to give a sense of what kind of change we have seen so far during the pandemic. When we look at the experiences and perceptions of destination organisations, we see a rather complex picture. The pandemic is clearly an unprecedented crisis for the tourism sector on a global scale and has been hugely disruptive in the short term. Impacts have been varied however, and the prospects for significant changes to destination development plans are also very uncertain. While some see the pandemic as a critical juncture, others expect a return to ‘business as normal’.

If we zoom in and consider the experience of individual businesses and entrepreneurs, we can see how path dependency and context matters but also that



the pandemic has opened up new opportunity spaces. In at least some parts of the world, lockdowns combined with government support created space and time for reflection and innovation. It showed a surprisingly innovative capacity and creativity of the tourism sector and SMEs more entrepreneurial than might have been expected. Some destinations radically changed their marketing strategy and others went all-in on product development to new domestic markets.

In this landscape of destinations and businesses faced with huge disruption we do not see clear breaks with patterns or trajectories. Apart from entrepreneurs going out of business, changes have rarely - so far - been transformative. Rather, and using a relational approach informed by actor-network theory, what was observed in most places were modest reconfigurations - as new practices and products emerged not as part of a path-defining moment but were instead embedded within an ongoing concern for tourism. *Tinkering* (Mol et al., 2015) rather than *transformation*. From the view of European and Nordic Arctic destinations, temporary disruption seems to be slowly replaced with well-known modes of ordering tourism. Some of these are anchored to an economic logic of growth, while others were concerned with ethical or community-oriented ways of thinking and doing tourism as more sustainable or more culturally sensitive. What will come next and what it will take to develop such tourism futures further does not seem to be drastic disruption, but instead ongoing and sustained tinkering.

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## **Any chance left for sustainability transitions? The postpandemic landscape of exclusionary tourism in Barcelona, 2022**

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In this short piece I would like to focus on the position of tourist sector workers and how they have been resituated by the pandemic crisis, using evidence from Barcelona. Much has been written about the need to keep tourism going as a last-instance job generator for weak local economies and especially in relation to the most vulnerable echelons of the labour market, the most dependent on the availability of unskilled positions (which the tourism industry offers), or as a complementary source of income as part-time and discontinuous contracts. However, it has also been pointed out widely in the literature that the labour disadvantage in the travel and tourism industry is deep (Baum & Hai, 2019; Bianchi & De Man, 2021), and how innovation in travel and hospitality – embodied by the rise of the platform economy – may have controversial effects in sanctioning precarity and favouring casual work (Robinson et al., 2019). The question of whether something is better than nothing to this respect needs of course contextualising, along the lines of debates on tourism sustainability as for instance in Hunter (1997), where he posits sustainable tourism as a paradigm that can be implemented to specific regions reflecting local conditions, place histories and opportunities. This conundrum is clearly translated to the post-pandemic debate. While scholars, professional organisations and policy bodies advocate for recovery to reactivate jobs in a sector that has suffered undeniable losses, and thus mitigate the economic impacts of this crisis, others see in this reactivation a key opportunity to dignify work in the tourism and travel industry (Baxter et al., 2021).

Barcelona is often quoted as a success story in urban transformations, in which tourism development has been synergetic to its transition from a deindustrialising city into an international post-industrial hub (Smith, 2005). In parallel to the process of democratisation of Spanish institutions and the rediscovery of an original Catalan culture, the new ‘Olympic’ urban project has been as an example of public-private collaboration unleashing benefits that would trickle down to all sectors of society. However, three decades after the key moment that aligned and catalysed the so-called ‘Barcelona model’, this transformation has been showing its dark sides: the flashy, welcoming, hyper-branded Barcelona is still a divided, polarized, excluding city, which in periods of expansion results in a very attractive residential and work location but in periods of contraction and crisis sees the widening of social injustice (Arbaci & Tapada-Berteli, 2012). These contradictions have become manifest in relation to its consolidated nature of ‘tourist place’ especially in the decade preceding the pandemic. It is around 2012-14 when the obstinate and actively promoted growth of tourism became ‘overtourism’: a widely shared sense that the impacts from tourism started to dwindle on the negative side across sectors of the middle and working classes of the city (Russo et al., 2022). In a context of slow and socially uneven recovery from the global financial crisis,

tourism income started to be fanned well away from the pockets of workers, which nevertheless bear the hindrances of more expensive homes and commodities, congested public spaces and services, contamination and increasingly deregulated and precarious labour.

The next crisis, the 2020 pandemic, has hardly reverted the structural drivers of such avenues of inequality and injustice. Although in a context of lesser pressure from tourism, low-skilled workers, migrants from developing countries, single parent women and youngsters out of education have not only suffered the effects of the slump in tourism activity, but have also been more exposed to the health hazards on account of their dependency on unfavourable work and dwelling conditions (Nel.lo, 2020). As argued by Bauer (2021), “housing has become the frontline defence against the coronavirus”, and it is nonetheless contested (Delclós & Vidal, 2021). Now on the verge of a definitive recovery of tourism activity, a working class tremendously weakened in the process will be facing again unaffordable housing markets, rarefying public services, and precarity.

Along with the international literature, the temporary blockage of tourism growth could have been a moment of reset and transition. In my 2020 paper in the ATLAS Review (Russo, 2020), I suggested that a post-pandemic recovery should favour product quality and differentiation, reverting on better salaries and more stable employment opportunities. This model change in labour would be the result of an ecological selection of companies that are prepared to do more with less, in line with a degrowth (or de-acceleration) scenario tuning to imperatives of sustainable cities and communities. There may be less employment in tourism in the future, but this would result in better jobs, while the containment of tourism expansion, let alone contributing to a mitigation of the climate crisis, would leave space for the development of alternative and more resilient economic sectors. This transition should be accompanied by reforms of contractual relations, a serious fight against casual work, and a new paradigm of tourist planning, including commercial regulations and taxation, constraining the unbridled expansion of the sector and mitigating the intensity of competition.

How realistic is this regenerative scenario in the light of what we have witnessed before and during the pandemic? I will now refer to some early results from a Horizon 2020 research project I am coordinating (SMARTDEST project, ref. 870753), tackling issues of social exclusion in tourist places. Namely, I'll be using insights from the case study of Barcelona, where we have analysed the forms of social exclusion that unfold among tourism workers, looking at pre-pandemic trends, but also at the reported experience of workers and employers during the pandemic period. We have no pretence that the situation of Barcelona can be easily generalised. However, as a global mass-tourist destination which has been pioneering urban tourism planning in the Mediterranean region, we estimate that trends in Barcelona may well illuminate on the type of challenges faced by many other tourism-dependent economies.

In Barcelona we have focused on the paradox of tourism success happening ‘at the expenses’ of work. First of all, it was found that tourist sector workers in Barcelona have been, in a period of expansion of tourism activity, the most likely to hold precarious or disadvantaged employment relations (whose share on total contractual relations in the industry has grown consistently between 2008 and

2019), change residence and move farther from working locations (Valente et al., 2022b). For females, senior workers and national workers, labour disadvantage represents an additional layer of precariousness that significantly affected their residential displacement out of Barcelona between 2013 and 2019, leading to longer commuting or plainly the exclusion from the labour market, while it was found that for migrants and younger cohorts, 'staying put' (closer to work locations) in a situation of labour disadvantage could equate with a devaluation of housing conditions, that is, accepting to move to homes offering lower quality or space.

These results hint at a double edge of precarity in local labour markets. On one hand, in thriving destinations like Barcelona, housing has steadily become less affordable for a sizable part of low-income households, among which tourism sector workers tend to be overrepresented. The unbridled growth of short-term rental apartments in the 2016-2019 period has not only raised inflated rental and purchase prices (as found in García-López et al., 2020), but also (and consequently) severely affected housing stability for tenants. In line with the findings of Valente et al. (2022a) this is a general trend for European urban areas. In the case of Barcelona, yet unpublished research indicates that during COVID-19 the income gap between home-owners and tenants has become wider. On the other hand, sizable contingents of tourism sector workers face residential instability, stifling their chances of upwards social mobility. Hence, rising precarity and casualisation in labour reinforce precarity in other related domains of life, like personal security or children care and conciliation.

These 'quantitative' findings have been further examined through field work with informants among the affected collectives, inquiring about personal trajectories leading to labour marginalisation for cohorts of undocumented or unskilled migrants, young adults, and workers of the platform economy. We also inquired about tactics to cope with the slump in activity during the pandemic, assistance received through government transfers, family, or solidarity organisations, and at participation in advocacy and resistance campaigns with civic organizations, unions and social movements. This fieldwork is in progress; early findings hint at labour disadvantage, intersecting with housing exclusion or devaluation of residential conditions, as a major hindrance to social reproduction. While the adjustments of the welfare system to cope with the pandemic crisis (with the introduction of a furlough scheme and of a 'citizen salary') have been key to avoid mass unemployment and poverty, they did not protect sufficiently seasonal, temporary and outsourced workers, and completely excluded undocumented and casual workers.

All in all, these insights from Barcelona are likely to be generalised throughout the range of case studies included in the SMARTDEST project, mid- to large-sized cities that have been the hub of intense tourism-related mobilities in past years of expansion, some (like Lisbon, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Edinburgh) recording various forms of social exclusion around tourism growth. In some of these cities, for instance in Amsterdam, the COVID-19 crisis has been a moment of reflection and reassessment throughout the destination ecosystem, with a shift in both pro-growth and anti-tourism discourses. This has opened the way for a widely-accepted 'planned recovery', that promises to tame some of the most problematic issues found at the cross-roads of unbridled growth, housing shortages and excess tourist pressure. However, for the majority of other cities we're studying, the

dominant orientation is that destinations resilience is to be found in a post-pandemic rebranding and reactivation of global mobility systems (or their expansion, as in the case of recent dispute over an extension of the Barcelona airport), which leaves very little margin for a re-empowerment of workers.

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## **Retreat and Recovery: Post-COVID Tourism and Wellbeing**

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### **Introduction**

This paper examines some of the mental health issues that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and considers the role that tourism plays in human wellbeing under the current challenging circumstances. In addition to enforced lockdowns and closed borders, many people have become increasingly anxious about travel and have preferred to stay closer to home. The benefits of staycations are briefly considered here but research is inconclusive about whether short trips in the vicinity of home can create as many positive impacts as longer trips further afield. Reference is made to regenerative and restorative tourism, but mainly from the perspective of individuals who are looking for mental and emotional benefits. The focus is on wellness retreats that provide spaces for rest and recuperation, as well as opportunities for personal development and transformation into the future.

### **The Impacts of the Pandemic on Mental Health: Implications for Tourism**

It has been well documented in recent months that the COVID-19 pandemic has engendered a mental health crisis (Rokni, 2020; Bhalla, Chowdhary and Ranjan, 2021; Yang and Wong, 2021). Anxiety about the pandemic has caused psychological distress because of fear of catching the disease, economic losses, social isolation and the lack of leisure and travel possibilities. Although the latter could be deemed minor compared to other physical and psychological health risks, the need for escapism and respite from the rigors of everyday life should not be under-estimated. Lehto and Lehto (2019) describe travel as an antidote enabling people to escape from an exhausting environment and to seek restoration. Certainly, past quality of life and wellbeing studies have emphasized the importance of the role of tourism in health, leisure and life satisfaction (Neal, Uysal and Sirgy, 2007; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee and Yu, 2011; Dolnicar, Yanamandram and Cliff, 2012; Chen and Petrick, 2013) not to mention subjective wellbeing or happiness (McCabe and Johnson, 2013; Chen, Lehto and Cai, 2013; Nawijn and Filep, 2016; de Bloom et al., 2017; Pyke, Hartwell, Blake and Hemingway, 2016; Kwon and Lee, 2020). More eudaimonic forms of activities are also important for one's self-development and transformation (Reisinger, 2013; Fu, Tanyatanaboon and Lehto, 2015; Knobloch, Robertson and Aitken, 2016; Smith and Diekmann, 2017; Sheldon, 2020). The COVID pandemic temporarily removed such opportunities, including one of the most important aspects of travel which is anticipation. Planning and looking forward to enjoyable activities whether they are personal hobbies, meeting friends or holidaying with one's family became remote possibilities for an unprecedented amount of time.

Lin et al. (2021) analyse whether staycations (excursions within driving distance from home) can afford similar benefits to longer trips, but their results are inconclusive. De Bloom et al. (2017) suggested that although the hedonic impacts



of wellbeing were not so different during a weekend at home and a weekend away from home, people found it easier to detach from work when they were away from home. This feeling has no doubt intensified during COVID lockdowns, as for many people, home actually became the workplace! However, travelling further distances, especially across borders, created higher levels of anxiety for the majority of tourists with fears for safety being a primary concern along with inconvenient and uncomfortable travel arrangements, extensive paperwork and expensive tests. Zenker et al. (2021) have even developed a scale for measuring the degree of anxiety faced by tourists. Yang and Wong (2021) suggest that the positive outcomes of travel have largely been replaced by anxiety, insecurity and psychological distress and that tourists may feel unwelcome in the destination because of social discrimination. It has been indicated that older tourists and females express more fear and are more likely to be cautious about travelling during the pandemic (Rokni, 2021). Nevertheless, it seems that some tourists are still willing to risk travelling precisely because of the social and mental wellbeing benefits, including relaxation, personal growth and social connectedness (Aebli et al., 2021).

### **Restorative and Regenerative Tourism**

Much is now being written about both 'restorative' and 'regenerative' tourism, especially in the wake of the pandemic. A New York Times article recently heralded a new era of 'regenerative' travel which is taking over from sustainable tourism as a way of leaving a place better than you found it. Instead of just slowing down degradation, the new approach is about restoring and then regenerating destinations (Glusac, 2021). This is an immensely important dimension of future tourism development and management in the post-pandemic era, but this paper focuses rather on the restoration of the potential tourist and his or her wellbeing. Such an approach has been taken by Sheldon (2020) who examines the inner world and transformation of the individual, arguing that transformed individuals can eventually help to transform whole societies and destinations.

Academic studies are increasingly returning to theories of 'Attention Restoration Theory', meaning the positive contribution of tourism to health and wellbeing (Lehto and Lehto, 2019; Packer, 2021). Emphasis is usually placed on the benefits of nature and natural landscapes (Qiu, Sha and Scott, 2021), rather than built environments and cities. Studies have shown the benefits for mental health of being in green areas or having green views during COVID-19 when people were forced to stay at home and not travel (Soga et al., 2021).

Packer (2021) concluded that short breaks in relatively close and familiar environments can be as beneficial as long-distance or international travel, which could be good news for future travel in the context of pandemics. For this reason, multiple breaks throughout the year could be more beneficial than one long vacation. Important characteristics of the vacation include intentionally detaching oneself from work and being in an environment that enables relaxation and reflection. The ability to switch off from one's gadgets and devices is another important aspect of psychological wellbeing while on vacation (Ayeh, 2018).

***Post-COVID Restorative Tourism***

Ma et al. (2020) suggest that the tourism industry should develop concepts that address the psychological impacts of COVID-19. They propose a 'healing tourism' concept that should enhance the sense of eudaimonia and increase social wellbeing. Healing tourism should focus on lifelong wellness and ideally take place in natural environments. The therapeutic benefits of tourism have been summarized according to different categories, including wellbeing tourism (spas, yoga), medical tourism, nature and adventure tourism, outdoor recreation and therapeutic landscapes (Buckley and Westaway, 2020). This paper will focus mainly on the first category of so-called wellbeing tourism (more commonly referred to as wellness tourism) especially in the context of retreats. The connections to nature and therapeutic landscapes for retreat-based tourism are strong, especially in the post-COVID era.

Aluculesei et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of health and medical spas in post-COVID recovery therapies. European medical spas have a tradition of using natural resources for healing respiratory disorders as well as strengthening immune systems and might therefore be the ideal spaces for post-COVID recovery. Wellness spas have also been offering packages which claim to help people who are suffering from long COVID symptoms, for example, SHA Wellness Clinic, which operates in Spain, Mexico and UAE offers seven-day post-COVID programmes following diagnostic tests with an internal medicine specialist which provide treatments that claim to alleviate symptoms. Park Igls in Austria offers a "Fit After COVID" programme which includes diagnostic and therapeutic treatments including massages, 'detoxifying compresses' and 'fortifying infusions'. Vivamayr Medical Resorts (also in Austria) offers individual medical exams, yoga, fasting and mud treatments. The COVID Convalescence Programme offered at theBodyholiday Resort in St Lucia aims to strengthen the respiratory system and to aid recovery generally. Treatments include yoga, Reiki, Manual Lymphatic Drainage, hypnotherapy, and osteopathy.

In addition to some scepticism about the medical evidence for such programmes, the spas and resorts have been criticized for being expensive (as much as 6000 Euros for 2 weeks) and therefore only serving a wealthy clientele. Post-COVID wellness retreats have even been described as "disaster capitalism" (Pitcher, 2021). On the other hand, doctors are now suggesting that any mind-body connection therapies that do no harm and contribute to stress management and address the psychological and emotional impacts of COVID should not be dismissed. These include yoga, meditation, breath work and massage (Chesak, 2021). Many of these could be undertaken at home, but as stated earlier, psychological wellbeing is more easily improved away from home where detachment from work is facilitated.

It is clear that spas, resorts and retreat centres are offering more than just physical health treatments, they are also helping to deal with mental, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs too. Bhalla, Chowdhary and Ranjan (2021) emphasise the importance of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) for mitigating the indirect effects of COVID on mental health and wellbeing, stating that "Eudaimonia-based travel and tourism post-COVID-19 may act as complementary and alternative medicine as it can facilitate the transformation of people through

travel and may reduce mental health anomalies”(p.770). In particular, they mention nature-based tourism, transformational tourism and spiritual tourism. They advocate non-religious spiritual travel to natural landscapes which engender transformation. Transformation is one of key tenets of future restorative and regenerative tourism, both for individuals and destinations. The physical aspects of long COVID are perhaps best treated by qualified medical professionals, but it could be argued that one of the best ways in which to restore oneself in the post-COVID era is to visit a retreat centre that focuses on mental, psychological and emotional dimensions of wellbeing as well as personal, individual transformation. Retreats can be visited for a few days, even a long weekend and there are many centres within short distances of major European cities.

### ***Retreat-Based Transformational Tourism***

Retreats have existed for centuries and were traditionally places in which spiritual solace could be sought. Over time, they have become refuges from the stresses of everyday life and places for rest, reflection, replenishment or self-development (Glouberman and Cloutier, 2017; Kelly and Smith, 2017). Although some healing or health-enhancing complementary and alternative therapies may be offered (Cohen et al., 2017), the main focus is usually on mental and emotional wellbeing. Typical activities include yoga, meditation, fitness, counselling, stress management, healthy nutrition, detoxification, creative practices, re-connecting to nature, digital detox and more latterly, post-COVID recovery. The time spent in retreats can range from one day to a whole year, but the most common length of time is 6-10 days (Norman and Pokorny, 2017). Retreat centres tend to be largely female dominated spaces, attracting solo travellers without children who are likely to be middle class, educated and professional (Kelly and Smith, 2017). Prices in Europe are not prohibitively expensive for the average Western salary but the retreats are unfortunately unlikely to be affordable for many lower paid keyworkers who might need them the most.

Even before COVID, the main motivations for going to retreats were connected to enhancing health generally as well as de-stressing and unwinding. However, rest and relaxation were the main motivating factors followed to a lesser extent by social and spiritual reasons (Kelly, 2012). Retreat participants are encouraged to focus on different domains of their life and to balance or harmonise different areas of wellness. The connection to eudaimonic wellbeing processes (Smith and Diekmann, 2017) and personal transformation (Sheldon, 2020) is derived through the process of trying to discover one's authentic or true self (Kelly and Smith, 2017). Participants are sometimes encouraged to address character flaws and lifestyle deficiencies and to emerge 'a better person'. However, the post-COVID period may not be entirely conducive to such intense processes, especially as many individuals may rather require rest, recuperation and escapism. One example of a retreat that is offering healing programmes (Euphoria in Greece) claims to “release the negative emotions, stress, tension and anxiety that have built up, perhaps even subconsciously, during the time of the pandemic” and nurture participants back to feeling like themselves again – “renewed, restored and re-energised”.

Portals like Retreat Company have been promoting retreat holidays around the world since the mid-1990s. Around 500 retreat holidays exist currently in Retreat

Company and they are categorized under around 100 different topic headings ranging from Anxiety to De-tox to Stress Management to Yoga. Retreat Company emphasizes health, rest, recuperation, escapism but also transformation in its opening promotion “When you are looking for a healthy holiday, a rest, somewhere to recuperate, a bolt hole or transformation vacations, our online retreats directory delivers a range of retreats and topics to choose from”. In many ways, tourists are encouraged to ‘self-diagnose’ their needs in the same way as individuals who select a self-help book. Indeed, there are some parallels with the self-help movement, the aim of which is described by Bergsma (2008) as enhancing personal strengths and functioning rather than alleviating the symptoms of psychological disorders. Common themes include personal growth, personal relations, coping with stress and identity. Like the physical impacts of long COVID, serious mental health problems are best left to medical professionals. However, the self-help movement, including retreats, can offer a number of benefits to predominantly well individuals who need mental and emotional rest or support.

During the pandemic lockdowns, online options were offered by retreat centres, such as Home Detox and Healing Retreats which included deliveries of organic juices and supplements as well as support and guidance from a team of experts via Zoom. Opportunities were given to take part in live workshops and to benefit from group interaction as well as taking part in one-to-one therapies, yoga classes or meditations sessions. Participants could choose the length of their involvement from a long weekend up to a whole month. Consultations could be booked with nutritional therapists, hypnotherapists, coaches or counsellors. Topics included emotional wellbeing, work-life balance, coping with trauma, stress or anxiety, handling change, life purpose and relationships.

One of the striking features of retreat centres that link them to recommended forms of post-COVID ‘healing holidays’ is the importance of connecting to nature (Ma et al., 2021; Qiu, Sha and Scott, 2021; Soga et al., 2021). Many retreats incorporate the natural landscape into their healing and recuperation process and the category of ‘Rural Hideaway’ reflects this. A ‘desert bliss’ retreat offers ‘meditative moon/stargazing’ and another retreat makes use of the ‘primordial sounds’ or vibrations of nature like the sea and wind. One retreat focuses especially on sounds of nature and promises to help participants connect better to the true self through both silence and sound: ‘Learn Primordial Sound Meditation... Reconnect with silence and discover your essence. Meditate on the sounds of the earth’. There is a chance to ‘get away from it all’ while working on emotional and spiritual issues. Emphasis is placed on increasing energy, creativity, happiness, moving forward in life and transformation. Even one-day post-COVID retreats are offered which focus specifically on nature-based relaxation:

*We will use this day to make a break with the worst of lockdown and get our bodies and minds to relax preparing us for a return to normality. we'll spend some time understanding the importance of relaxing both physically and mentally and how both are necessary. We'll spend as much time as we can outside, reminding ourselves how therapeutic nature and outdoors can be by trying out some 'ecotherapy'.*

Smith (2021) undertook a discourse analysis of the promotional language used by retreats which can be useful to identify what is offered as well as to gain insights into the benefits promised. She noted the use of the following:

- Encouragement to improve or change one's life, for example, 'to heal', 'to grow', 'to re-connect', 'to cleanse', 'to rebalance', 'to renew'.
- Active verbs which relate to eudaimonic personal growth and development, for example 'to improve', 'to enhance', 'to cultivate', 'to learn', 'to become'.
- References to long term wellbeing and the future self, e.g. 'for life ahead', 'the person you were meant to be', 'your purpose', 'a clear sense of your priorities', 'the future wellbeing journey of You', 'a new path' and 'lasting change'.
- Promises of support from the retreat organisers, for example, 'to encourage', 'to enable', 'to teach', 'to help', 'to coach', 'to guide'.

Promotional texts often emphasise the peaceful and comfortable environment which is conducive to relaxation, as well as the 'support' and 'nurturing' that take place. In modern living, many people want to be cared for when they go to retreats. The physical health programmes mention 'strengthening the immune system', which has become especially important during Covid, as well as 'detox' (popular in numerous retreats to remove the toxins of modern living). Participants are also encouraged to communicate their concerns, for example, to 'explore and express your emotions'. Retreats often promise to 'replenish' and restore 'vitality' and 'energy' which is depleted by diseases like cancer, Covid or stress. Many retreats claim to offer 'direction' and 'a clear sense of your priorities'. The pandemic forced everyone to re-think their priorities and the return to 'normal' life has proved challenging for many people. Some retreats teach people to understand depression and anxiety so that they can address it when they return home. Indeed, the 'take home' and long term benefits of retreats are often mentioned, reinforcing Ma et al.'s (2020) idea of healing holidays offering lifelong wellbeing. It may be currently ambitious to expect participants to be their 'best selves', but traditionally, retreats have also focused on the idea of guiding people to live the lives that they want to lead and to become the people that they want to be. This often involves the notion of new paths and personal journeys, for example, "If you feel highly stressed or lost after a relationship, career or health upheaval; are suffering burnout, depression.....We offer real support, coaching and guidance....for the future wellbeing journey of You'. Many of the programmes place emphasis on working through problems or relationships that hold people back from living their lives to the full and being 'authentic', so although some (difficult) psychological work takes place, the ultimate aim is to renew passion for life, become freer and more joyful. The term 'emergent future' is used to describe this path of new possibilities.

## Conclusion

This short paper has examined some of the mental health issues engendered by COVID as well as some of the possible options for healing holidays during the post-COVID period. Although this might include those people who are suffering from the physical impacts of long COVID, the recommendations are rather to seek professional medical help for such symptoms. For those, who are feeling physically well but emotionally stressed or exhausted, retreats might offer the ideal space in

which to rest and recover, whilst coming to terms with both the 'new normal' and the uncertain future. In the pre-COVID period, retreats encouraged participants to become their 'best selves' and to lead the lives that they truly dreamed of. Although this positive approach has remained, many participants may not currently be able to muster the energy to engage in extensive self-development and transformation. On the other hand, they may be relieved to be guided and supported by experts through an experience that has been relatively traumatic. Retreats offer a nurturing and healing environment in which to re-shape a sense of self in the post-COVID world and to work towards a regenerative, restorative and more resilient future.

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## **A thematic analysis of sustainability in the field of tourism and COVID-19**

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### **Introduction**

The current global pandemic has had an enormous impact on people's social and recreational life, leading to an unprecedented challenge to the whole tourism industry. Facing increasing socio-cultural issues like high unemployment, lockdowns and industrial instability, many scholars have proposed that it is time to rethink the tourism system. The profit-driven model of tourism has been especially questioned and transformations towards more sustainable means of tourism development have been proposed (Gossling et al., 2020; Higgins, 2020). Studies reviewing previous literature have paid attention to finding paths towards a more sustainable future, (Sigala, 2020). In order to resume the tourism industry from the severe tourism losses brought about by the pandemic, empirical studies on green practices and governance (Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Yousaf et al., 2021), destination resilience and sustainability (Kuscer et al., 2021; Yiu & Cheung, 2021), and stakeholder wellbeing (Agrusa et al., 2021) became popular, with great emphasis on minimizing environmental disturbance and maintaining the durability of societies.

This chapter is also based on a literature review. We executed a bibliometric study to illustrate the current state of knowledge within the fields of tourism and sustainability during the pandemic and also to find future research potentials and opportunities once the pandemic is behind us.

### **Rethinking tourism**

The pervasive damage caused by the global pandemic and corresponding governmental responses, such as social distancing and strict travel restrictions, has seriously affected tourism-related sectors, stakeholders, and tourism destinations and brought about the opportunity to rethink the tourism industry (Lenzen et al., 2020).

From an environmental perspective, many researchers have questioned the previous volume-driven tourism model and proposed a more sustainable transformation which considers environmental vulnerability, climate change and local destination resilience as part of a post-pandemic tourism recovery (Cristiano & Gonella, 2020; Gössling & Higham, 2020). In tandem, many European touristic destinations have begun to pay attention to effective allocation of nature resources, preservation of historical sites and local wildlife and utilization of new energies, such as sewage conversion or air purification in the decontamination of the local environment (Charalambous & Violaris, 2021). Similarly, the reduction of the worldwide carbon footprint, due to decreasing international transport and mobility, has made many academics advocate the continuation of this sustainable model even after the pandemic. For instance, domestic or short distance trips should be promoted due to their low environmental impacts. Gössling (2020) has also proposed way-outs for a sustainable transportation future through taking accurate customer volume predictions, stream control, and improving business efficiencies for the long-term development of the whole industry.

At the same time, a sustainable future also includes solving growing socio-cultural problems such as discrimination, inequality, and increasing gaps between the rich and the poor. So, viable solutions must concentrate in the enhancement of equal tourist accessibility to the touristic sites regardless of race, gender and regional bias and equal staff employment (Baum & Hai, 2020). On the one hand, open communication, flexible information exchange and social caring would be beneficial in handling tourists' discriminative experiences, fears, and conflicts (Jamal & Budke, 2020), especially when accompanied by misleading media news (Yang & Wong, 2020). On the other hand, especially for the vulnerable groups, such as people with poor working conditions, security of employment and staff rights have become a vital element in stabilizing the organization structure, long-term sustainability, as well as the survival and success of the tourism industry (Higgins, 2020).

During the gradual recovery of the tourism industry, a collaborative governance, implying the involvement of different tourism stakeholders, is argued to be crucial in creating a proactive and responsible atmosphere including more opportunities for the improvement of local community wellbeing, business vitality and ongoing development (Dangi & Petrick, 2021). Specifically, the function of governmental incentives, financial supports, and community empowerment has been emphasized in promoting local employment and entrepreneurship, especially for small and medium sized businesses (Utkarsh & Sigala, 2021). Relocation of tourism resources to contribute to the creation of meaningful tourist experiences, as well as balancing local resident benefits, creates new requirements for both governments and tourism practitioners in the reconstruction of post-covid sustainable destinations (Sigala, 2020; Renaud, 2020).

Overall, sustainability in the tourism industry, considering both the environment and stakeholder wellbeing, has become a priority. In particular, a nature-friendly urban planning and management model has become especially important for the resilience of local destinations and communities. Moreover, the resolution of socio-cultural concerns like unemployment, discriminative experiences, mental problems, as well as the enhancement of stakeholder collaborations is supposed to play a significant role in the regeneration of global tourism. To further explore

this research topic and critically rethink the future of sustainable tourism development, especially against the backdrop of the pandemic, this study aims to contribute to an understanding of current academic interests, as well as to provide way-outs and research potentials in the development of a sustainable path in the post-pandemic era.

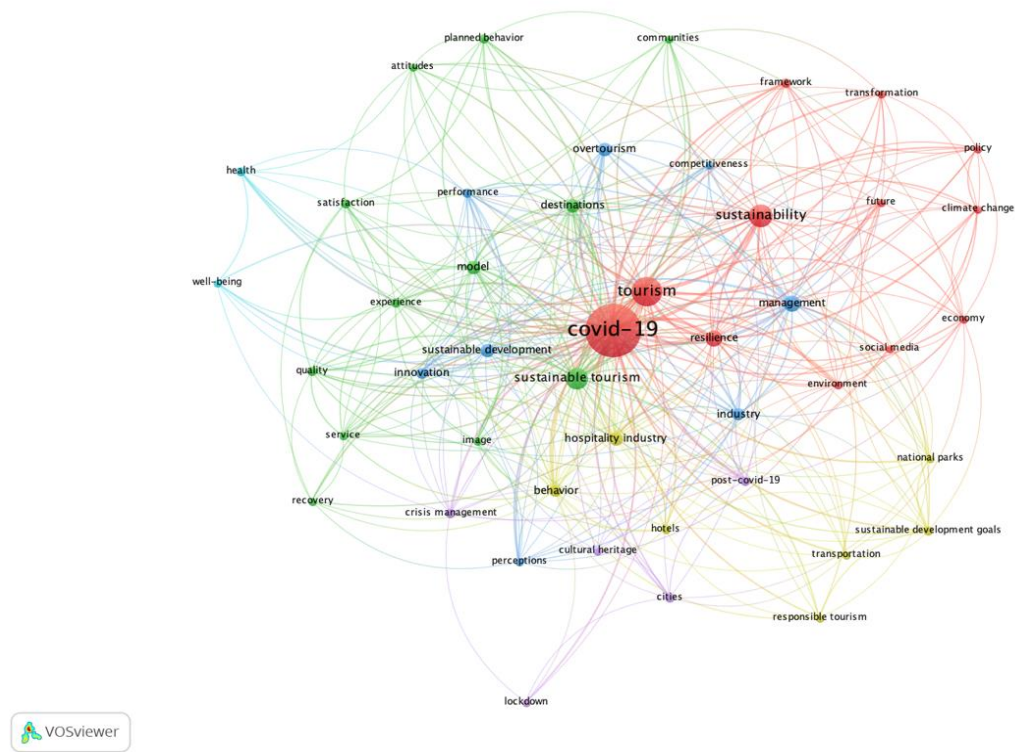
## Methodology

To better understand the thematic structures and relationships between different previously discussed topics, we conducted a bibliometric analysis. We collected data from the Web of Science database, restricted to a single research field (social science), and document type (English only) over the period 2020–2021. We defined search strings related to the “COVID-19” and “sustainable tourism” issues, including their synonyms such as “pandemic”, “coronavirus”; “tourism sustainability”, etc. and manually examined the data according to their research fields, topics, keywords, abstracts, etc. In total, we analysed 310 publications. The Vosviewer software was then used, focusing on a keyword co-occurrence analysis, through which keyword frequencies and the interrelations between them were visualized (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). This analysis allowed us to further identify the topic domains, and the potentially underexplored areas in the research process (Utkarsh &

## Results and discussion

**Figure 1** and **Table 1**, respectively, show the keyword co-occurrence map for our database (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010), and the analysis of the most frequent keywords. By analysing 310 selected articles and defining the minimum number of keywords occurrences to be six, we have obtained a total of forty-six items and six clusters (seen Figure 1). Generally, we found that a wide range of topics has been discussed in each cluster. More specifically, the red cluster focuses on the discussion regarding tourism sustainability during the pandemic and contains the highest frequency keywords such as “COVID-19”, “tourism”, “sustainability”. The items in the green cluster (“sustainable tourism”, “satisfaction”, “service” and “recovery”) relate to the sustainable tourism recovery process. The blue cluster includes nodes like “management”, “overtourism”, “industry” and “performance” which address workable solutions of the tourism industry from the management side. The yellow cluster consists of different tourism subsectors like “hospitality industry”, “transportation”, and sustainability related activities such as “responsible tourism”.

**Figure 1.** Keyword co-occurrence map



**Table 1.** Top ten keywords with highest number of total occurrences

Keyword	Occurrences
COVID-19	216
Tourism	71
Sustainability	43
Sustainable tourism	39
Management	23
Resilience	23
Hospitality industry	18
Destinations	16
Model	16
Overtourism	16

In a further step, we focused on a discussion of the main nodes (see **Table 1**), small nodes from each cluster, and their thematic correlations to further illustrate the main concerns, emerging themes, and future research potentials for COVID-19 and sustainable tourism. Studies related to “sustainable tourism”, “sustainability” and “sustainable development” focus on the discussion on collaborative governance in recovering from overtourism, conservation of biodiversity, protecting natural environments, as well as enhancing local wellbeing

(Gossling & Higham, 2020; Kuklina et al., 2021; Robina-Ramirez et al., 2021). Previous research emphasized that, to achieve these objectives, tourism policies should involve urban planning, and the exploration of less well-known areas with potential natural and cultural resources (Yiu & Cheung, 2021). At the same time, previous research paid attention to growth potentials in the adoption of virtual technologies to improve tourists' psychological buffering, alleviation of overcrowding, and promotion of the destination and community identity in the local tourism redevelopment during and after the COVID-19 pandemic era (Lemmi & Deri, 2020; Streimikiene & Korneeva, 2020).

Regarding the literature related to "management" and "resilience", both governmental and business efforts in enhancing crisis preparedness, mutual communication and belongingness, as well as flexible strategies and responses, appear as relevant topics (Altshuler & Schmidt, 2021; Sharma et al., 2021). Attention is also paid to creating innovative products, especially those fueled by technological innovations, as these have been predicted to be widely utilized into the tourism industry in the future for providing immersive customer experiences and sustainable business operations (Srivastava et al., 2021; Streimikiene & Korneeva, 2020). Nevertheless, it is argued that the rapid development of digital products could have a negative impact on the conditions and wellbeing of lower-paid tourism staff due to job precariousness (Rydzik & Kisson, 2021). From **Figure 1**, we see that "innovation" (blue) is the only item that appears in the cluster dominated by the "tourism sustainability" issue, and that despite the emphasis of technology influence of tourism competitiveness and longevity by above-mentioned authors. This may indicate that there is a quite unexplored area, and great research potential, in respect to the connection between new technologies and sustainable tourism models in the future.

One of the most reviewed topics relates to the "hospitality industry". On the one side, the negative impact of the pandemic causing unemployment and staff psychological distress has been widely discussed in this industry (Chen & Chen, 2021). Here, an ignorance of the rights of the most vulnerable staff groups, or the solution of issues related to gender, age, and education bias, are expected to raise further considerations (Higgins, 2020; Lopes et al., 2021). On the other side, green practices in both the hotel and restaurant industries, such as the promotion of local products, clean environments, and energy-saving facilities, not only contribute to the enhancement of destination branding and customer satisfaction, but should also be boosted for the sake of the whole industry (Cai et al., 2021; Yousaf et al., 2021).

We have also found several issues which are less represented in our visualization. Especially the importance of responsible behaviour when making travel choices has received little attention (Eichelberger et al., 2021). The nodes "responsible tourism" (yellow), "behaviour" (yellow), and "planned behaviour" (green), may reflect this discussion, however with little relatedness among them, which might indicate a future research direction in terms of "responsible practices" by different stakeholders during tourism activities, with the purpose of minimizing the environmental impacts of destinations and touristic sites. In addition, it appears that "transportation" (yellow) is closely related to "sustainable development goals" (yellow), which is also manifested in the previous discussions on the increasing necessity for safer, cleaner, and more sustainable mobility patterns like bicycles,

public transportation, or even walking (Thombre & Agarwal, 2021). This corresponds to the idea of Gössling (2020) and Ioannides and Gyimóthy (2020), who further advocate continuing this sustainable model even when the health crisis terminates, with the long-term aim of establishing a more balanced touristic world.

Furthermore, “social media” (red), has been regarded as an effective approach for the relief of psychological stress brought about by mandatory restrictions on movement or negative tourism experiences due to race and gender discrimination (Mansourian, 2021; Yang & Wong, 2020). It turns out that the large distance between “social media” (red), and “well-being” (light blue) might indicate a research potential for the relationship between these two concepts which could be further extended into the social media impacts on the fulfilment of tourist life quality and satisfaction. Crossley (2020) pointed out that, when correctly utilized, social media could play a vital role in presenting a sustainable destination image. The strategic planning related to the transmission of local positive image and enhancement of sustainable awareness might also merit future research.

## Conclusions

The pandemic has imposed new challenges to global sustainable tourism development. Previous research has argued that collaboration of all the relevant stakeholders, whose mutual communication and human caring - not only for their own benefit, but also in terms of their contribution to the reconstruction of society as a whole - has become of vital importance in overcoming the pandemic and sustainability in the tourism industry. The pandemic is still existing, thus further investigations into tourism sustainable practices and their significance in handling upcoming problems induced by the pandemic should be expected in the future. In addition, future research should explore the growth potential of high technologies utilization, and especially the application of virtual tools, social media, artificial intelligence, and strategic planning and management to promote the general efficiency and stability of the whole industry.

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## **Face masks, Health Codes and Viral-shaped Travels: Reflections from Zhuhai, China**

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### **Introduction**

Covid-19 has transformed our social worlds and ways in immense ways (Baum & Hai, 2020; Brouder et al., 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2021). This essay draws on reflections from the Chinese city of Zhuhai and narrates the experiences of travel between 2020 and present. Located on the south-eastern coast of China, Zhuhai is culturally and physically connected to its more globally known neighbours of Macao and Hong Kong (Ong, 2012; Simpson, 2008). Such cultural, historical, and economic links motivated the launching of a mega-bridge just before the onset of the global pandemic and possesses myriad networks of travels pre-covid and in the pandemic present. This essay will reflect on the everyday engagements with travels shaped by the virus and its resultant regulatory policies and practices. Here, I will touch on two main themes: 1) Regulatory Practices and the Zero-Covid Regime and 2) Internal Circulation and domestic tourism. In doing so, I seek to provide an everyday account of life during the pandemic and to bridge understandings between academic and actual lived-in experiences and to dispel media-misrepresentations concerning life in China and Asia in the Covid-present.

### **Regulatory Practices and the Zero-Covid Regime**

China has policed its international borders very tightly since the start of the pandemic. Inbound tourism ground to a halt and at the time of writing, has remained so. Visas for foreigners for work and residential purposes remained difficult to obtain and much of the inbound passengers into China's airport and ports have continued to be made up of returning Chinese nationals. China also practices a tough and tight quarantine regime for all arrivals. The quarantine period has changed from time to time but generally hovers around a two-week quarantine in an assigned location – designated quarantine hotels or quarantine centres converted from government owned residences.

Many employers and workplaces also necessitate daily health reporting from employees. These are commonly conducted over mobile apps and require employees to reveal their daily health status, vaccination records and travel itineraries. A series of vaccination programmes have also been rolled out as early as 2020 as China leverages on its status as an early developer and manufacturer of covid-vaccines. In areas where case rates were to be found, mass daily testings were conducted in order to identify and isolate patients from the healthy population and for treatment to be given to those who succumbed to the virus. The use of surgical face masks has been widely accepted and practiced and that appeared to have kept case rates down overall for an extremely populous country.

## **Internal Circulation and Chinese Domestic Tourism**

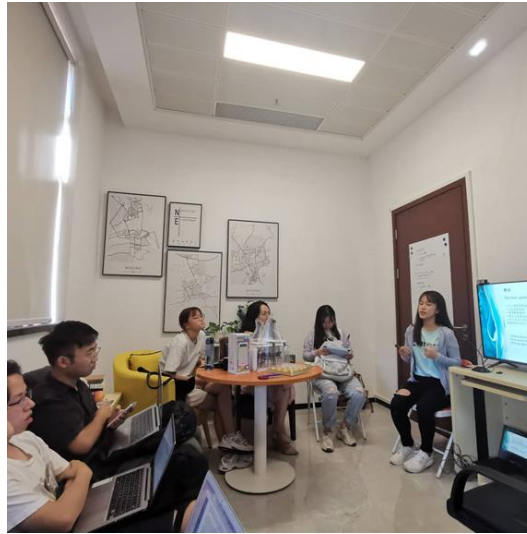
### *Context of dual circulation economies*

A discussion on China's domestic tourism during the pandemic years must be done within the context of China's policy of a 'dual circulation strategy'. The viral pandemic has also made clear the risks and susceptibilities in international trade integration. This has led to countries to reduce their reliance on other economies. As such, the Chinese state championed its new economic vision, coined the 'dual circulation strategy'. Essentially an economic narrative, it argues that China's economic growth through exports can be bolstered by a focus on domestic demand as the international trade environment comes favourable.

The strategy emphasises and plays to one of China's key and unique strength - a huge domestic market of 1.4 billion consumers. China also pays considerable attention to its middle class (Ong & du Cros, 2012) and for the last two years have sought to increase the size of its middle class and narrow the wealth gap, potentially increasing domestic consumption. It also means China's production system will be repositioned to focus more on demand at home rather than abroad.

### *Dual circulation powered domestic tourism*

While some observers claimed the deep impacts on China's tourism industry due to the falls in international tourist arrivals (Shikul Hoque et al., 2020), China's tourism has never been dependent on global source markets. For China, the political salience and sheer size of domestic tourism have always overpowered the need for international tourists within its territories and in its attractions. Internally, beyond the more standardised low-cost bus tours which has been fading in terms of appeal, China's tourism has largely been a middle-class experience (Ong et al., 2014; Simpson, 2008). Chinese professionals, university students and expats in China around me have continued to travel within China for the most part of the pandemic. Except for a minority of places within China which experienced covid case rates from time to time, domestic tourism had happened in China for some months after the summer of 2020 and much of 2021. At a time when the global community were shutting physical campuses and pivoting to online classes, I have been back on campus and teaching to students in-person. Academic and business conference travels had also resumed around late 2020 and went on for much of 2021. Rural tourism and tourism to open air spaces were more widely marketed and discussed (Li et al., 2021) but in everyday encounters, urban-based attractions and experiences have continued to stay popular and relevant.



*Figure 1: In-person tutorials: My students meeting me in my office for in-person tutorials.*

During these periods, I made several trips for work and holiday. For most parts of these, I did not feel the pandemic happening (that much). Domestic flights remained plentiful and reasonably priced. Some basic checks were put in place, but domestic travel stayed possible.

#### *Facial Masks, Health Codes and Travel Itineraries as New Normal Technologies*

Key to domestic travel powering on is the use of surgical facial masks, mobile phone-based health codes and travel itineraries. Surgical face masks which have been said to reduce transmission of the virus is mandatory in most public places, indoors attractions and public transport. In addition, one has to display one's travel itinerary and health status via mobile phone-based apps. These work mainly through the geo-referencing of one's routes and travels, approximating if one has been exposed to sites and zones of high covid transmission. The health codes draw on vaccination and covid nuclei acid test results plus travel history to determine if one is 'healthy' enough to travel and to enter specific sites. For both apps, a green display indicates a 'good to go' while a yellow/orange tinge bars one from entering public spaces and referrals to home isolations and quarantines.



*Figure 2: Signs around the attraction indicating the need to show one's health codes at Jiuzhai Valleys, Sichuan Province.*

Such Foucauldian style techniques and strategies at sorting out the population and categorising individuals, while discriminative, facilitated domestic travels. In most cases, green health, and travel codes and at a later stage, vaccination, are all it takes to travel domestically in China. For source regions which see covid case rates, covid nuclei acid tests have been mandated. Usually, the airports, trains and intercity bus stations require nuclei acid tests to be done within 48 hours from departure. For most part of China, basic healthcare provision is adequate, and travellers would be able to find a clinic or hospital for their nuclei acid tests.



*Figure 3: Healthcode on my mobile phone displaying my vaccination records, covid test results and my low-risk status (green, with mosaic added).*

The term, 'health code' is a little misleading for they do not measure health. Rather, they present one's risk for the community based on one's travel itinerary, vaccination status and time and result of last covid test. My own experiences with domestic travels in China during the time of viral pandemic have been largely positive. In fact, I experienced more difficulty due to my foreign status than the covid pandemic per se. For instance, licensing paperwork resulted in only a select portion of hotels being allowed to host foreign tourists. My family and I are also not able to book our high-speed train tickets online as the booking system accommodates only China citizen's identification number and does not cater to foreigners using passports as their main legal identification document.



*Figure 4: My family and I leaving for our holiday at Yangshuo, Guangxi Province on one of China's new highspeed trains.*

Our trip to Yangshuo coincided with the first window of domestic travel possible after the initial impact of the virus on the Chinese economy. In the summer of 2020, after months of relative lockdown and home-based learning, we were finally able to have a holiday outside Zhuhai. To be fair, Zhuhai is a fascinating city as new migrants to the city, we relished in the opportunities to travel within Zhuhai and to visit local attractions before domestic tourism at a larger scale was allowed in the summer of 2020.

We had engaged a local travel company in Yangshuo to bring us on a bus tour around the various attractions and for hotel bookings. Our trip to Yangshuo started with my purchasing of the tickets a few days before departure at the train station. We had our health codes and travel itinerary apps ready as well. The checks at the train station were smooth and easy despite the large number of passengers the station staff had to handle. The ride was a joy as well. Upon arrival at our destination station, we had to present our health code and itinerary again, but all went well, and we were off to our meet up with our travel company swiftly.

Check-ins in the hotels went alright too and we must present our health codes and travel itinerary at all the attractions we visited. The wearing of face masks was mandated at the attractions as well and they were especially vigilant at the indoor attractions such as the museums and galleries. What went wrong in terms of visitor experience was travel company or the tour guide. Although the practice had been outlawed by the Chinese government since 2012, our tour guide was pushing us to buy tourist souvenirs all trip!

Before inter-province travels were relaxed in mid-2020, as covid case rates were low in Zhuhai, I was still able to conduct fieldtrips around Zhuhai's tourism places for the courses I taught. The usual checks and apps and letters from the university and permission from the attractions were required but overall, our travels were undeterred and free.





*Figure 5: Conducting fieldtrips within Zhuhai city.*

Fieldwork in various parts of China where there were no case rates were also possible. In the summer of 2021, I've conducted two separate fieldwork trips with my research team – one in Shizhu County in Chongqing and another at Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan. So long one maintains a green health code and travel itinerary, it is possible to access most of the attractions and places as one would before the viral pandemic. We had a great time visiting valleys, gorges, hill villages, farms, factories, and plantations.



*Figure 6: Have mask can travel! Fieldwork at Chongqing*



*Figure 7: Masked air passenger: Waiting for my flight to Chongqing*



*Figure 8: Hosting hybrid international conferences*

We were able to host hybrid conferences as well. A core team of organisers, keynote speakers and local participants gathered in Fuzhou City, Fujian Province for the UNESCO Youth Conference we hosted. In the summer of 2021, we travelled to our conference venue in Fuzhou city and navigated and overcome the challenges Covid presented. We were still able to meet most of the participants online and a few of us already in China were able to meet up in-person.



## Conclusion

Drawing on my personal observations, I have sought to show the resilience of travels within China in spite of the challenges the coronavirus presented. For much of 2020 and 2021, residents in China (including Chinese nationals and foreigners working in the country) have been able to travel. Such travels have included fieldtrips for students enrolled in my courses, research fieldwork in Sichuan and Chongqing, travels for conference organisation (hybrid) and participation and family holidays. The travels were made within the context of a policy of maintaining zero covid case rates and has necessitated a host of biopolitical technologies for the custody and care of the population – China's huge domestic market and massive workforce. Such biopolitical technologies have included including locational tracking and health approximation (based on phone app-based tracked itinerary, official vaccination and covid test records) and the mandatory use of face masks in public spaces.

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## **Covid's disturbing impact on tourism and nature conservation in Sub-Saharan Africa: some reflections**

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### **Introduction**

As Gössling and Schweiggart (2022) recently argued, two years into the pandemic, countries continue to struggle with fifth and sixth waves, new virus variants, and varying degrees of success in vaccinating national populations. Travel restrictions continue to persist, and the global tourism industry looks into a third year of uncertainty. Clearly this has also impacted tourism in Africa. In 2020, an estimated number of 12.4 million jobs in the travel and tourism industry (equivalent to 51 percent of tourism employment) were lost as an impact of the pandemic in Africa. At the same time African countries suffer from the highest rates of vaccine inequality anywhere in the world. Compared to 2019, the rate of change regarding international tourist arrivals in in sub-Saharan Africa, the year-to-date change in international tourist arrivals dipped by more than 75%, clearly signifying a negative effect of the pandemic situation.

### **Impacts**

Obviously the pandemic has impacted Africa's national and local economies, tourism business and tourism employment. But tourism is also an important source of funding for managing protected areas and provides jobs for people living near national parks and wildlife. When travel to protected and conserved areas such as national parks and community conservancies is cancelled en masse, jobs and conservation management are placed at risk. For example, closure and prohibitions halted tourism in Namibia, which received 1.7 million international travelers in 2019. Initial estimates in early 2021 suggested Namibia's communal conservancies could lose US\$ 10 million in direct tourism revenues, threatening funding for 700 game guards and 300 conservancy management employees, and the viability of 61 joint venture tourism lodges employing 1,400 community members (Spenceley et al, 2021).

According to an overview in The Conversation (2021), in Uganda national parks typically generate 88% of their revenue from tourist entrance fees. A collapse in tourism visitation between July and December 2020 erased roughly US\$1.4 million from the Uganda Wildlife Authority's annual budget. This hampered core management activities such as anti-poaching and there's evidence that poaching doubled in the county's two largest parks between February and May 2020. According to the same overview, private wildlife industries weren't secured either. In South Africa between March and May 2020 alone, cancelled hunting trips, live sales of animals and the sale of meat products resulted in losses totaling US\$406 million.

## Future

Early 2022 both UNWTO as WTTC clearly signaled signs of recovery for tourism in sub-Saharan Africa, which is reflected in various country reports. As Doreen Reinstein (2020) recently predicted for South Africa:

*It's only February, but 2022 is promising to be a great year for tourism to Southern Africa. Admittedly, it got off to a bit of a rocky start with the omicron variant still fresh on everyone's minds. But -- dare I say it? -- things finally seem to have turned a corner: there are new flights from the U.S., a massive surge in interest from American travelers and exciting trade shows on the horizon.*

Similarly, predictions for Kenya are also optimistic (see Nyawira, 2022). The Kenyan Tourism Cabinet Secretary (CS) Najib Balala said the positive outlook was informed by increased vaccination across the country:

*The numbers are still low, but we are optimistic that we will eventually go back to our all-time high international visitor arrivals that is 2019, or even surpass it. This is because the majority of our masses are vaccinated and international visitors will have faith in our destination again.*

What does that mean for tourism and protected areas? In the special issue of ATLAS Review 2020, I already cited three potential scenarios proposed by Hockings et al. (2020) for how the pandemic would impact protected and conserved areas and the role they could play in society's recovery. The first two scenarios focused on a return to 'business-as-usual' or a 'business-as-unusual' and the third scenario directed the discussion to a more fundamental reorientation of the way we have been travelling and have organized tourism. In the same issue Robert Fletcher et al. explored the relationship between ecotourism, biodiversity conservation and the COVID-19 crisis. They highlighted the significant challenges posed by the pandemic to a dominant model of global conservation finance heavily reliant on revenue from ecotourism among other so-called 'market-based instruments'. These challenges, they suggested, are unlikely to be met by business-as-usual approaches, emphasizing a need to transform ecotourism development as a component of conservation programming generally in a radically different direction. They suggested that shifting policy and practice towards 'convivial conservation', an approach that foregrounds concerns for social-ecological justice and equity, offers a hopeful way through and out of the current crisis.

Now more than 2 years after the start of the pandemic, neither the third scenario of Hockings et al. (2020) or a transformation of the market based approach to ecotourism seem very likely. Attempts to a return to 'business-as-usual' or a 'business-as-unusual' are therefore more expected. A good example of the latter is Spenceley's (2021) report to the European Union on COVID-19 and protected area tourism, arguing that responses to COVID-19 from governments and the tourism sector to protecting people (visitors and tourism workers), ensuring business survival along the tourism value chain, and improving coordination mechanisms have been insufficient to address the crisis. According to Spenceley, the EU could provide support to encourage sustainable tourism recovery through

for example establishing a stimulus package for protected areas to protect the livelihoods of workers and communities in the tourism and conservation value chain; creating a combination of grant and low-interest loan finance; designing sound criteria for those supported; and planning interventions to minimise unintended negative impacts (e.g. organisations furloughing more staff to obtain financial support). These and other recommendations -however relevant - are only very partially addressing the core problem; the dependency of conservation in Africa from tourism

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again revealed how dependent many conservation areas and local communities are on tourism. But it has also shown how vulnerable tourism is to forces beyond its control. Tourism will remain an economic activity that supports conservation, but more diverse and stable revenues are required to sustain protected area management.

And even more generally, the close relationship of tourism to our living environment in a broad sense calls for a thorough rethinking and political consideration of the role that tourism can and should play in our society. Not least because - once the relationship with COVID-19 fades into the background - new - and even greater - challenges in areas such as climate change and biodiversity will call our attention. Not only in Africa, but also in the rest the world.

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## What is ATLAS



The Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research (ATLAS) was established in 1991 to develop transnational educational initiatives in tourism and leisure.

ATLAS provides a forum to promote staff and student exchange, transnational research and to facilitate curriculum and professional development. It currently has 161 members in 56 countries worldwide.

### What are the objectives of ATLAS?

- To promote the teaching of tourism, leisure and related subjects.
- To encourage academic exchange between member institutions.
- To promote links between professional bodies in tourism, leisure and associated subjects and to liaise on educational issues, curriculum development and professional recognition of courses.
- To promote transnational research which helps to underpin the development of appropriate curricula for transnational education.

### What does ATLAS do?

ATLAS promotes links between member institutions through regular meetings, publications and information exchange. The main activities of ATLAS currently are:

- Organising conferences on issues in tourism and leisure education and research. International conferences have been held in Canterbury, UK (September 2016), in Viana do Castelo, Portugal (2017), Copenhagen, Denmark (2018) and Girona, Spain (2019). Regional conferences are also held in Africa, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region.
- Information services and publications, including the ATLAS website and members' portal, the annual ATLAS Reflections, Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Running international courses, such as the ATLAS Winter University in Europe and the Summer Course in Asia.
- Organisation of and participation in transnational research projects, for example on cultural tourism, sustainable tourism, and information technology. ATLAS is participating in two major European projects. The Next Tourism Generation Alliance (NTG) for implementing a new strategic blueprint approach to sectoral cooperation on skills and the INCOME Tourism project to develop soft skills into higher education curricula and to strongly cooperate with businesses.
- Research publications and reports.

**What are the benefits of the ATLAS membership?**

- Regular mailings of information, updates on ATLAS conferences, meetings, projects, publications and other activities.
- Access to the members' portal on Internet with exclusive access code.
- Participation in the ATLAS information lists for everyone within ATLAS member institutions, as well as for the different Special Interest Groups.
- The annual ATLAS international conference, which provides an opportunity to network with other members.
- Conferences organised by regional sections.
- ATLAS members can participate in a wide range of projects run by ATLAS in the areas of tourism and leisure education and research.
- Members have access to research information gathered through ATLAS International projects.
- ATLAS members are listed on the ATLAS website, giving teachers and students easy access to information about member institutions via Internet.
- Distribution of information about member events, programmes, projects and products via the ATLAS mailing list and ATLAS website.
- ATLAS members are entitled to substantial discounts on ATLAS conference fees and selected ATLAS publications.
- Contacts and lobbying through ATLAS links with other international organisations.
- Opportunity for students to take part in an established academic and research network.

**ATLAS Special Interest Groups**

Members of ATLAS can form and join Special Interest Groups related to specific education and research topics or for specific geographical areas. Special Interest Groups run research programmes and can organise special events and publications related to their area of interest. The current Special Interest Groups are:

- Cultural Tourism Research Group
- Gastronomy and Tourism Research Group
- Business Tourism Research Group
- Cities and National Capital Tourism Research Group
- Volunteer Tourism Research Group
- Events Research Group
- Dark Tourism Research Group
- Heritage Tourism and Education Research Group
- Space, place, mobilities in Tourism Research Group

**ATLAS Regional Sections**

ATLAS is also represented at regional and local level by sections such as ATLAS Europe, ATLAS Asia-Pacific, ATLAS Africa and ATLAS Latin Americas. The regional sections of ATLAS have developed their own programme of activities and publications to respond more closely to the specific needs of members located in these regions and those with related research interests. Membership of ATLAS regional sections and Special Interest Groups of ATLAS is open to all ATLAS members at no extra costs.

**The ATLAS publication series**

As a networking organisation, one of the main tasks of ATLAS is to disseminate information on developments in tourism and leisure as widely as possible. The ATLAS publication series contains volumes of selected papers from ATLAS conferences and reports from ATLAS research projects. The ATLAS Tourism and Leisure Review gives ATLAS members and participants of the ATLAS conferences and meetings a platform to publish the papers they have presented. The editing will be carried out by an editorial board / field editors. All publications can be found and ordered in the online ATLAS bookshop at: [shop.atlas-euro.org](http://shop.atlas-euro.org).

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ATLAS membership is open to bona-fide educational institutions and professional bodies with educational, research or professional interests in tourism, leisure and related areas. If your institution is interested, complete the application form on the ATLAS homepage at [www.atlas-euro.org](http://www.atlas-euro.org).

**How much does the ATLAS membership cost?**

The annual institutional membership fee for ATLAS is € 325. For organisations located in countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America the fee is € 200 per year.

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