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Community, Collaboration and Co-creation in
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Introduction

Community, Collaboration and Co-creation in Times of Crisis

We live in a time of multiple, intersecting crises that are shaping new ways of engaging with and experiencing tourism. These crises include growing inequalities, threats to democracies, social fragmentation, the rise of populism and nationalism, forced displacement, climate change, global oligarchies, the increasing power of technocracy, wars, and pandemics. These changes and challenges not only refine the meaning of communities but also influence how collaborative and participatory patterns emerge and evolve among tourism stakeholders.

In traditional anthropology and sociology, the concept of communities has often been framed in unproblematic terms (Jørgensen, 2024). However, recent global geo-political, ecological and economic shifts have contributed to a more critical examination of this concept. Communities are typically defined as groups that share a common geographical or physical space (Urry, 2001) but also belong to the same social group. In discussing the local turn in tourism, Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby (2022, p.2) define local communities as “more than just a certain group of people associated with a place. Instead, we are more broadly inclusive of the local community, the local ecology (living air, land and waterscapes and more-than-human beings) and all generations pertaining to that place (including future ones)”.

The concept is further problematised in relation to growing divisions, polarised identities and ideologies, global misinformation (via the web, for example) and human/non-human exploitation. In acknowledging the contradictions, ‘fractures and disenchantments’ of our time (Braidotti, 2019, p.36), Rosi Braidotti calls for closer scrutiny on the meaning and entanglements of ‘we’ (p.37). This invites a critical reconsideration of how our shared condition shapes understandings of who ‘we’ are and to what extent, we can argue, we are in this together.

The possibilities and potentials of our collective praxis and aspirations to navigate, through transformation and resistance, fractures and ‘irreconcilable power differences’ (Braidotti, 2019, p.43), allow us to consider the heterogeneity and diversity of relational subjects (both human and non-human) and approaches. Accordingly, Braidotti (2019, p.157) argues that “*we-are-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-of-the-same*” (italics in the original). This highlights that our heterogeneity is defined by social categories such as class, race, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness but also by power, norms, values, privileges, rights, entitlements (Braidotti, 2019). The multiplicity of relational, heterogeneous subjects forms communities that must act together to reclaim power, agency and freedom.

Within the leisure context of tourism and events, we focus on the affirmative possibilities that community participation can forge through collaboration, driven by the shared aspiration of empowerment, fairness and inclusion. However, this is not without challenges, as communities’ involvement, participation and co-production are often hindered by the “structural injustices under which tourism operates” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p.616). Localising (Freya Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby, 2022) and socialising tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020) may open possibilities for greater justice and well-being for local communities and, more broadly, for all tourism stakeholders.

For this conference, we invite contributions from a wide range of multi-, intra- and transdisciplinary fields on ways community participatory and collaborative approaches unfold in tourism

destinations. We encourage critical debates on innovative and creative theoretical, methodological and practical community approaches to collaboration and co-creation within the fields of events, tourism and hospitality. Furthermore, we seek thought-provoking insights into the factors that might hinder such approaches. In reflecting on how, if and to what extent collaboration and co-creation develop in tourism contexts, we pose the following questions:

- How do power structures influence collaboration and co-creation in tourism destinations?
- What power dynamics influence collaborative approaches to tourism?
- How do collaboration and co-creation unfold in a time of multiple, intersecting crises? Which crises are the most influential, and how can they be overcome through community involvement and collaboration?
- How do communities respond locally to global changes and challenges?
- To what extent are grassroots movements and approaches influential in shaping co-creation of types of tourism that benefit destinations and communities? Have these evolved over time and in response to the multiple crises experienced globally?
- What are the enablers and barriers to developing collaboration and co-creation within the tourism sector between Western and Indigenous approaches?
- How do collaborative approaches develop over a human/non-human continuum?

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Keynote Speakers

Raoul Bianchi



Raoul Bianchi is Reader in Political Economy in the Faculty of Business & Law at Manchester Metropolitan University. Following ethnographic field research on different aspects of tourism development and cultural heritage in the Canary Islands in the 1990s, over the past two decades his work pivoted towards theoretical scrutiny of the international political economy of tourism and related themes, including, dynamics of tourism and capitalism; tourism geopolitics and citizenship; tourism, work and labour relations and more recently, questions related to the political economy of crisis and postgrowth visitor economies. His primary empirical focus remains Spain, southern Europe and the wider Mediterranean region, which has led to long and fruitful collaborations with the Universities of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Barcelona, the Balearic Islands and others in the region, as well as the independent research think-tank, Alba Sud. Raoul was for several years a visiting lecturer at Wageningen University and Research and is currently an Associate Editor at *Annals of Tourism Research* and editorial board member of *Tourism Planning and Development* and the *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*. Raoul has also been closely involved in campaigns for tourism and socioecological justice and was previously a member of the executive council of former UK NGO, Tourism Concern.

Sandro Carnicelli



Sandro Carnicelli is a Professor of Tourism and Leisure Studies at the University of the West of Scotland and the Deputy Director of the Centre for Culture, Sport, and Events (CCSE). Sandro is a member of ABRATUR (International Academy for the Development of Tourism Research in Brazil) and the current chair of the Renfrewshire Council Tourism Leadership Group. Previously, he was the Treasurer of the Leisure Studies Association and a member of the Executive Board of ABPCO (Association of British Professional Conference Organisers).

As a researcher, Sandro has been working in the fields of Tourism, Events, and Leisure for 20 years. Sandro has now over 50 publications between book chapters and peer-reviewed papers. Sandro has co-edited three books: *Digital Leisure Cultures* (2014); *Lifestyle Sports and Public Policy* (2014); and *Tourism Cases in Latin America* (2025). He has delivered funded projects for organisations such as the Carnegie Trust, UK Department of Transport, the Moffat Trust, The Higher Education Academy, and the UKRI-GCRF. He currently serves on the Editorial Board of *Leisure Studies Journal*, and the *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*. He acts as an Associate Editor for *Event Management Journal*, and he is currently the Editor in-Chief of the *World Leisure Journal*.

Anna de Jong

Anna de Jong is a Professor of Tourism and Regional Development at the University of Glasgow. Anna is an interdisciplinary social scientist, with a background in human geography, tourism management and philosophy. Her current research takes focus with tourism governance in regional areas, guided by wider concerns of resident inequalities, political capacities and participatory governance.



Designing Integrative AI for Hospitality: Rethinking SMEs' Digital Futures

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming service delivery across the tourism and hospitality sector. Technologies such as conversational agents, recommendation systems and automated service platforms are increasingly integrated into hospitality operations, enabling hotels to personalise services, improve operational efficiency and respond more effectively to guest needs (Ivanov & Webster, 2019; Tussyadiah, 2020). While large hotel chains have actively invested in these technological infrastructures, tourism small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often face significant barriers when attempting to adopt comparable innovations.

SMEs represent a substantial share of accommodation providers across tourism destinations. Yet many operate under structural constraints, including limited financial resources, uneven digital capabilities and uncertainty regarding the practical value of emerging technologies. As AI technologies diffuse across the hospitality sector, these constraints may contribute to a widening technological divide between resource-rich hotel chains and smaller hospitality businesses (Buhalis & Moldavska, 2022). This evolving divide raises important questions about how SMEs can engage with technological transitions while preserving the distinctive service qualities that characterise hospitality experiences.

Hospitality services are inherently relational. Guest experiences are shaped not only by service outcomes but also by interactions between guests, employees and service environments (Larivière et al., 2017). The introduction of AI into these interactions therefore has implications that extend beyond operational efficiency. AI-enabled systems may reshape how service encounters unfold, how communication takes place and how guests interpret hospitality experiences.

Rather than treating AI solely as a technological tool, this study approaches AI as a socio-technical actor embedded within hospitality service encounters. In this view, AI systems participate in structuring communication, mediating service processes and influencing how guests navigate hospitality environments. Understanding how guests interpret and respond to these AI-mediated interactions is particularly relevant for SME hospitality businesses seeking to integrate emerging technologies without undermining the relational dimensions of hospitality.

Against this background, the present study examines how the design of AI-enabled hospitality services influences guests' responses to such technologies and how these responses may inform more accessible and context-sensitive forms of technological adoption for SME hotels.

AI and Hospitality Service Encounters

Recent scholarship has increasingly examined the implications of artificial intelligence for tourism and hospitality services. Studies have explored the emergence of service robots, conversational

interfaces and automated service platforms that reshape both hospitality operations and customer experiences (Ivanov & Webster, 2019; Tussyadiah, 2020). These technologies offer considerable potential for improving operational efficiency while enabling more responsive and personalised service interactions.

However, customer responses to AI-enabled services depend not only on technological functionality but also on how such systems influence perceptions of trust, comfort and authenticity during service encounters (Gursoy et al., 2019). In hospitality contexts—where emotional engagement and interpersonal interaction play central roles in shaping guest experiences—the integration of AI technologies may therefore generate both opportunities and tensions.

Despite growing academic attention, several important gaps remain in the literature. First, a large share of existing research focuses on technologically advanced hospitality environments or large international hotel chains. SME hotels remain comparatively underexplored, even though they constitute a central component of tourism economies and often operate under distinctive technological constraints.

Second, many studies approach AI adoption primarily from managerial or technological perspectives. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to understanding how guests interpret the design of AI-mediated service interactions and which characteristics of these interactions influence their willingness to engage with such systems.

Finally, AI technologies are frequently conceptualised as an additional technological layer within hospitality services. Yet hospitality encounters may be more accurately understood as socio-technical systems involving interactions between guests, employees and service infrastructures. From this perspective, AI becomes part of a broader service ecology rather than an isolated technological component.

These questions are especially relevant for SME hospitality businesses. Given that SMEs often face resource limitations that restrict their ability to experiment with multiple technological solutions simultaneously, identifying the service design characteristics that most strongly influence guest responses may help reduce uncertainty surrounding AI adoption decisions.

Research Design

To explore these issues, the study adopts a mixed-method research design that combines a scenario-based guest survey with qualitative insights from SME hotel managers.

The primary empirical component consists of a scenario-based survey in which participants evaluate hypothetical hospitality service encounters involving AI-enabled technologies. Scenario-based approaches are widely used in tourism research to examine emerging technologies that may not yet be widely implemented in practice (Tussyadiah, 2020). By presenting respondents with realistic service situations, the method enables participants to imagine how AI-enabled services might shape their experience during a hotel stay.

Participants are asked to imagine staying at a hotel where an AI-enabled system assists in personalising different aspects of the guest experience. The scenarios describe how the system interacts with guests, responds to service requests and provides assistance throughout the stay. Respondents subsequently evaluate different aspects of the experience using structured survey measures.

Data are collected from a cross-national sample of hotel guests, allowing the study to capture diverse perspectives on AI-mediated hospitality services across different cultural contexts. Survey responses are measured using multi-item Likert scales that assess guests' perceptions of AI-enabled service interactions and their responses to technology-mediated hospitality encounters. The resulting data are analysed using structural modelling techniques to explore relationships between service design characteristics and guest responses.

To complement the survey component, the study also incorporates qualitative insights from SME hotel managers. These interviews provide contextual understanding of how hospitality businesses perceive both the opportunities and the challenges associated with adopting AI-enabled technologies. Manager perspectives are particularly important in the SME context, where technological adoption decisions are often shaped by operational constraints, resource limitations and perceptions of guest expectations.

By integrating guest evaluations with managerial insights, the research seeks to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how AI-enabled services might be realistically implemented within SME hospitality environments.

Expected Contributions

This study contributes to the emerging literature on artificial intelligence in tourism and hospitality in several ways.

First, the research expands existing scholarship on AI-enabled hospitality services by focusing specifically on SME hotels. Given the prominent role SMEs play within tourism economies, understanding how technological innovation can be integrated into resource-constrained hospitality environments represents an important research priority.

Second, the study advances a socio-technical perspective on AI within hospitality service encounters. By conceptualising AI as an actor embedded within service interactions, the research highlights how technological design choices may influence the relational dynamics between guests, employees and service systems.

Third, the study contributes to research on customer responses to emerging technologies in tourism by examining how guests interpret AI-mediated hospitality services (Gursoy et al., 2019). Such insights are increasingly important as AI technologies become more widely integrated into hospitality operations.

Finally, the research offers practical insights for SME hospitality businesses navigating digital transformation. By identifying service design characteristics that support positive guest responses to AI-enabled services, the study provides a better understanding of how SMEs might integrate emerging technologies while maintaining key elements of hospitality experiences, including authenticity, human interaction and personalised service.

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ALTRI macrocellulose against the Ways to Santiago: Tourism as Community Resistance in Galicia

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Abstract

The planned macro cellulose plant promoted by the Altri corporation in the region of Ulloa (Galicia, Spain) has generated significant social and environmental controversy. Located near several routes of the Camino de Santiago, one of Europe's most important pilgrimage and cultural tourism networks, the project has triggered widespread mobilization since 2023 among local communities, environmental groups, and tourism stakeholders. This paper examines the conflict between pollutant large-scale industrial development and territorial models based on cultural tourism and rural sustainability. Drawing on perspectives from the Anthropology of Tourism and political ecology, the study explores how tourism linked to the pilgrimage routes functions not only as an economic activity but also as a form of community identity and resistance against extractives models of development. Local actors mobilize the symbolic, cultural, and economic capital and value of the Ways to Santiago to defend landscapes, livelihoods, dignity life and regional identity against what they perceive as an extractive and negative industrial project. The paper argues that the ALTRI conflict (see: <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/altri-s-gama-mega-cellulose-factory-in-galicia-spain>) illustrates broader tensions between competing development models in rural Europe: industrial resource exploitation versus heritage-based and community-centered tourism. The case of the ALTRI project reveals how tourism can become a political and cultural resistance tool through which communities articulate alternative visions of responsible and conscious territorial futures.

Figure 1: Map of Galicia and the Ulla River affected by the macro cellulose ALTRI



Source: <https://www.galiceando.com/es/montana/ficha.php?tab=Rios&ref=0650000005&name=Ulla>

Introduction

The 'GAMA project' for implementing a Macro Cellulose facility (the biggest of Europe) is being promoted by Greenfiber S.L. (see: <https://greenfiber.es/gl/inicio/>) in partnership with ALTRI (a company based in Portugal, see: <https://altri.pt/en>). From March 5th, 2024, the GAMA project was under public information and assessment, including:

- the Application for Integrated Environmental Authorisation (AAI);
- the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);
- the Declaration of Public Utility;
- and the Project for the implementation of this large-scale industry and its associated infrastructures (366 hectares).

The implementation of the GAMA project would directly impact the cultural and landscape heritage of the municipalities of Palas de Rei, Melide, Santiso, and Agolada (Galicia – NW Iberian Peninsula). These areas are rich in cultural heritage, and ALTRI is affecting UNESCO's World Heritage Sites as the French *Camino de Santiago*, that is located 2 km from the projected factory area (with part of its perimeter entering the buffer zone of this world heritage route). Additionally, the macro cellulose envisaged by the GAMA project could also partially affect the Primitive Way of Santiago de Compostela.

This project envisages a large-scale factory with an extension of 366 hectares. And its facilities would have heights of:

- 75 metres for the chimney.
- 60 metres for the recovery boiler and the wood handling building.
- 50 metres high for the biomass boiler.
- Several 20-metre-high structures for the warehouses.

In addition, other structures will have to be built:

- A 12,426-metre underground pipe to supply water from the Portodemouros reservoir in the river Ulla (the second largest river in this territory, and the river in the North of the Iberian Peninsula with the highest number of invertebrate animals according to scientific research).

In the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula, ruined landscapes of the exploitation of energy and forest resources are quite notorious. Even today new developments are being proposed – projects for new landscapes once again defined by major international financial interests. On the other hand, almost always, both the understanding of such landscapes and the active resistance the large new projects of exploitation of natural resources have had on Galicia a local scale. This paper proposes references and data from an ethnographic approach going on ALTRI conflict in Galicia to illustrate and discuss the reasons for the impasses of discourse and mobilization already mentioned.

In November 2022, Portuguese multinational ALTRI submitted an initial application to "Augas de Galicia" (Galician Water Authority) to draw water from the Ulla River. The legal response period ended on September 30, 2024, without a decision. On December 29, 2022, the "GAMA" project, promoted by GREENFIBER (comprised of the Portuguese cellulose company ALTRI and the Galician forest company GREENALIA), was approved by the Galician Government (Xunta de Galicia) Council as a "Strategic Industrial Project" (PIE). This designation was intended to expedite the administrative processing of a project that, according to official sources, would produce lyocell (a textile fiber derived from forest cellulose) and invest between 800 and 900 million euros in Palas de Rei (Lugo, Galicia), creating 2,500 direct jobs. This PIE was approved

without justification of environmental, social, and economic safeguards, as stated in the official approval document¹.

On December 26, 2023, ALTRI formally requested the extraction of 16,790,000 m³/year of water from the Ulla River for the construction of a cellulose-based textile fiber industry, to be in the village of A Vacariza (Remonde parish, Palas de Rei municipality, Galicia). Subsequently, through a public notice dated February 20, 2024, the General Secretariat of Industry of the Xunta de Galicia published information (see:

https://www.xunta.gal/dog/Publicados/2024/20240304/AnuncioG0692-200224-0017_gl.pdf) the application for integrated environmental authorization (AAI) for the GAMA project; a) the environmental impact assessment (EIA); b) the application for a declaration of public utility; c) the “GAMA” technical project for the establishment of a cellulose-based textile fiber industry and its associated infrastructure).

In March 2025, the application for integrated environmental authorization for the project was provisionally approved, and the environmental impact statement (DIA) was favorable. From the outset of the call for proposals, a social movement emerged in the Ulloa region and in all Galicia, closely monitoring the project's characteristics and requesting information from public administrations and the company. This request was ignored and the Galician Government (Xunta de Galicia) will support the project as a PIE (Project of Special Interest), a political decision made before without any serious and rigorous evaluation. ALTRI project can be described as chameleon-like, due to its constant changes and fluctuations, and clumsy, due to its lack of scientific rigor, riddled with spelling errors, and poorly designed and structured (Pereiro, Carreño and González Rodríguez, 2024; Pereiro, 2024a; 2024b; 2025).

The consequence of ALTRI project was the creation of a conflict that divided Galician society, a massive social movement of rejection, and a grim perception of the social, cultural, environmental, and economic risks. Some politicians (e.g., the Popular Party of Galicia) presented ALTRI as a legal project and a fait accompli, even before its technical backing, thus masking many of its problems with propaganda, pseudoscience, an idyllic and excessively positive image, and silencing legitimate dissent and disagreement in a supposedly "democratic" regime.

¹ See:

-Pereiro, X. (2024): “Os mitos do proxecto ALTRI en Palas de Rei”, em Praza.Pública- Praza.gal, 3-04-2024. Online em: <https://praza.gal/opinion/os-mitos-do-proxecto-altri-en-palas-de-rei>

-Pereiro, X. (2024): “Altri en Palas de Rei: unha fábrica de ecoloxistas?”, em Galicia Confidencial, 6-06-2024. Online em: <https://www.galiciaconfidencial.com/noticia/264932-altri-palas-rei-fabrica-ecoloxistas>

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Brief theoretical framework

Nature has been converted into natural capital by Capitalism, and it is a very important production factor (Meadows et al., 1972) of goods and services. Nature and their landscapes require a geological, biogeographical, environmental, historical and social, cultural and political approach. Nature was “land” (work, agricultural production, horticulture, etc.) and today it has become “territory” (relief, orography, climate, geology, flora, fauna, biodiversity) and “landscape” (leisure, contemplation, leisure, tourism, etc.). Nowadays, land, territories and landscapes have a new social meaning: leisure, contemplation, enjoyment, tourism, natural and cultural heritage are result of this process of signification.

We observe nature through culture in a Nature-culture continuum, not yet as dichotomy and opposition. Landscapes can be considered as Ecosystems, Sociosystems and Socioecosystems. And in their materialization and objectification, landscapes are lived, imagined, represented and practiced socially and culturally. They received identification, idealization or rejection perspectives and practices. Landscapes are ethnoscaples (Appadurai, 1996) and sometimes landscapes are a field of tensions and conflicts by their use, function and meanings. Human beings give sense of place to their landscapes, that are incorporated and interiorized into human dreams and desires, looking for a sense of place (Tilley, 1999).

The exploitation of natural resources is a constant matter in the evolution of human history, but in global capitalism the natural resources and their communities are threat by many depredate industrial projects. The global economic power is associated with dead politics (necropolitics) of nature and technologies of manipulation of public opinion but not ever have symbolic efficiency. In our research about ALTRI project we shall focus on the ways in which these projects have been contested and the mobilization of these protests using tourism (rural, pilgrimage, natural, walking...) discourses as a way of community defense of their sociocultural identities. We will consider above the strength and perennial influence of large capitalist interests in this part of the Iberian Peninsula, which is most often represented by the pilgrimage ways to Santiago de Compostela. The conflict surrounding the macrocellulose project promoted by ALTRI in Galicia can be analytically approached through the intersection of Political Ecology and Anthropology of Tourism. These perspectives allow us to understand how tourism becomes not only an economic activity but also a political and cultural resource in territorial conflicts (Ruiz Ballesteros, 2026).

Methodology

The methodology used in this research, developed since 2022, was ethnographic observation, articulated with interviews with residents, tourism actors, and activists. Also, we have done an extensive and complete analysis of public discourses and protest narratives in media (TV, radio, journals, social media networks) collecting narrative materials. Besides, we have participated in several discussions and debates with local inhabitants of Ulloa area, all of which were registered in my fieldwork research notebook.

Extrativism against the Pilgrimage Ways to Santiago and tourism as a way of resistance

The “GAMA” project for the implementation of a cellulose-based textile fiber industry and its associated infrastructures has provoked a social movement of resistance and opposition, and a division of Galician society: pro-ALTRI / anti-ALTRI. More than 20,000 complaints – “allegations” about the project were presented by people against ALTRI project in GALICIA. Many of them argument the negative affection of the project to the Pilgrimage French Way of Santiago de Compostela and the community-based rural tourism projects.

The local reactions against the project were rational and emotional at the same time and tourism was very used in their discourse and expressions. Some aspects must be underlined in these discourses (see for example: <https://www.facebook.com/ulloaviva/> and Banet and Rivera, 2025).

- The tension between ecology and economy.
- The new popular ecologies and ecologists (middle classes, women, young people, etc.).
- The Urban-rural-urban alliance.
- The extractive abuse of the Anthropocene.
- The defense of the land and a dignified life.
- The critic of Technocracy, Developmentalism and autocratic geopolitics.
- Against eucalytization of the forest, pollution of atmosphere and water,
- Defense of Ulla River and the Ways to Santiago as symbols of collective identities.
- Tourism and cultural heritage as a tool of resistance,

From the perspective of political ecology, large-scale industrial projects often generate disputes over the control, use, and meaning of natural resources and landscapes. ALTRI project has been interpreted by many local actors as a form of extractivist territorial transformation, associated with intensive forestry, water consumption, and environmental and health risk. In this context, local communities mobilize alternative visions of development grounded in sustainability, heritage protection, and local livelihoods.

Tourism related to the Ways of Santiago de Compostela plays a central role in this process. The Jacobean pilgrimage routes represent a globally recognized cultural landscape that generates economic opportunities through rural tourism, hospitality services, gastronomy, and cultural heritage initiatives. For many residents, this tourism economy embodies a territorial model based on landscape preservation, cultural identity, and small-scale local entrepreneurship.

Tourism is in this case a form of social resistance. Communities strategically mobilize the cultural value and international prestige of the Camiño de Santiago to challenge industrial projects perceived as incompatible with the territory vocation and identity. By highlighting the importance of heritage landscapes, tourism and pilgrimage traditions, local actors construct narratives that defend the territory not only as a natural resource but also as a cultural and spiritual space.

Conclusions

Opposition to the ALTRI project illustrates broader tensions between competing development paradigms: on the one hand, an industrial model based on large-scale resource extraction, and on the other, a territorial model grounded in cultural tourism, environmental sustainability, and community-based economies. In this sense, tourism becomes a political tool through which communities' articulate resistance, negotiate development, and imagine alternative futures for rural territories. The contestation of the project expresses the right to a dignity and healthy life and the fight against ecocide and tourismicide. Technocratic supremacism of capitalist projects in democratic societies could be very questioned by very well-organized people. ALTRI project in Palas de Rei is an extractive exercise of cannibal capitalist accumulation by dispossessing local communities of resources without compensation.

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The sound of the *Quattro Province*: Traditional music for tourism enhancement

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The term *Quattro Province* [Four Provinces] is used to refer to a cultural region encompassing four administrative territories in northern Italy, namely the provinces of Alessandria, Pavia, Piacenza, and Genoa. These provinces, in turn, belong to four different administrative regions: Piedmont, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, and Liguria. This area covers part of the northern Apennines, an important mountain chain extending for approximately 1,300 km, which constitute Italy's geographical and cultural "backbone", and which is essential for the peninsula's hydrography, biodiversity, local economies, and regional landscapes. Moreover, these mountains have historically acted both as a nuanced connective space and as a border between communities, shaping traditions, practices, and identities.

This territory at the crossroad of four different jurisdictions shares a common traditional music heritage, consisting primarily of instrumental dance tunes played with the fife (a small wooden instrument similar to an ancient hautboy), the *müsa* (a local bagpipe with a single drone) and the piano accordion (Torri 2022; Bicego 2024). The traditional repertoire of the *Quattro Province* mainly comprises instrumental pieces accompanying local dance forms (e.g. *alessandrina*, *monferrina*, *piana*, as well as jigs and waltzes), typically performed during special occasions – such as weddings – and festivities. While this repertoire is played by a very small number of performers, it is still widely practiced in the locality, being defined as an "authentic tradition" not limited to an unchanging, crystallized repetition of itself, but embracing innovation and change as intrinsic, defining elements' (Tiramani 2024, p. 65).

Musically, the fife (in Italian, *piffero*) and the accordion are the two most prominent instruments in this tradition. They both take on the respective roles of lead melody and rich harmonic accompaniment, marked by distinct harmonic and rhythmic characteristics (ibid.). The fife in particular has become an idealised symbol standing for this music genre, while its sound conveys shared values and collective memories, forming what Appadurai calls a "community of sentiment" (1996). In earlier times, the fife was accompanied by the *müsa*, that was widespread in the region until the early 20th century (Bicego 2024). From the final decade of the 19th century, the accordion began spreading across this land, gradually replacing the *müsa*, and reflecting the cultural and technical changes of the time (ibid.). Still, this instrument is still considered as an important part of the *Quattro Province*'s musicscape.

Despite being located along the Genoa-Milan corridor – a part of the Italian peninsula characterised by important economic and cultural centres like the towns of Pavia and Alessandria, plus Genoa and Milan themselves (namely the most important port in northern Italy and Italy's "Economic Capital") – this mountain region is economically depressed and is experiencing social dispersion, as well as ageing and depopulation phenomena (Viazzo, 1990; Marchetti and Dall'Aglio, 1991; Gnoli et al., 2016; Gambazza, 2020; Torri, 2022). Though now sparsely populated, this region and its valleys were once vital crossroads for commercial trade during medieval period, facilitating the movement and exchange of traders, armies, pilgrims, and travellers, as evidenced by the ancient roads that traversed the region, such as the *Via Postumia*,

the *Via Francigena*, and the *Via del Sale* (Tiramani 2024). Today, the landscape reflects the abandonment that occurred since the Industrial Revolution of the late 19th century, a process that has never been reversed (Marchetti and Dall'Aglio 1991; Gambazza 2020; Torri 2022). Nevertheless, this favoured the preservation of woods and wilder aspects of local landscape, while local music aspects of the *Quattro Province's* tradition were able to survive the abandonment of peasant life (Gnoli et al. 2016; Bicego 2024). As this region is mostly a mountain area, the morphology did not ease industrial development while at the same time facilitated cultural isolation. If, on the one hand, this situation contributed to preserve local cultural identity and common traditions, especially those associated with music and dance, on the other hand this condition undermined the recognition of this regional identity beyond its borders, making it a neglected geographical reality (Ferrari et al., 2007).

Despite its rural mountain landscapes suited to hiking, its proximity to important cultural and artistic centres such as the village of Bobbio, and a rich gastronomic and wine production reflecting the excellences of four different Italian regions (Ferrari et al. 2007), tourism has not been fully developed as an economic driver. The area is primarily perceived as a transit corridor between major and wealthier cities such as Turin and Milan and the rest of the peninsula, with limited attention given to local culture and traditions. Participatory cultural tourism practices represent an opportunity to diversify the local economy and strength the position of this territory on the national tourism market.

Experiential and creative tourism, whereby people are motivated by the desire to really connect with places, cultures and inhabitants, consists of immersing oneself in the localness, interacting with people, engaging the senses, while learning history and stories of the place. Creative and participatory tourism is characterised by the active role visitors have within the destination, and by the numerous possibilities of understanding the visited territory and its features. The active role of visitors in “making their own experiences” has become so relevant that the term “experience economy” has been employed to express the shift in the very fabric of the economy, where consumers value experiences more than goods and services (Pine and Gilmore 2013). Participatory and creative tourism can be understood as a form of sustainable tourism, which benefits and engages local communities, providing a source of livelihood, strengthening cultural identities and protecting natural and cultural environments, and spurring entrepreneurial activities (Holden 2008). This aligns with United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide a specific list and structure through which to engage with tourism among its 17 main objectives (UNWTO 2015). Although experiences are intangible, experiences are now a sort of intangible commodity marketed and sold within the tourism industry, and hence their economic qualities emerge and get recognition internationally. Within the wider world of cultural tourism, new paths, resources and opportunities are emerging to experience heritage. While they can be defined by using different terms – such as alternative or niche – these novel forms of special interest in tourism can be translated into local development factors (Cerutti and Dioli 2016), since they also contribute in proposing something that is ‘more sustainable, less damaging and, importantly, more capable of delivering high-spending tourists’ (Robinson and Novelli 2005, p. 1). Heritage – in its tangible as well as intangible forms – is often integral to the tourism experience. Heritage is part of and enriches a destination's identity, enhancing its sense of place in the minds of those engaging with it (Tuan 1977). New forms of tourism consumptions forecast immersive experiences within a destination and its culture, with opportunities to learn a discover specific themes, such as music. Music in this sense has an important role within regions and societies' intangible cultural heritage, and it has been recognised as a fundamental element able to offer experiences to visitors searching for the musicscape of their selected destination (UNWTO 2018; Kearney 2020). Studies on the relationship between music and tourism demonstrate the appeal of sounding elements in enriching one destination's offer.

Music tourism has been recognised as a market niche of wider cultural tourism (Cerutti and Dioli, 2016). International scholarship in the study of the connection between music heritage/performance and territory has been traditionally applied in the US (Gibson and Connell 2007), Australia (Gibson and Davidson 2004), UK (Cohen and Roberts 2013), and Ireland, which is a renowned destination for its traditional music scene (Kneafsey 2003; Kaul 2009; Kearney 2022). In Italy, the relationship between music, tourism, and territorial promotion largely reflects the development of a strong classical and operatic music tradition (Friel 2019; 2021), while popular musical forms tend to remain associated with local and regional contexts (Citarella 2016). An exception is represented by the Taranta, a traditional musical genre from southern Italy, particularly Apulia, which has gained international recognition. This is also due to the *Notte della Taranta* – probably the most renowned Italian popular music festival – dedicated to this music form (Rinella and Rinella 2016).

The aim of this paper is to highlight the contribution of local musical traditions to the promotion of the *Quattro Province* as a destination, by proposing alternative, niche, and community-based experiences such as concerts, educational initiatives, visits to instrument makers' workshops, and music festivals (Sabatini and Trimarchi, 2019). In these contexts, local musical practices can play a central role in processes of social and cultural regeneration, alongside other elements such as nature and gastronomy. Through a methodological approach incorporating qualitative analysis comprehensive of interviews (with scholars and musicians, but also local policy makers and tourism actors and organisations), together with in-depth ethnographic fieldwork already tested in the north-east of Ireland (Pessina, 2024; 2025; 2026), this research explores the role of traditional music as a tool to develop creative and regenerative tourism practices, combining it with other themes like gastronomy, natural landscape, built heritage and territorial proximity with historical cities and the Liguria/Tuscany riviera. It seeks to identify and connect people engaged in local music and tourism facilities, understanding how they could act within a collaborative partnership for music tourism promotion of the *Quattro Province* as a destination brand. Findings obtained during the data-gathering process highlight the potential of niche, participatory and regenerative tourism practices as forms to appreciate local intangible cultural heritage. Moreover, they can inform future regional tourism development strategies and local DMOs. The paper thus aims to critically engage with and understand the relationship between local identity and musical traditions, proposing strategies to enhance participatory practices and appreciation of this territory and of its traditional music.

The ‘Uberisation’ of work in the Brazilian hospitality sector: An Even More Precarious Form of Outsourcing?

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Background

The platform economy has become widely established in Brazil since mid-2016, particularly in the areas of ride-hailing and food delivery, represented by platforms such as Uber and iFood. Subsequently, other professions have also been “uberized,” including teachers (Silva, 2019), lawyers (Carelli & Carelli, 2018), journalists (Figaro & Nonato, 2026), and domestic workers (Coutinho & Ferreira, 2021), although they still have limited reach across Brazil.

In the context of the platform economy in the hospitality industry, Airbnb has become widely used on a global scale, including in Brazil. However, the platform is no longer commonly understood as part of the “sharing economy” (Cansoy & Schor, 2023), and several countries and cities have regulated or even banned its operations (Uzunca & Borlenghi, 2019). As for workforce management in the hospitality industry, it would be in the private sector’s interest to invest in “uberization,” especially in operational roles, which “should be flexible and vary, based on demand” (El Hajal & Rowson, 2021:189).

Previous studies have reported the widespread use of Algorithmic Management (AM) in hotels to optimize tasks related to revenue management, reservations, housekeeping, inventory control, and human resources management (Spektor et al., 2023a; Spektor et al., 2023b; Jianu et al., 2025; Turcinovic et al., 2025).

While Accor Group hotels in Paris, Berlin, and Amsterdam use “AI-powered HR systems, including platforms for recruitment, shift scheduling, and chatbot-based employee support” (Turcinovic, Vujko & Mircetic, 2025:7), in Brazil, the use of Algorithmic Management (AM) for workforce management in the hotel sector is unknown. The same is true regarding the use of digital apps through which workers would be dispatched to work in hotels via a digital platform, similar to how Uber operates.

Objectives and Methodology

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the current stage of adoption of the platformization of labor, mediated by Algorithmic Management (AM), in the Brazilian hotel sector. As a specific objective, the study seeks to analyze the similarities between “uberization” and the outsourcing of labor, recognizing that this is the primary manifestation of the precariousness of labor relations in the Brazilian hotel industry.

This is a qualitative and exploratory study, grounded in a Marxist theoretical framework, which combines literature review with analysis of official data on the labor market in Brazil’s hotel sector.

Discussion

In a preliminary survey, no platform was identified that offers workforce management functionality in the Brazilian hotel industry. Below, we outline some hypotheses regarding the lack of or failure to adopt specialized applications.

- A. Quality control: Hotels require rigorous quality control to maintain their hotel rating (whether government-issued or set by the chain itself) and/or to meet occupancy and revenue targets (RevPAR). To this end, maintaining a permanent staff is less costly for the business, as quality requires knowledge of internal operating procedures, ongoing training, and careful supervision of goal achievement.
- B. Security: Hotel rooms are cleaned and tidied by housekeeping staff, which requires the company to place a great deal of trust in them, as the hotel is legally liable for any theft or damage to guests' personal belongings. Similarly, this applies to receptionists and night auditors, who handle cash and, in some cases, have access to the central safe. In other words, it is preferable to maintain a permanent staff for reasons of the company's trust in its employees.
- C. Economy: The average wage for employees in the Brazilian hotel industry is considerably low, making the uncertainty—both regarding a decline in quality (a) and safety risks (b)—associated with the shift from permanent contracts to other forms of employment (even if this entails a further reduction in pay) not worth the risk. In 2022, the average monthly wage for a housekeeper was R\$ 1,727.18 (US\$ 331), for a doorman R\$ 1,891.41 (US\$ 362), and for a receptionist R\$ 2,078.66 (US\$ 398) (MTE, 2026). Since the average for the entire economy was R\$ 3,390.00 (US\$ 649), this represents 50%, 55%, and 40%, respectively, less than the overall average.
- D. Market competition: When comparing the profile of the more broadly platformized market with that of the traditional hotel industry, we can observe a key difference: in the former, digital platforms have replaced small companies. Uber, for instance, competes primarily with taxi companies, the vast majority of these companies are small-scale, operating at the municipal level. In the hotel industry, by contrast, establishments mostly belong to large international economic groups, which possess greater bargaining power, organizational capacity, and resistance to the entry of tech intermediaries. Uber itself announced in 2019 the launch of the “Uber Works” app, initially in Chicago (BBC, 2019) and Miami (Miami Herald, 2019), which aimed to facilitate the hiring of temporary workers for various sectors. The app, however, was discontinued within a few months, without expanding to other locations, perhaps because entering different markets may not have achieved the expected scale and profitability, possibly due to resistance from both local business interests and labor regulations.

The low use of apps does not mean, however, that the hospitality labor market is characterized by good working conditions. On the contrary, employment in hospitality is commonly associated with low wages, high turnover, long working hours, and part-time jobs, not to mention the informality that occurs especially in small businesses (Giousmpasoglou, 2024). In this sense, the increased use of outsourcing by companies and new mechanisms for making employment relationships more flexible—especially those made legally possible in Brazil following the 2017 Labor Reform—exacerbate an already unfavorable situation for tourism workers.

Thus, while there are no specialized workforce management applications in Brazil, this is not the case for human resources firms that focus on recruiting, selecting, and/or managing workers for the national hospitality industry. According to official data from the Brazilian government, in 2024, there were 1,540 registered companies in the “Human Resources Supply and Management for

Third Parties” sector (MTE, 2026), with the state of São Paulo accounting for 30% of the total, although it is unknown how many of these companies have lodging establishments as clients.

While the practice of outsourcing has its origins in the early days of industrial capitalism, in the form of the subcontracting system, the centrality, scope, and nature that characterize it within the context of so-called productive restructuring or the regime of flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1992) lend outsourcing a new character. Outsourcing ceases to be an atypical occurrence and becomes central to the productive structure, widespread across various economic, urban, and rural activities, and fundamental to the high level of flexibility that financial capitalism and neoliberal policies currently demand (Druck & Oliveira, 2021).

Generally speaking, through outsourcing, a worker provides services to a company (the client), but their employment relationship is established with another company, which is contracted by the client. Typically, the contracting company is larger and better structured than the subcontractor; as a result, outsourcing allows the contracting company to reduce labor costs, while for workers, it leads to lower wages, loss of rights, and difficulties in organizing and mobilizing workers for collective action (Garcia, 2011; Campos, 2018).

In Brazil, within the context of salaried employment relationships, outsourcing was initially encouraged by the government in the public sector as early as the late 1960s, with the aim of having “instrumental” (non-core) services provided by private companies. Subsequently, the focus shifted to encouraging private companies to also outsource security services and temporary services of any kind. Outsourcing was also encouraged throughout the 1990s and 2000s through non-salaried work, particularly through self-employment, via cooperatives, and through sole proprietorships, transforming the worker into a legal entity (Campos, 2018).

More recently, following the enactment of Laws No. 13,429 and No. 13,467, both of 2017—the latter as part of the Labor Reform— this process was expanded, with outsourcing now permitted without restrictions, for both support and core activities, in both the public and private sectors (Teixeira et al., 2017). The following year, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) declared Brazil’s Binding Precedent No. 331 unconstitutional, as it restricted the outsourcing of core activities, on the grounds that the precedent violated the constitutional principles of free enterprise and free competition (Brazil, 2018). Thus, from both a legal and regulatory standpoint, the country began to accept outsourcing in certain situations.

In the hotel industry, Cañada’s (2018) study on the impact of outsourcing on housekeeping staff in Spanish hotels indicates that outsourcing has had negative effects on the quality of service provided. As for housekeeping staff, in addition to the effects already mentioned as negative consequences of outsourcing for workers, this form of employment has led to intensified workloads, a loss of autonomy, reduced job security, and negative health impacts, thus demonstrating that outsourcing further exacerbates the precariousness of working conditions.

In Brazil, there are also studies showing that outsourcing negatively impacts working conditions in hotels (Pirolo & Torres, 2012; Wrobel, 2022), while simultaneously reducing costs and improving the financial performance of these establishments (Sato et al., 2013; Martins et al., 2014). Wrobel’s (2022) study on the municipality of Foz do Iguaçu showed that there are significant differences in rights and benefits between direct and outsourced workers, since the collective bargaining agreement signed between the hotel and the union representing hotel employees differs from the agreement signed between the outsourcing company and the union representing employees in those companies. As a result, outsourced workers have lower minimum wages, receive lower overtime pay, are not entitled to seniority bonuses, and do not

participate in the distribution of service charges. Another point raised is that the fragmentation of unions weakens the representation of workers from different categories and the struggle for better working conditions for all workers, both direct and outsourced.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the impacts of the platform economy on the hotel sector in Brazil. The results indicate that, although the use of Algorithmic Management (AM) is already widespread in the management of various hotel departments across many countries—including in areas such as human resources and workforce recruitment—this is not yet the case in Brazil. In contrast, workforce outsourcing has established itself as the primary mechanism for increasing labor market flexibility in the sector, especially following the Labor Reform that began allowing its application to core business activities as well. This process contributes to the deepening of precarious labor dynamics in the hospitality sector in the country.

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