

Pechlaner, Harald (Ed.); Olbrich, Natalie (Ed.); Isetti , Giulia (Ed.)

**Book**

## Destination Conscience: Seeking Meaning and Purpose in the Travel Experience

New perspectives in tourism and hospitality Management

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

Emerald Publishing Limited

*Suggested Citation:* Pechlaner, Harald (Ed.); Olbrich, Natalie (Ed.); Isetti , Giulia (Ed.) (2024) : Destination Conscience: Seeking Meaning and Purpose in the Travel Experience, New perspectives in tourism and hospitality Management, ISBN 978-1-80455-960-4, Emerald Publishing, Bingley, <https://doi.org/10.1108/9781804559604>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/302582>

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# DESTINATION CONSCIENCE

*Seeking Meaning and Purpose  
in the Travel Experience*

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*Edited by*

HARALD PECHLANER

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NEW PERSPECTIVES IN TOURISM  
AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

# **Destination Conscience**

# NEW PERSPECTIVES IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT



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# **Destination Conscience: Seeking Meaning and Purpose in the Travel Experience**

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2024

Editorial matter and selection © 2024 Harald Pechlaner, Natalie Olbrich and Giulia Isetti.  
Individual chapters © 2024 The authors.  
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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80455-963-5 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80455-960-4 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80455-962-8 (Epub)



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# Rethinking Mass Tourism: Embracing Destination Conscience as a Guiding Approach

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## Destination Conscience: A Corrective for Sustainable Tourism

Against the backdrop of numerous ongoing socio-ecological crises, a comprehensive reassessment of all economic sectors is necessary, and mass tourism is no exception. Mass tourism is nowadays often negatively connotated, however, it is not a negative thing in principle. The central challenge lies in reconciling tourism with the preservation of ecosystems and local communities while respecting the physical and social boundaries of our biosphere. To do so, several challenges emerge, such as managing substantial volumes of visitors, and understanding how to meet their needs, minimising the consequential damage associated with travelling. Last but not least: it is about the provider's view of tourism and how guests should behave in a sustainable manner, with regards to the local residents and hosts. Mass tourism is ostensibly about capacities: how many guests can find suitable accommodation in a destination, how many guests is a destination able to provide accommodation for in a given time? Is mass tourism capable of more than just 'flooding' destinations with masses of guests? Is there such a thing as sustainable mass tourism? [Weaver \(2015\)](#) has identified at least two factors that facilitate a transformation of mass tourism into sustainable mass tourism: firstly, effective governance in terms of monitoring and certifying sustainability is needed. Secondly, the prospect of reducing quantitative growth in favour of certain qualities, particularly the quality of encounters and the quality of relationships between guest and host, must be entertained. Once people have more time for one another again, empathy can develop, which in turn can lead to guests

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Destination Conscience, 1–14



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doi:[10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241001](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241001)

and hosts reflecting thoroughly on their experiences and enable an evolution towards tourism with a certain quality. The frequently overlooked relational aspect in the context of mass tourism assumes paramount importance in our discussion. The experience of otherness is indeed a primordial need that travel fulfills, and many chapters in this book delve into it by examining its spiritual, ethical, and emotional dimensions. Understood as a caring and empathetic relationship toward both human and non-human others, it may be a useful interpretive key for a new model of sustainable tourism.

These are the standards of a development towards a form of tourism that basically everybody wishes for, namely a form of tourism that makes it possible for everyone to shape their travel in a way that suits them, or for everyone to travel in the way that you would like others to visit you (Monshausen, 2023). People who think in this way and follow this principle while travelling have an awareness of sustainability, which could act as a kind of regulator for responsible travel. It is responsible because travellers voluntarily set standards of responsibility, but it is also responsible because, as part of the bigger picture, everyone can contribute to create a sort of conscience in a destination that can then act as a benchmark of actions for hosts and guests alike. But because this benchmark of actions is not always present, inequalities and injustices arise, which consequentially, at the very least, raise questions about the current prevailing model of tourism, or in many cases, fight fiercely against it. If a stronger sense of responsibility cannot be established in a destination via the service offering provided by the hosts, responsible tourism becomes merely a small pinprick in the flesh of mass tourism. If the climate-conscious composition of the value chain cannot be established because of a lack of awareness, restorative and regenerative tourism can only emerge from a small circle of people who are convinced of their ideas and have the conviction to break with tradition and establish a new way. On the one hand, it is a discussion about decoupling quantitative growth and resource consumption within planetary boundaries; on the other hand, it is about the gradual development of restorative tourism with the potential to become a larger movement. Thus, new forms of tourism will develop out of the niche and thereby change the current standards of 'mass tourism', i.e. a tourism offer that is accepted as a standard by broad target groups. All of this contributes to punching holes in the massive armour of mass tourism, transforming it into a kind of sustainable mass tourism that is capable of taming itself and allows for alternative ways of development. That is the point: permitting incremental developments inside a homogeneous development model. Hence, in the end, there are two perspectives: firstly, the perspective that mass tourism carries the potential of willingness to change and secondly, the perspective of alternative tourism, which, viewed autonomously, enables an innovative form of experience.

Issues of fairness and inequality play a critical role. Reducing inequalities to foster equality of opportunity is an imperative of political, economic and social action. This does not mean equality in the sense of a monotonous offer. Equality does not imply the emergence of a uniform target group for a highly standardised product; on the contrary, digitalisation allows for 'mass customisation', in the sense of providing the possibility of taking individual particularities into account when creating tourist offerings. Questions of fairness, on the other hand, go even

deeper and are always intertwined with questions of dependencies. An emblematic example is that of resorts in countries of the Global South that provide jobs and, within a certain framework, add value to the region but create dependencies from, for example, corporate structures at the same time.

Current tourism seems to be a long way from having a high standard of sustainability, at least, from the form of sustainability needed to find answers for prominent problems related to tourism development. Key challenges related to tourism are issues of strategic regional development, offering the possibility of earning a living wage to as many residents as possible and establishing an overall well-functioning balance between the interests of the service providers and the interests, identity and core values of the local population. Additional issues concern appreciation and performance-based remuneration for employees in the tourism sector, a question that has recently taken on new dimensions, because, due to the current demographic crisis, hardly anyone is interested in working in the hotel and restaurant industry under traditional conditions. The tourism sector should be the pioneer for climate-friendly travel, since finding concrete solutions for challenges of mobility and traffic and, even more so, working on a comprehensive vision for the tourism industry as a whole is critical. This evolution presents a challenge for the development of products and experiences. The perception of overtourism, a diffuse feeling of dissatisfaction with the development of tourism among large sections of the population in a certain region or city, often leads to visitor flow control measures in the destinations. These measures are undoubtedly a step in the right direction towards getting these problems under control for the time being. But visitor flow control measures rarely address the real problem, which is trying to figure out what type of tourism one actually wants in any given region or city.

Destination Conscience is rooted first and foremost in the ability and willingness of individuals and actors in the destination to engage in critical and reflective thinking: to be reflexive in the light of enormous issues arising from a multitude of crises, which have a corresponding influence on questions of regional and living environment development. Reflection is a prerequisite to enable rethinking in the tourism industry and to establish questions of sustainability and fairness as a benchmark. The conscience, hence, describes the setting of common values as a guard rail for rethinking the existing offer or for setting the direction of development by defining new set of goals. Participation creates a network that, by means of reflection, acquires a minimum dimension of convictions for certain actions and directions. Tourism is a form of industry whose special characteristic is offering people distraction and diversion. Asking deep questions is not a part of this. This factor makes reflection difficult, unless one remains sensitive to questions of social developments and relies on the inner voice, which is in essence the result of constant searching and questioning that is guided by values. Hence, the destination's conscience is assembled by the conscience of all stakeholders who successfully manage to create acceptance and consensus in the destination and can become a corrective contributing to the development of sustainability in the destination. Overtourism, fair remuneration, business practices and climate challenges are all exemplary issues whose solutions require a conscience that can only be found beyond the commonly accepted goals of sustainability. Destination

Conscience is necessary to set priorities in the sustainability agenda and to mitigate conflicting goals in pursuit of a necessary balance.

## **Destination Conscience: From Mass Tourism to Sustainable Mass Tourism**

The future of tourism is characterised by a strong focus on sustainability, authenticity and personalised experiences (OECD, 2022; Olbrich et al., 2022). Mass tourism as it currently exists will increasingly be replaced by more sustainable and responsible approaches that focus on environmental protection, social harmony and cultural authenticity. Travellers will increasingly seek destinations that are environmentally friendly and focus on positive impacts on local communities. There will be increased demand for, for example, sustainable accommodation, environmentally friendly transportation, ethically produced products and local cuisine. Digitalisation and technology will play a pivotal role. On one hand, the internet and social media will foster enduring relationships between hosts and guests beyond the constraints of physical distance. On the other, the integration of virtual reality and artificial intelligence will enable the creation of customised and immersive travel experiences. At the same time, respect for cultural diversity and appreciation of heritage will play an important role (Cerquetti & Romagnoli, 2022; Salameh et al., 2022). Tourism of the future will thus be based on a balanced and responsible approach that considers the needs of travellers as well as those of the environment and local communities. What is important here is that choices are made and actions are taken to address the environmental, social and cultural negative impacts of tourism and to encourage responsible tourism (Anwar & Hamilton, 2005). In this regard, 'Destination Conscience' in particular plays a central role. Destination Conscience refers to the moral and ethical awareness of a destination region with regard to sustainability, social responsibility or the protection of the environment and culture. It includes the destination's efforts to promote environmentally friendly practices, engage and empower the local community, preserve cultural heritage and create positive impacts on society. It focuses on promoting conscious and responsible tourism practices that benefit travellers, locals and the environment (Pechlaner & Olbrich, 2023).

Finally, from the perspective of research, both the operators and the travellers have a special role to play in the future development of tourism. This will now be analysed in more detail.

### ***Examining the Supply Side of Tourism: Unveiling Perspectives and Strategies***

The future role of tourism stakeholders and providers will be shaped by the need to promote sustainable practices and meet the expectations of travellers in order to promote the evolution towards Destination Conscience. According to Calzada (2019), in order to take all the stakeholders into account, different groups need to be involved in decision-making processes: the public sector, the private sector,

civil society and academia. In particular, the role of governments and tourism authorities should be mentioned. They should create frameworks that promote sustainable practices, support the protection of the environment and culture and promote the development of quality tourism rather than mass tourism. Creating sustainable tourism strategies, promoting education and awareness of sustainable tourism and working with various stakeholders are essential tasks for governments (OECD, 2022). Likewise, tourism businesses and associations must assume their responsibilities and integrate sustainable practices into their operations. Tourism associations can play an active role by encouraging their members to adopt sustainable measures, share best practices and provide training. At the same time, tourism businesses need to focus not only on the well-being of guests but also more importantly on the well-being of employees (Alagarsamy et al., 2020). They must value their activities and efforts and care for them, accordingly. The involvement and inclusion of local communities and indigenous peoples in the tourism process should also not be ignored. Recognition of their rights, protection of their cultural heritage and inclusion in decision-making processes are critical. By promoting community-based tourism, local habitat can directly benefit from the economic advantages of tourism and cultural identity can be preserved (Bowen & Sotomayor, 2022; Herntrei & Tsvilik, 2022). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play an important role in promoting sustainable tourism (Thees et al., 2020). They can act as catalysts for change by creating awareness, implementing projects, supporting capacity development and working in partnerships with other stakeholders. NGOs can also help monitor and assess the impact of tourism and work to protect the environment and local communities. Finally, technology companies have the potential to revolutionise the tourism sector and promote sustainable practices. By developing innovative solutions such as online booking platforms for sustainable accommodation, intelligent transportation systems and digital information platforms, they can help travellers make conscious choices and improve their travel experience (Verma et al., 2022).

This means that the role of tourism stakeholders and providers requires comprehensive cooperation, coordination and commitment in order to build a sustainable and responsible tourism industry. A destination must be seen as a whole, and all stakeholders (e.g. politics, society or tourism businesses) must be involved in order to develop an overall strategy (Byrd, 2007; Tribe & Paddison, 2023). Building a common set of values for the entire destination and finding an identity as a destination is essential. By integrating sustainability into all aspects of tourism, the tourism sector can become a driving force for protecting the environment, promoting social justice and preserving cultural values.

### ***Empowering Travellers: The Future Role of Sustainable Tourism and Responsible Travel in Shaping the Demand Side***

The future role of travellers in tourism will be characterised by a growing awareness of sustainability, cultural respect and social responsibility. Travellers

will increasingly question their motivation to travel. They must be able to identify with the values a destination stands for and represents. For this reason, there will be a greater search for authentic and meaningful travel experiences where travellers can make a personal impact (e.g. slow tourism) (Huang et al., 2023). One of the key changes will be the increased emphasis on sustainable travel (OECD, 2022). Travellers will prioritise environmentally friendly modes of transportation such as rail, bicycle or electric vehicles. They will seek to minimise the environmental footprint of their travels by, for example, paying attention to energy-efficient accommodations, conserving water, reducing waste and supporting local products. Sustainable travellers will choose destinations that are committed to protecting nature, such as nature reserves or sustainable tourism initiatives (Burbano et al., 2022; OECD, 2022). Respect for cultural diversity and local traditions will also play a greater role in the future. Travellers will seek to respect and preserve the cultural heritage of the places they visit. They will prioritise quality over quantity. They will value local customs and traditions and strive to connect with locals and better understand their culture. The focus will be on exchange and mutual enrichment rather than superficial consumption. In particular, travellers will seek the moral and ethical awareness of a destination (in the narrower sense of Destination Conscience). Travellers will also take greater responsibility for their own behaviour. They will be aware of how their actions affect the environment, local community and cultural heritage. They will be informed and respectful, for example, by protecting sensitive ecosystems, supporting local businesses and being considerate of local norms and values (Spantig, 2022). The role of travellers will also be influenced by technological developments (Ozdemir et al., 2023; Sampaio et al., 2023). The use of digital platforms and social media will enable travellers to share information about sustainable travel options, find responsible suppliers and increase their knowledge about sustainable tourism.

Overall, the future role of travellers in tourism will be characterised by making conscious choices and initiating positive change. Travellers have the power to influence the tourism sector by, for example, supporting sustainable practices, strengthening local communities and promoting environmental protection and avoiding certain forms of travel (e.g. mass tourism). Through responsible and respectful behaviour, they can contribute to the sustainable and positive development of tourism.

## **Chapters of This Book**

The book opens with three insightful interviews with experts in the respective fields of philosophy, anthropology and theology. These conversations aim to bridge the understanding of conscience across various disciplines and establish its relevance to the tourism context. *Alberto Giubilini* offers philosophical insights into the historical evolution of the concept of conscience, the inner voice coming from some internalised figure, tracing its roots and conceptual nuances. This inner voice, which is the set of moral beliefs and emotions that shape our personal

identity and sense of morality, originates from influences, such as education, upbringing or religious traditions, and plays a crucial role in our decision-making process. Giubolini highlights that while conscience is subjective, our morality is inevitably influenced by societal and cultural factors: as social beings, our moral compass is shaped by the norms and values of our social groups. In the context of tourism destinations, a conscientious destination is one that strives to preserve its cultural identity and core values. This entails respecting the local values and norms, both for inhabitants and economic stakeholders who should prioritise the place's identity over financial gain. Moreover, conscientious destinations appeal to tourists who appreciate local cultures, cultural differences and value cultural identity.

In the second interview, anthropological perspectives on conscience and conscientious destinations are discussed. *Michael Volgger* highlights the connection between consciousness and conscience, with consciousness involving reflection and conscience relating to moral judgement, and underlies how both are necessary if we want to shape change and transformation. According to the French *conscience collective*, our moral compass is shared within our society and is closely linked to collective values. For the author, a shared conscience to empower reflection on alternative tourism models is required to promote collective awareness and prevent harmful tourism practices. Local stakeholders in particular play a key role, as they have the power to encourage collective reflection on what type of tourism is to be desired. Destinations should then educate tourists by soliciting conscience and consciousness, shaping and encouraging a transformative energy.

From a Christian theological perspective, *Guido Perathoner* highlights the close connection between conscience and the image of God within humanity, functioning as a sensorium that motivates righteous behaviour. Perathoner proposes that destinations can cultivate a conscience by engaging in sincere and comprehensive reflection on their actions, involving the local community, and giving importance to the human and cultural dimensions of tourism. The notion of 'Destination Conscience' ultimately refers to the creation of a vibrant and inclusive 'living space', where all segments of the population contribute to shaping the tourism offerings and determining the future trajectory of their respective destinations. The interplay between values and conscience is crucial, necessitating a delicate equilibrium between excess and deficiency. Sustainability, in this context, emerges as a corrective concept that guides us towards purposeful actions. Perathoner concludes by stressing that the quest for conscience in tourism destinations demands genuine introspection and a willingness to undergo self-examination and inner growth.

Beyond these short introductory interviews, 'Destination Conscience' brings together a collection of diverse contributions that delve into the theoretical foundations, practical applications and implications of conscience within tourism destinations.

The fourth chapter of the book, 'Unleashing the "Wind of Thought": Paving the Way towards Conscientious and Humane Tourism Destinations' traces the evolution of the concepts of humaneness and conscience, establishing their

significance as the conceptual framework for the entire volume. Drawing particular inspiration from Hannah Arendt's interpretation of Socrates's philosophy, *Giulia Isetti* delves into the vital role of education, knowledge and meaningful encounters in cultivating humaneness and conscience within the tourism industry. The chapter underlines in particular the potential and responsibility of tourism higher education in empowering students to become agents for systemic transformation by unlocking the power of critical thinking and unleashing the 'wind of thought'. By equipping future practitioners and managers with the tools to challenge established norms and envision alternative futures, tourism higher education can play a pivotal role in shaping a more conscientious and humane industry. Furthermore, there is a need for the tourism industry, governments and other organisations to promote frameworks of shared values and ethical standards through policies and guidelines. This requires striking a delicate balance between establishing top-down regulations that function as a common basis of values and encouraging critical thinking within this framework to allow for a dynamic and iterative process of testing and reconsidering these rules to ensure their effectiveness and relevance. Finally, the chapter emphasises the value of embracing diverse viewpoints and engaging in meaningful encounters and dialogues with local communities and stakeholders to collaboratively imagine and implement sustainable practices.

*Elena Cavagnaro's* contribution, 'Looking at Tourists through the Lens of Aristotelian Friendship – On Altruism in Tourism', discusses beliefs on human nature and addresses altruism and its role in tourism, intertwining ideas about human nature from ancient philosophy and modern science, particularly Aristotle, socio-biology and environmental psychology. Cavagnaro claims that the widespread dismal belief that tourists are self-centred, fun-driven, cheating individuals should be challenged, as altruism is not the prerogative of few but is hardwired in all of us. Indeed, if we understand human beings as capable of friendships of goodwill, a purer form of friendship felt for others for their own sake, then the system that we call tourism may start changing towards a more sensitive, human and sustainable path. The chapter finally claims that the new opportunities arising from the internet and social media can help us in removing barriers to the full deployment of altruism, such as the limited amount of time that modern tourists spend in a destination.

In his contribution 'Heritage and Destination Conscience: Empowering Communities and Enhancing Tourism Experiences', *Dallen J. Timothy* explores the issue of overtourism and the prevailing mass-tourism model, which traditionally focuses on the most tangible, extraordinary and ancient heritage sites. The author argues that heritage tourism – when it leverages sustainably on the past to develop the present socio-economic well-being – has the potential to empower communities and foster solidarity in shaping a Destination Conscience. The contribution describes how four different manifestations of heritage can contribute to the political, social, psychological and economic empowerment of communities, meaningful touristic encounters and the cultivation of Destination Conscience. Communities' empowerment and Destination Conscience are allowed and reinforced by several manifestations of heritage – among them, local



spiritual traditions, public archaeology, indigenous communities and ordinary heritage, which are addressed in the chapter. Dissatisfied by popular mass-tourism destinations, a growing number of tourists choose to avoid the most touristic and crowded destinations by shifting towards alternative types of travel experiences. These, labelled as slow tourism, immersive tourism, geotourism, purposeful cultural tourism and co-creative tourism, involve deeper engagement with the destination, its history, cultural heritage and the lives of its inhabitants. They thus foster community cohesiveness and conscience. In conclusion, Timothy argues that by using communities' heritage, tourism can be designed to offer immersive experiences that also enable a community's members to participate in the destination's success and grant the emergence of a Destination Conscience.

The rising trend of conscious travel and the desire for authentic experiences have influenced pilgrimages like the Camino de Santiago, as the contribution of *Markus Hilpert* and *Andreas Vogt* point out. The unique image and myth surrounding the pilgrimage create specific expectations and behaviours, leading to a distinct 'Destination Conscience' among travellers and locals. Such conscience is shaped through interactions, exchanges and cultural encounters along the route and is essential for locals and pilgrims to connect and for the pilgrimage to foster conscientious tourism practices that are sustainable and ethical. The motivations of pilgrims have evolved over time, with new combinations of religious and secular elements emerging in a postmodern society. However, despite a shift towards values such as well-being and greater awareness of others among travellers, massification, overtourism and the contradictions of conscientious tourism arise, potentially jeopardising the Camino's meaning and spirit. Some infrastructure projects and marketing campaigns point to a lack of proper consideration of all stakeholders involved and a lack of understanding for such a Camino conscience among planning authorities. The contribution finally highlights the fact that the Camino conscience is a dynamic process rather than a fixed state.

In 'The Binding Nature of the Sustainability Principle. Towards a New Level of Morality', *Martin Schneider* addresses a critical issue in ethical reflection – the gap between knowledge and action – particularly concerning sustainable responsibility for the future. The paper aims to present an alternative to the traditional 'three-pillar concept of sustainability', by highlighting the need for a new level of morality rooted in justice theory. This new level of morality entails extending the sphere of responsibility globally (spatially), intergenerationally (temporally) and ecologically (materially). Schneider argues that bridging the gap between knowledge and action requires grounding normative claims in emotion. By fostering an emotional connection to matters of sustainable responsibility for the future, individuals can develop an internal commitment and transform these concerns into questions of conscience. Building on the insights of Birnbacher, the chapter suggests three ways to cultivate a reliable emotional basis for intergenerational, global and ecological responsibility. The first approach proposed is the 'chain of love', which emphasises intergenerational care for the next generation. The second approach is the motive of self-transcendence or the creation of meaning, i.e. the human need for overarching goals that reach beyond one's own person, living environment and life. The third approach involves appreciating

cultural values in a comprehensive way so that individuals can transcend their subjective desires and wills. These three forms of bridging the gap between normative principles and action are proposed as ways to shape conscience and promote the necessary transformation towards a more sustainable future.

With their contribution entitled ‘A New Disciplinary Perspective on Values-Based Placemaking: Humanistic Destinations’, *Maria Della Lucia* and *Stefan Lazic* shed light on the pressing societal issues of injustice, unfairness and inequality – and the related need for eco-concerned transformational approaches to foster holistic values-based placemaking. The chapter explores how humanistic management can contribute to transforming places, making them more liveable and shaping them into humanistic destinations. Humanistic management aligns itself with transformative approaches aimed at changing the current socio-economic paradigm. It puts human beings at the centre and leverages principles such as dignity, respect, fairness, ethics and legitimacy to humanise businesses, economies and societies. The ethical dimension of humanistic management is grounded in mutual respect, reciprocity and the pursuit of the common good. Its values are connected to corporate responsibility for human flourishing and sustainable development. The authors advocate for a combination of equality- and ecology-concerned transformational approaches to drive changes and foster regeneration in the tourism destination domain. Humanistic Tourism emerges as a value-based business and development model aimed at exposing and transforming unfair systems while creating human, social, environmental and economic values. The chapter underscores the significance of the interface between humanistic management and regenerative development, as it can bring benefits to placemaking in tourism destinations. This combination can generate healthy human well-being and create opportunities for mutually beneficial encounters between the host community and visitors.

In the chapter ‘Integral Ecology as a Holistic Worldview and New Paradigm Towards Destination Conscience’, *Christian Meier* explores the concept of integral ecology and its potential to enrich the conscience of a destination and its actors. Integral ecology provides a comprehensive framework that incorporates moral-ethical standards and implications for human and non-human interaction within conscientious destinations. Drawing from Pope Francis’ encyclical letter ‘Laudato Si’, Meier highlights the central elements of integral ecology, namely the high ‘interconnection of everything in the world’ and the need of a new paradigm of ‘universal fraternity’ between human and non-human life. This broad understanding of integral ecology encompasses cultural, ethical and spiritual dimensions. The case study of the Catholic Plankstetten Monastery, rooted in deep ecological principles, shows how the interaction with the central actors of the destination, the monks, enables the perception and embrace of principles such as mindfulness, sacredness of life, empathy, compassion, attention, altruism and connectedness. The motto ‘life from the origin’ embraces the pursuit of God, everyday work and a responsible approach to life. In this sense, the conscience of the destination is enriched, guiding the monastic life in alignment with ecological principles. Meier advocates for the possibility of integral-ecological principles – like universal fraternity, solidarity, mindfulness, respect, integrity of creation,

common good orientation and reverence for life – to be integrated in a destination's conscience, reshaping the interaction between actors and redesigning touristic services and products. This transformative process can strengthen and (re-)activate the conscience on a destination and individual level, leading to a more respectful, conscience-based and mindful interaction among humans and with nature for the sake of sustainability.

In 'From the Periphery to the Centre – Beyond Traditional Destination Experiencing', *Harald Pechlaner* and *Natalie Olbrich* share the findings gathered during a small field trip to Rome with a group of undergraduate students from the Faculty of Mathematics and Geography at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. By accessing the tourist destinations in the city centre through four different routes, all starting in the Roman periphery, the research group aimed to gain a holistic impression of the destination. Specifically, social, demographic, economic and infrastructural inequalities and tensions between the city centre and periphery were identified and analysed. While traditional forms of travel and experience focused on central sights has led to problems of overtourism and congestion, the idea of approaching central sights starting from the periphery allows travellers with the necessary sensitivity to develop an awareness of differences within a destination and become attentive visitors who empathise and reflect on their moral and ethical responsibilities. The results show that a destination can only be understood when the periphery and the suburbs are seen as part of the destination and are visited along with the city centre. Interactions with marginalised locals at the border of society are key to uncovering several layers of inequalities, and this leads to a more balanced understanding of a destination and to the recognition of a destination's conscience.

In the chapter 'Discovering Waldensian hospitality: an exploratory study', *Elisa Piras* reconstructs the Waldensian model of hospitality, a recent innovation within the tourism landscape that is based on the values of sustainability, responsibility and solidarity. The analysis of the network Case Valdesi, managed by the service for social welfare of the Waldensian community in Italy – a small religious minority whose engagement within the Italian civil society, especially on behalf of vulnerable and marginalised people, has always been paramount – allows to detect and describe the main features of the Waldensian model of hospitality. The chapter sheds light on the model's roots, grounded in previous forms of hospitality in hospitals, hospices, boarding schools and similar structures of charitable assistance to vulnerable people, and it describes the recent shift to touristic hospitality and the challenges of balancing different goals: the expensive maintenance of historical buildings, the offer of quality touristic accommodation in line with international standards of touristic hospitality and the protection and promotion of the Waldensian culture and values. Linking back to the discussion on the concept of hospitality and on hospitality models, the chapter describes a detailed and sound account of the main features of the model of Waldensian hospitality thanks to the information and data collected through different research techniques – desk research, literature review, semi-structured interviews and participant observation undertaken during two fieldworks.

In their chapter titled ‘Exposing Conscience and Experience among Hindu Pilgrims in India: Interfacing Sacred and Profane’, *Rana PB Singh* and *Abhisht Adityam* delve into the profound aspects of the Hindu pilgrimage experience. They explore the cultural-historical context, the significance and the motivations behind embarking on these journeys, as well as the interface between the sacred and the mundane. Within Hindu tradition, pilgrimages hold spiritual values, as they foster the awakening of conscience, patience, compassionate mind and clairvoyance of thought. A pilgrimage journey typically encompasses three stages: *initiation*, *liminality* and *reaggregation*, symbolising the transition from the ordinary to the sacred. Drawing from case-study interviews conducted with pilgrims in nine sacred cities of northern India, the authors highlight that the desire for spiritual connectivity and the attainment of spiritual knowledge are the primary motivations for individuals participating in pilgrimages. The process of struggling through the path of transcendental learning to awaken cosmic consciousness connects the pilgrims both to humanity and the divine realm, which leads to an increased awareness of their role as global citizens and a sense of appropriation. The experiences of devotee Hindus are reflected in their conceptions, perceptions, receptions and co-sharedness – altogether forming a holistic network of belief systems. The pilgrims’ experiences can be understood through the interlocking network of phase-wise changes encompassing power dynamics, legitimacy and reciprocity. By combining intimate sensing and experiential feelings, the connection between humans and divinities promotes spiritual healing through awakening consciousness, ultimately driving the transformation towards a ‘Destination Conscience’.

The last chapter of this book is in the form of an interview. Here, *Antje Monshausen* highlights how tourism has commodified social interactions placing everything under economic exploitation and transforming the tourist experience into a ‘clinically clean’ process in which nobody desires empathy. In a world where the tourism sector in the Global South is driving countries to a reshaped dependency after decolonisation (namely, neo-colonisation), there is the need of a ‘Just Transition’ where people are empowered through education and opportunities to offer a more diversified tourism product where authenticity could promote resilient tourism models. Monshausen refers to Destination Conscience as a paradigm shift insofar as we must rethink tourism from the perspective of the host. The interviewee calls for the possibility to develop authenticity through local participation processes, empathy and quality as central components of a different tourism model. If the travel experience is to be of quality, then it must be shaped by the host (and not by the tourism product): having strong and visible local communities is the prerequisite for authentic tourism. To conclude, some principles that can contribute to tourism sustainable development are suggested: respect for human rights, participation processes, fair distribution of tourism benefits and mutual respect facilitation (which enables cross-fertilisation) between hosts and travellers. These values could become a way to raise awareness, enabling social progress and designing tourism activities in a more responsible way, securing sustainability and leading to a Destination Conscience.

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## Chapter 1

# Philosophical Perspectives on Conscience and Conscientious Destinations: An Interview With Alberto Giubilini

*Alberto Giubilini*

University of Oxford, UK

**Giulia Isetti (GI):** *Although conscience is a concept that we generally understand on an intuitive level, there is a certain lack of clarity when it comes to having to define it. Could you please give us a brief overview of possible interpretations of this concept and your personal understanding of it?*

**Alberto Giubilini (AG):** Conscience can mean different things. From a psychological point of view, it is the set of moral beliefs and moral emotions we identify with. Our conscience plays a key role in defining our personal identity and in shaping our feeling of who we are. Consistent with the original meaning of the term (both in Greek and Latin) as sharing knowledge with someone, conscience can be understood as an inner voice coming from some internalised figure. It is as if we had another person inside of us with whom we identify and whom we use as a standard for morality. Historically, this understanding of conscience has been given different readings. For instance, in Rousseau such an inner voice is the product of one's education; in Freud it results from one's upbringing and the influence of parental figures (the superego); in the Christian tradition, it is the voice of God inside of us. But there is also an emotive component in the notion of conscience, as we often talk of the 'bites of conscience'. In this sense, conscience is also a feeling of guilt that we have when we perceive we did something we think is wrong – an aspect that was emphasised, for example, by Kant.

**GI:** *What is the relationship between self and others when we speak about conscience and what practical implications does this have?*

**AG:** Conscience is an inner voice and is subjective in the sense that it does not require accounting for one's actions to others, but only to oneself. When you

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Destination Conscience, 15–16



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doi:10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241002

appeal to your conscience to justify something you did, normally that means you are taking your own conscience as enough for a justification. You don't need to further justify it to others. However, since we are social beings, our morality is inevitably shaped by the society and small and large networks in which we live: family, friends, colleagues, religious groups and our cultural background. In many views, conscience is just the way we internalise the norms that are relevant to our social groups.

**GI:** *What does it mean for a tourism destination to have a conscience and what would a conscientious destination look like?*

**AG:** I suppose it means to have a cultural identity and to try to preserve it. Conscience is an inner space made of the core values with which we identify. If geographical places have consciences, such consciences must be the values from which these places derive their own identity. In most cases, these are the cultural values of those who inhabit them or which shaped their histories.

**GI:** *If we understand conscience as a faculty for indirect moral knowledge, conscience can be considered a relativistic notion whose content changes according to social, cultural, and familial circumstances. Thus, being subjective moral compasses, consciences may be at odds with each other. Starting from this consideration, how can a common understanding of conscience, shared by its inhabitants, guests and economic stakeholders, be achieved by a tourism destination?*

**AG:** I think by appealing to a notion of respect for local values and norms. This applies to inhabitants and economic stakeholders who can defend the place's identity by not altering its nature and identity for financial purposes. And it also applies to guests, who can enjoy a tourist destination more by appreciating its own identity. This requires respecting it and not expecting it to change just because 'I am paying for my holiday'. After all, often, the reason why places become tourist destinations is precisely their own cultural identity. The appeal of a place would likely be undermined if its cultural identity is not preserved.

**GI:** *In your opinion, does a conscientious destination appeal to already conscientious tourists seeking meaning in their traveling experience, or does it rather aim to appeal to a broader audience and raise awareness of its own specific concept of conscience? If so, how?*

**AG:** If by 'conscientious destination' we mean a destination with its own identity based on local cultural values, it appeals mostly to those tourists who can appreciate local cultures, cultural differences and who value cultural identity. But by not altering its nature too much to accommodate tourists' expectations, it can also raise awareness of the importance of such values in those tourists who are less sensitive to them, so that they can learn to better appreciate the local dimension of the places they visit.



## Chapter 2

# Anthropological Perspectives on Conscience and Conscientious Destinations: An Interview With Michael Volgger

*Michael Volgger*

Curtin University, Australia

**Giulia Isetti (GI):** *The possible interpretations of the concept of conscience are numerous, what is your personal understanding of it?*

**Michael Volgger (MV):** Romance languages capture the two notions of ‘consciousness’ and ‘conscience’ with the same word. Italians, for example, speak of ‘coscienza’ when invoking either. I am sympathetic to treating the two aspects as connected. Both refer to a sort of mental or spiritual sense that observes and reflects on behaviour. While ‘conscience’ is more about a final moral judgement of what is right and what is wrong, consciousness is closely related to reflection, reflectivity and ‘as if’ thinking. A combination of both mechanisms is required to change things that are going in the wrong direction into better courses of action. Conscience is needed to stop the wrongdoing, and consciousness is required to devise the alternative ways.

**GI:** *From an anthropological perspective, what happens when the concept of ‘conscience’ travels across linguistic and cultural boundaries?*

**MV:** Broadly speaking, conscience as a concept is strongly related to ethics. From a cultural anthropological point of view, an initial assessment would probably associate the notion of conscience closely with the Christian religious tradition and consider it as culturally embedded in a Christian context. However, some anthropologists might believe conscience reflects people’s universal feelings around morality. There is also a strong link between conscience and the right, if not moral *duty*, to dissent because of the understanding that conscience is the last instance of judgement which overrides other moral impositions.

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Destination Conscience, 17–19



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doi:10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241003

Cultural anthropology is most interested in the commonalities and universalities of collective human behaviour and thinking, as well as the differences between cultural groups. While psychology, philosophy and theology might have more to say about the individual dimensions of conscience, from a cultural anthropological point of view, the collective dimension of conscience is of greatest interest. This includes the interpersonal formation of conscience. Émile Durkheim, for example, coined the concept of ‘collective conscience/consciousness’, in French *conscience collective*, to describe the shared moral principles and moral ties of a group of people. He linked it to his idea of mechanical solidarity, that is, the glue of ideas that hold societies together. According to Durkheim, our socialisation into a particular society provides us with an interpersonal moral compass. What is deemed acceptable behaviour would, of course, not be the same in all cultural groups hence, a degree of cultural relativism drives which specific values are getting inscribed into the conscience of an individual.

A confusing feature of conscience is that it is presented as a concept closely linked to collective values, but it can also be a vehicle to justify individual deviance from particular collective impositions. Just think about the association between conscience and freedom of thought.

**GI:** *What does it mean for a tourism destination to have a conscience and what would a conscientious destination look like?*

**MV:** The answer to the question as to whether a tourism destination has ‘a conscience’ depends firstly on how we conceive tourism destinations. If we understand tourism destinations as sorts of localised social networks between tourism businesses, inhabitants and other stakeholders, then this group of people can of course share common moral principles. The more close-knit this community is, the more they have gone through a similar socialisation, the more likely there are more widespread commonalities among their values. However, in the context of individualised worldviews, the set of a group’s common values might become quite small.

I come back to my initial thought that conscience and consciousness should be treated as closely connected if we want to employ them as transformation agents. A shared conscience is a great basis to agree on red lines in order to avoid certain excesses in tourism development and prevent harmful tourism practices. Promoting a collective consciousness in destinations as a form of collective awareness can translate red lines into transformative energy: it can enable reflections on the status quo of destination development and help conceiving alternative models of thinking and doing tourism.

**GI:** *If we understand conscience as a result of one’s upbringing and social context, as for example Freud suggests, people’s consciences may be at odds with others’ in different cultural and social context. Starting from this consideration, how can a common understanding of conscience, shared by its inhabitants, guests and economic stakeholders, be achieved by a tourism destination?*

**MV:** The key techniques are reflection and imagination. Despite all the hype around creativity, I fear that we have lost some of our capability to imagine

fundamentally different alternatives. A lot of things today seem to be *without* alternatives, or are a priori declared to be beyond discussion. Tourism development, tourism policy and tourism management are no exception to this general trend. This unquestioned consensus has probably made our societies and collective decision-making more efficient as we do not always restart discussing the basics. Having said that, I am concerned we sometimes risk losing out on effectiveness by pushing too far into some directions without sufficiently reflecting on the ultimate purpose. On an abstract level, this inability to discuss radical alternatives might have something to do with the end of the dialectic between socialist and capitalist economic and sociopolitical systems, and the general acceptance that capitalist systems have proven to be superior. The result is that at least Western societies largely benefit from the strengths of capitalism, but we also seem to be unable to manage some of its less desirable effects such as, for example, an ongoing and quite dramatic increase in inequality. This also applies to the socio-economic context of tourism and tourism destinations, where the result is a loss in cohesiveness and shared understanding within the network of destination actors as well as, eventually, the emergence of more negative attitudes towards tourism, tourists and tourism entrepreneurs among the local host population.

**GI:** *In your opinion, does a conscientious destination appeal to already conscientious tourists seeking meaning in their traveling experience, or does it rather aim to appeal to a broader audience and raise awareness of its own specific concept of conscience? If so, how?*

**MV:** The underlying question is whether tourists or, more broadly speaking, consumers support value-based business or whether they do not care. The scientific evidence on this question is mixed. Of course, many forms of tourism are well-described as highly hedonic and sometimes self-indulgent forms of consumption. At the same time, research has shown it is possible to influence tourists to consume more sustainably. Ultimately, I think the decision on which type of tourism is pursued sits with the *local* stakeholders: invoking conscience and consciousness also means putting the local collective in front of an imaginative mirror and triggering a thorough reflection on what type of tourism they wish to encourage. It should be *their* decision, and this decision should be made in a conscious manner. Based on existing research, it is clear that tourists can be educated, and probably destinations *should* dare to educate them more. And perhaps, ultimately, we need to take a few steps back towards the very origins of tourism in the 17th and 18th century's Grand Tour, where educational objectives were the primary motivations behind travel.

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## Chapter 3

# Theological Perspectives on Conscience and Conscientious Destinations: An Interview With Guido Perathoner

*Guido Perathoner*

Free University of Bolzano-Bozen, Italy

**Harald Pechlaner (HP):** *First the phenomenon of overcrowding arose, then there was overtourism. Now we are experiencing multiple crises, such as the climate crisis, the demographic crisis and an employee shortage. The type of touristic experiences escalated, the limits of growth were exceeded, and as a result tourism changed. Can a kind of ‘conscience’ point the way towards a future of tourism within certain limits? Can it help us understand right from wrong? In order to discuss these questions, it is necessary to understand what conscience means in the first place. What do you associate with the term ‘conscience’?*

**Guido Perathoner (GP):** There are two classical approaches to the concept of conscience. The first runs through the word ‘heart’. For example, in Jewish-Semitic culture, the word ‘conscience’ does not exist and instead the word ‘leb’ is used, which means ‘heart’. The concept is about feeling what is right at heart. It has been around for a long time, used, for example, back in Egyptian culture. With the Greeks, a second approach to conscience emerged. Now, the concept of ‘knowledge’ took centre stage. It was believed that human beings *know* what is right. The Latin term ‘con-scientia’ (with-knowledge) makes use of that same approach. Later, Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, for example, gave the term ‘conscience’ a depth-psychologically conditioned cognitive meaning. From a purely theological point of view, the biblically inspired concept of conscience is closely related to the image of God in humankind as described in Genesis 1:27. Human beings are created in the image of God, and this close God–human relationship is reflected in the conscience. The conscience is a sensorium that involves all personal dimensions and encourages ‘right’ action.

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Destination Conscience, 21–23



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doi:10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241004

However, trauma or other drastic experiences can distort the conscience, so that one might develop too much (scrupulous conscience) or too little conscience (coldness of conscience).

**HP:** *What might it mean for tourism destinations to have a ‘conscience’ and how can it be retrieved?*

**GP:** The conscience approach is very much based on reflecting on one’s own actions very honestly and holistically. This applies to every acting subject, and in this sense, our thoughts/reflections could also be extended to tourism destinations. I believe that these current crises we are experiencing can lead to a kind of rethinking, also regarding the development of tourism. I see this as an opportunity for tourist destinations to embark on new journeys together. Hereby, the willingness to implement rational and emotional insights operationally is key. The Greek terms ‘syneidesis’ and ‘synderesis’ represent this nicely: the former means the knowledge about something, and the latter tries to move from thinking about what is right to doing what is right. This willingness to act is missing in many tourist destinations. One thing is clear: the human aspect must once again take centre stage, and cultural and scenic aspects must be considered. Likewise, the local population must be involved, and their hospitable feelings must be respected. A destination consists not only of hotel owners but also of residents and employees. However, the voice of these people is usually not taken into consideration in discussions and decisions. These actors need to have more involvement again. The guest wants to get in touch with the simple realities of destinations. They do not perceive them as mundane, but as very interesting. So, when talking about destination conscience, one should try to emphasise the idea of the ‘living space’. Through the participation and communication of all population strata of tourist areas, the ‘conscience of the destination’ can be shaped. The region as a whole will need to ask itself where it wants to go regarding tourism. Tourism must be designed in such a way that the people who live and work at a destination will be satisfied with it many years from now. Otherwise, it must be expected that the area will lose its overall touristic appeal.

**HP:** *How are values (such as inclusivity, respect, humility, humanity, ...) and conscience related?*

**GP:** Once one consults the conscience, ‘values’ come back as an answer. The conscience is not only a mechanism, but it consists of contents that are reproduced. There is also a bad conscience, which means experiencing something one could call ‘unvalues’. It is a matter of finding a balance. Aristotle’s golden mean points exactly to this feeling for the middle way. Aristotle argues that between ‘excess’ and ‘deficiency’, a desirable balance must be found. This should also be the case in tourism: There is a middle ground between tourist growth and over-tourism, and that must be sought. In this context, conscience does not know a middle in the sense of a compromise but is concerned with the right measure, taking all aspects (economic, ecological, social, etc.) into account.

**HP:** *Can sustainability be a value? And how does this value ‘sustainability’ influence the conscience?*

**GP:** Everything that the conscience feels is sustainable. Sustainable means we have recognised what is good for us. Of course, we can also do things that are bad

for us, which is then the opposite of sustainable. Sustainability can be considered a corrective thought. We have realised that we do many things that are not meaningful and thus the necessity for correction arises.

**HP:** *How may the concept of virtue be important for tourism?*

**GP:** The strength of the concept of virtue is that it goes beyond the normative defaults, highlighting the inner attitudes of thinking and acting: One does not *have* to be hospitable in the sense of economically dictated constraints, but one *can* be hospitable and feel this as a coherent expression of one's own value system. Thereby, the virtue–ethical approach could be very helpful in the question of the 'conscience of a destination' and the alignment of a moderate touristic development. Especially in discussions about the future, however, we tend to be strongly guided by certain constraints ('pressure factors') and often underestimate the question of strengthening the intrinsic motivation in the realignment of certain factual issues.

**HP:** *Can conscience be sought after?*

**GP:** The search of conscience strongly correlates with the willingness towards unconditioned reflection. The inner 'becoming empty' for the purpose of inner motivational strengthening, as exemplified by the yoga teachings, plays an important role in various areas of life. What the search for conscience for touristic destinations could look like exactly remains an exciting question, even at the theoretical level. I observe, however, that certain touristic destinations are already in the midst of that reflection process.

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## Chapter 4

# Unleashing the ‘Wind of Thought’: Paving the Way Towards Conscientious and Humane Tourism Destinations

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### Abstract

The tourism industry is facing significant challenges in an ever-changing world marked by globalisation, digitalisation and societal shifts. The issues of overtourism and massification exacerbate concerns about sustainability and the industry’s impact on the environment and local communities. These concerns arise as profit-driven ideologies overshadow the industry’s original vocation to contribute to meaningful encounters, well-being and social justice. This chapter explores the cultivation of humaneness and conscience within tourism through education, knowledge and personal reflection. Drawing inspiration from Hannah Arendt’s interpretation of Socrates’ philosophy, it highlights the importance of critical thinking and a comprehensive understanding of the industry’s role in shaping alternative futures. Tourism higher education plays a pivotal role in empowering students to become catalysts for systemic transformation. Furthermore, this chapter emphasises the value of embracing diverse viewpoints and engaging in meaningful encounters and dialogues with local communities and stakeholders to collaboratively imagine and implement sustainable practices. Only by dismantling entrenched habits through critical thinking and fostering collaboration can the tourism industry envision alternative trajectories towards a more conscientious and humane path forward.

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Destination Conscience, 25–35



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doi:[10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241005](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241005)

*Keywords:* Conscience; humaneness; critical thinking; Hannah Arendt; Socrates; education; encounters

## **Introduction**

The tourism industry, like many other sectors, is facing a number of major challenges in today's rapidly changing world. Globalisation, digitalisation and shifting societal dynamics, such as growing individualism, isolation and inequalities, are affecting the way we interact with each other and with the environment, and even the way we travel and experience tourism destinations. Alongside these changes, the tourism sector grapples with critical issues, such as overtourism and massification, which have been eroding the very essence of meaningful travel and raising fundamental questions about the sustainability and consciousness of the tourism sector in its current trajectory. Indeed, the correlates of consumer culture, commodification and neoliberal logics of profits at all cost have imbued global tourism (Wearing et al., 2019) and weakened its original social function, i.e. its vocation to contribute to meaningful encounters, well-being and peace (Higgins-Desbiolles & Blanchard, 2010).

In order to tackle these challenges and create a more sustainable and responsible tourism industry, rethinking the way we travel is crucial. The COVID-19 pandemic, and a growing awareness of the gravity of the climate crisis and of the increasing economic and social inequalities, have contributed substantially to a growing need on the visitors' side for authenticity, meaning and purpose. In this context, new concepts such as humanistic (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021), wise (Coca-Stefaniak, 2020), responsible (Goodwin & Francis, 2003), eco, restorative, regenerative (Bellato et al., 2022), spiritual (Wang et al., 2023) and transformative tourism have come to the fore. The concept of 'destination conscience' underpins these concepts by emphasising the need for destinations to develop sensitivity, humaneness and a moral compass, in other words, a conscience.

While it is not within the scope of this essay to provide a full overview of the long and complex history of the concepts of humaneness and conscience, the section 'On Humaneness and Conscience' of this contribution will be devoted to briefly retrace a few milestones that underpin these two key concepts. In 'Hannah Arendt's Socrates and the "Wind of Thought"', drawing inspiration from Hannah Arendt's insights on the figure of Socrates, I will explore the potential of education, knowledge and personal reflection in cultivating humaneness and conscience. Building on these considerations, in 'Towards Humane and Conscientious Tourism Destinations' and 'Conclusion', I will emphasise the importance of tourism higher education to provide a platform for students to develop critical thinking and a deeper understanding of their role in the industry, empowering them to become agents of systemic transformation. Furthermore, I will also highlight the importance of embracing diverse perspectives and engaging in meaningful dialogues, not only within the tourism sector but also with local communities and other stakeholders. By dismantling ingrained habits and co-creating sustainable

practices through collaboration, we can envision alternative futures and chart new trajectories for a more conscientious and humane tourism sector.

## On Humaneness and Conscience

Unlike humanity, which is constitutive of human nature, humaneness reflects 'the never-ending human struggle to overcome the boundaries of egoism and parochialism' (Ranzenigo, 2022). As explained by Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights*, XIII 17), the Latin *humanitas* contains elements of both the Greek concepts of φιλανθρωπία (*philantropia*) and παιδεία (*paideia*), 'liberal education' (Liddell & Scott, 1925). Humaneness, philanthropy and, in a broad sense, humanism – a classical concept revived in the Renaissance by Pico della Mirandola – represent the humane form of existence, the common core containing a natural sympathy with others, emphasising human dignity and welfare, benevolence and optimism about the power of reason and sensitivity. Its educational approach (*paideia*) enables lives of personal fulfilment and the pursuit of an ideal of humaneness.

Conscience is a more complex concept that has engaged psychologists, philosophers of religion, philosophers of mind, epistemologists and ethicists for a long time (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017), even more so as it is not an univocal term: indeed, various meanings have been attributed to it over time (McKeever, 2023). The term derives from the Latin *con-scientia*, which partly overlaps with the Greek term συνείδησις (*syneidesis*) (Langston, 2001), thus implying 'knowledge, a knowledge shared with another, consciousness of right or wrong doing, [i.e.] conscience' (Liddell & Scott, 1925). Indeed, central to conscience is in fact a dichotomy, a bipolarity (McKeever, 2023), the presence of someone or something with whom the knowledge is shared with, even if it is oneself. Conscience is often perceived as an internal voice that is supposedly always present within us and identifies those activities which, if engaged with, would endanger the individual's inner harmony, e.g. by causing afterthoughts (Arendt, 1971). But to whom does this internal voice whispering in our ear about what is wrong and what is right belong to?

Forces outside the individual have tormented humans for their wrongdoings since the beginning of time: in Euripides' homonymous tragedy, Orestes is plagued by the Erinyes, having killed his own mother to avenge his father. Although not all aspects of the modern concept of conscience were already present in antiquity, indeed the presence of the Erinyes, visible only to Orestes' eyes, is nothing more than a 'critical and emotional awareness of one's own moral conduct' (Bosman, 1993).

Although the concept made its fortune in the religious context, even in the Middle Ages, conscience had little (or at least not only) to do with religious belief. In fact, it is rather a moral category in conjunction with the natural law common to all individuals, even non-believers (Leone, 2020). Thomas Aquinas argued that conscience is only a guide, pushing us to focus on others rather than ourselves, that does not have direct epistemic access to the source of knowledge, i.e. to God, therefore, it can be wrong and at odds with another's (see also Dimmock &

Fisher, 2017; Giubilini, 2016): despite this, conscience is binding, as it is what we take to be God's commands, and to act against one's conscience is the same as disobeying God (Shin, 2014). A few centuries later, Martin Luther's proclamation at the Diet of Worms in 1521 constitutes a milestone in the evolution of the concept of conscience: 'I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience' (Watson, 1957), thus proclaiming the infallibility of the God-given conscience. He, and others after him, e.g. Immanuel Kant with his categorical imperative, viewed conscience as a distinct faculty within human beings, and we owe it to them that conscience is still seen as a 'voice' or 'judge' within us showing us the way to act and do what is right in each situation (Langston, 2001).

On a more secular account, conscience can also be understood as a merely relativistic notion whose content changes according to social, cultural and familial circumstances (Giubilini, 2016). A notable example is Freud, who theorises that conscience is a product of our upbringing, the internalised authority derived from societal and religious rules that controls our primal drives and, being a social construct, it can be questioned and treated with some scepticism (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017). Over time, Freud's theories have been questioned and very often refuted however, conscience seems indeed to be influenced by the sociocultural context in which it operates, and, according to the neurophilosopher Patricia Churchland, even our genes and the very way our brain is wired by evolution also have a say in shaping one's moral compass (Churchland, 2019).

Finally, conscience cannot simply be categorised as an innate quality that an individual either possesses or lacks, except in exceptional cases; we can rather consider it as a spectrum (Perathoner, 2023), with the majority of individuals existing somewhere in between the two extremes. On one side of this spectrum are those that completely lack a moral compass, feelings of guilt, remorse, compassion and empathy, i.e. psychopaths (Churchland, 2019; Shin, 2014). On the other extreme side of the spectrum are those people whose pangs of conscience are so frequent and incessant that they completely inhibit their action, the so-called scrupulous or 'do-gooders' (Churchland, 2019, p. 139). It is indeed possible to have too much of a good thing: as the ancients already well knew, *in medio stat virtus*.

## **Hannah Arendt's Socrates and the 'Wind of Thought'**

Despite being a fundamental cornerstone in Hannah Arendt's reflections, her notion of conscience has not received much attention, as she tended to write mostly in terms of thinking, rather than conscience (Adair-Toteff, 2022). Arendt, one of the leading political thinkers of the 20th century, devoted a significant portion of her philosophical work to grapple the significance and historical impact of totalitarian regimes. In particular, she pondered on how ordinary individuals could conform to the dictates of Nazism and Stalinism, and be complicit, even if only by being silent, in acts of immense evil, without showing resistance to the

moral atrocities that these regimes perpetrated. In her renowned and contentious book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), through the exemplification of this grey German bureaucrat's figure, Arendt explored the banality of evil. She shed light on the unsettling reality that Eichmann's meticulous orchestration of the extermination of Jews did not stem from an alleged monstrous nature completely devoid of conscience – what Patricia Churchland would classify as psychopathy – but rather from thoughtless obedience and conformity. Indeed, Eichmann, and with him entire nations, simply embraced a different, flawed kind of conscience that dictated blind obedience: they internalised the voice of the regime and made it their own moral compass without questioning it (Arendt, 1994). Her conclusion was that it was a lack of thinking, i.e. the ability to look at something from another person's point of view that resulted in a lack of conscience. But how could millions of people fall into the general ethical slumber that led to the horrors of the 20th century?

Arendt supported the idea of fragmentary historiography, she thus sought to identify ruptures in history to redeem from the past those moments worth preserving and provide sources of illumination for the present (d'Entreves, 2022). She provocatively attributed one of these ruptures to Plato, whose influence has persisted throughout the centuries within the Christian and Western tradition and created the conditions for the moral slumber that enabled the holocaust and the gulags (Forti, 2015).

Since Socrates, the Greek philosopher who lived at the end of the 5th century BC did not believe in the written word, he is known to us primarily through the indirect accounts of Plato and Xenophon. Arendt sought to differentiate and even juxtapose Socrates' philosophy with that of Plato, aiming to challenge the portrayal of Socrates as depicted by his disciple. While this distinction may raise questions from a historical and philological perspective, it is crucial to acknowledge that Arendt's objective was not to provide a precise historical reconstruction of Socrates' life and philosophy but rather to assign him a representative function (Arendt, 1971).

In her reconstruction (Arendt, 1971, 2005), Socrates used to engage the citizens of Athens in a series of aporetic dialogues, seeking to challenge the obviousness of their prejudgments and beliefs. His intention was not so much to dismiss others' views to impose his own: on the contrary, 'he knew that he knew nothing'. His aim was rather a political one, as he sought to eradicate dogmatism and assist citizens in bringing true opinions (*doxai*) to life by contemplating alternative perspectives – essentially, to unleash the 'wind of thought': he infected citizens with his own perplexities, which is 'the only way thinking can be taught' (Arendt, 1971, p. 431). In attempting to teach himself and others how to think, Socrates did question the rules in force, an approach that was misunderstood by the *polis*, that sentenced him to death on charges of corrupting Athenian youth (Arendt, 1994).

Plato, deeply affected by Socrates' faith, developed a sense of disillusionment and scepticism towards the multitude of *doxai* in favour of a monopolising truth and lost all confidence in the possibility of philosophers engaging in dialogue with citizens and politics in general. He thus envisioned a utopian society, governed by the enlightened few, where the normative principle of unity and singularity took

precedence over the diversity and complexity of human perspectives. According to Arendt, Plato's longing for a rigid and harmonious order represented a departure, and even a betrayal, from Socrates' emphasis on critical thinking, open dialogue and the exploration of multiple viewpoints, and caused a clear separation and even enmity between philosophy and politics that marked the fate of later Western thought. Socrates and Plato function for Arendt as paradigms of two opposing theoretical paths: on the one hand the Socratic relativistic approach, on the other the Platonic approach, which later prevailed and led to the understanding of conscience as normative and prescriptive, e.g. as the voice of God, that is not to be questioned, but just obeyed (Forti, 2015). And when not questioning dogmas, values, rules, what is good and what is evil, becomes the normality, we get used to never making up our mind, which makes us vulnerable to manipulation, as anyone could provide a new set of unchecked rules (Arendt, 1971).

One of the most important legacies that Arendt attributed to Socrates is that of the discovery of the duality inherent in the activity of thought: he conceived thinking as an activity that presupposes the 'two-in-one' (*Gorgias*, 482 b7–c3), a soundless dialogue between me and myself which makes me verify my own moral conduct (Arendt, 1971, 2005). Solitude becomes a necessary condition for all forms of thought because the company of others interrupts my internal dialogue and makes the 'two-in-one' become again a 'one', thus momentarily silencing my inner voice. Arendt warns not to mistake this for an invitation for philosophers to abstract from society to dedicate themselves to pure contemplation, as Plato would suggest. Instead, she emphasises that our inherent duality, the 'two-in-one', is common to all human beings and carries the germ of multitude. Even when we are alone, we are in company, the company of ourselves (Arendt, 1994). Only those who know how to live in harmony with themselves (i.e. not in contradiction with their conscience) are capable of living in harmony with others. And this inherent plurality is the condition that corresponds to action (d'Entreves, 2022). According to Arendt, this inner dialogue is highly individual and can result in varying consciences, even at odd with each other. As a result, she expresses scepticism towards conscience due to its self-regarding nature and instead emphasises the importance of political judgements that include other selves (external to us) in our imaginings, i.e. the enlarged mentality (May, 1983). However, departing from Arendt's viewpoint, I perceive these two aspects as closely interconnected in the context of this discussion. Indeed, while maintaining inner harmony may be a self-interested and individualistic aim, it is important to note that harming others would ultimately disrupt our own inner harmony. In this sense, our conscience acts as a safeguard against wrongdoing, as it recognises that committing harm goes against our own self-interest. As Socrates would argue, it is preferable to endure suffering rather than to inflict harm (Arendt, 1971). In essence, I believe, in the wake of May (May, 1983), that self-interest (our own well-being) and benevolence (the well-being of others) merge through our conscience. By refraining from harming others, we ultimately preserve our own inner harmony and align our actions with a sense of ethical responsibility.

Having laid the theoretical foundation through an exploration of Arendt's interpretation of Socrates, I will now delve deeper into the practical implications of these reflections and their relevance to the concept of humane and conscientious tourism destinations. It is important to note that while I draw inspiration from Arendt's ideas, my interpretation is my own, and I aim to use her concepts as a framework to initiate considerations on tourism without seeking an exhaustive analysis of Arendt's philosophy.

## **Towards Humane and Conscientious Tourism Destinations**

Many have hoped for COVID-19 to be one of the ruptures in history that could have redeemed the tourism industry from its relentless pursuit of growth and profit at the expense of environmental integrity and social well-being (Cavagnaro, 2023). Indeed, the pandemic imposed a forced pause on us which offered the unique opportunity to have that solitude which, according to Arendt, is a fundamental prerequisite for our internal dialogue, our 'two-in-one' to happen and which would have thus allowed us to *rethink* the fundamental principles and values that shape the trajectory we wish the tourism industry to follow. However, even before the declaration by the World Health Organization (WHO) of the end of the pandemic in May 2023, it has become evident that the transformative potential of this pause was not fully realised, as we quickly relapsed into old unsustainable habits and practices (Cavagnaro, 2023). But there is hope that, by encouraging critical thinking and envisioning alternative futures, we can still strive for a more conscientious and humane tourism sector.

Even if Arendt struggles to bridge thought and action, the close connection she draws between the two gives hope that fostering critical thinking will pave the way for questioning the capitalistic and consumerist paradigm that afflicts the tourism industry and thus promote systemic change. According to Arendt, Socrates' lesson, the need to unleash the 'wind of thought', is an antidote to the risk of repeating our mistakes and falling back into the trap of 'business as usual'.

In this context, several recommendations can be identified. Firstly, reorienting tourism education is essential. Indeed, the potential – and responsibility – of tourism higher education to affect, directly or indirectly, the whole tourism industry, has already been rightly pointed out (Ayikoru et al., 2009), as well as its dire need to include a more humanistic approach to its curricula through the inclusion of humanistic managerial practices and values-based principles (Della Lucia et al., 2021), but also, more broadly, of the humanities – in particular philosophy and the arts (Caton, 2014). In fact, humaneness and conscience share the characteristic of not being an inherent trait – as shown in the previous sections of this contribution – that someone is either born with or without, but are rather linked with education and knowledge, respectively. This means that they can be cultivated, if not even taught, through a combination of education (*paideia*), experience and personal reflection. And with knowledge and education, in the wake of Hannah Arendt, I do not mean mere instruction and notionistic and instrumental top-down impartations, but rather the 'ability to tell right from

wrong, beautiful from ugly' (Arendt, 1971, p. 446), i.e. the process of nurturing aesthetic sensitivity, search for meaning and critical thinking (Holt, 2020). It is the ignition of a spark that awakens individuals to the importance of humaneness and conscience in their actions and decisions. Moreover, a closer interaction with real-world tourism contexts through a stronger focus on internships, field trips and community engagement projects is needed. This hands-on approach would provide students with opportunities to observe and reflect on the social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism, fostering a deeper understanding of the industry's complexities. Tourism education should thus provide an institutional space for students to cultivate a deeper understanding of their role in the hospitality industry and an awareness of their own agency and political potential (Cator, 2022). Students should learn to engage in meaningful dialogue with themselves ('two-in-one') by thoughtfully posing unanswerable questions of meaning, as suggested by Holt (2020). This would help students, future practitioners and managers to develop 'the capacity to care and to feel compassion for others, the imagination to dream up alternative futures, and the moral compass to move us in the direction we want to go' (Caton, 2014, p. 31).

Furthermore, promoting sustainable practices should be a priority across all sectors of the tourism industry. Arendt rightfully observes that different consciences can lead to different conclusions, indicating that what may bother one person might not trouble another. To address this, it is still important for tourism destinations, but also states and other organisations, to provide and promote a framework of values and to establish a shared understanding of ethical standards and expectations. This framework serves as a common ground that enables individuals with diverse consciences to find a basic alignment and work towards a collective purpose. Governments and international organisations play a vital role in shaping the tourism industry through policies, regulations, guidelines, such as the Sustainable Development Goals developed by United Nations, and incentives for conscientious practices. Establishing and enforcing policies that promote equal opportunities, human rights, education and sustainable practices to minimise environmental impacts of tourism are fundamental. Rules and policies should, however, not be treated as rigid and unchangeable but rather as a basis and tools for ongoing democratic dialogue, learning and adaptation. Encouraging critical thinking within this framework allows for a dynamic and iterative process of testing and reconsidering these rules to ensure their effectiveness and relevance. It enables stakeholders to question the status quo, challenge assumptions and explore innovative solutions that may better address the specific needs and challenges of their own context and for contingent situations that may arise.

Another key aspect is the involvement and empowerment of local communities. Indeed, an enlightened elite of future practitioners and managers alone cannot bring about the necessary transformation. Arendt's Socrates shows us that to be able to imagine alternative futures and spur action, we need to challenge deeply ingrained habits, crystallised knowledge and unexamined ways of thinking. This can only be achieved through a collective effort. The tourism industry has to



embrace the *doxai* – the diverse perspectives and opinions of others, also beyond the industry itself – and learn from others. It is, therefore, crucial to engage more in participation and open dialogue with local communities and other stakeholders (Volgger, 2023). By including these diverse voices in the tourism discussion, the industry can gain invaluable insights and foster a deeper understanding of the needs and aspirations of all those involved, as well as be able to envision radical alternatives (Volgger, 2023). Moreover, the promotion of community-based tourism initiatives is essential. These initiatives serve to distribute the benefits (and not only the costs, as is often the case) of tourism more equitably among the local community rather than concentrating them in the hands of a few. Furthermore, such empowerment ensures that the community is actively involved in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and allowing for more sustainable and responsible tourism practices. This inclusive approach ensures that the trajectory of tourism is shaped collectively and stretches beyond a narrow focus on profit and growth by prioritising shared values, sustainability, human dignity and welfare.

## **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique opportunity to re-evaluate our priorities and address the pressing issues of overconsumption, environmental degradation and social inequalities within the tourism industry. As the emergency fades away, the risk of falling back to the previous patterns of growth and profit-oriented practices becomes increasingly concrete. However, an antidote to the risk of repeating our mistakes exists in the form of what Arendt's Socrates calls the 'wind of thought'. By unleashing it, we may still have hope to break free from beaten tracks. Tourism higher education plays a fundamental role in nurturing the 'wind of thought' by equipping future practitioners and managers with the necessary tools to critically question engrained habits and envision alternative futures and grasp their agential potential. This can be achieved through a stronger focus in academic curricula on interdisciplinarity, experiential learning and ethical and values-based education. Furthermore, there is a need for the tourism industry, governments and other organisations to promote shared frameworks of values and ethical standards through policies and guidelines. This requires striking a delicate balance between establishing top-down regulations that function as a common basis and allowing for flexibility through ongoing democratic dialogue and adaptation. Finally, the innate plurality inherent in our human nature serves as a reminder that we need to embrace diverse perspectives (*doxai*) and engage in meaningful dialogues with local communities and stakeholders. Only through a collective effort, framed in shared values, informed by critical thinking and driven by a shared commitment to sustainability and social justice, can we pave the way for a more transformative, conscientious and humane tourism sector.

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## Chapter 5

# Looking at Tourists Through the Lens of Aristotelian Friendship – On Altruism in Tourism<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Tourism recovery after the pandemic has failed to take the path leading to sensitivity and humaneness at destination level. This chapter argues that to open this path, we need to confront the belief that tourists are self-centred, fun-driven and cheating individuals. This view on tourists and more generally human beings is central to the neoliberal understanding of consumers. It has moreover taken a strong grasp on the mind of economists, politicians, academics and the public at large.

To counteract this idea, I call upon Aristotle's discussion of friendship. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes between three forms of friendship: of utility, of pleasure, and of goodwill. Utility implies a relationship where people befriend each other in virtue of some good or service that they get or expect to get from each other. Friendships of utility, therefore, imply reciprocation. Friendships of pleasure can also be understood as a form of reciprocal altruism. However, friendships of goodwill are different because they are felt for others for their own sake and not in expectation of a favour in return. Friendships of goodwill include therefore others who may not be

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<sup>1</sup>The author wishes to acknowledge that her first thoughts on friendship, altruism and tourism were shared at her Professorial Inaugural Lecture as visiting professor at the University of Sunderland on 28 April 2022.

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Destination Conscience, 37–50



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doi:10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241006

able to reciprocate, such as tourists staying only a short time at a destination. Looking through the lens of friendships of goodwill, one could argue that all tourists, including short-stay visitors, will be friendly and caring towards their hosts.

This chapter explores the soundness of friendships of goodwill in the light of more recent research on human nature. It also discusses its implications for our understanding of human beings, the relationship between hosts and guests, and ultimately the opportunity to steer tourism along a more sensitive, human and sustainable path.

*Keywords:* Sustainable tourism; hosts and guest relationship; value theory; pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) theory; Aristotle; friendship

## Introduction

In the debate about the post-pandemic recovery, the scholarly community, almost unanimously, voiced the hope that tourism after COVID-19 would become more gentle, more attentive to local people, more respectful of local culture and heritage, more protective and – when needed – restorative of the natural environment (see e.g., the special issue of *Tourism Geographies* edited by [Lew et al., 2020](#)). Yet, the first data after the easing of restrictions tell a different story. In an interview with the Dutch newspaper *NRC*, Matthijs ten Brink CEO of Sunweb Group reflected on their 2021–2022 turnover, the highest ever achieved by the tour operator, and shared his expectations that the 2022–2023 season would break all records ([Benjamin, 2022a](#)). Ten Brink's expectation is supported by the conclusion of a study for the European Travel Council: travellers have no intention of changing their travel behaviour compared to the pre-COVID-19 period except for a slight preference for less exotic destinations ([CELTH et al., 2022](#)). The preference for European destinations, however, may change once restrictions are completely lifted worldwide and tourists regain confidence. Indeed, tour operator TUI reported that Dutch tourists tend to book vacations further away and for longer periods than they did before ([Benjamin, 2022b](#)).

Post-pandemic tourism follows the same track as pre-pandemic tourism, a track that was denounced by local communities, activists, scholars and even tourists themselves because it focusses only on economic growth at the expense of culture, nature and people.

In my efforts to grasp the reason why tourism did not change after COVID-19, my thoughts were repeatedly caught by a statement by Nobel Prize laureate and champion of neoliberal economic thinking Milton Friedman. Reflecting on the changes in the public and academic opinion between the 1960s and the 1980s about the role of capitalism in society, in the 1982 preface to his influential book on *Capitalism and Freedom*, he stated:

Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas

that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable. (2002, p. xiv)

The first sentence of the quote seems to back up the expectation that COVID-19 would produce an opening for radical change. Yet, Friedman also clearly states that a change does not happen by default because people during crises tend to fall back on existing options, on 'ideas that are lying around'. During crises, people do not have the time nor the energy to develop innovative ideas. A crisis offers an opportunity to implement alternative ideas only if these have been developed and embraced by a coalition of advocates beforehand.

In my early ruminations on Friedman's quote at the start of the pandemic, I was hopeful. Sustainable and ethical tourism has been debated in the scholarly community since the 1970s, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation has been promoting it for decades, and several big players in the sector – such as the already mentioned tour operators TUI and Sunweb Group – have committed to it. It seemed to me that a more sustainable, sensitive and human form of tourism was an idea that had been lying around for a while, that had been openly supported by tourism stakeholders and that could therefore have become the politically, environmentally and economically inevitable alternative after the pandemic.

When this consideration proved wrong, I started looking at Friedman's quote and at the scholarly work on sustainable tourism with fresh eyes. I started realizing that either ideas around sustainable tourism had not been lying around long enough to become the inevitable alternative during a crisis, or tourism scholars had failed to address beliefs that are less evident and more fundamental than (un)sustainable tourism practices. Neoliberal economy, the view that Friedman developed and that became the inevitable option during the 1980s macroeconomic crisis, is grounded on a specific belief about human nature as self-interested, egoistic and greedy. It moreover explains behaviour as dependent on a rational calculus of costs and benefits for the self. In reflecting on this ground belief of economic theory in the context of the post-pandemic tourism recovery, it occurred to me that, as Przeclawski stated, 'Tourism is first of all a form of man's behaviour. Man is the essential subject of tourism. Tourism can not be explained unless we understand man, the human being. Tourism is at present a form of man's life, a way to materialize various values' (1996, p. 239). Ideas on human nature and their implications for our understanding of human behaviour, including tourism, are seldom discussed. Tourism scholars form no exception, and therefore, beliefs about the main subject of tourism, the tourist, are seldom made explicit and discussed. This chapter attempts such a discussion by intertwining ideas about human nature from ancient philosophy and modern science, particularly Aristotle, socio-biology and environmental psychology. Aristotle is called upon as one of the most influential Western philosophers. Socio-biology and its basis, evolutionary biology, have been chosen because they are the theoretical frame from which altruism is often discussed in tourism studies. Environmental

psychology builds on the insights of evolutionary biology and not only offers a more articulated vision on human beings but also validates Aristotle's intuitions of human as capable of friendships of goodwill, a view that opens the possibility to steer tourism along a more sensitive, human and sustainable path.

Therefore, the following sections of the chapter are dedicated firstly to discussing beliefs on human nature and secondly to addressing altruism and its role in tourism. The second discussion has been divided in three sections dedicated respectively to socio-biology, Aristotle and an extension of Aristotle's view on friendships of goodwill. The conclusion highlights some implications of this discussion for both tourism scholars and practitioners.

## Human Nature

In reflecting on Przeclawski's quote reported above, Wheeler stated that tourism '[...] is a world driven largely by avarice, greed, self interest [...]. We need, therefore, to look first at ourselves and then at society when we address tourism' (Wheeler, 2004, p. 471). What do we see when we look at ourselves, as Wheeler suggests?

A thought experiment developed by Tom Postmes, professor of Sociology at the University of Groningen (The Netherlands), is explicitly designed to uncover (to paraphrase Friedman) ideas lying around on human nature. Imagine a crisis, such as an aeroplane during an emergency landing. What do you think happens after the aeroplane has landed? Would passengers panic and try to reach the exit at any cost, even if it implies leaving injured people and children behind? Or will passengers keep relatively calm and help each other reach the exit? (Bregman, 2021).

If you resemble the people to whom I have asked to react quickly on the two scenarios presented above, you will very probably answer that individual passengers will try to reach the exit at any cost. You may add that you would very much like it to be otherwise, but that under life threatening circumstances, human beings choose for their own life first. If asked to elaborate, you may refer to the fight, flight or freeze response (Cannon, 1929) and add that flight is an instinctive reaction to fear and has developed from the 'innumerable injuries' that our ancestors had to suffer during evolution (Cannon, 1929, p. 196). Fear has thus become 'capable of arousing in the body all the offensive and defensive activities that favour the survival of the organism' (Cannon, 1929, p. 196) such as increased blood sugar and deep and rapid respiration. Flight is an instinctive reaction to fear, and an emergency landing is fearful. Instinctive means that people have no other choice than to fly and save themselves without regard for others.

This dismal view on human nature has been lying around for quite some time. It is reflected in the story of the Genesis about the fall from paradise and Cain's murder of his brother, Abel. The Genesis is the first book of the *Bible*, a very influential book not only for Christian but for Western thought in general. In the IV century AD the *Bible* and the work of Neoplatonists inspired Augustin's view of humans as a damned race, and through Augustin, this gloomy paradigm of



human nature passed into Western Philosophy. It is voiced by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), one of the fathers of modern political philosophy, who saw humans as matter in motion, instinctively seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. It is central to the neoliberal economic view on human beings as individuals guided by self-interest maximisation promoted by scholars like Milton Friedman. It has also entered tourism studies. Fennel, for example, states that ‘humans, having little control over their actions, are subject to the same laws of nature, where acts of promiscuity, aggression, and so on, would essentially be out of our hands’ (2006, p. 112).

If this is how we think of humans who are the subject of tourism as Przeclawski reminds us, then it is no wonder that post-pandemic tourism is following the same unsustainable path along which it was moving before COVID-19 brought it to a grinding halt. Tourism does not follow a more sensitive, more ethical, more protective, more restorative path because the target group of tourism, that is humans, are not sensitive, ethical, protective and restorative. In other words: the defects of tourism are defects of human nature and cannot be helped because human nature, having developed in the long history of human evolution, cannot be easily changed.

Notwithstanding this long and successful tradition, the dismal view on human nature is not unchallenged. Let us go back to the example of an emergency landing and more generally of how people react during crises. Although academic research on how people behave during crises emerged only recently, consensus is building that people’s first reaction is not led by fear and not aimed at self-preservation but is pro-social and aimed at the survival of the group.

As [Helsloot and Ruitenber](#) (2004, p. 98) state: ‘Contrary to widespread belief, citizens do not panic in disaster situations. In fact, research into different aspects of citizen response shows that most citizens act in a rather rational way. Indeed, citizens often prove to be the most effective kind of emergency personnel. Disaster evaluations invariably show that most lives are actually saved by the “average” citizen’.

The above is also true in tragic cases that highly resemble the thought experiment devised by Professor Postmus with which this section opened. On 25 February 2009, a Turkish Airlines Boeing 737–800 with 135 people on board crashed in a soggy field near Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands. The aircraft broke into three pieces, but it did not catch fire. Passengers reacted pro-socially as Scanlon, Helsloot and Groenendaal report (2014, p. 48): ‘Most passengers escaped through the emergency exits and the breaks in the aircraft frame, including some of the most heavily injured. [...] The less injured victims helped other passengers out of the wreckage [...]. Some severely injured victims who could not be moved were encouraged by bystanders (“the ambulance will arrive within a few minutes”) who opened suitcases in a search for clothing to keep the victims warm. The bystanders then went back into the plane to search for travel companions of the severely injured victims. Only six living victims had to be rescued by the professional emergency responders’.

In other words, people do help each other when faced with a fearful calamity and do not focus only on their own, individual survival. In fact, communities

where the ties among people are strong have a significant higher chance of surviving a disaster than communities where those ties are weak (Fisher, 1994; Lindell, 2013). Moreover, there is mounting evidence from studies in disciplines as different as motivational studies (Alderfer, 1969), brain studies (Lawrence, 2010), behavioural economics (Thaler & Sunstein, 2021), neurobiology (Churchland, 2021) and pro-environmental behaviour (Steg et al., 2014) that people value more than an evolutionary reinforced instinctive response to save the self or the kind. People truly value others alongside the self and are capable of extending care and compassion to non-human beings and to nature (Cavagnaro & Curiel, 2023). There is therefore still hope that, if tourism's stakeholders abandon the dismal view on human nature and embrace people's ability to care for others, tourism could develop on a more sensitive, ethical, protective and restorative path.

### **Altruism in Tourism Through a Socio-biological Lens**

Tourism scholars have not fully denied a vision of humans as able and willing to care for others, to benefit others and to avoid harming others: in short, as capable of altruism (for a more articulate discussion see Cavagnaro & Curiel, 2023, Chapter 10). There is indeed a vivid discussion about altruism in tourism, as a recent webinar conducted by Professor Fennel demonstrates.<sup>2</sup> Altruism, though, is hereby framed as reciprocal altruism and, as we will see in a moment, this frame is still grounded on a dismal view on human beings.

The theoretical perspective from which altruism is discussed by, for example, Fennel is the socio-biological theory on reciprocal altruism proposed by Trivers (1971). Socio-biology is a field of biology that aims to examine and explain social behaviour in terms of evolution and behaviour's biological basis. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Trivers defends altruism if and only if it supports the survival of the individual. Reciprocal altruism, that is an act of altruism performed in the expectation that the recipient will return the favour, fits this condition. Reciprocal altruism acts are supportive of survival because 'in the long run they benefit the organism performing them' (Trivers, 1971, p. 35). Yet, as Trivers explains, 'the time lag is the crucial factor' (1971, p. 39), and therefore, reciprocal altruism can only develop under strict conditions. Such conditions include:

- a suitably long lifespan favouring repeated encounters;
- a low dispersal rate favouring repeated interactions among the same individuals;
- interdependence of individuals, i.e. limited possibility to force others in giving to/sharing benefits with the self.

If one of these conditions does not exist or ceases to exist, then cheating (non-reciprocating) is an attractive option from an evolutionary perspective.

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<sup>2</sup>See: <https://scotwebinars.org/events/volume-32/>, accessed 4 April 2023.

Modern tourism does not present the conditions for reciprocal altruism to develop. Tourists do not tend to visit the same place twice, and when they visit, they stay for a very limited amount of time. In their 2018 study, Gössling, Scott and Hall reckon that the weighted average of the length of stay for the entire sample was 5.4 nights in 1995, falling to 4.6 nights in 2015. They conclude that global trends in length of stay fell by 14.8% on average over the years 1995–2015. There is therefore very limited chance for repeated encounters and thus for reciprocal altruism to form (Fennell, 2006). The conclusion seems unavoidable that cheating, i.e. not reciprocating and even taking advantage of altruists, is an attractive option from an evolutionary perspective. In other words, if the socio-biological perspective on altruism is correct, then cheating would be the norm in tourism encounters. Policymakers and business actors in the sector should prepare accordingly.

Reciprocal altruism does explain the findings from disasters' study that close-knit communities have a higher chance of surviving than loose communities because close-knit communities are characterised by low dispersion rates and individuals' interdependence. These conditions, as we have seen above while discussing Trivers, favour reciprocity. Reciprocal altruism, however, does not explain why people also tend to help strangers, as has been reported by Helsloot and Ruitenbergh (2004) and Scanlon et al. (2014). It also does not fully explain tourists' behaviour and experiences. Of course, we have all read about and been told of cheating taxi drivers, dishonest shop keepers, guests stealing from hotel rooms and the like. Yet, how often have you cheated or have been cheated? And: how often have you been genuinely helped by a host or a fellow tourist? If your tourist experience resembles mine, the number of times that you have been helped greatly surpasses the number of times that you have been cheated. If it needs some reflection to come to this conclusion, it is because we tend to attend to, recollect and share negative experiences more often than positive ones, a phenomenon known as negativity bias (Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Vaish et al., 2008).

In short, both disaster studies and a reflection on personal tourism experiences (when corrected for negativity bias) contradict the belief that, in short-lived tourism encounters, reciprocal altruism cannot develop, and cheating should be the norm. It is thus appropriate to ask the question whether there are alternative perspectives on altruism that can explain these findings and experiences.

### **Altruism in Tourism Through an Aristotelian Lens**

My answer to the question above is affirmative. Even more strongly, my claim is that we can trace a more articulate approach to altruism in the Western scholarly tradition back to one of the first writings on ethics handed down to us: the *Nicomachean Ethics* written by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle around 350 BC. Aristotle's discussion is particularly interesting to tourism scholars because,

when introducing the subject, he states that we can experience ‘even in our travels how near and dear every man is to every other’ (Aristotle, 1999, VIII, 1)<sup>3</sup>.

In book eight of *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE VIII), Aristotle distinguishes three forms of friendship: of utility, of pleasure and of goodwill. Utility implies a relationship where people do not befriend each other for themselves but in virtue of some good or service that they get or expect to get from each other. In the words of Aristotle: people who befriend others for utility associate ‘to each other only in so far as they rouse in each other hopes of something good to come’ (Aristotle NE VIII, 3). Although Aristotle does not speak of ‘altruism’, a term that entered modern language only in the nineteenth century, friendships of utility echo Trivers’ (1971) understanding of altruism as reciprocation. Both friendships of utility and reciprocal altruism are sought after by people ‘for the sake of what is good for themselves’ (Aristotle NE VIII, 3), thus not for the sake of the other but for the sake of the self.

Pleasure is a specific form of good that people may expect from each other. Therefore, friendships of pleasure are framed by Aristotle as a sub-category of friendships of utility. Importantly, Aristotle adds that pleasure is a particularly short-lived form of utility. In the words of Aristotle (NE VIII, 3): ‘Now the useful is not permanent but is always changing. Thus, when the motive of the friendship is done away, the friendship is dissolved, inasmuch as it existed only for the ends in question’. Friendship for pleasure is even more unstable: ‘it changes with the object that is found pleasant, and such pleasure alters quickly’ often ‘within a single day’ (EN VIII, 3). Contemporary pro-environmental psychology confirms Aristotle’s intuition that hedonic motives (pleasure) are short lived and cannot sustain behaviour (such as being compassionate friends) for long (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007, 2013; Steg et al., 2014). Aristotle also recognises that friendships of utility and pleasure are strongly dependent on the contact, the association between the parties involved (NE VIII, 3 and 12). In short: friendships of utility and pleasure are short-lived and, aiming at reciprocation, need repeated contacts among the people involved. These two Aristotelian forms of friendship, therefore, are as unable as reciprocal altruism to explain altruism in tourism and justify the hope that tourists will not cheat in short-lived tourism encounters but behave in a more sensitive, careful and compassionate manner (Fennell, 2006; Trivers, 1971).

There is, however, reason to hope because alongside friendships of utility and pleasure, Aristotle introduces friendships of goodwill. Friendships of goodwill are a purer form of friendship felt for others for their own sake. Aristotle explains this form as follows: ‘Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good – and goodness is an enduring thing (NE VIII, 3) [. . .] men wish well to those whom they love, for their sake, not as a result of feeling but as a result of a state of character (NE VIII, 5)’. Friendships of goodwill point to altruism beyond reciprocity.

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<sup>3</sup>From now on, we will refer to this text using the acronym NE followed by the number of chapter in Roman and the number of paragraph in Arabic numbering.

In the passage quoted directly above, Aristotle contrasts nature or character with something that is only incidental. The difference between what is constant (nature, character or essence) and what is only incidental (or accidental) to something is one of the main distinctions in Aristotelian philosophy. Essence refers to the intrinsic nature of things, to the unvarying aspect of phenomena that should be captured, for example, in their definition. An accident, as the word itself says, is not an aspect of the intrinsic nature of things but only incidentally connected to it. To exemplify: Aristotle defines human beings as rational animals. Following Aristotle, therefore, the words 'rational animal' capture the essence of humans. Whether a specific person is tall or short is an accident in the sense that it does not change the intrinsic nature or essence of that person. Short people are as human as tall ones. Thus, in Aristotelian philosophy, claiming that friendship of goodwill springs from the nature and character of the people involved is a very strong statement. For these people, being good and feeling goodwill towards their friends has become part and parcel of who they are. Consequently, this form of friendship lasts as long as people live. Good people cannot act against their own nature; they cannot – so to speak – avoid being good.

### **Altruism in Tourism: Expanding the Aristotelian Lens**

Friendships of goodwill spring from the unvarying good-naturedness of the person and do not expect reciprocation. They can therefore, at least theoretically, include others who are unable to reciprocate such as those hosts and tourists who meet each other only briefly. Aristotle, however, does not reach this conclusion for two main reasons: firstly, because he believes that 'such men are rare' (NE VIII, 3) and, secondly, because also this form of friendship requires 'time and familiarity' (NE VIII, 3).

Let us examine, though briefly, these two beliefs starting from the statement that truly good characters are rare. From an Aristotelian perspective that only few men can achieve a state of character of pure goodwill, or in modern terms non-reciprocal altruism, does not imply that all others are by their own nature incapable to reach such a state. This is due to a second main tenant of Aristotelian philosophy, alongside the distinction between essence and accident: nothing can be actuated that is not already present as a capacity. To exemplify, if an infant has not the capacity to talk, then that infant would never be able to talk when growing up. Yet, that a specific infant does not talk does not mean that they are not able to: some accident may have occurred impeding them to develop the capacity to talk. Thus, that some people can actuate friendships of goodwill does not exclude that other people have the same capacity but have not yet been able to activate it. This resonates with findings from current studies on antecedents of pro-environmental and pro-social behaviour that have proven that all people act from three goal frames, a gain, an altruistic and a biospheric one. A gain goal frame implies that people take decisions based on utility or pleasure that can accrue to themselves. People acting from an altruistic goal frame take into consideration costs and benefits for others. The altruistic goal frame is built on the

benevolence value orientation individuated by Schwartz (1992, 2012). Notably, this value orientation does not include reciprocal altruism, but it does include values such as helping others for their own sake. A biospheric goal frame spurs people to take care of the environment for its own sake. Though the importance to individuals of each goal frame can vary, and not all might be activated when taking a decision, they are all present in each of us (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007, 2013; Steg et al., 2014).

Goal frame theory (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007, 2013) and basic values theory (Schwartz, 1992, 2012) are not the only modern perspectives pointing to the innate capability of people to act altruistically. Particularly interesting insights have been developed by neurobiology. Patricia Churchland, a neurophilosopher, summarises these insights meaningfully when she states that ‘We are wired to care’, the title of the introduction to her book *Conscience*. We are wired in the sense that ‘infant brains are genetically set up to take pleasure in the company of certain others and to find separation from them painful’ (2021, p. ix). Growing up, we learn to enlarge the circle of care to others. We get attuned with the standards of the community we live in, and we also learn to critically reflect on these standards. As Churchland says, we develop a conscience: an irksome inner voice that asks us to discriminate between what is morally right and wrong, and act to bring about what is right mainly in line but sometimes against the standards of our own community. Thanks to conscience, we are therefore able to care for others, including strangers, beyond any good that could accrue to us. Showing goodwill and pro-socially reacting to crises is not rare; it is a behaviour hardwired in our brain.

The conclusion seems unavoidable that all people have the capacity to develop altruistic behaviour and friendships of goodwill, but that not all of them actuate this capacity at any given time. The question is then what impedes people to act on their capacity for altruism and goodwill. One of the reasons may indeed be the lack of ‘time and familiarity’, as Aristotle says, or the lack of repeated encounters over time as Trivers and Fennel state. A full discussion of the philosophically and practically complex concepts of time, familiarity and encounter would exceed the space limit of this chapter. For the current discussion, it may suffice to say that the rise of the internet and social media has opened the opportunity for encounters that do not require people to be physically present in the same space at the same time. We have now the opportunity – unthinkable in the time of Aristotle and Trivers – to stretch the time and space of encounters among people, including guests and hosts. In other words, the internet and social media can be used to create familiarity and consequently goodwill before the hosting community and the tourists physically meet at a destination. To exemplify, I would like to refer to Karin Velthuisen, owner of camping Vrijhaven in the Netherlands. Karin Velthuisen ‘chooses her guests’. This may be a confounding statement. It confounded me when Karin Velthuisen shared it with me. Her explanation was simple. Karin Velthuisen observes her guests closely when they are on site. She then keeps contact with those guests who during their stay clearly embraced the camping’s commitment to sustainability, for example, by properly separating waste. She also asks these guests to recommend her camping to their family and

friends (personal communication by Karin Velthuisen to Elena Cavagnaro, April 2019). By a skilful use of social media, Karin Velthuisen creates and extends familiarity and friendship beyond the short moment of physical encounter with her guests. Karin Velthuisen is an entrepreneur. Similar tactics could be applied by other entrepreneurs and by destination management organisations (DMOs) to create familiarity with tourists before and after their physical stay.

In sum, if all human beings (including tourists) have the capacity to develop friendships of goodwill and if familiarity between hosts and guests can be created using tools that are independent from physical presence in the same space and time, then we do not need to design tourism experiences that fit only, or mainly, a vision of humans as self-interested and pleasure-seeking individuals. The path to a gentler form of tourism is not blocked anymore by such a dismal vision on human nature and is therefore practicable.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have claimed that to open the path towards sensitivity and humaneness at destination level, we need to confront the belief that tourists are self-centred, fun-driven and cheating individuals. This view on tourists, and more generally human beings, is central to the neoliberal understanding of consumers and has taken a strong grasp on the mind of economists, politicians, academics and the public at large. To counteract this idea, I have called upon Aristotle's discussion of friendship. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes between three forms of friendship: of utility, of pleasure and of goodwill. While friendships of utility and pleasure are short-lived and require reciprocation to develop, friendships of goodwill are felt for others for their own sake and not in expectation of a favour in return. Friendships of goodwill include therefore others, such as tourists staying only a short time at a destination, who may not be able to reciprocate. With reference to basic values theory (Schwartz, 1992, 2012), goal frame theory (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007, 2013; Steg et al., 2014) and neurobiology (Churchland, 2021), I have shown that this form of friendship or altruism is not the prerogative of few but is hardwired in all human beings. Finally, I have claimed that the new opportunity arising from the internet and social media can help us in removing barriers – supposing they are indeed such – to the full deployment of altruism like the limited amount of time that modern tourists spend on a destination.

In this conclusion, I would like to stress some consequences of this new view for tourism and tourists by going back first to Aristotle and adding then some personal ideas and suggestions for further research.

In his discussion of friendship, Aristotle repeatedly reflects on the relationship between hosts and guests. At first, he subsumes 'the friendship of a host and guest' under friendships of utility (Aristotle NE VIII, 3). As he makes explicit a bit later in the text (NE VIII, 6), Aristotle is thinking here of the 'commercially minded' and therefore arguably of commercial hospitality in its strictest form (Lashley, 2015). Later, Aristotle insists that each form of friendship involves association,

thus including the friendship between hosts and guests and particularly the friendship among fellow travellers (NE VIII, 9). The stronger this association is or is made to be, the lesser is the propensity to cheat, to not help, to harm or to complain towards the people one associates with (NE VIII, 9). The useful lesson that we can derive here for tourism professionals is that they should develop knowledge on how to favour the development of a sense of community among fellow travellers or between a host and a guest even if they associate only for a short period of time. Proper segmentation and targeting (Cavagnaro et al., 2021) can facilitate this task. Tourism professionals could also consider the vast literature on team building. Skills in the use of social media, as already highlighted above in the case of Karin Velthuis, are also essential for professionals in the tourism and hospitality industry.

However, more important than the acquisition of new skills is the change in mindset that the understanding of human beings as capable of unqualified altruism and friendship for goodwill can bring in scholars and practitioners. When the mindset or paradigm out of which the system arises changes, then the system itself – its goals, power structure, rules and culture – changes (Meadows, 1997/1999). If when looking at ourselves, we stop seeing self-interested and greedy individuals who at the very best engage in reciprocal acts of altruism and starts seeing human beings, including hosts and guests, as capable of friendships of goodwill because they have a conscience impelling them to care for and help others beyond reciprocity, then the system that we call tourism may start changing towards a more sensitive, human and sustainable path.

This chapter is no more than a first attempt to address altruism in tourism from a broader perspective than reciprocity. Therefore, future research is needed on several issues that have not been touched here. Firstly, future research should more profoundly discuss non-reciprocal forms of altruism in tourism, in general and particularly considering specific forms of tourism such as voluntourism (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017; Thompson, 2022). Secondly, future research should explore and learn from practitioners who, as Karin Veldhuis, already approach their guests as humans and as possible friends. Finally, altruism should also be discussed with reference to non-Western literature and culture, particularly when trying to understand how people interact in a world-wide phenomenon such as tourism.

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## Chapter 6

# Heritage and Destination Conscience: Empowering Communities and Enhancing Tourism Experiences

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### Abstract

This chapter examines the role of heritage as a means of empowering destination communities and providing deeper and more meaningful encounters between tourists and their destination, which contributes to the notion of Destination Conscience by highlighting more sustainable and humane ways of ‘doing’ tourism and opening places up to greater community involvement and access by visitors. This includes heritage concepts such as Indigenous communities, local spirituality and religious traditions, public archaeology and ordinary heritage, and how these translate into deeper engagement between residents and tourists, community empowerment and a more creative and holistic tourist experiences. Conceptually, this chapter highlights notions of empowerment, tourists’ experiences and Destination Conscience.

*Keywords:* Community empowerment; spirituality and place; democratisation of heritage; Indigenous knowledge; residents and tourists engagement; tourism experiences

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Destination Conscience, 51–63



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doi:[10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241007](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241007)

## Introduction

Much tourism until now has focused on extremes – the biggest, the most beautiful, the furthest and the oldest. This is especially apparent in the context of traditional heritage tourism. Heritage assets are a salient part of the supply side of tourism, with the majority of mass tourism focusing on the extraordinary, ancient and most tangible elements of cultural heritage (Timothy, 2018). Heritage is the contemporary use of the past – tangible and intangible, including the living cultural present. It is something humankind values and hopes to pass on to future generations. Heritage is very community-oriented and value-laden (Den, 2014; Kyriakidis, 2019) and is now seen as a salient means of protecting local identities, empowering Indigenous communities and providing opportunities for tourists to learn about, and appreciate, destinations more fully. Heritage tourism – the use of the past (tangible and intangible) for tourism purposes – is one of the most pervasive forms of tourism on the planet, and nearly every trip includes some element of the cultural past, whether culture is a serious pursuit or a more casual, tangential element of a different kind of journey (McKercher, 2002; Timothy, 2021a). Heritage tourism has existed for centuries and has now become one of the most salient elements of mass tourism almost everywhere.

The current concept of ‘overtourism’ is closely connected to mass tourism. Overtourism is characterised by conditions of too much tourism to the point where destination residents are unhappy about the sector and the social and ecological impacts it effects in their home regions. Popular heritage destinations currently experiencing high levels of overtourism include Barcelona, Rio de Janeiro, Venice, Prague, Vienna, Dubrovnik, Kyoto, Rome, Santorini, Munich, Amsterdam, Budapest and many others (Milano et al., 2019; Pechlaner et al., 2020). In these places, tourism has created contentious relationships between locals and tourists, diminishing the visitor experience and increasing discontent among residents, often thwarting the very notion of Destination Conscience. These conditions have weakened Destination Conscience as communities feel powerless to effect change in their quality of life and the places where they live. Empowerment is key in building community conscience and satisfying tourists who seek deeper experiences. Despite its centrality in mass tourism and part of the cause of overtourism, heritage tourism has the potential to empower communities as they use their past in sustainable ways to develop their present socio-economic well-being and build community solidarity for greater Destination Conscience (Aznar & Hoefnagels, 2019; Boley & Johnson Gaither, 2016; Chong & Balasingam, 2018; Kim et al., 2019; Su et al., 2023; Timothy, 2015, 2021a). This chapter describes the role of four different manifestations of heritage in creating more empowered communities, greater Destination Conscience as manifested in enabling alternative access to communities and a greater valuing of local cultures, and therefore, more meaningful touristic encounters.

## **Heritage, Tourism and Empowerment**

Empowerment is a key construct of successful and sustainable tourism development, and therefore, an important manifestation of Destination Conscience in how communities can choose their own futures and how their cultural inheritances are promoted for tourism or hidden from tourists' gaze. Empowerment occurs when bottom-up development replaces top-down development, when ideas, actions and benefits become grassroots endeavours rather than being imposed from above by governments or powerful elites with personal financial interests (Timothy, 2012). For most of tourism's history, particularly in the Global South, tourism has empowered the wealthiest and most influential stakeholders, while simultaneously disempowering the communities whose natural and cultural heritage is on display. This has accentuated the distances between the haves and the have-nots in society. However, since the 1990s, there has been a greater appreciation among development and planning specialists of the need for a more balanced, harmonious, equitable and sustainable approach to tourism. Part of the answer to these challenges is empowerment, including the empowerment of the most traditionally disempowered sectors of society (e.g., women, ethnic minorities and migrants).

There are many types of community empowerment that exist within the framework of socio-economic development. These include political, social, psychological and economic empowerment, among others (Scheyvens, 2002; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). Political empowerment is evident when the people who are most impacted by tourism have a voice in whether or not to accept tourism, reject it or modify it to meet their needs. Community cohesion and solidarity (not necessarily full agreement) and cooperation for mutual benefits are indicative of social empowerment. Psychological empowerment prevails in a community when its collective confidence and esteem are central to planning and promoting tourism, and when communities take pride in what is unique about them and choose either to promote their uniqueness or hide it from the tourist gaze. Economic empowerment indicates conditions where employment opportunities are plentiful, money is earned to fund public services, and all segments of society have opportunities to benefit financially if they choose to do so (Scheyvens, 1999).

There are many themes within heritage tourism studies that clearly manifest the notions of Destination Conscience and empowerment (Timothy, 2020a). These include, but are not limited to, local faith traditions, pilgrimages and sacred spaces; public archaeology; Indigenous communities; and ordinary heritage. These are examined briefly below and their applications to principles of empowerment are highlighted.

### ***Local Spiritual and Religious Traditions***

For millennia, humans have worshipped the divine and venerated sacred places (Coleman & Elsner, 1995). Some of the earliest Neolithic sites of ancient worship have been found in Turkey, Malta and South Asia, and have become significant

places of modern-day worship and tourism. Religion is a pure manifestation of heritage because of its rituals, belief systems, practices, recitations and prayers, sacred writ, holy sites and pilgrimages. All of these elements of spirituality or religious worship are manifestations of faith heritage that are extremely meaningful for the faithful and of cultural interest to others.

As part of their religious practices, believers have travelled in search of the sacred, to draw close to gods, seek absolution from sins, beseech deity for favours and blessings, to be healed in body or spirit and to satisfy religious obligations. Some religions require travel to sacred sites to achieve salvation in the afterlife (e.g. Islam and some Christian sects), while others encourage it as a life-enrichening experience but not a requirement (Olsen & Trono, 2018; Ron & Timothy, 2019). Long-distance pilgrimages became common in European societies with the Christianisation of Europe during the late Roman Empire and into the Middle Ages (Birch, 1998). In ancient East and South Asia, pilgrimages took shape in a large number of sacred places (Griffin et al., 2018; Stoddard, 1994). Intra-European pilgrimages and religious travel between Europe and the Holy Land began in late antiquity and lasted far into the Middle Ages until the Reformation and bubonic plague slowed it down dramatically (Ron & Timothy, 2019). Today, pilgrimages are among the largest tourist gatherings in the world, with the Kumbh Mela and the Hajj being counted among them, in many ways resembling the large-scale mass tourism seen in other sorts of destinations (Qurashi, 2017; Shinde, 2021).

Despite these extremely popular, long-distance and global pilgrimages, the majority of pilgrimage behaviour takes place in local environs, where vernacular shrines, temples, churches and other sacred spaces are venerated by certain segments of society but might not appeal to the masses (Bremborg, 2013; Frascaroli, 2016). Most sacred places are small scale and unremarkable, and used by a limited number of area faithful (Liutikas, 2014; Stefko et al., 2013). ‘Folk shrines’ of regional or local importance, sometimes not even officially acknowledged by a faith organisation, as well as sites associated with hometown religious leaders and places where miracles of local acclaim occurred, are the focus of much veneration and pilgrimage-like activity. These everyday localities enrich the cultural milieu and heritage landscapes of places (Burgassi, 2019) which, together with other elements of human heritage, manifest as unique, interesting and value-laden spaces of potential tourist attention.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many religious adherents to cancel or postpone their pilgrimage journeys abroad. In this process, an increasing number of adherents focused on religious sites of local significance, deepening their sense of place and valuation of regional religious heritage in place of the global (Olsen & Timothy, 2020). This process brought greater visibility to local religious sites. This, in conjunction with various globalisation processes and increased use of the internet and social media, has made what was once a local and common phenomenon (folk shrines and area pilgrimages) into a global phenomenon with widespread currency, particularly among people who seek deeper and more meaningful place-based experiences. Thus, globalisation, the COVID-19 pandemic and a growing interest in deeper, more meaningful experiences have

pushed ‘...small, regional shrines and sacred sites to the forefront of global tourism. This means that many folk shrines of local renown now have the potential to become destinations of more international acclaim’ (Timothy & Olsen, 2023, p. 470). As locally valued religious heritage and practices reach the global stage and as the potential for tourism growth is realised in their ordinary places of religious heritage (Aulet & Vidal, 2018; Shyju et al., 2020), communities may become increasingly united, emboldened and empowered through solidarity of purpose, with the knowledge that their local traditions have importance not only to them but to outsiders as well.

### ***Public Archaeology***

Archaeological sites are one of the most pervasive heritage assets and among the most visited localities in the world. Every place of human habitation has an archaeological record, although some places choose to emphasise it in their heritagisation processes, including tourism, more than other places. A different perspective on heritage tourism and Destination Conscience can be understood through public archaeology – an activity that engages the public in archaeology through tours of excavations and sites, interpretive programmes, volunteer opportunities, public education lectures and other outreach activities. This is a process of democratising heritage so that it is both more accessible to the public and reflects better the public’s own heritage. This is particularly important in descendant communities, whose own ancestors are the focus of archaeological work. Whereas traditional archaeological research has focused solely on the scientific study of material culture from the past, sometimes to the exclusion of the communities whose history is being studied, archaeologists have come to terms with the idea that communities are important stakeholders and partners in their scientific inquiry, that the public is in fact the client, the audience and equal partners in archaeological pursuits (SAA, 2023). This has led to the suggestion that archaeologists have now come ‘out of their fortresses’ (Gürsu, 2020, p. 58) and have democratised the past for general consumption. Although public archaeology has existed for many years in one form or another, the term was coined and its systematic practice came about in the 1970s with the realisation that public support is crucial to the work of archaeologists.

Volunteering at archaeological sites, archives, cultural centres and museums, at home or elsewhere, is a clear display of public archaeology (Timothy, 2020b). Archaeology-based volunteer tourism and leisure engages the public, makes findings more accessible to the community and builds public awareness. The democratisation of archaeological heritage forwards the idea that the public has the right of access to its own heritage, and such efforts should be encouraged as a way to enhance educational opportunities, reaffirm local identity and roots and improve a community’s quality of life (Corbishley, 2011).

Archaeologists and many heritage resource managers have been reluctant to accept tourism as a legitimate use of the archaeological record. However, given increasingly scarce public and private funds for undertaking research and with a

growing ethos of public outreach and community partnerships in heritage-making, most archaeologists now recognise the need to facilitate and encourage tourism as a means of justifying and funding their studies (Gillot, 2020).

This democratisation of archaeology may also have the effect of empowering communities and creating conscientious stewards of human heritage, including community members, archaeologists and the tourists themselves. In the words of Gillot (2020, p. 36), public archaeology and archaeology-based tourism have ‘the potential of not only bringing financial gains but also helping to create a more cohesive identity within local or descendant communities’.

### *Indigenous Communities*

An important manifestation of heritage is Indigenous practices and Indigenous knowledge. Part of the deeper engagement with destination communities is manifest in the area of Indigenous tourism (Melubo, 2023; Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019). The archaeological record and other manifestations of heritage are particularly relevant for descendant communities, and this is especially the case with Indigenous communities that face challenges to protecting their distinctive identities. Many elements of native people’s culture are on the verge of disappearing through acculturation processes, environmental changes, overtourism, globalisation or simply modern-day living (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019; Stonefish & Kwantes, 2017). Heritage tourism and other celebrations of living and tangible heritage can help preserve Indigenous cultures, deepen people’s roots, connect them more closely to their ancestral lands and provide a sense of intergenerational continuity (Stronza, 2008; Timothy & Tahan, 2020).

When native-led tourism initiatives dominate and native people are empowered to show what they want to show to outsiders or hide what they do not want outsiders to see (Rigby et al., 2011), they will be more empowered and conscientious of their role in tourism. ‘When communities take ownership of the problems and benefits associated with tourism, they become psychologically empowered. When tourism brings employment and other economic advantages to the people who want to benefit from it...destination communities become economically empowered. When native people take pride in their cultural heritage and desire to share it with others through tourism, on their own terms of course, intra-community solidarity grows, and they become socially empowered. When decision-making derives from the grassroots level and as autochthonous societies have the power to welcome tourism or to resist it, they are becoming politically empowered’ (Timothy & Tahan, 2020, p. 215).

### *Ordinary and Vernacular Heritage*

As noted at the outset, mass tourism has long centred on the extraordinary, momentous and opulent heritage of extraordinary people, including rulers, nobility, celebrities, great artists, politicians and famous military heroes. Yet,



these people represent an infinitesimally small proportion of Earth's inhabitants. Their heritage has been well preserved, interpreted, marketed and sold as a tourism commodity, but what about the heritage of everyone else? Despite tourism's traditional focus on extraordinary and grandiose heritage, the cultural heritage of ordinary people, such as intangible traditions, small villages, farm buildings, industrial archaeology, cemeteries, fisheries, vernacular architecture, agricultural landscapes and other vestiges of ordinary life, is also an important part of the world's heritage milieu that deserves to be commemorated, celebrated and protected for its scientific and social value as well as for its tourism potential (Podder et al., 2018; Timothy, 2014, 2020a, 2022). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) World Heritage List was a culprit in celebrating only the most glorious, universal heritage until recently, when the organisation later began to memorialise the commonplace heritage of ordinary people through its lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural Landscapes (Labadi, 2013; Rössler, 2006). As people's ordinary heritage is valued by outsiders, pride in their local cultures increases (Butler et al., 2022; Nicholls et al., 2004), and there is a stronger desire to protect what might otherwise be lost in favour of something more 'impressive', extraordinary and of greater 'universal value' (Araoz, 2011).

## **Enhanced Experiences: Deeper Engagement in Heritage Tourism**

As these examples demonstrate, various manifestations of heritage have the potential to empower communities and strengthen community conscience as local cultures become more accessible, more highly valued by tourists, the tourism system and residents whose culture is on display. This makes for a stronger foundation for niche and special interest tourisms.

There is evidence that tourists are becoming more sophisticated and choosier about the destinations they visit and the activities they undertake (Moutinho et al., 2011). Although tourists generally want to see the world's momentous heritage, part of the growing sophistication and desired experiential touristic encounters, travel consumers are increasingly interested in seeing how ordinary people live. Expressions of ordinariness and vernacular lifestyles have been an important part of the heritage tourism product for many years, such as folk museums in the United Kingdom (Peate, 1949) and visits to Maasai tribal areas in Tanzania and Kenya (Buzinde et al., 2014; Melubo & Carr, 2019), but seeking ordinariness or gazing upon the 'real lives' of others is now a greater part of sought after touristic experiences (Timothy, 2021b).

Many tourists are unsatisfied with the mass-produced package tours that have been so popular in the past, and they are far less content with the superficial engagement with places and peoples that typically defines mass tourism (Richards, 2015; Timothy, 2018; Yang, 2012). In addition, many travellers are choosing to avoid the most touristified destinations where overtourism dominates consumer landscapes. This has led to the identification of many types of special interest tourism that sometimes function as alternatives to mass tourism and

include, for example, heritage tourism, sport tourism, culinary tourism, roots tourism, ecotourism, solidarity tourism, and many other actions that satisfy personal interests and create unique niche markets. These niche markets are evidence of people seeking deeper, more meaningful and immersive experiences that lead to greater knowledge, increased self-discovery, greater confidence in their place in the world, satisfying personal interests and gaining a deeper understanding of the plight of their earthly cohabitants (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Isaac, 2008; Scarles, 2009). Such changes in the demand for more existential tourist experiences will likely result in greater levels of empowerment in the destination as communities gain financially, politically, psychologically and socially through tourism, but this assertion is in desperate need of additional research.

Many labels have been assigned to these deep travel experiences in recent years, including slow tourism, immersive tourism, geotourism, purposeful cultural tourism and co-creative tourism. Slow tourism emphasises a greater personal awareness of oneself and the world. It entails reduced speed and mobility by staying in a single location longer, getting to know the place's history and culture more intimately (Oh et al., 2016). Immersive tourism is similar to slow tourism in that it requires visitors to remain longer than usual, appreciating local lifestyles and foodways and learning about local cultures, possibly even participating in religious activities and studying local languages. Geotourism generally has two meanings. The first meaning is geology-based tourism. The second meaning is more culture- and place-oriented; it is tourism that sustains and enhances the distinctive geographical characteristics of a place (National Geographic, 2023). Purposeful cultural tourism denotes travel that is motivated primarily by a desire to learn about other cultures and heritages and to have a deep cultural experience (McKercher, 2002; Timothy, 2021a). Co-creative tourism emphasises deeper engagement between locals and tourists, where the experience is co-developed by destination residents/stakeholders and the tourists themselves for a more profound authentic and embedded encounter (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Campos et al., 2018). What all of these tourisms have in common is a more meaningful and profound engagement with a destination, its history, its cultural heritage and its current inhabitants and their lifestyles. That tourists might want to see their vernacular architecture and landscapes and experience their everyday lives is a powerful force for destination communities. These recent movements within tourism enable communities to become more empowered to control their tourism futures and deeply involved in co-creating touristic experiences, while tourists simultaneously become more authentically engaged in local cultures and gain a deeper appreciation for the destination community.

## Conclusion

Mass tourism, including heritage tourism, has traditionally focused on the extraordinary, most tangible and oldest heritage of humankind since it began to grow in the late 1800s. Heritage sites of global acclaim have become some of the

most iconic symbols of tourism and nationalism, including the Great Wall of China, Machu Pichu, the temples of Thailand, the Pyramids of Egypt, Angkor Wat and the Roman Forum. Although heritage assets have been the backbone of most mass tourism, as noted above, heritage tourism has also emerged as a niche form of special interest tourism that may help empower communities politically, economically, socially and psychologically and develop a sense of common identity and Destination Conscience, as what was once local and ordinary becomes more valued at a greater scale. As heritage tourism empowers communities, they take greater pride in the remnants of their cultural past and desire to protect and promote it (or not) to outsiders. Thus, the valorisation of ordinary and Indigenous heritage, archaeological remains, faith traditions and other manifestations of heritage builds solidarity among community members and makes places desirable for tourists who seek deeper, more meaningful and existential travel experiences. The very idea that tourists might want to experience something that is rather mundane or ordinary can help build community cohesiveness and increase community conscience.

Tourism has the potential to empower communities, or community cohorts, that have heretofore been either disempowered through tourism or otherwise neglected, including Indigenous people, ethnic minorities and women – all of whom have important heritage that deserves to be protected and shared with visitors from elsewhere, if its owners so desire. Raising the profile of a community's holistic heritage may have the effect of drawing tourists who seek more immersive experiences in the local and in the 'Other', for an empowered community is a desirable community whose members have a real stake in tourism's success which, as the contents of this book make perfectly clear, are important elements of Destination Conscience.

Balance, harmony, equity and other principles of sustainable development may translate into a more conscientious destination that not only benefits more deeply from tourism in social and economic ways but also reflects a greater sense of purpose, value and meaning, which will no doubt translate into enhanced tourist experiences (Michalkó et al., 2015; Rivera et al., 2016; Sheldon, 2022), improved quality of life and a more content populace. This equals more confidence and perhaps an ability to interact more positively with visitors and help co-create more enjoyable and satisfactory tourist experiences in their communities as many contemporary tourists seek deeper, more rooted experiences in communities that are empowered to protect and share (or not) their heritages with the outside world.

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## Chapter 7

# Pilgrimage Destination Conscience: The Search for Meaning Along the Way of St. James

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### Abstract

Pilgrimage is a special form of conscious travel – maybe even the most conscious one – and therefore, awareness is one part thereof. As a result of this quality, which is gaining importance in Western society, pilgrimage is currently experiencing a renaissance (but not just for religious or spiritual reasons). No other pilgrimage route can be compared to the Camino to Santiago de Compostela in terms of numbers of pilgrims, popularity and fascination, and with around half a million pilgrims, the city broke its record again in 2022. The focus of this essay is the following question: is there a ‘Destination Conscience’ in relation to the Camino, and if so, who creates and uses it, and does it change over time? In terms of methodology, existing scientific studies are re-analysed and the results of field studies by RWTH Aachen University evaluated, in order to examine the contributions made by various stakeholders (travellers, local population, tourism providers, institutions, etc.) to the development of a possible ‘Destination Conscience’ pilgrimage. Through personal interactions and cultural exchange, they develop common values and a common awareness. On the other hand, these different expectations and changing perspectives also lead to conflicts and misunderstandings. The example of the Camino shows that ‘Destination Conscience’ is not a state but a process, and change is an essential part of this quality.

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Destination Conscience, 65–77



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doi:10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241008

*Keywords:* Pilgrimage; Camino de Santiago; sustainable tourism; over-tourism; massification; image

## Journey Conscience: The Spirit(s) of the Way of St. James

Travel, tourists and their holidays have changed in many ways in terms of their expectations of the destination and the way they visit places or sights. Today, many tourists feel that simply visiting places is too superficial, and so, increasingly more of them are instead looking for alternative, deeper and more authentic experiences. Very often, superficiality is not countered by more sensations; it is much more about touching the local reality of the destination – as well as the hope that this experience will touch one’s own self.

One reaction to this growing demand for authenticity, meaning and conscious travel is the increasing pilgrimage along the Way of St. James, the Camino de Santiago (Lois-González & Santos, 2015). This is a Europe-wide network of pilgrimage paths, each leading to Santiago de Compostela. The beginning of the pilgrimage to the tomb of the apostle St. James is suspected to have been first trodden in the 9th century, while in the 11th century, Santiago de Compostela became one of the most important Christian pilgrimage destinations alongside Jerusalem and Rome. Since the 1980s, the Way of St. James has gained renewed popularity, and in 1987, the Council of Europe classified it as a ‘Cultural Route’. At that time, around 3,000 pilgrims were counted per year; however, in 2022, over 438,000 were officially registered in Santiago de Compostela (Fig. 7.1). Moreover, together with all those pilgrims who only walk part of the way somewhere in Europe, there were well over half a million who experienced the route in 2022. Numbers are especially high in Holy Years, when the day of St. James (25th

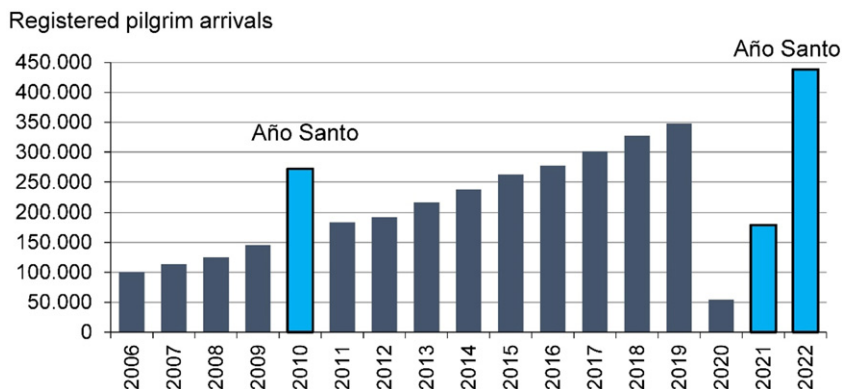


Fig. 7.1. Increase in Pilgrim Arrivals in Santiago de Compostela (2006–2022). *Source:* The authors. *Data:* Oficina de Acogida al Peregrino, Santiago de Compostela.

August) falls on Sunday, and after interruptions to travel restrictions caused by the global pandemic, pilgrimage recovered rapidly in the extended ‘Año Santo’ 2021–2022.

The Europe-wide network of numerous routes leading to Santiago de Compostela is constantly growing, thus making it extremely difficult to calculate the total length of all signposted ways (Fig. 7.2). Pilgrims consider the city of Santiago a destination, as well as the Way itself and the regions through which certain routes pass. The traditional trail from the Pyrenees to Santiago, known as the Camino Francés, is still the most frequented, although the flow of pilgrims is increasing even faster on other routes.



Fig. 7.2. Map of the Pilgrimage Routes of Saint James in Europe.  
Source: The authors. Data: IGN (2017).

The Way of St. James is often associated with the expectation of more conscious experiences and a unique resonance (Lois-González & Santos, 2015). Culture and nature, traditions and history or religion and spirituality contribute to this notion in various ways. Additionally, very personal experiences and small everyday moments along the Way of St. James often lead to a more conscious form of travel. Conscience is related to one's own values, and pilgrimage is valuable in the truest sense of the word. Both social and religious values are decisive for the (sometimes very different) behaviour of pilgrims (Brumec, 2021); however, values also determine the behaviour of providers along the Way of St. James, such as hostels, restaurants and shops. Pilgrimage as a special form of travel generates and requires a special range of goods and services, characterised by typical virtues, qualities and values. These values associated with the pilgrimage route – as a network of actors, places, experiences and paths – create an image that raises very different expectations for every individual. All in all, however, this image generates the unique myth of the Way of St. James and the fascination that accompanies it – and perhaps also specific 'Destination Conscience'.

What is the purpose of 'Destination Conscience' anyway? Even more precisely, because the Camino is a complete journey, what is the purpose of 'Journey Conscience'? Can it be a compass of values for pilgrims or a key to a genuine and deeper understanding of the Way of St. James? Furthermore, for tourism providers, could 'Journey Conscience' be a guideline for destination management organisations (DMOs) and other tourism stakeholders seeking to develop credible experiences? If so, 'Journey Conscience' would probably require a strong narrative for the Camino de Santiago, which offers alternative approaches to tourism, religion and spirituality. In turn, this type of tourism could also be an opportunity for religious institutions to bring their messages and values closer to people (Sammet & Karstein, 2021).

A pilgrimage is not just about arriving at a destination; the path itself also motivates pilgrims (Hafner et al., 2012), albeit these motivations have changed over time. While religious motives traditionally dominated, profane reasons are often also important today (Duda, 2014; Marine-Roig, 2015). Many scientific studies on pilgrims along the Way of St. James have examined, for example, motives and expectations, socio-demographic structures, financial expenditure or interactions with locals. Santos (2021) provides a good overview of the current state of research. Spatial differences and changes in pilgrimage over time are also the focus of many scientific studies. However, depending on the method, location or time, these studies sometimes arrive at different results. There are also increasingly more interesting studies on the provider side, analysing, for example, their marketing strategies and the effects of the Way of St. James on destinations. The local population living along the Way should be considered as well (Pechlaner, 2017). Recent studies have addressed the role of local initiatives, DMOs and other tourism stakeholders, and so, based on the findings of such scientific work, this essay asks the following questions:

- Are there typical values, behaviours or virtues associated with pilgrims of St. James?
- Is there specific ‘Journey Conscience’ attached to the Camino?
- Who constructs, generates, propagates and consumes the ‘Journey Conscience’ of the Camino?
- Does the ‘Journey Conscience’ of the Camino change?

## **Who Changes Who in the Network of Pilgrims, Locals and Sites?**

There have been hostels, restaurants and hospitals along the Way of St. James since the Middle Ages, and to this day, local inhabitants benefit from the economic stimulus provided by pilgrims. These economic effects are of regional economic importance because the trail mainly leads through rural and structurally weak areas, so pilgrims enable the local population to earn additional income. Most stay in private guest houses, boarding houses, pilgrim lodgings or other simple accommodation options. Especially in such small hostels, interpersonal relationships often develop, and pilgrims are treated as guests and not as customers. The Camino not only brings together people from different cultures, but the smaller hostels in particular also offer short but intensive relationships, which is appreciated by many hostel owners. For the vast majority, economic factors are not the only motivation to run a hostel (Seryczynska et al., 2021) because in addition to overnight stays, there are several other points of contact with pilgrims. The local population also benefits from the additional income from food or services (Lois-González & Santos, 2015), and so, the pilgrimage route is thus also a place of cultural encounters, where both locals and pilgrims alike influence each other.

With the increase in the numbers of pilgrims, however, newer types of pilgrims have emerged, and consequently, their values and motives have changed. Official statistics still confirm a very high proportion of those who are religiously motivated (43%) – or at least religiously or culturally motivated (50%) – but motivations are much more complex and do not fit into rigid statistical categories (Pereiro, 2019). The numerous surveys of pilgrims indicate that – depending on the scientific study – between 20 and up to almost 50% of travellers are religiously motivated, but more secular motives, such as enjoying the landscape or having an adventure or a cheap holiday, dominate nowadays. For this reason, the literature also speaks of the ‘secularisation’ and, in view of the increasing numbers of pilgrims, ‘massification’ of the Camino (Rucquoi, 2019). However, studies with in-depth interviews also reveal that many people walk the Way of St. James, for example, to initiate a new start in their lives or to deal with a crisis (Kurrat, 2019). The Camino as a form of ‘self-therapy’ (Moulin-Stozek, 2019) thus becomes a unique experiment in finding meaning and orientation.

Accordingly, there are certainly pilgrims along the Way of St. James with exclusively religious motives (e.g. penance, piety, veneration of saints), and there are also travellers with purely profane interests (e.g. self-discovery, culture, sport). However, for the vast majority, both secular and spiritual reasons (more or less)

play a role (Lois-González & Santos, 2015), resulting in a multi-motivational journey of ‘touripilgrimage’ (Pereiro, 2019). The combination of these two motivations makes the Camino twice as valuable: in a postmodern society, religious offerings such as pilgrimage are no longer exclusively symbols of a spiritual conviction but can also be interpreted in a more profane way, for example, as cultural heritage, a therapeutic method or a sporting challenge. Nonetheless, the sacred components of a destination can also be experienced in a touristic sense. For most travellers along the Camino, the assumed boundaries between religion, culture, self-discovery and sightseeing are therefore permeable. This has changed the Camino, but the Camino also changes pilgrims, in that their experiences may result in changes to their personal hierarchy of values, i.e. there is often a value shift towards welfare and the interests of others (Brumec, 2021). Consequently, it could be concluded that the Camino leads to greater consciousness of the pilgrim community.

### **Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, Between Journey Conscience and Overtourism**

Walking the Way of St. James is generally regarded as a sustainable form of tourism, but its economic, social and environmental effects depend on the dimension of pilgrimage flows, as well as on the specific characteristics and capacity of destinations. In addition to the focus on sustainability, conscious tourism also includes ethical aspects concerning the interactions of all involved stakeholder groups, namely the experiences of travellers, local hosts as part of society, entrepreneurial activities and public institutions (Castillo et al., 2020). According to this definition, conscious tourism is beneficial for the coexistence of the local community and visitors, brings together natural heritage and cultural heritage and enhances spiritual values over material values.

The Camino connects people, as well as the cities and villages along the Way, in a landscape characterised by a striking concentration of a rich cultural heritage that consists not solely of sacred elements (Cascos & Molinero, 2018). The growing recognition and popularity of the cultural route is resulting in more efforts to maintain this heritage and provide services, which in turn strengthens the attractiveness of the route as perceived by different types of pilgrims and other travellers. However, the lack of consideration of the Camino in some large-scale infrastructure projects with significant impacts on the landscape raises doubts as to whether there is ‘Camino conscience’ among planning authorities. On the other hand, Galicia and other regions also provide funds for ongoing improvements along the route.

At this point, it is necessary not only to analyse how pilgrims experience and perceive the Way but also to detect possible differences between the perceived and the projected image, in order to adapt the marketing strategies of destinations along the Way (Andrade & Caamaño, 2016). Indeed, the professional marketing campaign for the Xacobeo, i.e. the celebration of the Holy Year (1993, 1999, 2004, 2010, 2021–2022), has changed over time and merged with the promotion of

the Galicia region as a tourist destination. The Xacobeo provides a strong incentive of promoting the Way of St. James, the city of Santiago and Galicia, but it depends on the coordinated action of a great number of social groups, enterprises and public institutions and on their changing organisational structures (Álvarez et al., 2010). Ultimately, the Holy Year, as a time-limited but periodically staged ‘signature event’ (Hilpert, 2022), not only promotes awareness but also leads to a sharp increase in visitor numbers (Fig. 7.1). The presentation of Santiago de Compostela in marketing campaigns and in the media highlights its importance as a destination for pilgrimage and urban tourism. However, this mediated image is fixated on the attractiveness of the historic city centre and disregards the residents and their social reality (Escudero-Gómez, 2013).

The intensive promotion of tourism and the rapid growth of pilgrimage flows have meant that pilgrims as well as inhabitants increasingly perceive the last stages of the Camino Francés and the city of Santiago as overcrowded. Many local actors already recognise signs of overtourism in Santiago de Compostela, but they perceive them in different ways, very often depending on seasonality (Lopez et al., 2019), in that the numbers of tourists in hotels and other forms of accommodation are highly concentrated in the summer months (Fig. 7.3). In 2022, Santiago registered more visitors than ever before. After concerns about the future of tourism during the global pandemic, the debate about massification started again: is overtourism challenging the spirit of the Camino and the harmonious coexistence of residents and visitors? As an example in this regard, residents along the last kilometre of the Camino have protested against the inappropriate behaviour of pilgrims, resulting in posters indicating a ‘decalogue of good practice for the end of the Camino’ being placed at strategic points along the streets (Vilas-López, 2022). In addition, locals appeal for more consideration and understanding – a behaviour that should be a fundamental part of conscious

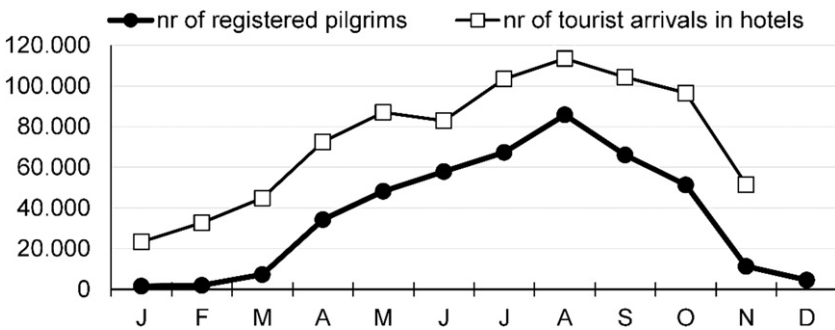


Fig. 7.3. Tourist Arrivals in Hotels and Number of Registered Pilgrims in Santiago de Compostela 2022. *Source:* The authors. *Data:* Oficina de Acogida al Peregrino, and INE.

tourism. Meanwhile, regional politicians celebrate the record number of pilgrims at the end of the Holy Year and desire more records in the coming years.

Rapid changes in the numbers and composition of travellers on the Camino raise many questions. Do people who are less guided by religious-spiritual motives tend to report their journey and present themselves more than others via electronic media, thereby contributing to a further change in the motivational structures of travellers on the Way of St. James? Does the shift towards motives of cultural tourism and sports lead to a loss of Camino conscience? Are influencers and the urge for self-promotion leading to Caminos looking more and more like long-distance trails or themed tourist routes? The frequent boasting about completing particularly long stages of the route in the shortest possible time has nothing to do with the spirit of the Camino. How do electronic media platforms influence travellers' behaviours along the route? Moreover, Galicia had to take measures to curtail the spread of the improper practice of pilgrims throwing away or burning their shoes and clothes at Cape Finisterre, at the western end of the route.

Pilgrims appreciate hospitality and encounters with people on the Camino, and they are grateful for their experiences and report them accordingly. Many experience support and friendly people along the way, and they like to give something back, perhaps on another pilgrimage or by participating in activities arranged by pilgrim associations in their own region. Experienced pilgrims, for their part, have recognised the increasing popularity of the Camino Francés and thus chosen other routes for further journeys. Empirical studies show an overall high level of pilgrim satisfaction, but they also reveal concerns about increasing massification and a loss of the Camino Francés's identity (Martín-Duque & Morère-Molinero, 2019). However, the impression of overcrowding on the path is very subjective and depends on individual preferences and different motivations. While some pilgrims seek tranquillity and distance away from people, others enjoy contact and exchange with fellow travellers. Others avoid the last 100 km of the busy Camino Francés and opt for a 'bypass' to reach Santiago via an alternative route. In the debate about the carrying capacity of the Camino Francés, there have been calls to increase the minimum distance of 100 km that pilgrims must walk to obtain the 'Compostela'. Such a decision has been rejected by Galicia, but it would favour the region of Castilla-León, where they hope to welcome more pilgrims setting out. Current dynamics affect the Camino conscience of pilgrims and local stakeholders. While, on the one hand, there is a quest to recognise traditional hospitality on the Camino as an intangible cultural heritage, on the other hand, some actors in the accommodation sector are calling for a reduction in low-cost public hostels based on donations. Of course, offering different types of accommodation is quite reasonable because they correspond to a differentiated demand and increase the added value of the Camino.

The numbers of pilgrims on the main route, the Camino Francés, are still rising, but statistical data reveal the diversification of routes (Fig. 7.4). The popularity of the Portuguese Way of St. James is growing rapidly. In many regions of Spain, pilgrimage associations and public initiatives promote the



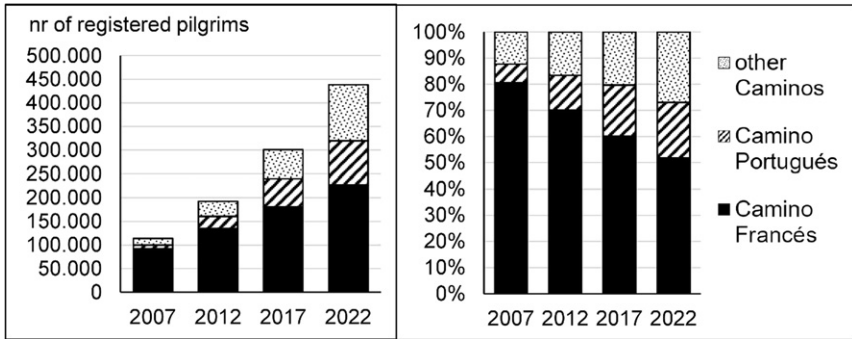


Fig. 7.4. Increase in Pilgrimage to Santiago and the Diversification of Routes. *Source:* The authors. *Data:* Oficina de Acogida al Peregrino, Santiago de Compostela.

recovery and signposting of routes to Santiago de Compostela, even from the south of the country.

## Destination Conscience on the Local Level

One of these newly emerging, recovered pilgrimage routes is the Mozarabic Way of St. James, the Camino Mozárabe, which starts in Almería, in the south-eastern corner of Spain and about 1,400 km from Santiago de Compostela. From the Mediterranean coast, the path leads up to the mountains, passes along the Sierra Nevada to the city of Granada and continues via Córdoba up to Mérida, where it meets the Vía de la Plata. The ‘Mozárabes’ (Christians living under Islamic domination in the south of the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages) used the route for pilgrimage to Santiago. At present, pilgrims are again walking the hitherto little-known path, mainly in spring and autumn (Fig. 7.5). Particularly, experienced pilgrims choose the Camino Mozárabe, with a seasonality very different from that of tourism on the Camino Francés and on the coast of Almería.

The revitalisation of this historical route offers opportunities for the enhancement of the rich cultural heritage of many small municipalities. In collaboration with the [Asociación Jacobea de Almería-Granada Camino Mozárabe](#) (hereafter ‘Association’) and the municipality of Alboloduy, a research group at the RWTH Aachen University studied the evolution and local effects of this pilgrimage route on cooperation and rural development in the province of Almería, combining surveys among inhabitants, pilgrims and tourists, with interviews directed at public institutions and local stakeholders (Voth, 2020). The Camino Mozárabe is becoming an element in territorial articulation and the strengthening of local identity. In cooperation with municipalities, members of the dynamic Association and local volunteers not only make great efforts to

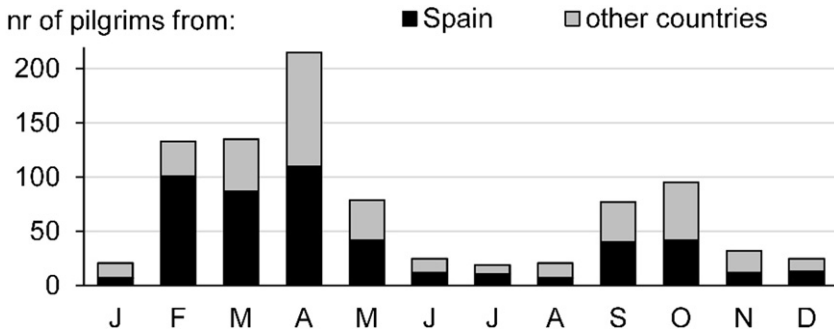


Fig. 7.5. Seasonal Pilgrimage on the Camino Mozárabe From Almería in 2022. *Source:* The authors. *Data:* Asociación Jacobea Almería-Granada Camino Mozárabe.

signpost and maintain the path, but they also create and disseminate a Camino conscience. In villages, the number of hostels founded and maintained by the Association has increased, as well as the number of pilgrims. The demand from increasing numbers of visitors helps to maintain services that are important for residents (Guil-Soriano & Voth, 2021). The municipality of Alboloduy in particular is very active in terms of promoting the Camino and implements many activities successfully. With the objective of favouring conscious tourism, the municipality has organised campaigns to raise awareness and stimulate the participation of local people, including all age groups, with special projects directed at primary schools. Inhabitants nowadays demonstrate a high level of knowledge about the Camino and like to welcome pilgrims, who in turn enjoy the hospitality and come into contact with people along the way. The village museum displays an exposition about the Way of St. James and the local pilgrimage route, and special information days and gastronomic events of the Camino are organised on a regular basis. A large scallop shell was painted in the middle of the town hall square, symbolising the local community's commitment to the Way of St. James.

### **Summary: Is There a Camino Conscience?**

There is a trend towards more conscious travelling and an increasing desire to experience destinations in a more authentic way. Pilgrimages as a whole – and the Camino in particular – benefit from this trend. The image and the myth behind this unique pilgrimage path generate specific expectations, patterns of behaviour and perhaps also a special ‘Destination Conscience’ among not only travellers but also local actors. These characteristics of a destination (Santiago de Compostela as well as the pilgrimage route itself) are the result of exchange and experience, of interaction and communication. In this regard, it is necessary that locals and pilgrims come into contact with each other, and that the pilgrimage route

becomes a place of cultural encounters. Locals and pilgrims influence each other here, but only a conscious tourism (including not only sustainable but also ethical requirements) is beneficial for the fertile coexistence of the local community and visitors.

Many studies demonstrate that the motives of pilgrims have changed over time. However, it would be far too short-sighted to claim that religious reasons are less important today and profane reasons (sport, nature, culture, etc.) play a more important role. Rather, in a postmodern society, there are completely new combinations of the religious and the secular. Not only is this changing the Camino, but the Camino is also changing travellers. Surveys of travellers along the route note a value shift towards welfare and a greater awareness of others. However, the lack of consideration of the Camino in some infrastructure projects with massive impacts on the landscape makes it doubtful that such a Camino conscience also exists among planning authorities. Likewise, in the marketing campaigns of Santiago de Compostela, it is debatable whether all stakeholders are sufficiently and consciously considered. Problems of massification and over-tourism challenge the harmonious coexistence of locals and visitors, and contradictions relating to conscious tourism become obvious. Ultimately, changes in the numbers and composition of travellers could threaten the spirit of the Camino, and the current Camino conscience could become a victim of the increasing numbers of persons who are less guided by religious-spiritual motives. The consequences of such changes are of course assessed differently. There are pros and cons, losers and winners, places that suffer and others that will thrive. In any case, the Camino conscience is not a state but a process.

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## Chapter 8

# The Binding Nature of the Sustainability Principle: Towards a New Level of Morality

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### Abstract

This chapter addresses the question of what normatively binding claims can be associated with the principle of sustainability. It proposes a theoretical reading of justice that requires a new level of morality, namely a global (spatial), intergenerational (temporal) and ecological (material) extension of the scope of responsibility. This makes it plausible that responsibility for those who are distant in space and time, as well as for nature, becomes a matter of conscience. At the same time, it is shown how the binding claims resulting from the principle of sustainability can be internalised in the course of a conscience formation and how the gap between knowledge and action in questions of sustainable development can be closed by means of an emotional underpinning. Finally, it is proposed to transfer the question of conscience to spatial units and tourism through the model of ‘Destination Conscience’ and to institutionalise the idea of ‘inner commitment’ or self-commitment. One suggestion is the creation of committees that could be a collective ethical conscience for the future issues.

*Keywords:* Sustainability; conscience; climate justice; rights of nature; mind behaviour gap; ethics of the future

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Destination Conscience, 79–94



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doi:[10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241009](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241009)

## Introduction

It has been clear for decades that nature and its ecosystems are being deprived of their capacity to regenerate. Science is increasingly trying to quantify where the planetary boundaries lie. They describe ‘tipping points’ or ‘tipping cascades’ (Rockström et al., 2009). Beyond certain critical thresholds, ecosystems, ocean currents, wind patterns, etc. are predicted to ‘tip over’, which in turn would mean that developments would be difficult to control (cf. Folkers, 2018, p. 284). Although this knowledge is available in very different specialist contexts, the ‘Great Transformation’ (WBGU – German Advisory Council on Global Change, 2011) towards a way of life and civilisation that enables a good life for all within planetary boundaries is still a long way off. Natural resources continue to be exploited, the capacity to absorb CO<sub>2</sub> is overexploited, rainforests are being cut down and oceans are being polluted.

We know what’s happening. So, why is it so difficult for us to change our lifestyles? It is not without reason that future generations will ask: ‘How could it happen that democratic, open societies, fully aware of the situation and in possession of innumerable means to stop the impending catastrophe, nevertheless went to their doom?’<sup>1</sup> (Ulrich, 2019, p. 37).

The gap between knowledge and action is one of the central problems of ethical reflection. The question of ‘how ought demands [...] can become effective motivations for behaviour’ arises above all ‘because ought demands cannot of themselves compel action in accordance with them, but depend on the willingness of the addressees to follow them’ (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 171). And yet, it is obvious to attribute to moral demands ‘a certain intrinsic content of motivation’ (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 171). This, at least, is the thesis of the so-called internalists (cf. Birnbacher, 2022, p. 171). This approach to the problem of motivation, which is also widespread in moral psychology, assumes that ‘whoever accepts a certain moral demand for himself [...] also has a reason to conform his behaviour to it’ (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 171). Accordingly, it is important to understand how moral norms ‘can be internalised by individuals so that they have an inner access to them and feel affectionately as well as intellectually committed to them’ (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 14).

The starting point of this chapter is that ‘taking for oneself’ aims at an inner formation of the conscience of each individual. In the first step, therefore, the specific focus of conscience is revealed (Section ‘The Specific Focus of Conscience’). Since the question of conscience focuses, among other things, on the ‘inner bindingness’ of a moral claim, Sections ‘The Human Rights Perspective and Its Priority’, ‘Sustainability as a Demand for Justice’ and ‘Ecological Extension of Responsibility’ reconstruct which normatively binding claims can be linked to the principle of sustainability. The aim is, on the one hand, to bring into play an alternative to the relativising weighing practice of the ‘three-pillar concept of sustainability’ and, on the other hand, to show that the sustainability principle in a justice-theoretical reading requires a new level of morality, namely a global (spatial), intergenerational (temporal) and ecological (material) extension of the

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<sup>1</sup>When quoting from German-language editions, the translation is by the author.



sphere of responsibility. In the final step, the gap between knowledge and action diagnosed in the introduction is taken up in order to provide the previously reconstructed normative claims with an emotional basis (Section ‘Conclusion: Bridging the Gap Between Normative Principles and Action’). In this way, it is made plausible that questions of sustainable responsibility for the future can become questions of conscience if they bind us inwardly and lead to an inner commitment.

## The Specific Focus of Conscience

The modern understanding of conscience owes its origins to ancient, Judeo-Christian and specifically modern influences. ‘Socrates already invokes the dark and mysterious voice of his *daimonion*, which stands by him as a warning counsellor. This divine *daimonion* prevents him from doing anything that might lead him astray or prevent him from seeking the truth. [...] The personal experience of being unconditionally bound by the truth one has discovered later leads to various reflexive theories of conscience. In these theories, conscience is interpreted as a *sacred guardian spirit*, as a *watcher and observer of all our faults and merits* (Seneca), as an *inner court of justice* (Paul, Rom 2:14–16; Kant), as the *voice of God* (Augustine) or, more cautiously, as an *echo of the voice of God* (John Henry Newman) and as a *natural disposition to distinguish between good and evil* (Thomas Aquinas). What all these explanatory models have in common is that they understand conscience as a critical self-awareness and sense of responsibility on the part of human beings, and as an instance of self-examination of one’s own actions that admonishes, accuses, or urges one to do good’ (Schockenhoff, 2013, p. 156).

Basically, there are two aspects of conscience: On the one hand, it is the ability to judge goals and courses of action as right or wrong or good or bad from a normative point of view. On the other hand, conscience expresses itself as the experience of an inner commitment to do or not to do something. In conscience, ‘the general, objective ranking of goods and the demand to take them into account is directly asserted as our own will. [...] If I unjustly harm, offend or injure another, I directly harm myself. I have, as we say, a *bad conscience*’ (Spaemann, 1982/2015, p. 75).

The inner voice of conscience can be accessed by analogy with Luther’s dictum ‘Here I stand and can do no other’. When we listen to the inner voice, we ‘voluntarily commit ourselves to an endeavour [...] in our basic practical positions. We affirm something to which we are affectively and volitionally attached’ (Seel, 2002, p. 291). This experience can be interpreted with Harry Frankfurt’s idea of *wholeheartedness*, acting from the whole heart or with an undivided will. He uses it to describe the motivational power a person has when they have fully decided on a particular option for action and is determined in terms of their will (cf. Rössler, 2017, pp. 48, 74): ‘Being wholehearted means having a will that is undivided. The wholehearted person is fully settled as to what he wants, and what he cares about’ (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 102). Motivation and wholeheartedness owe

their existence to fundamental concerns: they show what is important to a person in life, what they care about, what they love. According to these considerations, the formation of conscience can be understood as the binding of the will to ethical determinations that give direction and are binding. With the act of will, which is decisive for free will, we affirm what we have identified as ‘actually good or bad, right or wrong’ (Rössler, 2017, p. 51). The ‘I will’ that is important for modern notions of autonomy and freedom thus becomes an affirmation. The decision ‘I will’ thus says: ‘This is how it is. This is how it should be. This is how it is good. This is how it is in truth’ (Menke, 2022, pp. 190–191). The binding decisions of conscience have ‘the status of normative knowledge’ (Nida-Rümelin, 2016, p. 369). Nida-Rümelin speaks of ‘ethical realism’ (2016, p. 372) and normative ‘truth claims’ (Nida-Rümelin, 2016, p. 369). As an example, he cites the duty to respect human dignity and human rights. These have an objective validity so that ‘it is no longer left to the discretion of political communities whether they design their laws in such a way that human rights are respected or not’ (Nida-Rümelin, 2016, pp. 369, 372). For Markus Gabriel, too, it is obvious that there are moral facts which are similar to the recognition of truths:

When I see someone writhing on the floor after being hit with a pipe, I have an intuition that this is not right and that this person needs help. When I see someone being humiliated, verbally abused at work, for example, I immediately have an intuition that this should not be happening. That brings me into contact with simple moral facts.

(Gabriel, 2023, p. 60)

Moral realism, according to Gabriel et al. in a *New Institute* plea for a *New Enlightenment*, holds that moral cognitions are not ‘mere expressions of socially shared preferences’ (Gabriel et al., 2022, p. 31) but reveal moral facts that ‘provide guidelines to know what to do and what to forbid’ (Gabriel et al., 2022, p. 32). The good is thus a ‘deontic necessity, something we ought to do under any circumstances’ (Gabriel et al., 2022, p. 31).

If the question of conscience is now transferred to institutions and spatial units, as in the idea of ‘Destination Conscience’, then this can be interpreted in the sense of adhering to ethical standards and taking responsibility for the consequences of actions, as in the idea of ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR). A specific level of meaning that justifies the concept of conscience and goes beyond responsibility strategies is related to the desire and experience of inner commitment. Thus, the idea of a ‘Destination Conscience’ would not only lead to the definition of guidelines for ethically responsible tourism. In parallel with these ‘should’ strategies, it would also set in motion awareness-raising processes aimed at creating a mutual attachment to the guiding principles and thus promoting commitment.

## The Human Rights Perspective and Its Priority

The ‘Great Transformation’ towards a way of life and civilisation that enables a good life for all within planetary boundaries can be described as a process of self-awareness or self-transformation. It is ‘at its core . . . to be understood as an ethical task’ (DBK, 2021, p. 20) and ‘is therefore as much an ethical imperative as the abolition of slavery and the condemnation of child labour’ (WBGU – German Advisory Council on Global Change, 2011, p. 2).

When talking about an ethically responsible form of tourism, reference is usually made to the guiding principle of sustainability. A core idea of the sustainability concept is to break with a one-sided focus on short-term economic returns and to adopt an integral and long-term perspective (cf. Schneider, 2021). To operationalise this principle, reference is made to the ‘three-pillar concept of sustainability’ (cf. Göpel, 2020, pp. 23–24). This means that economic development should be changed so that it is ecologically and socially balanced. Sustainable tourism would then be a form of tourism in which natural resources are protected and social aspects are taken into account. The aim is to achieve a sustainable balance between tourism activities and the natural and social environment. Within the three-pillar concept, however, it is often the case that some take care of the economic aspects, others the environmental aspects and still others the social aspects (cf. Göpel, 2020, p. 25). In the field of tourism, the situation is usually similar. The focus is on purely economic accounting. In addition, CSR and sustainability reports show how improvements can be made on the environmental side or how social issues can be addressed.

From an ethical perspective, the three-pillar concept can be defined as a form of weighing between three seemingly equivalent goods, as a weighing between economic, social and environmental goals (cf. Reder et al., 2019, pp. 46–48). At this point, however, we should pause and consider ethical gradations. For those who are not utilitarians, the trade-off between economic and social goals is not a trade-off between equally important goods. According to a common guiding principle of economic ethics, economic returns are not an end in themselves but a means to an end (cf. Sautter, 2017). The efficient production and distribution of goods and services serves to satisfy human needs and desires and to improve people’s quality of life and well-being. Normative principles, such as the demand for justice or respect for the autonomy of other people, on the other hand, have a normatively binding claim; they apply unconditionally (cf. Schönecker, 2013). In this sense, John Rawls in his influential *A Theory of Justice* (1971) opposes ethical approaches that relativise *The Basic Liberties and Their Priority* (1983), i.e. that equate basic liberties with other values, thus allowing liberties and economic well-being to be pitted against each other.

First, the priority of liberty means that the first principle of justice assigns the basic liberties, as given by a list, a special status. They have an absolute weight with respect to reasons of public good and of perfectionist values. For example, the equal political liberties cannot be denied to certain social groups on the grounds that their

having these liberties may enable them to block policies needed for economic efficiency and growth.

(Rawls, 1983, pp. 8–9)

It is not possible to give equal weight to economic goals and normatively binding goals. The weighing of goods or values is ethically relevant. But there are limits to this weighing. There is what Immanuel Kant calls the categorical imperative. This has been interpreted in the ‘humanity formula’, which still shapes ethics today: ‘Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end’ (Kant, GMS 1785, BA 66–67). The other must not be instrumentalised; it is an end in itself. This normative claim is also the background for the protection of human dignity as formulated in Article 1 of the German Basic Law. The inviolability of human dignity is unconditional, absolute and without exception. Accordingly, there are no ‘good reasons’ that could justify subjecting people to treatment that violates their dignity. The guarantee of human dignity cannot be weighed (cf. Zoglauer, 2013, p. 177).

However, the unconditional protection of human dignity not only shapes legal opinion; it is also a recognised basic social consensus. The assertion that a development violates human dignity is an accepted argument for denouncing and combating problematic developments. It is not without reason that we expect fair wages to be paid, no exploitative working conditions to be tolerated and human rights standards to be respected. For organisations and companies, this is referred to as the obligation to be guided by standards of governance, i.e. responsible corporate management (cf. Sautter, 2017, p. 525ff.). Linked to this, for example, is the requirement that production conditions comply with the International Labour Organisation’s core labour standards. ‘These prohibit exploitative child labour, forced labour and discrimination of all kinds and include a guarantee of freedom of association, including the right to collective bargaining’ (Group of Experts, 2010, p. 36). The Alliance, which is supported by a large network of social movements and which advocates the introduction of a supply chain law, also calls for binding standards throughout the value chain (cf. Demele & Zimmer, 2020).

If the idea of ‘Destination Conscience’ is to be integrated into concepts of sustainable tourism, then the question of conscience must first be posed from a human rights perspective, i.e. one that aims to protect human dignity. It is not possible to give a conclusive answer to the question of what concrete claims follow from this. Nevertheless, the human rights perspective provides a binding ethical orientation (cf. Steinforth, 2021, pp. 4–6). This includes avoiding any form of exploitation and discrimination, paying employees fairly and equitably, and giving people real opportunities to participate in development and in social and political processes. Participation is not only recommended by economic or political wisdom but is also ethically required: What should follow from the goal perspective of sustainable tourism must be negotiated in terms of procedural justice.

## Sustainability as a Demand for Justice

From a normative point of view, the principle of sustainability can also be interpreted in such a way that, in addition to human rights standards, ecological capacities play the role of an ‘absolute weight’ (John Rawls). A normative criterion that follows from this is, firstly, *resource justice*, i.e. the claim of all people to equal opportunities in the use of globally accessible resources (cf. Chakrabarty, 2021, pp. 56–60). Secondly, sustainability aims at *intergenerational justice*, i.e. a *temporal* extension of the justice perspective (cf. Vogt, 2021, pp. 488–491; Schneider, 2021). The understanding of justice is extended by a dimension that takes future generations into account – in the sense of the ‘first commandment’ that Hans Jonas established in his ethics of responsibility, namely the commandment not to endanger the future existence of mankind (cf. Jonas, 1984, p. 36). According to this, the consequences and costs of the overexploitation of environmental space by the present generation must not be exported to the future of generations yet unborn. The classic definition can be found in the *Brundtland Report* (1987) of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development. There, ‘sustainable development’ means ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. Thirdly, the *spatial* delimitation of the concept of justice (*global justice*) comes into focus because, on the one hand, people in the global North make disproportionate use of the available environmental space – measured, for example, by their ecological footprint – and because, on the other hand, those who are least responsible for this have to suffer most from the ecological damage as well as from the impending costs of countermeasures. This raises the issue of environmental justice. It arises in particular with regard to the historical responsibility of the global North for the extinction of species, global warming and the pollution of the oceans (cf. Vogt, 2021, pp. 378–380).

Interpreted in this way, the recognition of the principle of sustainability is a sign of a moral learning process. In this reading, sustainability is linked to the challenge of expanding human sensibility and imagination, that is, to a relationship with time and space ‘that goes far beyond our ordinary perception’ (Pelluchon, 2021, p. 233). This means that future generations and people living at a distance are included in the sphere of responsibility and become ‘objects of our moral appreciation’ (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 51). In its climate decision of 24 March 2021, the German Federal Constitutional Court opened the way for a legal operationalisation of intergenerational justice with the requirement of ‘inter-temporal safeguarding of freedom’ (cf. Kersten, 2022, pp. 35–39). But it also raises the question of the scope of our moral obligations. Does our conscience stir when the consequences of our patterns of production and consumption, including tourism, are ‘externalised in such a way that they take effect only at a spatial distance and are not directly perceptible to us’ (Steinforth, 2021, p. 6)? Are we outraged by the cynical ‘living well at the expense of others’ (Lessenich, 2019)? Do we hear the ‘call’ of future people who do not yet exist? Do we recognise their right to an environment that allows them to live in dignity? Can we respond, indeed do we feel responsible, to ensure that the maximum limits of global

warming are respected, in particular by limiting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and that measures are taken to respect further planetary boundaries?

If we answer these questions in the affirmative, then our commitment to sustainability cannot be limited to weighing economic, social and environmental goals. It is about nothing less than the spatial and temporal delimitation of our sphere of responsibility, about global and intergenerational justice. When we speak of sustainable development, and in this context of sustainable tourism, it must be measured in a normative perspective by whether the fundamental rights of all people are respected and whether all people worldwide can live within the planetary boundaries and will continue to do so in the future.

### **Ecological Extension of Responsibility**

In current social–ecological discourses, the goal perspective of sustainability is criticised for not being ambitious enough, even in its justice-theoretical interpretation. Within the framework of the sustainability concept, the unreflected use or exploitation of nature can be problematised. However, this reflection is still based on anthropocentric models. Even in the case of sustainable use, it is assumed that ecosystems simply exist and function. Moreover, the value of nature is assessed solely in terms of human preferences. The non-human is only valuable insofar as it is important for human flourishing (cf. [Chakrabarty, 2021](#), pp. 63–64). Jens Kersten also asks, ‘What comes after sustainability?’ (2022, p. 48) In his eyes, the *relativisation* of anthropocentric views and the *relationalisation* of human existence must be taken seriously in order to overcome the ‘central challenges of the Anthropocene – species extinction, climate catastrophe, global pollution’ ([Chakrabarty, 2021](#)).

The resulting socio-ecological relationism does not start with abstract principles and norms but with ontological reflections that are ‘about nothing more and nothing less than a different way of being in the world’ ([Horn, 2018](#), p. 68).

One of the most important reference authors for a relational understanding of reality is Bruno Latour. His approach sees itself as a project to overcome the separation between the immaterial and the material and between culture and nature (cf. [Schneider, 2022](#)). This can be seen, among other things, in the fact that he calls the narrative of relations, which he contrasts with the narrative of modernising and emancipation, a ‘narrative of bonding and ecologizing’ ([Latour, 2010/2016](#), p. 64). In short, he says: ‘Between modernising and ecologizing, we have to choose’ ([Latour, 2012/2013](#), p. 8). By this, he means that the goal can no longer be emancipation from natural, material and social ties, as in modernising, but a deeper penetration of the interplay of countless things and living beings, human and non-human actors (cf. [Latour, 2012/2013](#), p. 10). Ecologising requires a completely new relationship between human beings and the world, a relationship in which human beings are no longer indifferent or hostile to the world but are aware of their embeddedness and ‘to be sensitive to the experiences’ ([Latour, 2012/2013](#), p. 477). As ‘terrestrials’, Latour continues, we need to trace the hybrid

network of reciprocal relationships that ‘enables the living to make the earth habitable’ (Latour, 2021, pp. 15–16).

In his encyclical *Laudato si’* (2015), Pope Francis also offers a variety of impulses for an understanding of nature that sees it not only as a resource but also as a relational context of life. Methodologically, the approach of an ‘integral ecology’ (LS 137–162; Vogt, 2021, pp. 251–257; DBK, 2021, pp. 75–80) is decisive here, according to which the fact that everything is interconnected (cf. LS 16, 42, 89, 91, 117, 138, 220, 240, 246) is at the same time understood as a normative dictum to respect the complex ecological interrelations and effects.

We take these [eco]systems into account not only to determine how best to use them, but also because they have an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness. Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself; the same is true of the harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space and functioning as a system. Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these larger systems for our own existence. [. . .] So, when we speak of ‘sustainable use’, consideration must always be given to each ecosystem’s regenerative ability in its different areas and aspects. (LS 140)

In Markus Vogt’s concept of sustainability, networking is not only a descriptive term but also a normative one. To distinguish between the two aspects, Vogt uses the term *retinity* for the ethical meaning: ‘Retinity differs’, he argues, ‘from the general concept of networking by being placed in an ethical context of justification. It is a specifically ethical concept and refers to the imperative to link the development of civilisation to the long-term preservation and functioning of the ecological systems that support it’ (Vogt, 2009, pp. 350–351).

The moment ecosystems and other living beings are no longer ascribed only an instrumental value, the figures of environmental ethical justification also change (cf. Krebs, 2017). For Corine Pelluchon, the ethical paradigm shift implies the need for ‘a new enlightenment’ (Pelluchon, 2021, p. 19). Modern ethics, ‘which led to human rights and the recognition of the equal dignity of all human beings, [must] continue in the affirmation of the intrinsic value of ecosystems and other forms of life’ (Pelluchon, 2021). As this becomes more and more socially resonant, the moral learning process becomes a question of rights. For the idea of who has rights has also expanded. For centuries, children had no rights nor did prisoners, foreigners, women, the mentally ill, African Americans or indigenous peoples. On the basis of an ecological extension of the sphere of responsibility, nature would then also have to be granted rights (cf. Adloff & Busse, 2021; Kersten, 2022).

However, this cannot be achieved simply by expanding the scope of postulated responsibility but requires a transformation of human self-understanding. Eva von Redecker speaks of a *Revolution for Life* (2020). This aims at a new configuration of living together, which is expressed in a caring attitude. It is not about ruling or dominating but about sharing and participating in life, not about winning but about the need to live for and with someone. Pelluchon develops an

*Ethic of Consideration* (2019) in which she ascribes a crucial role for the success of a social–ecological transformation to the practice of an attitude of humility and attentive belonging to the shared world.

## Conclusion

The previous considerations have attempted to make plausible the fact that the concept of sustainability is developing from a pragmatic concept of the wise use of natural resources to a normatively demanding concept in which the horizon of responsibility is extended globally, intergenerationally and ecologically. Responsibility for those who are distant in time and space as well as for nature becomes a matter of conscience. As mentioned above, this can be seen as a new stage in the development of morality (cf. Vogt, 2021, p. 145). The research of Michael Tomasello shows that this assumption is not just a positing but a challenge that is repeated in the history of evolution. According to his analysis, the decisive evolutionary advantage of *Homo sapiens*, which enabled its worldwide spread around 15,000 years ago, was not a specific biological ability but the development of a morality aimed at cooperation in large groups (cf. Tomasello, 2016, pp. 11–21, 207–239). Its key feature is the transition from a second-personal morality based on tit-for-tat strategies towards individually known people to a general morality of abstract rules. In view of the multiple, globally interconnected crises of the present, humanity is currently facing the challenge of a qualitatively increased complexity of cooperation problems. The future of *Homo sapiens* depends on whether a new stage in the development of morality can be reached. ‘Ethics must be extended globally, inter-generationally and ecologically’ (Vogt, 2021, p. 145). However, this cannot be achieved simply by starting from a previous theoretical knowledge or from well-founded general principles in order to apply them in practice in a second step. The ‘nasty gap’ between knowledge and action is the sore point of normative approaches. The moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt speaks of a ‘rationalist fallacy’ (2012, pp. 88–89).

In the case of the climate problem, several factors combine to inhibit the motivation to behave in accordance with moral norms: ‘the pronounced future orientation of climate responsibility, the social distance to those primarily affected, and the threatening nature of the changes demanded of habitual lifestyles’ (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 173). The obstacles to intergenerational, global and ecological responsibility cannot be overcome by more moral appeals. Rather, they must be placed on a ‘more reliable emotional basis’ (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 182). Birnbacher suggests three ways in which this might be possible. The first, in his view, is the chain of love, the intergenerational chain of care for the next generation (cf. Birnbacher, 2022, p. 183). The assumption that the care of parents for their children can be a model for future responsibility also plays a role in Pelluchon’s ethics of consideration. Drawing on Hannah Arendt’s philosophy of natality, she speaks of the newborn as the ‘face of consideration’ (2019, p. 161,



290). The newborn reminds us that we are ‘vulnerable and dependent beings’ (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 291) inserted into a ‘common world’ (Birnbacher, 2022).

It awakens our desire to do all we can to pass on a habitable planet [...]. The fragility of a newborn baby points to the fragility of every human being and the need to [...] work for an ecologically sustainable society that is just for all human and non-human beings.

(Birnbacher, 2022, pp. 291–292)

A second form that Birnbacher brings into play for an emotional anchoring of intergenerational and global climate responsibility is ‘the human need for overarching goals that reach beyond one’s own person, one’s own living environment and one’s own life’ (Birnbacher, 2022, pp. 184–185). This motive could also be called the motive of self-transcendence or the creation of meaning.

Providing for the global future takes these motives into account in a special way, because the individual is affirmed in his or her self-worth and can empathise with an overarching context of meaning. He sees himself as a link in a generational chain, held together by an intergenerational sense of community that includes gratitude in the past as well as recognition of precautionary obligations in the future. This motive can be particularly strong when it is supported by community ties with like-minded people.

(Birnbacher, 2022, p. 185)

In this context, Birnbacher points out that the ‘commitment to a future that is in principle transcendent of experience [...] is similar to the religious commitment to a transcendent God’ (Birnbacher, 2022). Pelluchon develops a similar idea. She transforms the ‘experience of the incommensurable’ (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 109) into the experience of being situated in a ‘common world’ that consists of ‘the totality of generations and the living’ (Pelluchon, 2019) and implies an ‘umbilical connection of the living’ (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 110). This can mean that the subject ‘opens itself to a truth that transcends itself’ (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 109). Through a ‘deepening of the self’ (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 89), ‘transcendence in immanence’ (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 109), which Pelluchon programmatically calls ‘transcendence’ [*sic*] (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 113), leads ‘to an awareness of the bond between generations and all living beings’ (Pelluchon, 2019, p. 89):

It is the experience of our shared destiny with other living beings, human and non-human, and it is inseparable from the desire to care for them and to leave a habitable world for future generations.

(Pelluchon, 2019, pp. 113–114)

A third form, which in Birnbacher's eyes can contribute to a sustainable responsibility for the future, is the 'appreciation of cultural values' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 184). This too can be understood as self-transcendence (cf. Joas, 1997). When we come to understand and appreciate values in a deep and comprehensive way, we expand our self-concept. We allow ourselves to be defined by something that transcends our mere subjective desires and wills. We are motivated to value and promote values such as compassion, fairness, justice and solidarity – and to see commitment to them as binding. At the same time, facilities, institutions and places where value-bound experiences of self-transcendence are made and given a specific form of articulation can be considered valuable – because otherwise, certain forms of relating to the world and self-relativisation would be lost (cf. Seel, 2008/2014).

Those who love Bach's music usually also have an interest in ensuring that this music is not lost and that it is preserved and passed on to future generations. [. . .]: 'To love is, amongst other things, to care about the future of what we love'.  
(Birnbacher, 2022, p. 184)<sup>2</sup>

The conservative aspect of appreciation also comes into play when we work to preserve our homeland for our children and our children's children. If it is destroyed, opportunities for experience are irretrievably lost. Preventing this and giving the home a future can be a strong motive for ecological and intergenerational responsibility (cf. Krebs, 2011, 2013).

The three forms of bridging the gap between normative principles and action are aimed at the heart of the question of conscience. As described in the first chapter, two aspects can be distinguished: On the one hand, it is the ability to judge goals and courses of action as right or wrong or good or bad from a normative point of view. On the other hand, conscience is expressed as the experience of an inner commitment to do or not to do something. The second aspect is the result of an educational process, which can also take the form of a process of self-transformation. In this perspective, conscience takes the form of a self-commitment.

If the question of conscience is transferred to spatial units and tourism via the guiding principle of 'Destination Conscience', the aspects of global, intergenerational and ecological responsibility mentioned in this chapter can be used for reflexive awareness-raising processes. In particular, the aspect of inner commitment or self-commitment needs to be institutionally anchored. Destinations can also impose obligations that prevent them from succumbing to opportunistic temptations. Contracts and frameworks can fulfil this function. Advisory bodies (councils, commissions and expert panels) are also important in this context. These can be used to 'act as a collective *ethical conscience for the future* that is not

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<sup>2</sup>The quotation in the citation is from (Passmore, 1980, p. 88).

subject to the pressures of lobbying, party politics and election campaigns in the same way as politicians' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 188).

Here the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC) can be seen as a role model (cf. Birnbacher, 2022, p. 189). It is not without reason that the IPCC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. Just as climate researchers describe reality and develop models and measurements for the complex interrelationships between impacts, effects, interactions and repercussions that allow predictions about the exact point in time at which we will cross thresholds, they also influence a response (cf. Latour, 2015/2017, pp. 41–74). By presenting facts, they create a space of global responsibility, thus relativising the 'the old idea that description entails no prescription' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 48). Their data 'concern us so directly that their mere expression sounds like an alarm' (Birnbacher, 2022, p. 47).

Another inspiring example is the Citizens' Climate Council (cf. Schroeder, 2022). This is a group of 160 very different people, representative of the population, who in the first half of 2021 attempted to develop possible measures for dealing with the climate crisis in 12 rounds of scientifically based discussions. If such a tool were to be scaled up for different spatial units, much could be gained in terms of new ideas for solutions.

However, experience shows that the path from science-based warnings of future risks to corresponding forward-looking policies is a long and arduous one (cf. Birnbacher, 2022, pp. 189–190). This 'nasty divide' is also simply due to the inability to face new challenges and the reluctance to accept truths that are uncomfortable for oneself and others. In this sense, the primary question of conscience is how the 'age of denial' (Sloterdijk, 2023, p. 72) can be replaced by an 'age of truth' (cf. Schneider, 2023).

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## Chapter 9

# A New Disciplinary Perspective on Values-Based Placemaking: Humanistic Destinations

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### Abstract

The predominant neoliberal structure of capitalism and tourism as the fuel of capitalism exposes growing problems of injustice, unfairness and inequality. Places and communities around the world are currently expressing the need for radical changes in placemaking to be able to think, plan and act differently. This theoretical contribution adopts a humanistic management (HM) perspective of placemaking to promote places where people enjoy living, working, interacting and having meaningful experiences. Tourist destinations are relevant places to discuss the application of HM principles in practice and promote humanistic destinations and the humanisation of placemaking. This chapter concludes by arguing for an interface with eco-centric and posthumanist transformative approaches to promote holistic value-based placemaking and regeneration of places.

*Keywords:* Values-based placemaking; equality-concerned transformative approaches; humanistic management; humanistic destinations; regenerative development

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Destination Conscience, 95–109



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doi:[10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241010](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241010)

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has reignited the debate on potential scenarios for our future (Brouder, 2020; Gössling et al., 2021; Russo et al., 2020), as this recent and unprecedented crisis has shaken our generation (Harari, 2020) as human beings, citizens, workers, consumers and travellers. The external and internal shocks that have shaken our economies and societies have exposed the paradoxes, tensions and fragilities of the dominant ideological paradigm of neoliberalism, which focuses on profit rather than people and the planet (Gamble, 2019). These circumstances exacerbate injustice, unfairness and inequality in these uneven systems (Healey & Barish, 2019).

The 'new normal' that has emerged from the pandemic has brought expectations of changes in societal norms, attitudes and behaviour (Varna & Oswell, 2021). Communities worldwide are expressing the need to harness a new sense of togetherness to mitigate isolation and loneliness, strengthen community bonds and utilise the transformative power of mutual aid and collective action. New motivations are emerging to imagine, design and manage places, making them more accessible, friendly and inclusive. People expect to love and feel comfortable living in places where they are free to think and experience differently and meaningfully (Richards & Duif, 2018). Tourism is directly involved in this placemaking debate (Cheer, 2020). While driving the development of mainstream destinations (Dodds & Butler, 2019) and complementing the livelihoods and well-being of communities in rural and remote locations (Hockings et al., 2020), the tourism economy reveals old and new paradoxes, vulnerabilities and inherent crises (Fletcher, 2011).

Sustainability and sustainable development have been recognised as the main paradigm to address place development, transform placemaking and enable communities to thrive, regardless of the sector or industry group driving local development (Ghavampour & Vale, 2019). Adopting an outward-to-inward approach (from the macro to the meso and micro levels, including businesses and individuals) and calling on a triple bottom line approach, holistic planning and stakeholder engagement (Byrd, 2007), sustainability capitalises on the identity, resources, inspiration and potential of the local community to foster prosperity, promote people's well-being and protect the environment (Lang & Marsden, 2018). Despite efforts to advance sustainability, there is still little evidence that our communities are truly abandoning the growth trajectory and embracing balanced, creative and democratic placemaking concerned with people and the planet (Shevchenko et al., 2016).

Alternative approaches are gaining credit for addressing the current need for change in placemaking, emphasising issues of equality and ecology (Hopwood et al., 2005; Pirson & Lawrence, 2010). Humanistic management (HM) is a new area of research, practice, policy, teaching and training that fits well with equality-oriented transformative approaches to changing the current socio-economic paradigm (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010; Pirson et al., 2018). Its difference from other approaches lies in its inward-to-outward approach to economic and social change. At its core is the recognition, protection and flourishing



of the unconditional dignity of every human being, which becomes a central organisational goal (Spitzeck, 2011) that affects both the internal and external contexts of business management. By putting human beings at the centre and leveraging dignity, ethics and legitimacy, HM fosters the humanisation of business towards humanism in economies and societies (Melé, 2016). This humanism- and values-based perspective is still largely unexplored and seems particularly relevant for addressing the challenges of placemaking from both a theoretical and managerial perspective.

This theoretical contribution addresses values-based changes in placemaking and regeneration, adopting a HM perspective to transform unequal places and create living places where people can live, work, interact and have meaningful experiences. The key research question is how HM can help transform places to make them more liveable and stimulate their communities to flourish. Tourist destinations are relevant places to discuss the application of humanistic tourism and the difference and advantage of HM in promoting humanistic destinations (Della Lucia, Giudici et al., 2021). The notion of *humanistic tourism* has recently been coined by studying the interdependent relationship between HM and tourism (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021a), HM and sustainable tourism (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021b) and the improvement of higher education in tourism management through HM (Della Lucia, Dimanche et al., 2021). However, the contribution of HM in destination management is still absent yet significant and urgent from a placemaking perspective (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021a).

This chapter is developed as follows. The HM: Equality-Concerned Approaches for Changes in Placemaking section frames HM (Pirson, 2017) within transformative approaches that are concerned with equality and question the fundamental characteristics of today's society and how humans relate to the environment (Hopwood et al., 2005). The basic principles of HM are illustrated based on a qualitative content analysis of a sample of eligible articles identified through a systematic literature review conducted using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach (Moher et al., 2009). Finally, the principles of HM are discussed from the perspective of places having a tourist specialisation to foster the development and flourishing of humanistic destinations and the humanisation of placemaking. This chapter concludes by arguing for an interface between HM and other transformative approaches, such as regenerative tourism (Araneda, 2017) and posthumanism (Guia, 2021), to overcome anthropocentrism and promote holistic value-based placemaking and regeneration.

## **HM: Equality-Concerned Approaches for Changes in Placemaking**

The alternative approaches that are gaining credit for addressing the current need for change have stemmed from making sense of many different (mis)interpretations of (sustainable) development, distinguishing approaches that emphasise concerns for *equality* or *ecology* and mapping the different reformist and transformative viewpoints that address them (Hopwood et al., 2005; O'Riordan, 1989).

The logic of these alternative approaches extends to placemaking without losing its meaning and value (Gibbons, 2020). Equality-conscious strategies prioritise (incremental or radical) changes to increase the accessibility, diversity and inclusion of places and address systemic inequalities to take steps to eliminate discrimination and prejudice (Varna & Oswell, 2021). They aim to create a more equitable and just placemaking, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and has an equal opportunity to thrive and develop their capacities (Bellato et al., 2022). Ecological or eco-centric approaches are rooted in an ecological worldview and advocate changes (incremental or radical) to address environmental issues in placemaking, including carbon emissions, waste, pollution, biodiversity and natural resource management (Hopwood et al., 2005; O’Riordan, 1989; Reed, 2007). Their goal is to create more resilient placemaking, where the needs of society do not compromise the health and well-being of natural ecosystems.

HM has recently emerged from cross-sectional studies, including conscious and cooperative capitalism, social business, social entrepreneurship, business ethics and sustainability (Pirson, 2019). Due to this multidisciplinary and the scope of change proposed, HM falls within transformational approaches that invoke social equality and value human well-being (Hopwood et al., 2005). It contrasts with the utilitarian and economic characteristics of ‘non-humanistic’ companies (Spitzeck, 2011) and ‘mechanistic management’ that have a purely economic mindset and consider human beings only as a factor of production (Melé, 2016). On the contrary, it provides humanistic and value-based management methods that focus on the value of human life, the protection of human dignity and the promotion of well-being (Melé, 2016). Although HM began with a significant emphasis on the dignity of identity (i.e. at the individual level), over the decades, it has been extended to include multiple spheres of action and impact (Pirson, 2020; Winchenbach et al., 2019). Human dignity extends to the organisational context, humanising businesses and bringing humanism into economies and societies (Kimakowitz et al., 2011; Melé, 2016; Spitzeck, 2009). The humanisation of business (Pirson & Turnbull, 2011) promotes the unconditional dignity of every human being (Spitzeck, 2011) through the development of human virtues and capabilities, in all their forms, to their fullest extent (Melé, 2003). In turn, humanistic leadership legitimises a radical change in the interaction between (human) beings, companies, society and the economy, creating a culture of trust, mutual respect and inclusion in which people feel valued and motivated to contribute to the development of a sense of purpose and ethical behaviour within and outside the organisation. In this way, HM seeks to change the current socio-economic paradigm and the way human beings relate to each other and the environment and other beings.

## **HM Principles**

A systematic literature review conducted using the PRISMA approach (Moher et al., 2009) allowed us to shed light on the principles of HM. The search for ‘humanistic AND management’ in the Scopus and Web of Science databases

generated 1,686 articles. The sample was reduced to 720 articles by limiting the subject areas to social sciences, economics, business and decision sciences. Articles unrelated to the research questions were excluded by a double screening of titles, abstracts and keywords. The final sample comprised 72 eligible studies, supplemented by 15 articles identified through snowball sampling. Most of the articles are theoretical contributions based on HM in an organisational context. However, they emphasise the need to interconnect the company or organisation with the place and environment in which it operates and integrate the theory and practice of HM (Dillon, 2021; Melé, 2016; Spitzbeck, 2009).

Manual qualitative content analysis of the eligible sample, including content coding and code reduction, provided details on the pillars of HM – *human dignity, ethics and legitimacy* (Fig. 9.1). *Dignity* is at the core of the humanistic approach and recalls the inherent universality and equality between people (Pirson et al., 2018). Respect for human beings and the inherent virtues, values and rights of human beings is unconditional: dignity cannot be measured, priced, lost or diminished (Melé, 2016) and is remarkable in all cultures across historical eras (Dierksmeier, 2011). The idea of treating people as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end is reflected in inter-human relations, the workplace, the economy and society. People should be valued for their virtues, unique skills and contributions, and their work should be fulfilling and meaningful.

According to Dierksmeier (2011), the result is the self-fulfilment of all people. The synergistic link between dignity, enterprise and society (Dillon, 2021) finds

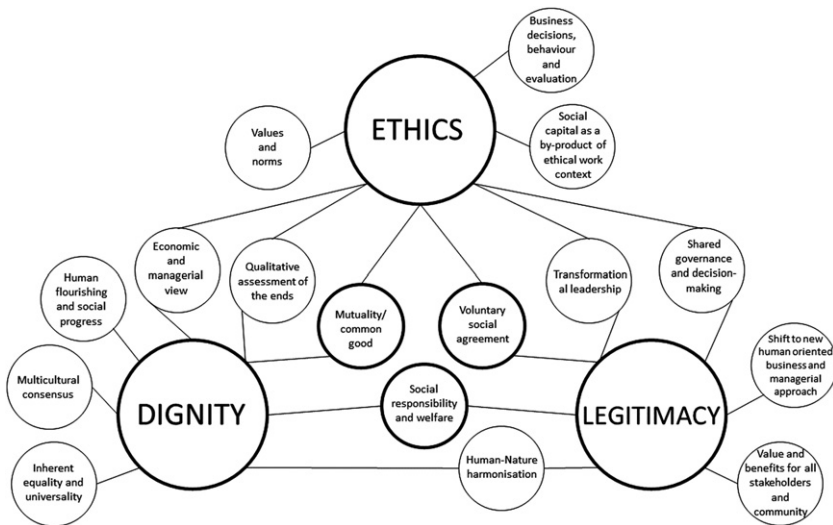


Fig. 9.1. Humanistic Management Pillars and Their Characteristics.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

an ‘enlightened management and economism’ that strives to promote and develop dignity and well-being through managerial practices (Pirson, 2017). Protecting human dignity and promoting well-being creates the conditions for justice, equality, humanised economy, community activities and equitable relationships through which the individual flourishes and society progresses (Dierksmeier, 2011; Melé, 2009; Pirson, 2017). When managers’ decisions align with humanistic reasoning, well-being, prosperity, welfare and social responsibility become the primary metrics for assessing value generation (Dillon, 2021; Donaldson & Walsh, 2015). Non-financial evaluation reinforces HM, which includes generating unity in social life, acting with justice and pursuing the common good (Melé, 2016).

The *ethical dimension* of HM is based on mutual respect, reciprocity and the common good. The principles, values and norms that enable people to distinguish and judge what is good or questionable provide individuals with a basis for making fair decisions and judgements and taking actions within and outside the business context (Melé et al., 2011). The alignment between personal and institutional ethics is reflected in the duty of care, the recognition of taking responsibility for decisions and actions inspired by justice and equality and the search for harmonisation between moral and financial logic (Spitzeck, 2011). In humanistic organisations, decision-making actively includes a range of stakeholders, increasing their motivation and improving organisational outcomes (Kimakowitz et al., 2011; Pirson & Turnbull, 2011). The ethical work environment created in humanistic organisations generates a virtuous circle of positive dynamics, including the building or rebuilding of social capital. The latter is a by-product of this context resulting from organisational design and managerial activities incorporating ethics into the general manager’s dimension (Melé, 2009).

*Normative legitimacy* based on values, ethics and norms underpins shared governance models, voluntary leadership and responsible business activities, which are fundamental to individual, organisational and systemic responsibility. Shared governance is a participative, network-oriented structure that enables people to participate actively in decision-making processes (Pirson & Turnbull, 2011). This structure reduces levels of authority in organisations, focuses on human capabilities (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010) and incentivises shared efforts for common purposes (Dillon, 2021). Transformational leaders are the change agents that followers voluntarily recognise for the leadership of these governance structures. They can promote critical and responsible thinking and practice and create a climate of trust, enabling long-term relationships, understanding different needs and generating social and financial value (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010). The humanist leader thus enables stakeholders to espouse the organisation’s purpose, considering the needs of the community of which they are a part (Melé, 2016). The legitimacy of humanism is thus reflected in the creation of shared value for all stakeholders, from employees, shareholders and customers to the community, the environment and the public (Dillon, 2021; Kimakowitz et al., 2011; Spitzeck, 2011). Creating shared value means recognising the interconnectedness of all beings and harmonising human activity with the natural environment (Melé, 2016).

Dignity, ethics and legitimacy link humanistic values to corporate responsibility for human prosperity and sustainable development. Business and economic activities that incorporate the principles of HM enable places and their communities to meet their needs and prosper, thereby increasing the well-being of society. Tourism is a crucial sector in this regard (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006).

## Humanistic Destinations: The HM Difference and Advantage

Destinations are places with a predominant tourism specialisation that are managed and marketed by a destination management organisation (DMO) whose main purpose is to engage an open and flexible system of multiple interdependent stakeholders (Gálvez-Rodríguez et al., 2020) to promote collective value creation through collaboration, sharing and trust in the destination's physical and digital (business and tourism) ecosystems (Cabiddu et al., 2013). Destination management and marketing domains include geographical and administrative areas, social and cultural capital and local communities and their resources, products and services (UNWTO, 2007). The image and perception of the destination define its tourism market and competitiveness. Experience design and meaningful and engaging experiences are at the core of the destination's value proposition.

The multifaceted dimensions of destinations pose sustainable placemaking challenges that must be addressed to enhance destination vitality and promote community well-being, sustainable experience design and meaningful visitor experiences. The processes of shared value creation revolving around the notion of humanistic tourism – understood as a value-based business and development model aimed at exposing and transforming inhomogeneous systems and creating economic, human, social and environmental value (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021a) – can be combined with the HM principles outlined above to activate a humanistic transformation of destinations and the humanisation of placemaking.

The notion of *humanistic destination (placemaking)* is derived from the discussion of each group of humanistic tourism interactions and value creation (Della Lucia, Dimanche et al., 2021) – *human-to-human, human-to-nature, human-to-technology and human-to-economy* – through the lens of the dimensions of HM – *dignity, ethics and legitimacy*. This discussion emphasises the humanistic difference and advantage (Della Lucia, Giudici et al., 2021) that is based on human beings and their multifaceted interactions: questioning established perspectives in tourism (and destination) management inherited mainly from neoliberal approaches (Dodds, & Butler 2019; Fletcher, 2011) and inter-attending the importance of human dignity and values that have so far received little attention in tourism management but respond to urgent social needs.

The *human-to-human* interaction is at the core of the value propositions of destinations and revolves around the encounter between *local communities and travellers* (Della Lucia, Dimanche et al., 2021). The humanistic dimension of this encounter is related to the return of tourism as a *social force* (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006, 2020) and an instrument of *conviviality* (Illich, 1973). By connecting local communities willing to welcome travellers and travellers responding to

community needs by ‘meeting locals and living like a local’ (Richards, 2014), destinations foster capacity-building, build greater well-being and fulfil broader social promises (e.g. justice, equality, equity and autonomy) embedded in destination brands. The mutual recognition of each other’s dignity and the mutual respect and ethics that underpin the encounter between local communities and visitors activate the roles of tourism as a soft transformative service and of destinations as transformative places (Galeone & Sebastiani, 2021). Transformative services and destinations allow local community, creativity and culture to flourish and recognise the right of every human being to actively participate in creating and living meaningful experiences, travelling fairly and honestly (Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017). The foundational values of inclusion, respect, trust, fairness, openness and caring that two-way relationships emphasise also reflect an individual and societal legitimacy, understood as a personal and mutual assumption of responsibility for the promotion of conviviality: an ethical, mutually beneficial encounter based on collective efforts for common and elevated purposes. In this way, internal and external stakeholders endorse the value system built and shared in the destination through human encounters and interactions. This value system provides the basis for co-creating a desirable value proposition and meaningful experiences. It also incorporates changes in how people think, act and live influencing social innovation in destination services (Kabadayi et al., 2019). Ultimately, a humanistic destination is a place designed, managed and promoted to foster diversity, inclusion and respect. Social equality in the destination’s human–human interaction grounds a sense of belonging, citizenship and understanding among social groups, including travellers as temporary residents. Furthermore, it enables destinations to respond to the challenges of the tourism industry by leveraging people’s dignity and rights.

The *human-to-nature* dimension is another destination value proposition. It is threatened by global challenges (including climate change, pollution, natural resource depletion, biodiversity loss and waste), exploitative development patterns and poor regulation that increase the pressure of human activity on the natural environment. This dimension is reminiscent of the notions of *convivial conservation* (Fletcher & Büscher, 2020) and *environmental justice* (Lee & Jamal, 2008). These notions call for humans, non-humans and nature to live side by side in meaningful coexistence, supporting the livelihoods of people living in close contact with wildlife and nature, promoting equitable practices in the use, protection and conservation of the environment and ensuring a fair distribution of environmental benefits and costs. Environmental justice is as relevant as social equality for destination and placemaking, as they are interdependent. Environmental degradation and risks are likely to occur in tourist locations with little accountability for behaviour, interactions and resources. In turn, environmental (in)justice extends to experience design, human encounters and visitor experience, as nature coexists with humans and the built environment. It is a resource and a destination attraction, and a destination value. Therefore, nature is a (living) being with dignity that must be recognised and protected, acknowledging its value and rights, and promoting fair practices in dealing with it. In destination management, marketing and placemaking, the discourse on the conservation and

sustainable transformation of the environment is relevant, multifaceted and multi-layered in terms of the legitimacy to act and the tools used. It involves conservation regulations (international, national and local) and sustainable development plans (e.g. for natural World Heritage Sites and protected areas), environmental policy, destination spatial differentiation strategies (Weaver, 2012), corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies, environmental certifications and labels. DMOs largely influence their practical implementations as orchestrators of destination management and marketing plans in a joint effort with policymakers, the local community and travellers visiting the destination. In summary, a humanistic destination is a place that recognises the intrinsic value of nature and promotes convivial conservation and environmental justice in human–nature interactions by adopting strategies and tools to address an ecological worldview (Reed, 2007) and a thriving living system (Mang & Reed, 2012). When humans and nature coexist without anthropocentric domination of the former over the latter, the former strives to create positive benefits and outcomes for the natural environment.

The *human-to-technology* interaction captures the growing potential of information and communication technology and its use in destination management and marketing. This interaction is embedded in *digital ecosystems* of destinations (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2019) and *e-democracy* (Sigala & Marinidis, 2012). The digital revolution makes it possible to overcome space, distance, time and other constraints by creating virtual places that comprise networks of destination stakeholders. Digital ecosystems register the progressive shift of power and control from DMOs to destination stakeholders, legitimising them to take responsibility in destination decision-making, helping to generate content and visitor experiences and building destination strategies, brand reputation and perception (Trunfio & Della Lucia, 2019). Therefore, technologies can enable the transition to e-democratic destination management and marketing, in which tourists and stakeholders can access and actively participate in the co-creation of destination value (Munar, 2012). The by-mechanism is a shared e-governance model that synthesises the legitimacy of dispersed stakeholders at the institutional, destination and community levels (Ruhanen et al., 2010). However, the acceptance and use of technology (Davis, 1989) becomes crucial for stakeholder access and inclusion in e-environments.

The creation of common goods (in addition to technology usability and interoperability and destination competitiveness) and the nature of human–technology and human–human interactions in virtual spaces are perceived benefits relevant to accessing and participating in the physical–virtual destination continuum (Trunfio et al., 2022). When they reflect the core values and norms (dignity, respect, fairness, ethics) of human interaction in the physical domain, human–technology interaction generates collective value and reduces its co-destruction through equitable communication, collaboration, trust and knowledge sharing among community members and travellers through interactive communication (Kabadayi et al., 2019). The latter includes tools to inform, monitor and manage visitor flows in ways that do not harm the dignity of individuals and the environment (particularly in protected areas and vulnerable

natural habitats) or jeopardise interpersonal relationships among community members while they live meaningful experiences. Ultimately, a humanistic destination is a place that designs and manages human–technology interaction to serve people and the environment. Technologies are not an end in themselves, but their integration into destination management, marketing and visitor experiences aims to increase stakeholder legitimacy and e-democracy and improve the accessibility and inclusion of destination stakeholders in experience design.

Lastly, *human-to-economy* interaction reflects the evolving role of the tourism industry in the (sustainable) development and innovation of destinations. This interaction is at the centre of the debate on *restarting the tourism economy on a new basis* (Brouder, 2020; Gössling et al., 2021; Russo et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the call to address the tourism growth model's paradoxes, vulnerabilities and inherent crises. Destinations that adopt this model are criticised for the growth and profit rationale of tourism, their exploitation of people and the environment (Gössling & Hall, 2006), their unfair and exploitative labour practices and their environmental harms and risks (Bianchi & de Man, 2021). Inequality, injustice, prejudice, discrimination, precariousness and imbalances in wages and between work and family life are among the problems that urgently require a solution (Winchenbach et al., 2019). Tourism destinations and businesses are redesigning their development and business models to address sustainable development goals (UNWTO, 2020) and CSR (Farmaki, 2019).

The collective impact effort of destination stakeholders – from place governments and DMOs to businesses, organisations and community members – aims to mobilise the resources and capacities of many stakeholders to share the costs of transformation and the new economic opportunities resulting from social and environmental progress (Kramer & Pfitzer, 2016). However, resistance factors block and hinder business transformation (Oevermann & Mieg, 2021), particularly the dependence on previous development models, low community engagement and misperceptions (e.g. towards adaptive reuse, service orientation, waste management, etc.). Destinations' efforts are varied, but 'all stand out as having done something special to be cleaner, greener, and kinder' (Kinsman, 2021): recycling to invest in renewable energy, investing in ethical finance to improve environmentally and socially friendly activities, regenerating places to give them new life and improve community livelihoods, from post-industrial sites to local former fishing communities. Economic Nutrition Certification Marks have been created to show how destination revenues are reinvested in the local economy, creating a sense of ownership in conservation, and increasing community pride extended to non-profit making offers run by volunteers to produce nutritious fruits, vegetables and herbs. In addition, business leaders are paving the way for fair business practices that respect all legal frameworks, value the dignity and skills of every worker, support decent work and equal opportunity and develop relationships with travellers and other businesses on an ethical basis. Therefore, a humanistic destination is a place that promotes significant changes in the planning and management of the tourism economy to seek human-economic interactions based on values, echoing a *hybrid economy* (Burnes & Choi, 2021). Integrating



humanistic values (dignity, respect, equity, ethics) into the tourism economy ensures social equality, environmental justice and e-democracy. They value cooperation and co-evolution, coopetition over competition, sharing and circular economy over profit, quality over quantity and authenticity over standardisation. DMOs, as legitimate destination orchestrators, play a central role in inspiring and guiding this shift in mindsets, strategies and collective actions.

## **Open Conclusion**

HM's founding principles and values can help design, manage and transform places to become more accessible, inclusive, transformative and environmentally friendly, stimulating host and guest communities to thrive (Pirson, 2017). While discussing the application of HM in places with a tourism monoculture, the emerging notion of humanistic destination incorporates and interconnects the principles that placemaking must invoke by undertaking humanistic transformation. Humanistic placemaking places humans at the centre and promotes transformation along pathways of change that redefine how humanity perceives our relationships with the economy, each other, nature and other beings and technology (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021b). It makes use of a hybrid economy to foster a combination of market and nonmarket exchange mechanisms (Burnes & Choi, 2021), conviviality and social equality to bring people together for common and high purposes (Illich, 1973), environmental justice to ensure equitable distribution of environmental benefits and costs (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2022) and e-democracy to promote widespread participation and equalisation of power (Sigala & Marinidis, 2012).

The application of HM to value-based placemaking involves a holistic transformation that echoes other holistic approaches that can complement and overcome its inherent anthropocentrism to address the current need for change. In recent decades, regenerative tourism and posthumanism have ignited a lively debate in tourism research to move beyond a neoliberal, capitalist approach to people and the planet. Regenerative tourism (Araneda, 2017) is an eco-centric transformative approach that works on systemic health by aligning human activity with natural limits (Mang & Reed, 2012). It views a place as an ecosystem that interconnects actors, processes and activities (Dredge, 2022) rather than as a collection of individual isolated units (Meadows, 2009). The net-positive result of regenerative development combines the renewal of community livelihoods and well-being with the restoration of ecosystem health (Bellato et al., 2022). Post-humanism (Guia, 2021) goes beyond humans and non-humans to embrace the vulnerable and disempowered, whomever and whatever they may be. It proposes an ethical regime and political responsibility to address the commodification and depoliticisation of tourism and promote regional transformation. Its underlying affirmative ethics recognises that 'the self exists in intricate relationships with the other' and is individual, relational and political (Guia, 2021, pp. 510 and 516). In conclusion, promoting holistic value-based regeneration in tourism and destination management and placemaking can benefit from the interface between HM

and these transformative approaches to generate mutually beneficial encounters between humans and non-humans.

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## Chapter 10

# **Integral Ecology as a Holistic Worldview and New Paradigm Towards Destination Conscience. Fostering a More Respectful Interaction of Human and Non-Human Creatures**

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### **Abstract**

In this world of complexity, disruption, multi-layered crises and insecurity, people seek orientation, stability and meaning. This desire exists in everyday life, in working environments and even more in vacation time. Therefore, the way we see the world and how we interact with each other and with nature should also be reflected by tourist destinations. ‘Destination Conscience’ seems to be a promising conception that offers the desired contemporary design of destination realities and travel experiences. Accordingly, destinations and their products should be characterised by authenticity, meaning, sensitivity and humaneness on all levels. In this chapter, the concept of ‘integral ecology’ as a holistic worldview and new paradigm is presented. Integral ecology can be a source of perception and wisdom that enriches the ‘conscience’ of a destination and all its actors. Hence, this chapter addresses the question of how integral ecology can contribute to Destination Conscience. The essay uses the methods of literature review, application, transfer and case study.

Firstly, the concept of integral ecology will be presented. In the second part, this worldview will be applied to destinations. The enrichment of

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Destination Conscience, 111–126



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doi:[10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241011](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241011)

Destination Conscience by the principles of integral ecology can manifest in the destination's self-image and in the interaction in business relations and business actions. It can find expression in the operational management, organisation and development of a destination and in the design of the touristic services and products. In the third part, the case study of a Catholic monastery in the Altmühltal will be presented for further illustration.

*Keywords:* Sustainability; integral ecology; transformation; religions; spirituality; worldviews

## **Introduction**

In a time of multi-layered crises, insecurity and complexity, the attitudes of sensitivity and humanness are gaining in importance. This goes for all human interactions, but especially for tourist destinations as networks of actors, attractions and experiences, as they provide the preconditions for vacations – the ‘most important days of the year’ for many people. In this context, vacations should not only give people recovery, deceleration, respectful treatment and increased appreciation: given that vacations can be exempt from everyday constraints, they should also offer the setting to satisfy people's search for meaning and purpose. To achieve this, destinations should give their visitors the possibility to truly experience the area they visit with authentic and in-depth touristic offers, and, especially, the opportunity to reflect on themselves, who they are and what their role in the world could be. From this can emerge that they feel resonance, that they feel (re-)connected to the world and to their fellow human beings, and that they recognise what is essential in life and what their role in the world is.

To take the need of sensitivity and humanness and the outlined requirements demanded from a destination into account, a strong and well-calibrated moral and ethical compass becomes more relevant – firstly for the touristic providers and then also for visitors – for a conscious destination experience. This compass can be comprehended as ‘Destination Conscience’: an inner voice for moral deliberations, an orientation skill and a basis for moral judgements that results in corresponding decisions and actions.

‘Integral ecology’ as a holistic worldview and new paradigm can be helpful for further conceptualisation of Destination Conscience. Furthermore, it can enrich the process of realisation of conscious destinations. The concept of integral ecology can augment and strengthen a destination's moral-ethical compass as it offers concrete moral standards and implications for treating others and nature – in vacation time and in everyday life. Integral ecology can support the positive formation of an inner compass and can give more substance to it by bringing in strong moral and ethical reference standards and by enforcing certain values and virtues for interaction. The integration of principles of integral ecology in destination's conscience can have various forms and expressions.

As the basis of the argument, the concept of integral ecology will be described more thoroughly in the first section to lay the foundation for its application to



destinations in the second section and to answer the guiding question: how can integral ecology concretely contribute to destination's conscience?

## **Integral Ecology – A Holistic Worldview and New Paradigm**

Integral ecology is the core of the encyclical letter 'Laudato si' – On care for our common home' of Pope Francis of 2015.<sup>1</sup> Facing the global environmental crisis (LS 3)<sup>2</sup>, Francis addresses Laudato si' to 'every person living on this planet' (LS 3). It is a text of religious origin. But Pope Francis not only presents religious-theological derivations for his explanations but always complements them with scientific, 'secular' argumentations – Bals calls this 'double coding' (Bals, 2016a, p. 46). The encyclical gained worldwide attention. It was highly received by believers and non-believers, scientists, politicians and civil society all around the world.

Integral ecology can be denominated as an environmental and social-ethical conception. It describes the objective of an environmentally and socially just way of life and of a corresponding economic and political model. It defines an attitude towards the entire created reality, which respects this reality for its own sake, which appreciates it with attention and which treats it with care through a frugal lifestyle (Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, p. 27).

The central element and basis of Pope Francis' integral ecology is that in the world '*everything is interconnected*'<sup>3</sup> (LS 138, see also LS 16). Therefore, a 'more integral and integrating vision' (LS 141) is needed:

Since everything is closely interrelated, and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an integral ecology, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions (LS 137).

In the view of this 'systems view of life',<sup>4</sup> humans should be aware of the significance of every action and decision they take and of their responsibility. As one explanation of the interconnection of everything, Pope Francis underlines 'our common origin' (LS 202). 'A good part of our genetic code is shared by many

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<sup>1</sup>Integral-ecological, holistic worldviews can be found also in other literary philosophical traditions and schools of thought, for example, in the natural philosophical works of Klaus Michael Meyer-Abich (for instance, in Meyer-Abich, 1988). Nonetheless, the integral-ecological conception in Laudato si' contains manifold original and determined approaches and argumentations, which make it comprehensive and particularly efficacious.

<sup>2</sup>In this chapter, citations from Laudato si' will be indicated with "LS" and a number. These numbers refer to the numbered sections in the encyclical. This is the common style of citing encyclicals.

<sup>3</sup>Emphasis by Christian Meier.

<sup>4</sup>This is also the title of a book of Capra and Luisi (2014), which can deepen the discourse and understanding of a certain worldview.

living beings' (LS 138), he recalls (Bals, 2016a, p. 48). Pope Francis expresses the conviction that 'as part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us . . . form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion' (LS 89). He states that '[t]his basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life' (LS 202).

Pope Francis' integral ecology executes a significant paradigm change with far-reaching consequences: The superiority of humans over other humans and especially the dominion of humans over nature correlated with its exploitation should be overcome. It should be replaced by the new paradigm of a 'universal fraternity' (LS 228) between all human and non-human life. This is the second core element of integral ecology. Every creature – human and non-human – is conceded an intrinsic value (LS 208). If humanity would really internalise and respect this paradigm, it would have tremendous consequences on human interaction and on behaviour towards nature. 'This is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails' (LS 90) – with this, Pope Francis expresses that humans are a very particular part of creation with particular responsibility (LS 68), as guardians of creation, as conservers and protectors.

The Pope executes a profound paradigm shift away from a 'tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures' (LS 68) and a 'technocratic or technical and economic paradigm that allocates a central position to human beings as rulers and owners' (Bals, 2016a, p. 44, with reference to LS 106). The Pope considers the "technocratic paradigm", the rational-instrumental understanding of the world and the capitalist-instrumentalist dominance over nature' (Bals, 2016a, p. 44) as the cause of the twofold socio-ecological crisis (Bals, 2016a, p. 44).

In the new perception of the world and humans' role in it, '[n]ature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live' (LS 139), the Pope points out. Rather, '[w]e are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it' (LS 139). Thus, '[w]e are faced not with two separate crises . . . but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental' (LS 139). The result of this is that 'a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*' (LS 49). Therefore, '[i]t is essential to seek comprehensive solutions' to consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems to combat poverty, restore dignity to the excluded and at the same time protect nature (LS 139). Therefore, for Pope Francis, a holistic ecology not only encompasses the classic triad of sustainable development – environment, economy and social affairs (Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, p. 17) – but also includes *cultural, ethical and spiritual* dimensions.

To further illustrate his argumentation, the Pope refers to *Saint Francis* (cf. for the following also Federbusch, n.d., pp. 55 and 57). '[T]o him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists' (LS 11). He 'was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast' (LS 10) – empathy, connectedness, care,

attention, compassion, altruism and mindfulness are underlined. The prerequisite of a new philosophy of society based on real compassion and solidarity with others is to overcome individualism, egoistic immediatism and alienation and to (re-)enter into an appreciative and respectful relationship with others (cf. also LS 162 and 119) and the world around us.

When the Pope gives an overview of the current ecological crisis, the ‘results of the best scientific research available today’ (LS 15) should ‘touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows’ (LS 15). We should ‘become painfully aware, dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it’ (LS 19), [Heimbach-Steins and Stockmann \(2019, p. 27\)](#) point out. This is indispensable for being able to initiate a real change of course in lifestyle and politics ([Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, p. 27](#)). Furthermore, this confrontation can lead to a personal goal and the task of ensuring the continuity of the earth, to a ‘vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork’ (LS 217), and to put it into practice. This can open a perspective of meaning for oneself and one’s life, to find purpose. ‘What does the earth need us for?’ Pope Francis puts up for discussion in LS 160.

The Pope adds at this point that Saint Francis ‘helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to *categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology*, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human’<sup>5</sup> (LS 11). You can name love and the attitudes of being able to experience awe and wonder here. Moreover, the quote can be seen as a reference to transcendence, spirituality and religiosity. In a novel way, Pope Francis’ integral ecology combines a scientifically founded perception of the ecological crisis with the interpretative potentials of cultural, spiritual and religious traditions and wisdoms as resources ([Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, pp. 28–29](#)). Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, former president of the Club of Rome, supports this, referencing *Laudato si’* when he says: ‘It could be wise to pay attention as well to the spiritual and religious dimensions of all civilizations’ ([von Weizsäcker & Wijkman, 2018, p. 64](#)).

The text passage on Saint Francis also reveals another central aspect of integral ecology: The saint ‘lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace’ (LS 10). Thus, integral ecology aims to regain the different levels of the *ecological equilibrium* ([Bals, 2016b, p. 2](#)).

A ‘global perspective’ (LS 164) and solidarity is necessary, and an intergenerational perspective (LS 159). Long-term thinking (LS 166 and 178) and patience is needed ([Zink, 2016, p. 22](#)). This universal solidarity brings with it a changed economy – a certain reduction of growth is inevitable (LS 193) – and a change of lifestyles (cf. also Federbusch, p. 64). Orientation of activities to the common good is required (LS 157). The reflections also focus on the conditions of quality of life and their improvement as part of an ‘[a]uthentic development’ (LS 147) in

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<sup>5</sup>Emphasis by Christian Meier.

human dignity and for securing human rights (LS 158). These conditions must also include participation- and relationship-friendly living spaces. These conditions have to include the establishment of an economy that conserves resources and that is based on frugality, environmental education and the practice of a corresponding lifestyle (Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, p. 28, referring to Birkel, 2016). Such a lifestyle should focus on intensity instead of extensiveness, on frugality and mindfulness instead of maximum consumption (Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, p. 28).

Integrity of creation (LS 13), balance (LS 225), sacredness of all life (LS 80–85), reverence for life (LS 207), appreciation (LS 119) and subsidiarity (LS 157) are further central ethical principles and virtues (see also Zink, 2016, pp. 23–30) that provide the basis of how to see the world and for action orientation.

The Pope dedicates Chapter 6 of *Laudato si'* to 'Ecological education and spirituality' as propositions for human maturation that results from integral ecology. 'Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a . . . lifestyle . . . capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption' (LS 222). '[L]ess is more' (LS 222) and sufficiency (LS 223) can provide guidelines. With education in environmental responsibility, developing new habits and the right motivation is crucial, Federbusch (no date, p. 114) points out, referring to LS 209 and LS 211. This can be part of a personal transformation process.

## **Integral Ecology Applied to Destinations**

As outlined above, a strong and well-calibrated moral and ethical compass becomes increasingly relevant for destinations. How can integral ecology contribute concretely to this inner, ethical compass and reference medium for decisions, framed as Destination Conscience?

Integral ecology as a worldview with certain ethical principles can enrich, augment and strengthen a destination's ethical compass and its conscience as it offers moral standards and implications for human interaction and towards nature. This means that the principles of integral ecology as a new paradigm can set reference standards and orientation parameters for destination's conscience. They function as frames of reference and orientation and enforce certain values and virtues for interaction. They support the development of a strong inner compass and can give more substance to it. Furthermore, the integration of integral ecology into destination actors' conscience and thoughts can intensify the feelings and attitudes of humanness, sensitivity and compassion as supporting elements of a strong and well-formed moral compass. They can strengthen orientation, recollection and the feeling of interconnection. This can lead to a more respectful, mindful and conscience-based interaction of destination actors, responsible business decisions, sustainable destination development and meaningful, enriching offers and destination services. Thus, an enrichment of the conscience by integral ecology can resonate in all destination actors' way of thinking, communication and interaction.

Before looking in more detail at the different areas of possible manifestations of the enrichment of Destination Conscience by integral-ecological principles, it should be emphasised that in order to step from knowing and wanting to doing, it is crucial that normative claims and values become *binding* for individual actors and destinations as a whole, that they find their way into the inner compass as a reference standard in the course of conscience formation processes.<sup>6</sup> Inner commitment is essential. Moral appeals and knowledge of the need for change alone often do not result in corresponding actions (Vogt, 2021, p. 40).

Many integral-ecological principles and perspectives – universal fraternity, the interconnectedness of everyone and everything, inter- and intra-generational justice and the resulting necessary solidarity – and their illustration in *Laudato si'*, not least through the double coding and its very touching linguistic style, could per se already have the potential to touch people in such a way that these principles and perspectives become binding in the course of conscience-forming processes.

Nevertheless, the importance of supporting factors for moral claims to become binding and to be internalised in the inner compass should be pointed out. These factors should be incorporated into processes in all the fields of a destination highlighted below in which the Destination Conscience is enriched.

On the one hand are the *emotional* level and the internalisation possibilities through *experiences* that one makes in certain settings. In addition to knowledge and reason, further motivations are needed that address the affective-emotional and spiritual dimension of human action. Humans find these motivating factors in their culture, in the ethos of the communities they belong to and in deeper encounters with other people, themselves and nature. In this, religions – which are always woven into specific sociocultural contexts – also play an important role (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, 2018, pp. 85–86).

On the other hand, it seems very useful in all destination areas and contexts examined below to *'translate'* religiously inspired orientations into *'secular language'*. This translation is not a matter of course. According to *'Public Theology'*, one can methodically presume that the churches can only fruitfully contribute their cultural and normative orientation knowledge to society if all participants openly engage in mutual learning processes. *'Multilingualism'* is required in the sense of a permanent *'translation'* of ethical and theological guiding terms and concepts into *'secular language'*. At the same time, a translation of ecological extreme experiences and search processes into theological language or a connectivity to it is also necessary (Vogt, 2021, p. 64). Even in societies with a liberal political culture, secularised citizens should also participate in efforts to translate relevant contributions from the religious sphere into publicly accessible language (Vogt, 2021, p. 63 with reference to Habermas, 2005, p. 115).<sup>7</sup> Under the prerequisites of the methodological standards of Public Theology, the discourse on

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<sup>6</sup>On the requirement of bindingness: see explicitly the contribution “The binding nature of the sustainability principle. Towards a new level of morality” in this book.

<sup>7</sup>On the *'translation'* of religion into secular language and contexts: see, e.g. Menne (2019).

the environment offers excellent potential for a new appropriation of Christian traditions of spirituality and explanation of the world (Vogt, 2021, p. 64). Under these conditions, the involvement of multilingual-competent translators in the abovementioned sense in possible integration processes of integral-ecological principles at destination level seems to be helpful.

In view of these preliminary considerations, in the following presentation of possibilities for a manifestation of integral ecology, suitable supporting factors for moral claims to become binding and to be internalised in the conscience are also mentioned.

The enrichment of Destination Conscience by integral ecology means that, as a first manifestation, the ethical principles of an integral ecology, an integral-ecological understanding of oneself and the world can be incorporated into *destination's self-image*. If the principles are integrated, they augment the Destination Conscience. A kind of conscience-forming process takes place among the destination and responsible providers. The destination's self-image takes on a new orientation. To raise awareness and acceptance among providers, it could be helpful that they attend seminars and make use of services that make experiencing and appropriating the principles of integral ecology possible.

If the ethical principles of an integral ecology enrich the Destination Conscience by being set, accepted and internalised as moral standards, then, secondly, this is reflected in the *interaction in business relations* and decisions of a destination. If integral-ecological principles like universal fraternity, solidarity, mindfulness, respect, integrity of creation, common good orientation and reverence for life become decisive, then the interaction of destination actors is shaped by these principles. The relationships will then be based on real appreciation for each other. Interaction will be characterised by solidarity, a cooperation mindset and altruism instead of egoism and an exaggerated competitive mindset. These principles then become guiding in operative business decisions, actions and in behaviour towards others. As a result, the 'Little Way of Saint Teresa of Lisieux' can also find application. This is 'not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures, which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness' (LS 230). The visitors will feel, notice and appreciate this changed, more sensitive and human destination character.

If the principles of integral ecology, which comprehensively include sustainability principles,<sup>8</sup> are integrated in the Destination Conscience, then, thirdly, this can find a practical, visible and measurable expression in the *operational management, organisation and development of a destination*.

If respect, human dignity, universal fraternity and common good orientation enrich the destination's conscience as moral standards, operational activities and destination development should be characterised by humanness. Customers and employees must then be perceived and treated not as objects that serve for earning

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<sup>8</sup>For the implementation of sustainability in tourism, see, e.g. Bieger & Beritelli (2013, pp. 42–45).

money (Bals, 2016a, p. 44) but treated with appreciation, sensitivity and humanness. Destination's public architecture, paths and squares should be designed in a way that they can strengthen opportunities to meet, to come into relationship and to experience interconnection.

If those responsible for the destination incorporate the option for the poor (LS 158), the principles of a universal brotherhood, of solidarity and human dignity in their conscience – no one should be excluded – then they consequently should implement measures of participation and empowerment for the poor, excluded and marginalised persons in their destination.

If the interconnectedness of everything and the universal fraternity of humans and with nature, correlated with the principle of integrity of creation and with the sacredness of all life, finds entry into destination's conscience, then natural resources, landscape, flora and fauna are also treated with high sensitivity and respect, are protected and cared for. Biodiversity loss has to be prevented and ecological equilibrium conserved. Operational management of destination businesses – food, building materials, resources, energy, supply chains – should then be characterised by sustainability.

A sincere and deep integration of integral-ecological principles and norms into destinations and into the destination's conscience requires destination managers and developers to think about a qualitatively different understanding of progress, growth and prosperity – with consequences for the destination orientation, its organisation, its development and especially the operational target parameters.

Integral ecology requires a global and intergenerational perspective and solidarity, as indicated in the Section 'Integral Ecology – A Holistic Worldview and New Paradigm'. This brings with it a changed economy – a certain reduction of growth is inevitable – and a change of lifestyles, as Pope Francis states. Orientation of activities to the common good is required. An economy that conserves resources and that is based on frugality and a lifestyle that focuses on intensity instead of extensiveness, on frugality and mindfulness instead of maximum consumption, is requested.

From an environmental and socio-ethical perspective, the required basis for this is an ethical-cultural reorientation (Vogt, 2021, p. 497). The modern progress paradigm of unlimited growth should be replaced by the guiding idea of developments that are integrated into the material cycles and time rhythms of nature. According to Vogt, a 'culture of sustainability' integrates environmental quality as a fundamental value in the cultural, social, health and economic definition of prosperity. It is an expression of a revitalisation of the ethic of moderation. At the societal level, a culture of sustainability aims for a new ecological model of prosperity through structures of use and distribution that are intelligent, resource and environmentally friendly (Vogt 2021, p. 497). Vogt states that the optimisation of quality of life and chances of participation for as many as possible in the present and in the future is 'sustainable', not the maximisation of growth. Only a resource-light prosperity fulfils justice standards and is justifiable. The 'Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare', which measures prosperity not in terms of gross national product but by criteria of a comprehensive concept of ecosocial

development, can serve as a measure and control concept for this objective (Vogt, 2021, p. 498).

All these reflections also apply to destinations' orientation. Post-growth economy and sufficiency, degrowth and common good economy as alternative concepts for economic operation (Pufé, 2017, pp. 289–302) come into view at this point,<sup>9</sup> also for the tourism industry and destinations. If integral-ecological norms and standards become guiding principles for the Destination Conscience, this is related with giving up the modern progress paradigm of unlimited growth and profit maximisation as the central target parameter. Of course, such a reorientation, which affects turnover and profits, is not insignificant. Such a change of course first affects the owners and providers of tourism infrastructure and services, the shareholders and the destination management organisation. Tensions are to be expected, as a tourist destination operates in a global competitive environment. However, this change of course does not mean a loss of quality of life from an integral-ecological perception. This transformation into a more human, sustainable and value-based destination can provide benefits for everyone. It can become a USP and thus pay back in the form of monetary values and the destination's welfare.

In-depth dialogue processes for agreement involving all destination actors, stakeholders and residents appear to be necessary. Taking this step requires courage and a pioneering spirit and, ideally, support from politicians who change the framework conditions in a supportive way (Vogt, 2021, p. 498). The path seems feasible if one is fully convinced of it and follows the inner voice.

If the principles of integral ecology are integrated into the destination's conscience, then this, fourthly, finds expression regarding the design of the touristic *services and products* such as guided tours, seminars, hikes, exercises and other activities. At the latest at this point, the conscience of the costumers as destination actors also comes into focus. Services and products are then configured in such a way that they illustrate the ethical principles of integral ecology and that costumers can experience and internalise them. This can result in costumers adopting new, more respectful, more sensitive, more human standards for dealing with other humans and nature, and integrating them into their conscience.

Offers like *simulation games and joint exercises* can illustrate the integral-ecological guiding principle that *everything is interconnected* and that the extinction of one element threatens the whole system and can cause its collapse. By having these experiences and becoming aware of these principles, the protection of natural resources and biodiversity becomes a requirement – which can further strengthen the formation of conscience.

Courses for a lifestyle that is shaped by *Christian creation spirituality*, and courses for an integral-ecological lifestyle and a corresponding world and self-image, seem promising. That is, these courses have the character of ecological education and education on ecological spirituality. In addition to scientific and

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<sup>9</sup>For a socio-ethical analysis and evaluation of post-growth strategies, see Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2018.



secular reasons and motivations for the care of environment and engagement on behalf of the poor, explicitly spiritual motivations are also presented in these courses. Conversion to a *frugal lifestyle* (LS 223) and a redefinition of *quality of life* can be elements of an integral-ecological, spiritual lifestyle, which can be thematised in seminars and which are suitable to enrich conscience. Frugality involves (re)gaining inner peace and taking time to live in harmony with creation (Federbusch, p. 51, referring to LS 225). ‘To be serenely present to each reality . . . opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment’ (LS 222). For this, the seminars can also focus on mindfulness, enable real nature experiences through hikes or be aligned with the Kneipp philosophy and its five elements – of which the central one is the order of life and a corresponding balance ([Verband der Gesundheitspädagogen im Kneippbund e.V.](#)).

For the aim of training, specifically, *mindfulness* – calm attention in the here and now (LS 226) – courses for meditation, Thai Chi or Yoga, and courses for creativity, art and handicrafts can be offered. These courses can also focus on *meaning* making and can have the character of self-discovery courses with personal coaching – ‘what does the earth need us for?’ ([Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019](#), pp. 18–19, citing LS 160).

Highlighting the relevance and effects of an (un)sustainable lifestyle and the maxim of the *option for the poor* (LS 10) can be the main topic of such courses, too. In destinations where it is appropriate, social hotspots – townships, slums, homeless shelters – can be visited with the aim of illustration and experience, always with a high level of sensitivity and respect.

Destinations can establish offers to *co-work* in sustainably designed nurseries or gardens. In this way, participants can regain a relationship to nature and food cultivation, linked with the internalisation of corresponding values.

The Pope emphasises that, along with others, the Church is entrusted with helping to raise people’s awareness (LS 214) of sustainability requirements. Therefore, it seems obvious that those responsible for a destination initiate cooperation with Christian congregations and actors when establishing offers like those described.

Configuring touristic products in such a way that they illustrate the ethical principles of integral ecology gives recipients the possibility to experience that everything is interconnected and that they are embedded in a universal web of life, to develop compassion, mindfulness and other attitudes and moral standards that can enrich the conscience. Customers can find their way back to their inner stability and balance; they can become aware of what is essential and can have conscious experiences. This meets today’s customers’ desires and needs.

All the principles, orientations, rationales and motivations described above can augment the conscience as a moral compass of destinations and its actors, and thus influence decisions and lifestyles. They can be meaningful as individual tasks are pointed out that can put one in connection with ‘something bigger’ and ‘a big whole’.

## Best Practice Example – Plankstetten Monastery

Destinations that want to become integral-ecological and conscious can be inspired by the example of the Catholic monastery of Plankstetten, situated in the Altmühltal in Bavaria. This monastery can, according to the definition of Freyer (2015, p. 320), be denominated as a destination.<sup>10</sup>

The example of this monastery has been chosen because, along with being a faith-based destination, it is a pioneer in becoming a more sustainable, human and values-based destination. Business decisions in particular seem to be guided by determined standards of conscience. The transformation of the monastery in recent years, among other things towards a regional and ecological circular economy, organic farming and high resource conservation, required courage. Furthermore, this monastery offers good opportunities for the necessary ‘translation’ of religious language and concepts into secular language through its open conversation culture, exchange and cooperation, the manifold educational offers and platforms for discussion. Plankstetten Monastery seems suitable for inspiration and orientation for secular destinations, too, even if it is clear that enriching the conscience with normative reference standards of religious origin, supported by dedicated ‘translation work’ and a corresponding transformation of a destination, is a challenge for secular destinations that should not be underestimated; it requires a profound conviction of the meaningfulness of the envisaged path.

If you take a closer look at the monastery of Plankstetten, one can attribute many characteristics, guidelines and principles of integral ecology to its organisation, management and destination life. These can enrich the conscience of this destination.

Life from the origin – this is the motto of the Benedictine monastery (Plankstetten Monastery (a)). The monastic life follows the Rule of Saint Benedict. The search for God is the primary task of the monastic community. In this is also included everyday work. A culture of mindfulness emerges, which also finds expression in a responsible approach to life. The ecological orientation of the monastery of Plankstetten wants to serve this goal (Plankstetten Monastery (b)).

The *monks* as central actors of this destination cultivate frugality, sufficiency and mindfulness. They are capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. The principles of reverence for life, sacredness of all life, appreciation and integrity of creation are applied. When you meet and interact with the monks, empathy, attention, compassion, altruism, connectedness, care and mindfulness are perceptible. They seem balanced, in relation and harmony with God, with themselves, with others and with nature.

These principles of a high appreciation for humans and nature are also expressed in the visible and measurable *operational management* of the monastery. The monastery has implemented a regional and ecological circular economy

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<sup>10</sup>By this definition, destinations are geographical, landscape, sociocultural or organisational units with their attractions that tourists are interested in. A bundle of tourism services is produced and jointly offered by different providers to foreign visitors.

(Plankstetten Monastery (b)). The conscious and efficient use of *energy* is central. Wherever possible and economically viable, energy and resources are saved. The energy management aims at CO<sub>2</sub>-neutrality (Plankstetten Monastery (c)). The monastery affirms on its homepage that, in accordance with their regional self-sufficiency concept, they want to build and arrange the monastery so that it is close to creation and sustainability. For this, healthy and climate-friendly *building materials* are used. This has best been realised with the recently constructed wood-straw passive house. It is a unique, awarded reference project for climate-friendly building in Europe (Plankstetten Monastery (d)). Plankstetten Monastery has practised organic *farming* since 1998 (Plankstetten Monastery (f)), regionality and seasonality is guiding. They work according to Bioland guidelines. The products serve for self-sufficiency but are also marketed in organic food shops. The monastery also shows a global perspective of solidarity, among other things with a store where One World Fair Trade goods and handicrafts are sold.

It is possible to spend holidays in the monastery with accommodation and meals. Guests can also take part in the monastery's religious life to a certain degree and can co-work in the garden and monastery nursery. One can participate in one-day and multi-day courses and other *educational offers*, in which many principles of integral ecology are evident. These principles can be experienced and internalised by the participants in multiple ways and can enrich the conscience of the destination actors. The educational programme follows a holistic approach and focusses on spirituality, sustainability, lifestyle, health and creativity. Some current and past offers are: *Learning to live a sustainable life*, *Exercising body, soul and spirit*, *Retreat – Mindful forest experiences*, *From faith to ecological action* (Plankstetten Monastery (e)). The recently founded 'Centre for Creation Spirituality' (Bistum Eichstätt, 2022) manages some of these offers. They serve for reflection, recollection and (re-)orientation of the mindset and of individual action based on certainty about the meaning and purpose of human life. They can give experiences of reconnection. From this one can conclude that the monastery's understanding and realisation of sustainability encompasses not only environment, economy and social affairs but also cultural, ethical and spiritual dimensions.

The whole destination 'Plankstetten Monastery' embodies 'universal fraternity' and that everything is interconnected. Humanness, sensitivity and compassion can be felt everywhere and in all things. Christian creation spirituality shapes the monks' lives and they make it visible, experienceable and teach it. This addresses lifestyles and quality of life. It can change habits. The combination of sustainability, spirituality, nature, history and special hosts makes this destination very authentic and impressive.

## **Conclusion**

Integral ecology as a worldview based on certain principles can augment and strengthen destinations' moral-ethical compass, as it offers moral standards and implications for human interaction and towards nature. If applied, the principles

of integral ecology as new paradigm can set standards and orientation parameters for destination's conscience. This strengthens the profound development of a destination's conscience. Furthermore, they can intensify the feelings and attitudes of humanness, sensitivity and compassion as supporting elements of a strong and well-formed moral compass.

The enrichment of Destination Conscience by the principles of integral ecology can manifest in the destination's self-image. It can find reflection in the interaction in business relations, decisions and actions of a destination. It can find a visible and measurable expression in the operational management, organisation and development of a destination. Moreover, it can find manifestation in the design of the touristic services and products.

A transformed mindset, interaction and behaviour can result from this transformational process: These processes and products of a transformative character based on integral ecology can strengthen and (re-)activate the conscience on a destination and individual level. They can provide recollection and orientation for destination's actors, inner clarity and peace with oneself, with each other and the environment. They can increase the feelings of (re-)connection and embeddedness, of purpose, meaning and balance and the attitudes of humanness, sensitivity, compassion, kindness and appreciation. From this can result a more respectful, conscience-based and mindful interaction of humans towards each other and towards nature in a destination, and sustainable action.

These human and more sensitive destinations, which are based on values, authenticity, credibility and sincerity, not only meet the desires and needs of our times, but they also contribute to a comprehensive transformation of society towards sustainability. What could be more desirable than happy guests who are reconnected and in balance, with outreach into their everyday life and destination operators who are filled with the knowledge that they have contributed to a more sustainable and better world?

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## Chapter 11

# From the Periphery to the Centre – Beyond the Traditional Destination Experiences

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### Abstract

A primary urban destination can be accessed through its regional periphery. Thus, while a city centre may be the primary attraction, by approaching it from and through the periphery, suburbs can become part of the place and marginalised people as part of the destination from a more holistic perspective. Tourists who are more attuned to the various layers of the transformation of a destination may be more attentive visitors and might empathise and engage with the lives and survival of others when given an opportunity to reflect on other elements of the destination beyond the central area. As part of a field trip to Rome, the Chair of Tourism of the Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt explored the inequalities at the periphery of Rome as a destination with undergraduate students from the Faculty of Mathematics and Geography. The results show that a holistic impression and deep understanding of a destination can only be gained by visiting both: its centre and its periphery. Moreover, the centre and periphery of a destination can then be compared in terms of, for example, poor or rich, well kept or unkempt, or native or migrant. However, these comparisons should not be used to look at poverty or similar factors, but to develop an awareness of differences and to look behind the typical tourist zones of a destination. In this case, we suggest that tourist routes can be key in providing a more holistic experience in an historic city.

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Destination Conscience, 127–142



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doi:[10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241012](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241012)

*Keywords:* Attractions; centre; Destination Conscience; periphery; Rome; transformation; routes/trails

## **Introduction**

Traditional tourism has typically focused on the centre of a destination, the main attractions and the well-trodden tourist zones. From a marketing point of view, the desired attractions, the most famous and iconic, are the focal points of the destination. These main attractions are surrounded by services that help optimise the experience. In most cases, guests make their way directly to the primary points of interest and ignore the lesser known and less visited attractions and other areas of the destination. This bundle of core attractions and services form the core perceived destination, where experiences are expected to take place. This traditional focus on central sights has led to the phenomenon of overtourism, especially in heavily visited cities such as Barcelona and Venice. Overtourism indicates that an excess of visitors and guests at and near attractions, mostly in the central areas of popular destinations, has led to frustration among the local population. This issue, as well as increased travel experience of travellers, and increasing technological developments, leads to tourists becoming dissatisfied with the traditional mass tourism-oriented superficial sightseeing experience and begin seeking more authentic experiences in the destination away from the central attraction area.

Interest in the ordinary lives and living spaces of destination residents is increasing. This causes visitors to become interested in interacting with the local population and learning about their lives, economic activities and political and religious beliefs. All this goes hand in hand with the increasingly widespread belief that tourism primarily shows the most beautiful sides of life and the most attractive places, while ignoring less appealing localities and marginal areas. In the current vernacular, nobody wants to be ‘a tourist’; instead, people prefer to be labelled a ‘traveller’ or a ‘guest’, shying away from the notion that they are only interested in typical tourist attractions and experiences. The traditional destination – focused essentially on iconic attractions and wondrous experiences – may lose value and credibility in this new movement towards more holistic travel experiences. This raises the question, ‘can the continued superficial engagement with destination residents compensate for this lack?’ The increasing speed and massive acceleration of daily living also accelerates a form of tourism that promises some level of fulfilment by checking off attractions on a list of place one wants to visit. However, this and the overall increase in social alienation (especially via social media and the COVID-19 pandemic) is deepening the desire for relationships, for meaningful experiences rather than titillating adventure, for depth instead of breadth. Religion, art, nature, history and everyday moments outside core tourist zones can enrich people’s experiences in the places they visit, to resonate with place and people, and to appreciate reflection rather than suffer through acceleration.



This understanding was studied during a field trip in Rome with the question, which conscience does Rome has as a tourist destination. Students from the Bachelor of Geography and the Teaching Degree in Geography from the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, together with the Chair of Tourism, researched places and attractions in Rome. Routes/trails were developed to integrate these uncommon things in the city's periphery into the main attractions of the historic city centre. The working groups involved exploring potential routes and recording undiscovered attractions with the aim of deepening the conscience of Rome as a destination. The moral responsibility and ethical aspects of Rome as a tourist destination were addressed. As one of the most famous and historically important cities in the world, Rome carries a special responsibility to develop and guide tourism in accordance with the city's values and principles. The protection and preservation of architectural heritage, the preservation of Rome's cultural identity and respect for the needs and rights of local communities are a few examples. Rome as a destination should take measures to control mass tourism, minimise environmental impacts and promote sustainable practices. Balanced and responsible tourism development should be pursued, considering the long-term benefits for the city and its inhabitants. In this regard, the peripheral areas of Rome present an opportunity to contribute to better balanced, more holistic and sustainable tourism so that the industry might have a greater positive impact, with more diverse attractions and experiences being accessible to travellers.

## **Focusing on the Guest**

The overall product of tourism is the journey itself, which consists of sub-components such as transport, accommodation and gastronomy. The goal of tourism service production and the travel chain is to offer and sell experiences for a limited period of time that will generate feelings such as fun or happiness (Smith, 1994). Experiences have an overwhelming effect and are not entirely within our power. They refer to the personal experiences and impressions travellers have during a trip and can be generated by a variety of activities and interactions that allow visitors to engage with the culture, nature, history or people of a particular destination. Adventures such as hiking can be as much a part of the experiences as cultural events, sightseeing tours or food consumption. Individual experiences are often unique and help to enrich the travel experience, and they can create unforgettable memories. However, it is still unclear when an experience becomes an experience for the individual traveller, or what part individual experiences play in the overall satisfaction of a tourist (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2016).

Additionally, in the German language, unlike in English, a distinction is made between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* (Duerden et al., 2015; Pine & Gilmore, 2013; Schmitt, 2010). The English term *experience* describes both the lived experience, and the knowledge and the experience that arise through an encounter. *Erlebnis* means objective interactions between providers and guests (e.g. a visit to a

restaurant), whereas *Erfahrung* refers to the resulting and subjective effects (e.g. satisfaction with the service quality) (Duerden et al., 2015).

Over the years, many experiential products in tourism have developed with the aim of satisfying guests' consumption of experiences. The research shows that visitors continuously seek unique and authentic experiences. The desire for relationships is growing as *Erfahrungen* become more desirable than staged *Erlebnisse* (Grötsch, 2006). With these developments in mind, the social and cultural impacts of tourism are of particular interest. The role of tourists and hosts and the interactions between them needs a closer look. Questions such as the influence of tourism on social structures, identities and people's everyday lives, but also issues such as social inequality, sustainability and the development of tourist destinations (Heuwinkel, 2019) have to be studied to develop greater Destination Conscience.

## The Touristic View From the Periphery to the Centre

A destination is defined as a geographical place or a specific area characterised by tourist activities and representing a destination or place of desire for visitors. A destination has no particular spatial extent, as the guests themselves define the parameters of the destination. A destination might be a city, a region, a country or even a continent that arouses the interest of travellers and motivates them to visit. Destinations contain the facilities, such as accommodations, food and entertainment, that are necessary to provide 'holiday' experience (Fyall, 2022).

Tourists typically choose a destination based on its attractions and available activities. Thus, attraction points play an essential role in a destination's appeal. Attractions are geographical units, points and/or clearly delimited spaces that motivate people to spend an autonomously determined amount of time visiting. Attraction points consist of a combination of activity opportunities and services. They are controlled and have appropriate structures to offer certain differentiated moods or atmospheres, enabling unique visitor experiences (Kušen, 2017; Leiper, 1990; Richards, 2002). Consequently, attractions become exchange platforms and catalysts for community growth. The crucial factor is that, as in any network or system, network effects occur. These reinforce the effect of the individual elements via redundancies and broad effects (Benckendorff, 2014; Leiper, 1990). The network effect in tourism can also have negative consequences. If the attractiveness and benefits of a destination or tourism product increase with the number of travellers, a self-reinforcing cycle can develop in which more people are attracted than the destination can carry. The phenomenon of overcrowding thus arises. The combination of central attractions with corresponding activities leads to high numbers of tourists, resulting in overcrowded places, often crowding locals out of their own action spaces. Such a phenomenon is apparent in popular tourist cities such as Barcelona and Paris (Milman, 2020). According to Beritelli (2013), these destinations are characterised by a spatial structure that often clearly identifies tourist areas, and in historic cities, these typically develop organically

through time. These areas can be delineated on a map, characterised by central attractions and connecting spaces (e.g. transport or accommodations).

This spatial structure also creates a tension between the centre, with its tourism infrastructure, and the periphery. Centre refers to the core area of established and popular tourist destinations, while the periphery includes lesser known or remoter regions surrounding the centre where far less tourism generally takes place. The centre is the most centrally located area and is in high demand. Centres have a spatial concentration of core facilities, a good infrastructure, a variety of attractions and a wide range of services. They often generate significant economic benefits for the city at large. In contrast, the urban peripheries are less developed and lesser known than the core areas they surround. Peripheries usually have less tourist infrastructure and devote fewer resources to tourism development. Consequently, they may be seen as disadvantaged or backward with a lack of innovation, low self-organisation and weak entrepreneurship. Issues such as de-concentration, dependence on the centre, deprivation of value and resources, provinciality, peripheral location or poor accessibility characterise the periphery. However, these peripheral regions often have their own charm and unique attractions, including ‘untouched’ nature, agricultural landscapes, authentic cultural experiences and remoteness (Beetz, 2008).

The theory of central places, developed in 1933 by Walter Christaller, is a spatial location theory that deals with the hierarchy and distribution of central places in a region. The theory states that central places provide services and goods that are in demand by surrounding areas. These central places operate in a hierarchical structure, with larger centres having a wider range of offerings (Braun & Schulz, 2012). In the context of tourism, Central Place Theory relates to the distribution of tourism services, attractions and infrastructure in a destination. Centres are often viewed as major attractions that provide a wide range of tourism offerings. Further development of Christaller’s theory has focused on the role of peripheral areas. It recognises that not all attractions and tourism services should be concentrated in central locations, but that a decentralised distribution can allow for more balanced and sustainable development (von Böventer, 1968). The centre–periphery model describes the tension between a central area that functions as an economic, political or cultural core and peripheral areas that are less developed, less dynamic or even remote. In the centre–periphery model, important functions, resources and investments are concentrated in a centre, while peripheral areas typically have less infrastructure and fewer socio-economic opportunities. This imbalance can lead to social, economic and environmental disparities; the gaps in development dynamics or wealth disparity between the centre and the periphery typically increase. As a result, agglomeration disadvantages may also arise, leading to suburbanisation within the centres, and consequently the development of new centres in the former periphery. These subcentres have a similar economic structure to the centres and benefit from the state’s decentralisation policy, which attempts to restore equal living conditions by promoting the subcentres. This creates a stable polycentric settlement system in which the former periphery is integrated into the economic cycle (Braun & Schulz, 2012). A further development of the centre–periphery model is the three-zone

model, which aims to divide a region or country into three main zones: the centre, the periphery and the semi-periphery. The understanding of centre and periphery remains unchanged. The idea of an intermediate zone is further elaborated in the three-zone model, which plays an important role in political and social stabilisation. The semi-periphery lies between the centre and the periphery and shows characteristics of both zones. It usually experiences higher levels of development than the periphery, but still does not reach the level of the centre. The semi-periphery may be affected by inequalities in the economy and regional disparities (Schmalz, 2020).

At its core, the tension between centre and periphery in tourism arises from the focus of excessive demand on the best-known centres. This leads to mass tourism, congestion, hierarchised service relationships, environmental impacts, cultural and regional identity loss, reduction of quality of life, social problems and the out-migration of the local population. Real cultural exchanges no longer take place, but instead are staged or superficial. On the other hand, peripheral regions remain underdeveloped, and the potential economic benefits of tourism cannot be fully exploited. However, there are efforts in tourism to promote the reduction of disparities between the centre and the periphery. In the periphery, other approaches to tourism (e.g. sustainable tourism) are more possible and must be developed by strengthening social cohesion, economy and infrastructure. In this way, a more balanced distribution of tourism products can be achieved and the principles of sustainable tourism development can be better promoted.

Route-based tourism provides a possible solution to imbalance and tension between centre and periphery. With routes and trails, itineraries are developed to connect different attractions, including in both the centre and its peripheral areas (Timothy & Boyd, 2014). Purposively planned routes have economic significance and a tourism function, and in most cases, the itinerary connects attraction nodes that share a common connection to a certain theme or a combination of themes, such as architecture and culinary traditions. Tourist routes can have elements of main attractions and core areas. However, lesser known or remote places and potential attractions can also be part of tourist routes. (Murray & Graham, 1997; Vada et al., 2023). Incorporating peripheral areas in these linear tourist routes allows people and places on the margins of central tourist destinations to benefit from increased attention and visitor expenditures. This can lead to greater social and economic empowerment in local communities and alleviate some of the overcrowding that typically occurs in popular central areas. City walking is an important part of the trails concept, as 'Walking around a destination to experience a place is an attraction in its own right' (Ram & Hall, 2018, p. 281). This approach to tourism entails exploring a destination on foot (sometimes including using local transportation to access distant points on the route) and discovering lesser known neighbourhoods and districts away from the touristified centre. Culture, history and daily life can be discovered in a unique way that is more personal than might be experienced in city centres. City walking can include interacting with local people and enables more authentic, less staged interactions with area residents. It also provides an opportunity to discover and support local

stores, restaurants and cultural institutions in peripheral areas (Giddy & Hoogendoorn, 2018; Ram & Hall, 2018).

## **Methodological Approach of the Study**

To achieve the aim of the research project – to describe the conscience of Rome as a tourist destination, the students approached the centre (the core of the city's main attractions) from the periphery. Initially, four possible routes were defined from the four cardinal points, which have St Peter's Square in the centre of Rome as their culminating destination. A radius of 8–10 km from St Peter's was defined to simplify route formation from the periphery, a distance that would be easy enough to walk while encompassing a variety of cultural, social and gustatory experiences and locations. Using websites, travel blogs and social media platforms, potential itineraries were developed to connect attractions or places that correspond to the themes or sites of general interest. The routes were studied by the students and travelled at different times of the day. In addition to exploring the routes, the qualitative method of 'cultural probes' was used. These 'rely on participants' self-documentation through photographs and narratives' (Celikoglu et al., 2017, p. 85). Through the use of cultural probes, a deeper understanding of cultural and social contexts, insights into the design of products, services or social innovations can be gained. This method allows participants to participate actively in the research and contribute their individual perspectives and experiences (Townsend & Patsarika, 2022). One aim of this exercise was to document the suggested tourist trails through short video sequences (maximum 10 seconds) to create an approximately one-minute video per route at the end. In addition to environmental influences, such as weather, number of people or noises, the main goal was to create an itinerary that would help create an understanding of the destination and capture moral and ethical elements of Rome's periphery.

It is important to note that the preliminary results are only an initial starting point. Driven by the urban environment on site, after the initial trip the results collected by the students were evaluated cartographically, new routes were created and further research was carried out. Additionally, the route tracking results were supplemented by expert interviews in the field, but the findings from the interviews are not presented here.

## **Selected Findings: Routes From the Periphery to the Centre**

### ***Northern Route***

The route from the north starts at the main church, Gran Madre di Dio. Passing the Social Welfare Office INPS Roma Flaminio, the Tiber River is crossed on the bridge Ponte Duca d'Aosta to reach the Olympia site and the Ponte della Musica bridge. The Tribunale di Roma, Sezione Fallimentare, the Giardini di Piazza Mazzini and the Fontana delle Cariatidi are other key points on the trail before it reaches St. Peter's Square. Fig. 11.1 shows the route and stops along the way.



Fig. 11.1. Northern Route. *Source:* Cartography/Alexandra Kaiser (2022) with the tool geofabrik.de.

In general, coming from the north, the route can be summarised as non-touristy and well suited for immersive experiences with the local culture. The route does not lead out the city, but the tourist centre is quickly left behind and local residential areas are opened up for exploration. The disparity between rich and poor in Rome becomes visible on this trail: one side boasts well-kept houses, whereas many buildings on the other side are in ruins and littered with garbage. In addition, contrasting moods and sensations that reveal tensions between modern and old or welcome and unpleasant can be felt.

### ***Eastern Route***

The route coming from the east (see Fig. 11.2) starts in the ‘slums of Rome’ near the metro stop *Quintiliani*. Through empty industrial areas and very wealthy residential areas (gated communities), the route leads to the train station *Roma Tiburtina*. The route then leads to the Museum of Comparative Anatomy: ‘*Battista Grassi*’, the university quarter and the old city wall *Viale di Porta Tiburtina*, before the more touristic city centre opens up, starting with *Roma Termini*, the Pantheon and *Castel Sant’Angelo*. The end point on the route is once again *St. Peter’s Square*.

This route reveals the tension between the centre and the periphery in Rome very well. Ten kilometres outside the centre to the east, the area is rather isolated, unsafe and poor. As one moves towards the centre, the urban landscape is better maintained and welcoming. Nevertheless, the neighbourhoods are very quiet and rather empty of people. At the beginning of the tourist zone, the number of people increases significantly to the point of overcrowding around the main attractions. As a result, this latter part of the trail is characterised by tourist services such as restaurants, hotels and numerous souvenir stores. The residential areas are very clean, isolated and home to the city’s wealthy population.

### ***Southern Route***

The third route, from the south, starts at *Parco di Villa Bonelli*. Setting off towards the centre, users can discover the church *Chiesa Parrocchiale del Santo Volto di Gesù*, the library *Biblioteca Guglielmo Marconi*, various local markets, the *American University of Rome* and the fountain *Fontana de’l’Acqua Paola*. Before reaching *St. Peter’s Square*, the *Conventual Church of San Giuseppe alla Lungara* and the paediatric hospital *Bambino Gesù* are key stops along the way. Fig. 11.3 shows the route coming from the south as well as other attractions.

This route is characterised at the beginning by quietude, with a sparse population (mostly locals) and a well-kept environment. Many historic church buildings can be seen on the route. Towards the centre, the variety of educational institutions (e.g. libraries, schools or universities) also increases steadily. Even in the central areas, hidden, less-visited sights can be discovered. There are no large tourist crowds on this itinerary; only in *St. Peter’s Basilica* does one encounter large throngs of tourists.



Fig. 11.2. Eastern Route. *Source:* Cartography/Alexandra Kaiser (2022) with the tool geofabrik.de.





Fig. 11.3. Southern Route. *Source:* Cartography/Alexandra Kaiser (2022) with the tool geofabrik.de.

### **Western Route**

The fourth trail approaches the centre of St. Peter's Square from the west. Two routes were created along this corridor, both starting from the Hotel Villa Carpegna (see Fig. 11.4). On the first route (No. 1) are a number of churches (e.g., Parrocchia S. Pio V, Chiesa di Santa Maria del Riposo and Casa Generalizia

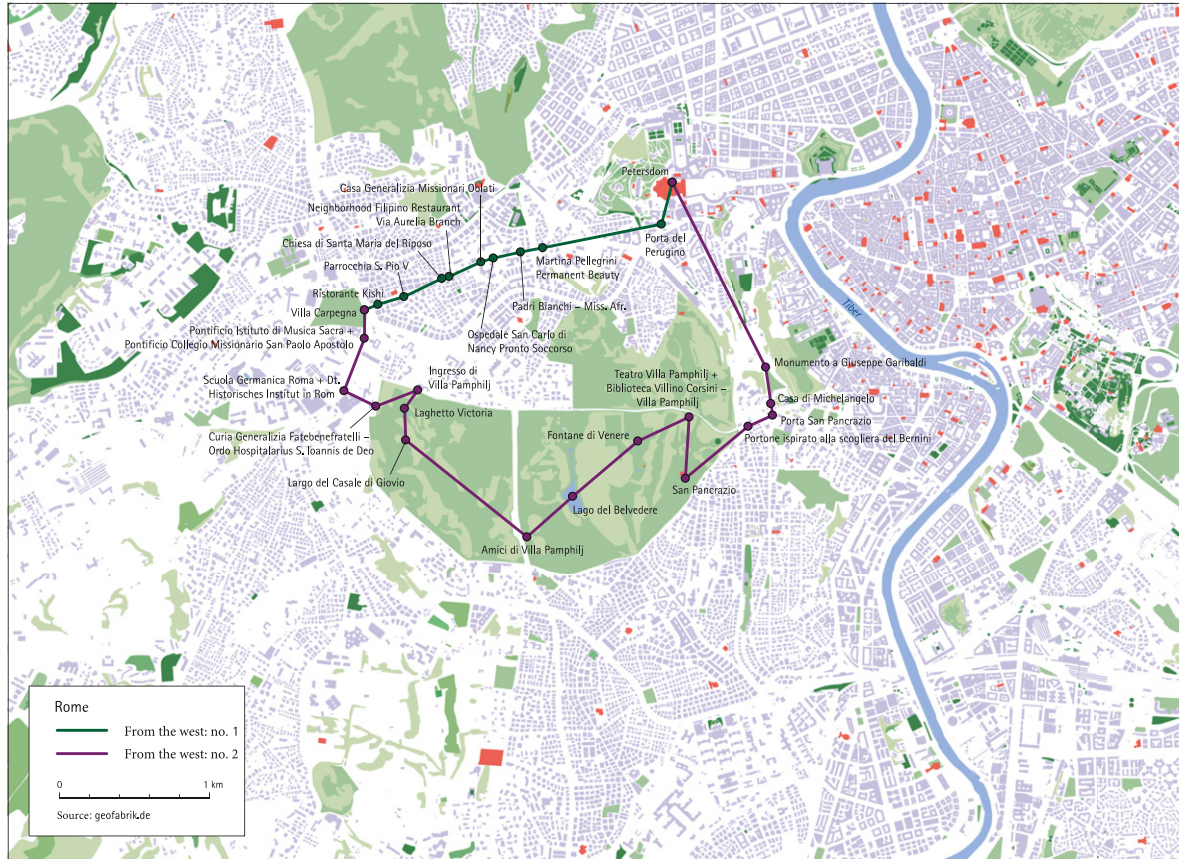


Fig. 11.4. Western Route. *Source:* Cartography/Alexandra Kaiser (2022) with the tool geofabrik.de.

Missionary Oblati), the hospital Hospital San Carlo di Nancy and the city gate Porta del Perugino. The second route (No. 2) heads south before eventually reaching St. Peter's Square. On Route 2, the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, various churches (e.g. *Cúria Geral da Ordem Hospitalária de São João de Deus*), a small lake in a park, the library Villino Corsini, the museum Porta San Pancrazio, the house of Michelangelo and the monument of Giuseppe Garibaldi are the main features.

In this itinerary, two sub-routes were created, allowing the linking of different impressions and enabling a comparison of locations in the general vicinity. Route 1 is characterised primarily by a built environment and religious theme, including many churches characterise the image of this route. The second includes more open space, including a large park (Villa Doria Pamphilj). This is a popular recreation area among locals and tourists. It is well maintained and clean. It was also noticeable that the degree of pollution increased from the centre to the periphery, but in residential areas, much less attention appears to be paid to cleanliness than at the well-known tourist sights.

## **Discussion and Outlook**

This chapter illustrates that balanced, holistic and sustainable development in tourist centres and peripheral areas can help to ensure the positive impact of tourism on all areas of a destination and that a destination's multiple attraction points – not just its main attractions – are accessible to travellers. In other words, tourism has the potential to build bridges between the periphery and the centre. Places are characterised by both geographies, and thus in many cases these completely different urban spaces are characterised by a tension between periphery and centre, giving rise to a destination's conscience. The people at the margins of society give a destination a more comprehensive and perhaps authentic face, as they reveal the vulnerabilities of locations and make their struggles visible to the outside world. This chapter shows that urban (or peri-urban) peripheries in major tourism centres can become suitable starting points for exploring popular destinations. We postulate that tourists can access destinations through their peripheries and that on their way to the centre. They can learn much more about the city and appreciate it more holistically than only seeing what every other visitor sees. Thus, they may better understand and appreciate the places they visit and become 'experienced' guests themselves through their interactions as tourists, abandoning traditional 'touristic thinking' and adopting a greater experiential approach to the historic city. The margins of society (socially and physically) are often the key to a deeper understanding. Peripheral places can be laboratories for individuals to see the 'big picture' and what locals value in their own non-tourist spaces. This includes the contrasting notions of poor versus rich, important versus unimportant, relevant versus irrelevant, periphery versus centre and tourist versus traveller. The important point is to draw attention to the street and ordinary life

but away from the well-trodden tourist centre. This can help create a greater understanding of broader conditions, spread of benefits to other neighbourhoods and contribute to the improvement of the area by visiting, encountering and developing relationships.

In summary, three elements contribute to a better understanding of world-class, albeit extremely crowded, destinations like Rome. First, attraction points are places of desire for tourism. They reflect historical and contemporary perceptions and interpretations of transformation. They are mostly located in urban centres or become centres through marketing and increased visitation. Second, destination peripheries usually lie outside the boundaries of normative tourism space. They are sites of vulnerability and are relatively unknown to outsiders but have potential to experience greater social resilience as tourists value their cultures and action spaces more fully. Finally, trails and corridors that connect peripheries to tourist centres may be key tools for overcoming vulnerabilities, increasing community resilience and providing transformational experiences for tourists and community members.

Destinations have a moral and ethical responsibility. Tourism development must focus on the current interests and needs of local people as well as long-term sustainability. As one of the most famous and visited cities in the world, Rome is a good example of this. Destination Conscience refers to the shared values, principles and norms of behaviour defined by a community or place as moral guidelines for tourism. These include a commitment to manage tourism in a way that is ethical, sustainable and respectful of the environment, culture and local communities. In this sense, the Destination Conscience can focus on promoting sustainable tourism, protecting the environment, preserving cultural heritage, supporting local economies and respecting the rights of local people. It involves using tourism as a force for positive change that meets the social and environmental needs of a destination while providing an enriching experience for travellers. Route-based urban tourism that links peripheral areas to city centres where most tourism takes place can help achieve some of these goals and may be a useful tool for other cities which desire to create holistic destinations with shared visions for sustainable tourism.

## **Acknowledgement**

We would like to give a special thanks to Andreas Huber, Head of the Protocol, Guest and Event Management Department of the Archdiocesan Ordinariate Munich, who supported this study with his excellent expertise. We would also like to thank the students Sonja Leinfelder, Franziska Stiegeler, Ole Schwickert, Celine Leonhardt, Anna Wermuth, Anna Zander, Laura Raber, Hannah Denzl, Fenja Siemens, Dustin Muske and Felix Krebs for their cooperation in the empirical study in the context of this field trip.

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## Chapter 12

# Discovering Waldensian Hospitality: An Exploratory Study

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### Abstract

The *Case Valdesi* (Waldensian Houses) are non-profit structures, managed by the Diaconia Valdese, that propose a value-based and value-driven model of hospitality. There are nine hospitality facilities (six guest houses, two hotels and one hostel) located in different Italian venues, open to individual travellers, families or groups who look for unconventional tourism experiences such as slow-paced visits to artistic and natural attractions, retreats, informal symposia, as well as creative projects. The guest houses welcome international students and volunteers who provide hospitality services. They host refugees and asylum seekers when needed and encourage connections and mutual exchanges among people with diverse life experiences. Moreover, they use the hospitality revenues to support educational and social welfare projects. This chapter will present the Waldensian model of hospitality through a case study based on observations and qualitative data collected during fieldwork, proposing it as one of the possible sources of inspiration for the creation of human destinations.

*Keywords:* Hospitality; religious minorities; Waldensians; solidarity; low-cost travels; sustainability

### Introduction

The concept of hospitality is crucial for understanding the sites and practices of touristic destinations. On the one hand, it does refer to the provision of goods,

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Destination Conscience, 143–156



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doi:10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241013

services and experiences for the guests, while on the other hand, it is a constitutive part of the identity and image of any receptive structure (Lynch et al., 2021). Moreover, hospitality identifies a common ground between hosts and guests that allows their encounter and the establishment of a relationship, as is revealed by the Latin origin of the term (*hospes*, a word used to indicate both host and guest). The etymology also reflects its historical association with places called *hospitals*, which were establishments providing care and shelter to travellers, pilgrims and the sick during the mediaeval era; these institutions, which were often run by religious orders, embodied the spirit of hosting and caring for those in need.

It is important to notice that the concept of hospitality embraces a wide range of forms of reception beyond commercial hospitality, such as institutional, cultural or community hospitality (King, 1995; Reuland et al., 1985). Institutional hospitality refers to hospitality practices within organisations, institutions or public facilities (e.g. educational institutions, government offices, community centres). Cultural hospitality emphasises the practices and customs associated with hosting guests in different cultural contexts, and it often involves rituals, ceremonies and specific codes of conduct related to welcoming, accommodating and honouring guests. Community hospitality involves the collective efforts of a community or neighbourhood in welcoming and accommodating visitors, aiming to create a sense of belonging and to promote a positive image of the community, fostering tourism and supporting the local economy (Lugosi, 2014).

This chapter describes the Waldensian model of touristic hospitality, explaining its main features and showing how it combines elements of all the different forms of hospitality mentioned above. The Waldensians are a religious minority, mainly based in Italy, who have had a historical role as pioneers of Protestantism in Europe and have known a long history of persecution and violence (Stephens, 2015; Tourn, 2008). During the last two centuries, Waldensians have been developing and entrenching their capacity for action in civil society to the benefit of the entire population of the country. Relatively recently, Waldensians' institutional hospitality (e.g. in kindergartens, shelters for vulnerable people, hospitals, retirement homes) was complemented by touristic hospitality, thanks to the use of community-owned facilities for the reception of paying guests.

Given the absence of academic literature on the subject, this chapter offers an exploratory study, aimed at defining the Waldensian model of hospitality – detecting its main characteristics and highlighting the similarities and differences of this model with respect to commercial tourist accommodation models and to the mainstream model of religious hospitality widespread in Italy (Lombarts, 2018; Reuland et al., 1985).

This chapter describes the model of Waldensian hospitality thanks to information and data collected through different research techniques. Desk research and literature review have allowed to reconstruct the historical and cultural features of the model. Moreover, evidence concerning the organisational and value-related features of the model has been obtained through 17 semi-structured interviews conducted with Case Valdesi's managers, employees and volunteers as well as with their guests between January and February 2023. Further evidence



has been collected through participant observation with the support of photographic documentation during two short periods of field research carried out in February 2023 in Casa Cares (a villa-farm in the countryside of Reggello, in Tuscany) and in Foresteria Valdese di Torre Pellice (the guest house located at the heart of the Waldensian headquarters, in the Alps of Piedmont). The triangulation of the different data and evidence collected allows to identify the distinctive features of the Waldensian model of hospitality. The study presented in this chapter is intended as a contribution to the debate on the concept of hospitality and on value-based models of hospitality; it also aims to advance knowledge on the life of the Italian Waldensian community. Given the lack of literature on Waldensian hospitality and the significance of the topic for understanding contemporary trends of touristic offers beside the mainstream models of hospitality, in the conclusion, a few avenues for future research are presented.

## The Waldensian People: A History of Persecution, Mobility and Rootedness

The Waldensians, also known as the Vaudois, are a Christian religious movement with a rich and enduring history. They trace their origins back to the 12th century in the valleys of the Cottian Alps (Val Pellice, Val Chisone and Val Germanasca), west of Turin and very close to the French border. The movement was founded by Peter Waldo (also known as Valdesius, 1140–1206), a merchant from Lyon, France, who renounced his material possessions and dedicated himself to a life of poverty, preaching and promoting a simpler, more direct interpretation of Christianity (De Cecco, 2011; Tourn, 2008). The Waldensians developed as a pauperist and spiritual renewal movement within the Christian *koiné*, emphasising the importance of personal faith, the authority of the *Bible* and the access to the sacred texts in vulgar languages. They faced persecution from the Catholic Church and from several European states throughout their history, with episodes of violent repression, forced conversions and displacements. To escape violence, this ‘people-church’ had to move repeatedly across the Alps, developing a multicultural and multilingual community closely tied to the governments of Protestant states such as Great Britain, the Netherlands and Switzerland (Peyrot, 2022, pp. 23–26; Tourn, 2008). Despite the challenges, the Waldensians endured and spread their beliefs in different parts of Italy, France, Switzerland and Germany, eventually joining the Protestant Reformation in 1532 (Palombaro, 2023). The recognition of civil and political rights came in 1848, when the king of Savoy Carlo Alberto promulgated the *Lettere Patenti* (Luzzi, 1998), while the full recognition of religious freedom came only in 1946, with the Italian Republican Constitution (Stephens, 2015).

Today, the Waldensians continue to exist as a Protestant Christian community open to ecumenical dialogue and their experience is a reference point for other Protestant Churches. Although there are no precise data, about 15,000 Waldensians are based in the Waldensians Valleys in Piedmont, while about 10,000 are spread in several Italian regions, constituting the so-called diaspora. A Waldensian

community (*Colonia Valdense*) has developed in Uruguay and Argentina since 1856 as a consequence of emigration, constituting the third branch of the community (today approximately 13,000 people). Moreover, in some areas of Germany (Baden-Württemberg and Hessen) there are a few hundreds of descendants from the Waldensian families who emigrated there in the Seventeenth century. Since 1975, the Waldensian Evangelical Church is united with the Methodist churches of Italy, and it is governed by the Synod, the general assembly of the representatives of all the local communities that meet every year in Torre Pellice (Fratini & Carpanetto, 2020). The interest of other European Protestant Churches for the Waldensian history and the transnational contacts with the Protestant communities that stemmed from Waldensian emigration in Germany and in the United States contributed to make the Waldensian valleys a destination for religious tourism and the rediscovery of cultural roots (Peyrot, 2022).

Despite its small numbers, the Waldensian community has always been active and clearly recognisable in the Italian political landscape, participating to the liberal uprisings during the 19th century (Palombaro, 2020) and to the anti-fascist *Resistenza* movement during the Second World War (Viallet, 1985). Their positions on the freedom of faith and worship for all religious groups, recognition of civil rights, contrast to all kinds of discrimination and active pacifism have inspired many political struggles of the Republican era (Bein Ricco & Spini, 2016; De Cecco, 2011; Genre, 2017). Recently, they have contributed to the public discussion on sensitive ethical-political issues such as migration, gender and prison regime, expressing progressive views while proactively engaging in many activities and projects within the social sector (e.g. creating humanitarian corridors for refugees in partnership with Catholic associations and with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, realising schemes for the welcoming and integration of refugees and asylum seekers, managing programmes for the protection of women and children victims of domestic violence, guaranteeing assistance and protection of people in prison).

The principles at the basis of the Waldensian political and social engagement reflect the community's identity, forged by the experience of discrimination and violence. Mobility as a means to escape persecution and to spread the evangelical message has been fundamental for the construction of Waldensian identity, a strong and well-rooted sense of belonging that today is in danger of being lost due to the reduced number of members of the Waldensian people church in an overwhelmingly Catholic country as well as to the depopulation and precarious climatic and environmental balance of the alpine Waldensian valleys. One of the pillars of the Waldensian identity is hospitality, directed not only to the members of the three branches of the community and to the descendants of the Waldensian communities but to any person, irrespectively of her/his nationality, gender, sexual orientation or (dis-)ability.

## **From Institutional Hospitality to Touristic Hospitality**

Given the centrality of the experiences of voluntary or forced mobility for the Waldensian populations and the strategic position of the Waldensian valleys on the (geographical and cultural) alpine border connecting the Italian, French-speaking

and German-speaking regions, it is not surprising that hospitality has always played an important role in the history of the church. For centuries, the diffusion of the evangelical message has been achieved by travelling *barbets*, clandestine preachers who, mingling with merchants and storytellers, crossed the alpine borders smuggling censored catechisms and Bibles (Tourn, 2008). The private homes of the faithful as well as the simple buildings and mountain shelters used for worship offered hospitality and protection from the political and Catholic authorities.

During the 19th century, the Waldensians, also thanks to the support of Protestant missionaries who were on good terms with the Savoy, developed in the alpine valleys a distinct system of social institutions for care and education such as parish schools (and boarding schools and houses for the teachers), hospitals, orphanages and parsonages. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the groups of the ‘diaspora’, scattered throughout the Italian territory from Friuli Venezia Giulia to Sicily, sought to garrison the cities where they lived founding charitable committees, institutions and associations or taking them over from other Protestant groups. Thus, the Waldensians acquired over time an appreciable real estate patrimony, further expanded during the 20th century thanks to donations and bequests from people not always belonging to the Waldensian community (Genre, 2017).

After the Second World War, the ecumenical activities aimed at young people of all creeds, nationalities and gender and sexual identities who wanted to discuss topical issues (e.g. pacifism and disarmament, civil and political rights, international crises, volunteer work for disadvantaged peoples) and to share moments of prayer and spirituality reached an international scope. So, in 1947, the Waldensian pastor and progressive politician Tullio Vinay launched a symbolic initiative for the participatory construction of a village for the reconciliation and fraternal love of the peoples: Agape Ecumenical Centre in Prali (Piedmont), which was inaugurated in 1951. Ten years later, as a constructive response to the mafia system that oppressed the local population, Vinay urged volunteers from different countries to build in Riesi (Sicily) a new complex with youth camp facilities, school and kindergarten, Servizio Cristiano (Vinay, 1973). Both Agape and Servizio Cristiano became outstanding examples of institutional/religious hospitality destinations where the relationship between hosts and guests was cemented by a common worldview that, leaving room for different religious and political perspectives and interpretative keys, was grounded on the will to denounce all forms of structural violence and injustice and to act in a transformative way (Rebora, 2021). These structures offer examples of Waldensian institutional hospitality: here, a number of religious (often with an ecumenical spirit) and non-religious associations organise camps and work camps for young peoples. For instance, during the summer 2023, Agape has hosted several camps dedicated to teenagers and to parents and children, a camp on sustainable economy, an international theological camp, but also lesbian, gay and trans-feminist camps.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The camps’ programme is available on Agape’s website: <https://agapecentroecumenico.org/programma/>.

With respect to religious youth camps proposed by Catholic and Orthodox groups, the Evangelical and Waldensian camps stand out for their openness to civil rights issues and the inclusion of all identities (Bein Ricco & Spini, 2016).

These centres, as well as many other facilities used for cultural and worship activities, are directly managed by the Waldensian Church under the control of the Synod. On the other hand, other facilities – e.g. the retirement home Casa delle Diaconesse in Torre Pellice and the Rifugio Re Carlo Alberto in Luserna San Giovanni, specialised in providing assistance to people suffering from dementia – are used for the activities of the Waldensian *Diaconia*, the humanitarian and social service organisation associated with the Waldensian Church in Italy. The Diaconia carries out a wide range of activities and initiatives aimed at providing social and welfare service: support, assistance, education and advocacy for individuals and groups in need, in Italy and abroad (Genre, 2017).<sup>2</sup> Although inspired by a religious worldview, these activities are characterised by a secular approach and are directed *erga omnes*.

### The Network ‘Case Valdesi’

Recently, the organisational structure of the Diaconia has been reorganised according to sectorial rather than to geographical criteria: one of the main changes has been the creation of the network ‘Case Valdesi’ (Waldensian houses) to manage in a coordinated and efficient way the structures and services of touristic hospitality. The network includes nine hotels, guest houses and holiday houses located in different Italian regions. The network’s website ([www.case-valdesi.it](http://www.case-valdesi.it)) provides useful information about the different accommodation facilities and allows users to contact them and make reservations online. It also provides information concerning the sustainable, responsible and solidarity-based tourism approach shared by the hospitality structures belonging to the network. Case Valdesi are connected to the national and international circuits ‘Turismo responsabile’ and ‘Christian Hotels International’. Some of the network’s facilities are present on the online platform [www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com) or on other similar digital services for booking accommodation.

The network has never been studied by scholars working on tourism management or by experts of religious minorities. However, the recent engagement of Diaconia with touristic hospitality is a relevant innovation with respect to mainstream religious-based hospitality in Italy, which is generally associated with Catholic religious orders and associations; it is also a new feature of the long-standing presence of Waldensians within the Italian civil society. In order to shed light on the characteristics of the network, a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants has been realised between January and February 2023. Some interviews have been conducted online, while others have

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<sup>2</sup>The 2021 Social Report of the Waldensian Diaconia is available online: [https://diaconiavaldesi.org/csd/documenti/documenti\\_pagine/Bilanci%20sociali/bilancio%202021%20diaconia%20valdesi\\_WEB.pdf](https://diaconiavaldesi.org/csd/documenti/documenti_pagine/Bilanci%20sociali/bilancio%202021%20diaconia%20valdesi_WEB.pdf).

been conducted during a visit to the network's offices in Florence and during fieldworks conducted in the structures of Reggello and Torre Pellice. The network's director, three managers of the hospitality structures and some workers and volunteers have been asked questions concerning their tasks and responsibilities, the business model, the practices of hospitality and the values that ground them, with special attention to the core values of sustainability, responsibility and solidarity. The information and data collected through the interviews and complemented through desk research have been fundamental to reconstructing the main features of the Waldensian activities of touristic hospitality.

The network Case Valdesi offers different options for visiting mainstream and unusual touristic destinations in different parts of Italy. Three facilities are located in cities of art and are open all year round (Hotel Casa Valdese Roma, Foresteria Valdese di Firenze, Foresteria Valdese di Venezia), while the other six, open for variable periods only during the spring and summer season, are equally distributed between seaside locations (Casa Valdese di Rio Marina, Hotel Casa Balneare Valdese di Pietra Ligure, Casa Valdese di Vallecrosia) and countryside locations (Casa Cares di Reggello, Foresteria Valdese di Torre Pellice, Ostello Villa Olanda in Luserna San Giovanni). All these facilities had always been used for reception and hospitality, particularly for disadvantaged people. For instance, the 16th century building of the Foresteria Valdese di Firenze, Palazzo Salviati, has been used since 1922 to host the Gould Institute, founded by the American benefactress Emily Gould. This institution, which is still active, hosts and provides educational opportunities to orphans or children from underprivileged families, working together with the Juvenile Court of Florence and other public institutions. Another example of the change of use of hospitality structures is offered by Casa Valdese di Vallecrosia, that had been used first as a Waldensian female school and then as a seaside boarding house for students during the summer months and a convalescent home during the rest of the year.

The network Case Valdesi adopts a non-profit business scheme: in addition to facilities' maintenance and staff remuneration, the proceeds are used to support the social and humanitarian activities run by the Diaconia Valdese (Interview 1; Interview 2). On average, Case Valdesi welcome between 25 and 30 thousand guests each year, for a total of about 85–90 thousand overnight stays. The network's Director is responsible for the connection with the Diaconia, for the marketing and for supervising the management of eight out of the nine structures (Interview 1) – only Ostello Villa Olanda is managed independently. Foresteria Valdese di Torre Pellice provides essential services (accommodation and catering) for the activities of the Waldensian Church and for the local communities based in the Waldensian Valleys; therefore, it offers hospitality to the guests who take part in the activities of the Church's governing body (Interview 4). Each of the nine structures has a manager, who is responsible for coordinating the staff (Interview 2; Interview 3).

The number of employees varies depending on the time of year: on average, Case Valdesi employ 85–90 people in summer and 35–40 during winter. Employees are selected on the basis of their curricula and many of them do not belong to the Waldensian community – with the exception of the structures

located in the Waldensian valleys of Piedmont, where the number of Waldensian employees is higher (Interview 1; Interview 4). Beside the employees, who are all employed on regular contracts, in some structures (e.g. Casa Cares) there are international volunteers who assist the employees. They can be recruited through different schemes (voluntary civil service schemes organised by public institutions or by Protestant Churches) and they spend 9 or 12 months working/training at the hospitality structures while learning Italian (Interview 6).

### **Case Studies: Casa Cares and Foresteria Valdese di Torre Pellice**

The two cases offer concrete examples of Waldensian hospitality. Both hospitality structures are located in the countryside, away from the mainstream tourist routes of Tuscany and Piedmont. They attract different target groups of tourists and their connection to the Waldensian religious and cultural identity is different. The two fieldworks have been carried out during the weekends, and they allowed the participant observation of typical activities that are normally undertaken in these hospitality structures. In Casa Cares, there was the annual retreat for a group of coordinators of the activities of the Gruppi Biblici Universitari (GBU), an Evangelical association for the promotion of the reading and study of the Bible in University contexts. In Foresteria di Torre Pellice, the occasion was the celebration of the 17th of February, the commemoration of the attainment of rights and of religious freedom for Waldensians, the most important civic celebration for the life of Waldensian communities.

Casa Cares, also known as Villa I Graffi, is a holiday house but previously had been a huge farm surrounded by olive trees, fruit trees and a dense forested area. Beside residential buildings, there is a former theatre and church that is used as a gym and space for activities. From 1971 to 1975, the farm was bought by a network of Protestant Churches to host the Institute Cares (Centro assistenza ragazzi e studenti), which provided social assistance (education and professional training) to underprivileged children. The property was transferred to the Waldensian Church in 1988 and since then it became a place for encounters and hospitality, where groups of people go for training, exchange, project planning, sport and spirituality experiences. Many Evangelical groups from Italy and other European countries (France, Switzerland, Germany) organise regular meetings and retreats for lay people and clergy people. A type of retreat on the rise is that of yoga, ayurvedic, new age, spirituality and meditation groups that can at times ask challenging requests, especially regarding the meals' compositions (Interview 2). Over the years, Casa Cares has been used for social projects: after 2015, the house has hosted refugees and asylum seekers within the framework of the project 'Mediterranean Hope', the refugee protection programme of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy managed by the Diaconia. During the last years, Casa Cares has started pilot projects of social agriculture for the inclusion of migrants and disadvantaged people (e.g. troubled minors and ex-convicts following reintegration paths) through training in olive cultivation and biological, sustainable farming (Krieg, 2008; Interview 2; Interview 5). The products of the farming are served to the guests of Casa Cares and

the cooks adopt anti-waste practices. The volunteers play an important role in the daily management of the house, assisting the employees with practical tasks – cleaning, farming, setting the rooms (Interview 5; Interview 6). Despite its openness to the world, one of the limitations of Casa Cares is its detachment from the local reality, not only because of the difficult public transport connections: contacts with the local community of Reggello are scarce and sporadic (Interview 2). This limits the capacity of guests and volunteers to benefit from the local offer of cultural and artistic activities (Interview 6). The percentage of Waldensian people among the guests is relatively small and limited to groups linked to the activities of the Church in Tuscany. None of the members of the staff is of Waldensian faith, although one of them descends from a Waldensian family. The microcosm of Casa Cares is multicultural: the two cooks come from Belgium and from Venezuela and one of them is an artist and street musician. The farmer is from Valdarno but has been living in London for a long time and he is Buddhist. The volunteers come mainly from Germany, and some of them belong to Evangelical communities (Interview 5). The characteristics of Casa Cares' hospitality that guests declare to appreciate more are the friendly atmosphere and the caring attitude of the staff (Interview 9).

Foresteria Valdese di Torre Pellice consists of three historical buildings – the former school Casa Beckwith, the former museum Pensionnat and the Cascina – and a more recent building that is used as dining and activities hall, Salone Diodato. The complex lies at the centre of the Waldensian Quarter of Torre Pellice, very close to the Temple, to the Waldensian House and to the Museum, the two buildings harbouring the main religious and cultural activities of the Waldensian minority. The Foresteria can host up to 112 people and it has a catering/restaurant service that is active during the opening season and that can be used for the activities of the Church (e.g. the communitarian lunch of the 17th of February) and of Waldensian associations based in Torre Pellice or in the neighbouring villages. The peak period for the Foresteria is the summer, especially during the week when the annual Synod of the Methodist and Waldensian churches takes place, at the end of August. On this occasion, the representatives of the different Methodist and Waldensian communities meet in Torre Pellice to elect the seven members of the *Tavola* – the main governing body of the Waldensian community – and to discuss the guidelines for the activities of the different organisations and working groups connected to the Waldensian Church. During the opening season, the Foresteria hosts different guests: individuals and groups interested in discovering the Waldensian valleys, often belonging to Protestant Churches or German or American descendants of Waldensian ancestors, and individuals or families, usually elderly people who live in Turin or in other towns of Piedmont looking for a cooler and peaceful summer holiday. The average period of stay is 3–4 days. A third group of guests include people who visit the Pellice Valley and the neighbour valleys for sport – trekkers, cyclists, skiers, but also ice hockey teams meeting the local team (Hockey Club Valpellice Bulldogs) for matches, tournaments or joint training activities (Interview 4). Thanks to the convenient prices during the Spring many groups visit the Foresteria for school trips and parish trips, but their goals and interests are different from the ones of the groups attending Casa Cares: normally, they do not have

training or other kind of self-organised activities, but they look forward to discover the sites of Waldensian history and to visit the museum, library and archives. The groups hosted by the Parish of Torre Pellice are welcomed with refreshments and practical touristic information by an ad hoc committee of the Società del cucito, the glorious association of local women who contribute actively to the Community's life, especially by organising fundraising activities for the Parish and recruiting volunteers for providing service in the Restaurant during the official celebrations (Interview 10). In the Foresteria, the staff is mainly composed of local (Waldensian and non-Waldensian) people from Torre Pellice or from the other villages of the valley, with the noticeable exception of an employee who arrived in Italy thanks to the humanitarian corridors. The restaurant works according to professional standards when there are groups of guests and is run by the cook and the maître (Interview 11).

### **Reconstructing the Waldensian Model of Hospitality**

Before outlining the main features of the Waldensian model of hospitality, it is important to recall briefly what a model of hospitality is and to distinguish its components. First of all, hospitality is a human relationship – made of ‘interpersonal encounters in public space’ (Bell, 2011, p. 138) – whose essence and implications are mysterious and potentially destabilising for the people involved, an ambiguous condition that has been captured by the well known concept of *hospitality* (Derrida, 2000). Hosts share their houses with their guests. Sharing the same spaces can facilitate the encounter, but it can also create incomprehension and conflict. In general, hospitality is performed by different actors: private actors, social actors (non-commercial organisations) and commercial actors (King, 1995, p. 220). These actors tend to offer different kinds of hospitality, establishing different relationships with their guests. However, as is the case with the Waldensian model of hospitality, there can be hybrid models: here, a social actor offers hospitality for paying guests and adopts a non-profit scheme to fund social and humanitarian activities.

According to Reuland et al. (1985), a hospitality model links the three elements of the hospitality offer (Product, Behaviour and Environment) with the elements of guest satisfaction (Needs and Objectives). In her recent contribution to the debate on the conceptualisation of hospitality, Lombarts (2018) claims that this understanding of a hospitality model should be revised in the light of sustainability imperatives. So, the Environment (the specific hospitality facility) should be replaced by the Context (the planet) and new actors should be included into the formula (which ought to consider the interests and needs of direct and indirect stakeholders, i.e. all the people affected by the relationship established between the host and the guest, starting with the host's employees). Hosts' and guests' behaviours should be aligned and strive for sustainability. Furthermore, engagement, ‘the behaviour manifesting from motivational, cognitive and/or motivational drivers’ (Lombarts, 2018, p. 303), is crucial for hosts, guests and stakeholders. Finally, the relationship between hosts and guests is no longer



considered (only) as a transaction, but rather as an experience. This means that not only the commercial interactions, but also the emotions felt by hosts, guests and stakeholders are important elements to be considered. With respect to the hospitality model proposed by Reuland et al., the revised model seems more helpful to analyse hybrid models that could not fit perfectly into the category of commercial hospitality.

This analytic framework can be helpful to study the specific characteristics of the Waldensian model of touristic hospitality that, as noticed before, is different from the institutional hospitality offered for religious activities and camps, in order to interpret the data, information and evidence collected during the research.

*Product:* Waldensian hospitality structures offer different locations, accommodations, and board solutions. Some facilities (Rome, Florence and Venice) are open all year long, while others are bookable only from February or April to October (Reggello, Torre Pellice, Luserna San Giovanni). The holiday houses (Rio Marina, Pietra Ligure, Vallecrosia) are available for the summer season only. The prices vary depending on the facilities – they tend to be higher in the facilities located in the art cities – and on the periods of the year. All the structures propose special prices for individuals and groups or for specific targets. Furniture and services are simple and essential, but functional. Sobriety and reduction of waste characterise the choice of the linens, cleaning products and the food. Indoor and outdoor common spaces are available for the guests in several structures.

*Behaviour:* The network Case Valdesi puts emphasis on the caring and friendly welcoming of the guests. In the welcoming phase, there is no reference to the Waldensian religious and cultural identity and in general there are no attempts to proselytise the guests. The structures are open to any person or group, irrespective of their faith.

*Environment/Context:* Case Valdesi commit themselves to adopt measures in line with sobriety and sustainability and they have implemented several information campaigns and actions (through posters, postcards, infographics, anti-waste and correct recycling signals) to sensitise their guests on the issues connected to environmental and social sustainability (e.g. saving resources and expressing solidarity towards unprivileged groups). Although so far sustainability does not seem to be an essential dimension that tourists consider when they choose Case Valdesi, the adoption and explanation of sustainable measures is generally favourably received by the guests.

*Guests' needs and objectives:* Guests get to know Case Valdesi in different ways and they assign different values to specific aspects of hospitality. This at times can lead to a mismatch between guests' expectations and the touristic offer, especially in the case of bookings made through online portals normally associated to mass tourism by tourists who are not familiar with the European/Italian standards (e.g. some tourists find the lack of air conditioning in the rooms, or the lack of daily cleaning of the rooms unacceptable). Religious belonging or proximity to the Waldensian and Protestant transnational community are factors that play an important role as far as the possibility of getting to know the Case Valdesi network and their offers and initiatives is considered.

*Engagement:* In general, the employees of Case Valdesi show a high degree of engagement: they share and actively support the Waldensian model/vision of hospitality. The volunteers, even those living abroad, tend to maintain this feeling of engagement for long and it happens quite often that they return to visit the structures where they have worked as tourists. Guests tend to express satisfaction for the hospitality received, and it is not infrequent that they keep in contact with the employees; it happens that they go back to the facilities that they have visited and that they use word of mouth to suggest the Waldensian hospitality structures to family, friends and colleagues.

## **Conclusion**

As announced in the introduction, this chapter's main goal is to sketch the contours of the Waldensian model of touristic hospitality, contributing to shed light on the recent emergence of a unique actor within the touristic sector. This descriptive contribution also aims at deepening the understanding of the presence of the Waldensian minority within the Italian society expanding the knowledge on its contribution to the innovation of touristic hospitality towards models that assign great importance to the adoption and implementation of transformative principles such as sustainability, solidarity and inclusion. The collection of data and a comprehensive analysis of the case studies are needed to deepen the understanding of the main features of the model and of its functioning.

To sum up the main findings of this exploratory study, it seems that a distinctive Waldensian model of touristic hospitality is emerging as a consequence of the transformation of institutional hospitality. The coordinated management, leaving room for the specificities that characterise each of the nine facilities of the network Case Valdesi, has been successful in proposing a common vision, achieving visibility and increasing distinctiveness with respect to alternative offers. Over the years, Case Valdesi have developed the capacity to host guests with different needs and to develop collaborations and partnerships with other actors of the touristic sector. However, the challenges ahead demand attention, among them safeguarding the heritage of buildings of historical interest while maintaining high standards of hospitality quality, matching guests' expectations and taking root in local contexts, especially for those hospitality structures located far from the mainstream touristic routes. Other aspects that would require further research are the link between the Waldensian model of hospitality and Waldensian cultural identity as well as the prospects for the resilience of the Waldensian minority offered by the touristic sector in the valleys of Piedmont and in the towns touched by the diaspora. As one of the managers of the Case Valdesi network put it: 'transforming the stranger in a guest is an act of love and gratitude for having freely received God's love' (Interview 1). Thus, it seems that shifting from religious hospitality towards touristic hospitality could produce an impact which is not limited to increasing the opportunities for employment and generating revenues to sustain social projects to the advantage of underprivileged individuals and

groups, but it opens new spaces for elaborating new visions of the relationship between hosts and guests.

## Interviews Mentioned in the Chapter

Interview 1: Interview with a manager of the network Case Valdesi, 5 January 2023.

Interview 2: Interview with a structure manager, 5 January 2023.

Interview 3: Interview with a structure manager, 13 January 2023.

Interview 4: Interview with a structure manager, 24 January 2023.

Interview 5: Interview with a worker of the network Case Valdesi, 11 February 2023.

Interview 6: Interview with five volunteers, 11 February 2023.

Interview 7: Interview with a worker of the network Case Valdesi, 12 February 2023.

Interview 8: Interview with a worker of the network Case Valdesi, 12 February 2023.

Interview 9: Interview with a member of GBU, 11 February 2023.

Interview 10: Interview with a citizen of Torre Pellice, 17 February 2023.

Interview 11: Interview with a worker of the network Case Valdesi, 17 February 2023.

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## Chapter 13

# Exposing Conscience and Experience Among Hindu Pilgrims in India: Interfacing Sacred and Profane

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### Abstract

The notion of deeper experiences of Hindu devotees inspired by divine images and sacred places has roots in the historical past, going back to the Vedic period (ca. 2500 BCE), where we find rich literature on performances, rituals and merits of pilgrimages. Considered the bridge between human beings and divinities, the experiences received are the resultant ‘blissful fruit’ (*phala*) that helps the spiritual healing of pilgrims through awakening conscience and understanding the manifested meanings, symbolism, purposes and gains. This system can be viewed concerning the ‘texts’ (the mythology, ancient text and related narratives) and the ‘context’ (contemporality and living tradition). These rules and performances have regional perspectives of distinctions, but they also carry the sense of universality, i.e. locality (*sthānic*) and universality (*sarvavyāpika*) interfaces. The devout Hindus reflect their experiences in conception, perception, reception and co-sharedness – altogether making the wholistic network of belief systems, i.e. the religious wholes in Hindu society. This chapter deals with four aspects: the historical and cultural contexts, the meanings and merits received, the motives and the journey and interfacing experiences. The study is based on the experiential and questionnaire-based exposition and interviews of pilgrims at nine holy places during 2015–2019 on various festive occasions and is illustrated with ancient texts and treatises. The sacred cities included are Prayagraj,

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Destination Conscience, 157–170



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doi:10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241014

Varanasi, Gaya, Ayodhya, Vindhyachal, Ganga Sagar, Chitrakut, Mathura Vrindavana and Bodh Gaya.

*Keywords:* Conscience; cultural context; experiential exposure; Hindu outlook; pilgrimages; ritual landscapes; sacred and profane; sacred time; *tīrtha-yātrā*; Sanātana Dharma

## Background and Fulfilling the Quest: Cultural Context

Since the historical past in Hinduism (i.e. ‘Sanātana Dharma’, referring to the continuity and sustenance of the ancient tradition), the five religious duties (*dhārmic kartavya*, called *pañcha kriyā*) form the traditional minimal moral-duty practices. These duties are *upāsana* (worship of divine images, local to universal), *utsava* (festive celebration, on special days, related to astronomical happenings and associated folklore and glorifying stories), *dharma* (moral duties, making a pathway linking humanity to divinity), *tīrtha-yātrā* (pilgrimage to sacred sites and performance of rituals) and *samskara* (rites of passage, life cycle rituals and related celebrations). The ancient tradition of pilgrimage, called *tīrtha-yātrā* (‘tour of the sacred fords’), connoted pilgrimage with taking a holy dip in the water bodies as a purificatory rite. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* of the *Rig Veda* (7.15), dated ca. 2500 BCE, mentions: ‘Flower-like the heels of the wanderer, His Body growth and is fruitful; All his sins disappear, Slain by the toil of his Journeying’ (cf. Bhardwaj, 1973, p. 3). Pilgrimage is an understanding of meaning within the sacredscape through its imageability and expressive qualities. This, together with the simultaneous gain of a ‘moral sense of nature’, has been the ‘major discovery of the great seers and sages of the past. The system of pilgrimage is a “whole of reality” where holiness gets resorted in a *field* that is latently alive, filled with expression and meaning, and certainly deserves human reverence’ (Singh, 2011, p. 21).

In the context of life, pilgrimage involves all the matter, substance and consciousness of human beings in its drama of eternal journey (*ātma-yātrā*). It embodies the domain of divine life; only those with potential can experience and understand the meaning. Meaning is a form of being, and we need an eye of *clairvoyance* – ‘Clear Seeing’. However, ‘let them be trivialized by a secular society that destroys the inner meaning of everything it touches. But the reality is there’ (Berry, 1992, p. 131). The most common ritual act in any form of Hindu pilgrimage is *darshan* (‘auspicious glimpse’) taken by pilgrims. The *darshana* has at least three categories: *samparka* (direct contact, touch), *driṣṭigat* (visual, without touch) and *dūrasta* (seeing from a distance). For *samparka darshana*, very long queues of people waiting are common at the important temples/shrines (cf. Stanley, 1992, p. 85).

In all the happenings and rituals, the concept of *darshana* is inextricably linked to interconnecting devotees and divinity, especially in the Hindu pilgrimage (*tīrtha-yātrā*). One cannot easily understand how a Sanātana Hindu experiences pilgrimage without a deep appreciation for the not-so-obvious concept of *darshana*, which literally means ‘sight or vision’; however, this denotes a more

profound spiritual feeling (*ādhyātakima anubhūti*), which can be realised and revealed but in no way easily expressed explicitly. Of course, through symbolic expressions, anecdotes and stories, this can be shared and understood to a certain extent. In the Sanātana Hindu tradition, the direct encounter, or seeing/visioning, of the Divine (image) is the ideal that paves the pathway to pilgrimage. Similarly, Hindu devotees want to see holy men and women, holy shrines and images abiding in the ancient sanctums and surrounded by auxiliary deities. Ultimately, they want to see God, to have a personal, life-changing, bliss-engendering, *karma*-eradicating vision of Truth within themselves. The pilgrim also wants to be seen by God, to concede and expose himself/herself before God and thus to be known to Him and receive blessings. *Darshana* is the essence of every pilgrim's journey, the rationale, the ordained rules of the religious texts and the mundane and sacred goals.

A pilgrimage journey is a hierarchic rite of passage in Hindu traditions; however, it is also more than that. Commonly, it involves three stages of function: *initiation* (from awareness to start), *liminality* (the journey itself and experiences) and *reaggregation* (the homecoming). These stages refer to the march from mundane to sacred over time and ultimately receiving some deep sense of feelings. The human quest to get peace and eternal satisfaction and an experience of the manifestation of place encourages the *initiation*, which further advances the sense of faith and the wish for a sacred journey. The stage of *liminality* later develops into *experientiality* leading to the preparation for transmigration (*moksha*) in a broad context (cf. Singh, 1992, pp. 39–40, 2013, pp. 50–51). However, pilgrimages can be classified according to different motives, which generally vary from one sect to another and from one society to another. After having experiential feelings and religious gain, pilgrims return to their everyday life, and in the end, they expose their memories and emotions to society. This further promotes awareness and the wish for pilgrimage to other community members (Singh, 1987, p. 525526): This way, it forms a cyclic frame of travel, a *pilgrimage maṇḍala* (Fig. 13.1).

An example of the Hindu outlook on pilgrimage (cf. Fig. 13.2) would explain the above issue. From a believer (person) to the Ultimate, at least four layers exist but are interconnected through sacred space, sacred time and sacred functions (rituals) and functionaries. In a theological context, this is the eternal will to interconnect a person to the Ultimate; while in a social context, it refers to the march from individualism to universal humankindness. In this model, a multi-faceted approach should be applied, together with experiential understanding, to reach some meaningful and conclusive findings reflecting the intricacies and representing the cultural intricacies.

In the case of Rajasthan (the western part of India), it is noted that most pilgrims interviewed held that visiting *tīrthas* (sacred fords) does not give ultimate *moksha* (liberation from transmigration); but most agreed that it was of supreme merit. In the light of textually expressed values, it was astonishing to read how universal the idea was that bathing (*snāna*) in a pilgrimage site was of little spiritual or sometimes religious significance. At the same time, generosity was held up as especially efficacious and meritorious, as noted by Gold (1988, p. 263):

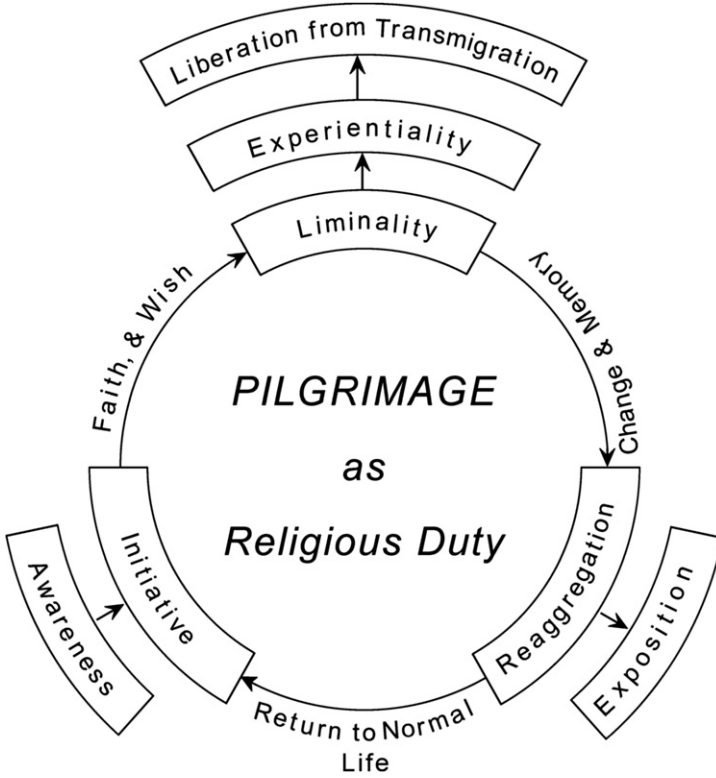


Fig. 13.1. Pilgrimage as Religious Duty (After Singh, 2013, p. 50).

Pilgrimage helps to loosen all kinds of bonds, but not because the waters of *tīrthas* cleanse the results of bad deeds from men's souls; not one person among my informants evinced any trust in such reputed powers of *tīrthas*' baths. Rather, pilgrimage helps because of the cumulative effect of being removed from daily routines and attachments at home, of taking many powerful *darshana* of the gods, of voluntarily enduring hardships on the road, and above all, of putting out money both for the sake of these experiences (the initial fare) and during them (the constant drain of *rupees* and *paisa* into the outstretched hands of *paṇḍās* and beggars) decidedly good for the soul. The effect is one of lightening; the returning pilgrim should be thinner and poorer.

The above study concludes that the pilgrims accept the view that the highest goal of pilgrimage is not simply 'going to the place' but the encounter with the divine spirit that is more likely to occur there and experienced through a variety of rituals. But, of course, stress is also placed on inner resolution (the 'pilgrimage



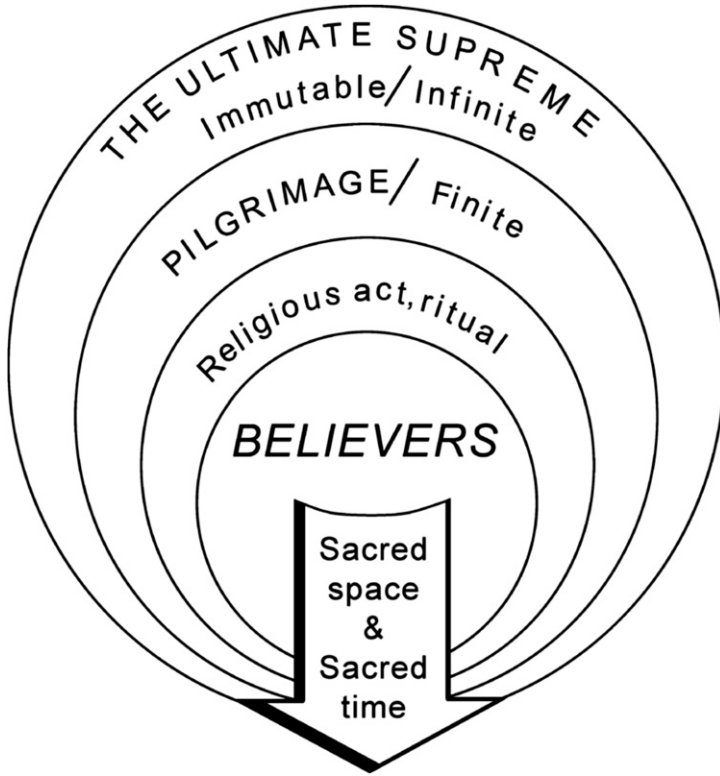


Fig. 13.2. Hindu Outlook on Pilgrimage (After Singh, 2013, p. 51).

within', *ātma-yātrā*) that ought equally to accompany an earthly or a spiritual quest as the source of a pilgrimage's – and a life's – greatest blessings (*puṇya*) and accomplishments.

In common sense, gazing at the divine images (*darshana*) is considered the central act of *tīrtha-yātrā*. The concept of pilgrimage in Hinduism has metaphoric explanations; besides being a means of the physical act of visiting the holy places, the act also implies to mental and moral code of purification (cf. *Skanda Purāṇa-Revā Khaṇḍa*, 227.23). Faith, firm determination and mental preparation are necessary for the pilgrimage; therefore, any time is good for it (*ibid.*: 227.20). One of the unique forms of manifestation of a sacred site is its close association with a particularly holy person (cf. Bharati, 1970, p. 89), or a deity. The *Yajur Veda* (16.42) described Lord Shiva himself as *tīrtha*; therefore, His resort city which He 'never-forsaken' (*avimukta*) becomes the most sacred site of pilgrimage: the city of Kashi (also called Varanasi, or Banaras) (Eck, 1982, p. 28). Body-place symbolism also appears concerning holy places, that is, how through yogic and *tāntric* function, one can receive the merit of a 'holy place', as discussed in the case of

Kashi (Kāshī *Khaṇḍa*, KKh, 5.25). This way, gazing at the holy person, the deity or his associated site is assumed to be an actual visit to a *tīrtha*.

## Meanings and Merit Received: The Textual Context

The notion of *tīrtha* symbolises at least four connotations in ancient Sanātana Hindu literature: (i) a *route* going to a place where one can receive manifesting power (cf. *Rig Veda* 1.169.6; 1.173.11), (ii) the *bank of a river* where one can take holy dip as a rite of purification (cf. *Rig Veda* 8.47.11; 1.46.8), (iii) a *sacred site* wherein lies the power of manifestation (cf. *Rig Veda* 10.31.3) and (iv) the religious territory which became sacred due to religious activities and work of the god/s (cf. *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 18.9). In all these connotations, spatial dimension lies in the background; thus, they reflect the cultural characteristics imposed upon varieties of mythologies referring to possessing spiritual power that devotees pray to receive as blissful merit (*phala*). Working diligently with themselves, the pilgrims observe their *yogas* (controlled physical path to reach) and their *sādhanas* (disciplined mental approach of awakening) so that their seeing may be pure and untainted. Traditional questors' practices of *snāna*, the sacred bath, especially at the confluences of holy rivers, and *muṇḍana*, shaving of the head, are part of attaining that purity and ultimately receiving the blissful merit.

The *Atharva Veda* (18.4-7), dated ca. 2000 BCE, says one can get released from suffering and troubles by performing pilgrimage; however, one must follow the ordained rules and moral conduct, supported by described rituals, austerity and behaviour. Other text of the post-Vedic period mentions that pilgrimage is a process of soul healing and provides peace, easiness and relief from poverty. The ancient texts (ca. CE 6th–12th centuries) describe meanings manifested therein and the inherent motives and messages (cf. TA-G, 1957, p. 63). To get the merit (*puṇya*) of pilgrimage, one should control sexual desire, anger, greed, tasty food, jealousy, pride and distorted mind (the *Devī Bhāgavata*, 8.8, cf. TA-G 1957, p. 749). According to the *Padma Purāṇa* (19.10-12), the ultimate aim of Hindu life is to link to the divine power, which will be received through visitation (*darshana*), associated rituals (*pūjās*) and above all, the pilgrim's conscience and awakened thought that are shaped and regulated by their belief systems.

According to the *Kāshī Khaṇḍa* (of *Skanda Purāṇa*, 6), the metaphysical notion of a sacred place denotes the path of truthfulness, forgiveness, control of mundane wishes, following the prescribed moral codes, and simplicity. In continuance, the texts also mention that one gets the same merits acquired by pilgrimage and associated rituals by donating to the needy, discontentment, celibacy and humbleness. By inference, pilgrimage also connotes cultivating an awakening conscience, patience, clairvoyance of thought and a compassionate mind. Having a dip in the holy river or water pool would provide religious merit if intentions and acts are good; moreover, the resultant fruits will be pure and spiritual.

Food restriction is essential to the pilgrimage to keep the purity of mind, eternal satisfaction and a healthy body. In Hindu tradition, food plays a

significant role in the system of religious performances and rituals; the food offered to the deities (*prasāda*) is thought to have the salvific quality that bestows considerable spiritual merit, purifying body, mind and spirit, thus in a way considered as a giver of spirituality that has a special place in the cultural traditions and lifestyles (Singh, 2023b, pp. 122–123). According to the classical religious texts of Hinduism, three broad categories of food are described for health, nutrition and interrelated lifestyles and resultantly overall effects: *sāttvika* (promoting goodness), *rājasika* (stimulating passion), *tāmasika* (fostering ignorance). Of these, *sāttvika* is prescribed during pilgrimages, representing the qualities of sweetness, softness and nourishment, and promoting vitality, strength and cheerfulness, illustrated with pure vegetarian foods, milk and fresh vegetables (Singh, 2023a, p. 4).

While performing a pilgrimage, one must completely avoid greediness, selfishness, denial, unkindness and a wicked mind. The five types of people who never receive the resultant merit (*puṇya*) from pilgrimage include non-believers, those with a cruel or doubtful mind, detectives and those practicing detective-related inauspicious activities (cf. TA-G, 1957, pp. 63–64). The *Padma Purāṇa* (41.12, 59.11, and 63.14) also prescribes that during the pilgrimage, the following also be treated as attributes of pilgrimage and treated similarly to receive the merits: a sage, mother, father, guru, husband and wife (in case of a married couple).

## Motives and the Journey: Experiential Exposure

People form a sense of themselves and their environmental surroundings at a variety of scales (*spatialities*), time frames (*sequentialities*), functions (*activities*), mobilities (e.g. *pilgrimages*), quests (*sacrality*) and mental states (*belief systems*) (Singh et al., 2022, p. 135). At the local scale, people first experience the spirit and power of places (*genius loci*) and then proceed to share this spirit and power at larger scales (Singh & Rana, 2020, p. 97). Generally, travel to holy places has been considered a pilgrimage with a strong religious or spiritual motivation, and often involves long journeys from distant places on foot to arrive at a sacred site. Although the goal of such travel is to *see and be seen by* the deity [and saints] and seek blessings, pilgrims also engage in ordained rituals considered necessary by priests or religious functionaries for travel. These religious functionaries help the pilgrims be firm in their motives and merits (cf. Singh & Rana, 2023). This is the way the profane attributes support the sacred; thus, they become part of the sacred and help to regulate the cycle of sacred-profane reciprocally. Touristic pilgrimage develops when the latter dominates in this system, promoting mundane motives. In this context, the famous proclamation of *a pilgrim being half-tourist and the tourist being half-pilgrim* is reasonably accepted.

A survey conducted in 1972-73 interviewing 500 pilgrims noted that more than half the pilgrims had come to Kashi (one of the holiest cities in India) for special performances, especially for purification and ancestral worship; these respondents exemplify the typical pilgrims who travel to a distant place because the object of devotion is located there (Vidyarthi et al., 1979, p. 136). Similarly, another report

(2019) was made by the author that supported the above observation, indicating that this seat of pilgrimage has still continued its sacred character that evolved in the historical past. Although the journey may be meaningful, the primary reason for movement is merely to get from one place to another (i.e. from home to the pilgrimage place) to acquire religious merit (*puñya*). However, due to its particular value for ancestral rites, just over 12% of the interviewed pilgrims reported that they undertook a circumambulation (*parikramā*) and/or associated with post-funeral ceremonies and some secondary-level religious activities. Similarly, pilgrims often have multiple reasons for their sacred journey, including special performances like fulfilling the vow to relieve suffering or possessing evil spirits (Singh, 1997, p. 206). Since the ancient past, a passion for place attachment to receive divine merit has been a basic norm in Hindu tradition. A sacred place as a 'storied place' is eulogised in Hindu mythology, or oral epics, with divine connotation – myth and *terra firma* intersect there (Singh & Rana, 2021, p. 139). Most of the holy and pilgrimages places are such distinct places recoding mythologies, folklores and beliefs about their association with gods and their activities (*hīlās*). In Hindu tradition, such journeys are primarily for religious or spiritual gain; of course, pilgrimage is also supported by the profane (secular, mundane), and after a complex web of rituals, the profane gets transformed into 'sacred'. This cycle is regulated in a spiral manner.

Recent surveys of pilgrims in the nine pilgrimage cities of north India (see Table 13.1) clearly show the predominance of spiritual merit as the main object (i.e. over half of the respondent pilgrims). However, this predominant motive varies according to the unique character or personality of the holy place as narrated in the religious treatises (cf. Table 13.2), e.g. the main motive to visit Gaya, famous for ancestral rites, is ancestral ritual (i.e. 65%), while Vindhyaachal, as a regional centre of goddess worship, following the local and folk tradition, is popular for tonsure and fulfilling vows (i.e. 48% of respondent pilgrims). The holy places of Prayagraj, Varanasi, Ayodhya and Mathura are eulogised as sacred land associated with the various acts of a distinct divinity; therefore, at these places, more than half of respondents expressed motives to have spiritual merits (cf. Table 13.1). In some places, where natural scenery like hills, falls, rapids and caves exist near the holy places, side-by-side touristic pilgrimage becomes more common in comparison to other places, for example, Bodh Gaya, which is a place related to the Buddha's enlightenment that also attracts pilgrims for peace and union with nature spirit (cf. Tables 13.1 and 13.2).

Along with mountains, water is one of the most sacred symbols in Hinduism. Water sites, in the form of rivers (*tīrthas*) and the confluence of those rivers, are considered sacred, and bathing in these water bodies allows a person to experience cosmic energy and be purified from sin (Singh, 2020). Of all the rivers in India, the seven most holy or sacred rivers are the Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvārī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu (Indus) and Kāverī rivers, making the whole of India intensely sacralised. This has powerfully promoted the development of a huge mass of sacred places along these rivers and replicating of other sacred places from various parts of India in the frame of spatial transposition. Furthermore, small ponds (*kuṇḍas*) and lakes are also considered sacred (Singh et al., 2022, p. 138).

Table 13.1. Motives of Pilgrims in the Nine Holy Places of India (Number in %).

Se	Main Purpose/Gain ( <i>lābha</i> )	1, Pr	2, Va	3, Ga	4, Ay	5, Vi	6, Gs	7, Ch	8, Ma	9, Bg
1.	Spiritual merit ( <i>puṇya</i> )	52	58	12	53	23	17	11	37	12
2.	Blessing of holy men ( <i>āshisha</i> )	11	10	8	21	7	10	13	13	17
3.	Ancestral ritual ( <i>shrādha</i> )	14	14	65	9	9	15	4	–	2
4.	Tonsure ( <i>muṇḍana</i> )	4	4	5	2	28	6	3	–	–
5.	Fulfilling vows ( <i>manautī</i> )	3	2	2	2	20	9	8	3	3
6.	Liberation ( <i>moksha</i> )	4	4	3	3	1	32	12	13	3
7.	Self-peace ( <i>shānti</i> )	4	2	1	4	1	2	18	15	32
8.	Relief from suffering ( <i>mukti</i> )	5	1	1	3	2	4	26	6	11
9.	Donation/charity ( <i>dāna</i> )	1	2	2	1	1	3	3	4	8
10.	Touristic pilgrimage ( <i>yātrā</i> )	2	3	1	2	8	2	2	9	12
	Percentage of respondents	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Total respondents (N)	380	432	320	418	290	113	120	149	212

Source: Personal surveys and interviews in different periods of festivities, 2015–2019.

Note: **Pr** Prayagraj, **Va** Varanasi, **Ga** Gaya, **Ay** Ayodhya, **Vi** Vindhyachal, **Gs** Ganga Sagar, **Ch** Chitrakut, **Ma** Mathura Vrindavana, **Bg** Bodh Gaya. For the religious characteristics and manifested merits of these holy cities, see Table 13.2.

This observation supports the ancient epic of the *Mahābhārata* (13.108.16-18), which states: ‘Just as certain limbs of the body are purer than others, so are certain places on the earth more sacred – some on account of their situation, others because of their sparkling waters, and others because of the association or habitation of saintly people’. These cantos also mention the generalised and distinctive rules, the ways and the codes of conduct to be followed during the pilgrimage at the various places, as well as the hierarchy and degree of sanctity of various places. One pilgrim respondent said: ‘The objective of pilgrimage takes my concern for more meaning when I realize the purpose of life. Life is meant to become free from the wheel of *samsara*, which means the continuous cycle of birth and death. It is for making spiritual advancement and to perceive our real identity as human beings’ (Singh & Rana, 2021, p. 142).

Table 13.2. Religious Characteristics of the Nine Holy Places of India.

Se	Holy Place	Affinity With the Deity/God; Sacred Attribute	Textually Defined Religious Characteristics and Merits
1.	<b>Pr</b> , Prayagraj	3-rivers confluence: the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Sarasvati rivers; Sage Bhardwaj; every year, one-month fair	Release from sin and purification; pleasing the ancestors
2.	<b>Va</b> , Varanasi	Shiva Vishvanatha, Annapurna, Bhairava; the Ganga River;	Release from sin and purification; pleasing the ancestors
3.	<b>Ga</b> , Gaya	Vishnu/ancestors' spirit; the Sun god; the Phalgu river	Blessings of the ancestors and settling of their spirit into the divine realm
4.	<b>Ay</b> , Ayodhya	Rama – birth, childhood, capital; the Sarayu River	Release from sin and purification; pleasing the ancestors
5.	<b>Vi</b> , Vindhyachal	Goddess Vindhyavasini, together with Ashtabulja, and Kali; the Ganga River	Blessings from the Goddesses for the overall well-being of the family, especially the children
6.	<b>Gs</b> , Ganga Sagar	Sage Kapila and sacred ocean, where the Ganga merges into the Indian Ocean	Blessing for getting release from transmigration; purification
7.	<b>Ch</b> , Chitrakut	Rama – past ca. ten years while in exile	Austerity, peace, solace
8.	<b>Ma</b> , Mathura Vrindavana	Krishna-Radha; sacred groves; the Yamuna River	Blessings for overall well-being; peace in the family
9.	<b>Bg</b> , Bodh Gaya	The Buddha – get enlightened here; the Niranjana (Phalgu) River	Self-awakening, peace and contemplation

*Source:* Based on various religious treatises, dating from ca. CE 6th to 12th centuries.

## Hindu Pilgrims' Experiences: Interfaces and Stepping

Based on experiential, participatory and expositional information, Hindu pilgrims' experience should be theorised in the interlocking network of phase-wise changes regarding interfaces among power, legitimacy and reciprocity (cf. Fig. 3, cf. [Singh & Rana, 2021](#)). Here, 'power' refers to the relationship among cultural

actors in which one cultural actor (a) can get another (b) to make some pilgrimage that ‘b’ would not have otherwise done. The strength and bases for *power* are maintained by the ‘Continuity of tradition’ through cultural traits (i.e. Life-Culture) – identified as A in Fig. 13.3. In addition, the power of cultural continuity serves as a ‘coercive force’ maintained by the three forms of religious incentives: material, solidary and purposive.

*Legitimacy* is conceived as a generalised perception or adaptability of the religious actions of the social groups that are desirable, proper or appropriate within some traditionally and culturally constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and code of conduct. This is represented by the system of tourism-recreation in the purview of Life-World – shown as B in Fig. 13.3. The bases for legitimacy can be individual, organisational and/or institutional.

*Reciprocity* is a transformative channel interlinking the passage of ‘succession-sustenance-sustainability’ and maintains counter actions between the pilgrims (sacred), and the functionaries (profane) involved therein, i.e. it influences the other and is influenced by the other; this way, this process is constantly going on in the frame of a spiritual quest under the belief systems (i.e. Life-Philosophy) – shown as C in Fig. 13.3. These three together make the platform of ‘Life state’. The last one influences the dormant condition (*asakriyātmaka*, (1); which passes through the state of discretionary (*ātmanirṇayātmaka*, (2); reaches to a set of desires (self-searching; *ātmānusaṅdhānātmaka*, (3). These three mental states will further form three successive conditions: difficult (*ākṛāntya-janya*, (4); dominant (*anubhava-janya*, (5); and dependent (*āshrita-janya*, (6). And thus, ultimately, the cycle reaches the resultant ‘definitive’ (revelation, *anubhūti*, (7). In the six phases of passing the mental state and condition, pilgrims ultimately receive the final form of faith-healing, i.e. from initiation of ‘realization’ (*anubhava*, as physical experience) to the final state of ‘revelation’ (*anubhūti*, spiritual gain).

Life State	Mental state	Condition	Ultimate
<b>A</b> Continuity of Tradition: Cultural Traits (Life-Culture)	3 Desire (self-searching) <i>ātmānusaṅdhānātmaka</i>	4 Difficult <i>ākṛāntya-janya</i>	<b>7</b> Definitive <i>anubhūti</i> (revelation)
<b>B</b> Tourism-Recreation: Socio-Economic (Life-World)	2 Discretionary <i>ātmanirṇayātmaka</i>	5 Dominant <i>anubhava-janya</i>	
<b>C</b> Spiritual Quest: Belief-systems (Life-Philosophy)	1. Dormant <i>asakriyātmaka</i>	6 Dependent <i>āshrita-janya</i>	

Fig. 13.3. Hindu Pilgrims’ Experiences and Interfaces (After Singh & Rana, 2021, p. 144).

## Concluding Remarks

An earlier study concludes that devout Hindus were motivated by spiritual ideals rather than curiosity or hedonism, as observed in the case study of pilgrims in the Kumbha Mela in 2013, held at Prayagraj. It is noted that motives articulated by participants imbued them to attend the pilgrimage and encompassed a need for *spiritual connectivity* (devotion) and *spiritual knowledge attainment* (from saints). It was noted that ‘in many ways, the pilgrimage was a coping strategy for the existential challenges faced by participants and an opportunity to hope for a better future. The activities undertaken by participants were aligned with the articulated motives. Two key activities that occupied participants’ time and endeavours entailed voluntary services are – ‘*servicing self*’ which included engaging in prayer, meditation, bathing in the revered and holy rivers (geopiety), listening to spiritual discourses, as well as *servicing others*’ (Buzinde et al., 2014, p. 1). Descriptions of the experiential component encompassed experiences of *spirituality* and *social unity*. The former entailed accounts of experiencing the divine; a level of geopiety underpinned these expressions. The latter included sentiments of solidarity (Buzinde et al., 2014, p. 16).

Like similar studies, the meaning and value of insights and revelations from Hindu pilgrimages can be assumed by being open to messages received and voices from ordinary and extraordinary sources, bearing witness to the inhuman and struggling through the stages of transcendental learning to awaken to cosmic consciousness. This process connects one to the legacy of humanity and the realm of divinity and thus may take ownership of one’s role as a global citizen (Tamashiro, 2018, p. 8).

Ongoing pilgrimage is a learning cycle through awe, wonder and deep experiences that enables pilgrims to reach transcendence (cf. Ki, 2022, p. 16). It is also noted that experiencing exceptional psychological processes during the pilgrimage is common. These experiences also tend to lead to positive long-term psychosocial effects, as in the case of Camino de Santiago (cf. Lavric et al., 2022, pp. 9–10). The hardship pilgrims faced was probably due to the explicit motivation for some pilgrims to walk barefoot, run or crawl. Many of them valued the journey for the positive feelings they experienced. However, these were not directly associated with merits (Preston, 1992). However, certain hardships and austerities were self-imposed and intended; therefore, people were ready to conceive of any difficulties along the journey as potentially merit-yielding. For most pilgrims, ‘the experiences of pilgrimage, particularly hardships, were valued simply because they were encountered rather than being consciously sought out’ (Nordin, 2011, p. 668).

How *spiritual magnetism* at a sacred site derives from human concepts and values via historical, geographical, cultural and faith forces also needs special attention. Turner and Turner’s (1978) analogy that ‘pilgrimage is exteriorised mysticism while mysticism is an interior pilgrimage’ needs detailed investigation. Such study may be benefited from the use of alchemy – after all, we need to understand the ultimate reality and place of human beings in the cosmos. Following Geertz’s (1983) insight into ethnological writings as ‘fictions of both of



another cultural reality and their mode of production', Gold's (1988) great work of exploration and deep thought on Rajasthani pilgrimage combines intimate sensing, experiential feelings and religious understanding and finally provides a unique account of perigrinology – leading to understanding Destination Conscience. She says: 'Mostly I tell what people did and what they said about what they did to each other and to me' (Gold's, 1988, p. xiii). This chapter may lead to a new path to an extent on how the human science paradigm (*Geist-wissenschaften*) can be used to achieve an explanation and finally to seek understanding (*Verstehen*) of pilgrimage studies in India.

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## Chapter 14

# Participation as Key to Destination Conscience

*Antje Monshausen*

Tourism Watch, Germany

**Harald Pechlaner:** Ms. Monshausen, what do you personally understand by the concept of ‘conscience’? And what does it mean in the context of travelling?

**Antje Monshausen:** Your concept focuses very much on the perspective of the traveller and his behaviour in connection to the destination. So let us look at that, I think I would just leave it at an imperative: Travel in a way that you would like others to visit you. If you imagine how you want to be treated as a host, you have the chance to become a good guest, too. The origin of empathy in tourism lies in encounters between travellers and hosts.

The context of Destination Conscience goes even beyond that. It actually means that you think about the tourist activity from the point of view of the hosts, the communities and the destinations. It is a radically different approach to what we have actually done in the tourism industry since the beginning of international tourism. We used to plan tourism from the travellers’ point of view and understood destinations just as a physical locality, not as a living space.

**Harald Pechlaner:** Thinking about the tourist activity from the host’s perspective, does that then mean reflecting something like a conscience to the guest? What is it all about? Is one a role model for the guest and how can one show the conscience in the end? Is that simply acting as a role model or is that a specific way of communicating? How would you proceed if we actually think of the tourism activity from the host’s perspective – which I agree with – how would you proceed?

**Antje Monshausen:** I think that this question is difficult because it focuses on how a host should behave in order to influence the guest’s behaviour. I think that is already a wrong approach because one of the central components in such a different tourism

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doi:10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241015

model is partnership. How do you develop empathy for one other? How do you put yourself in the other person's shoes? How do you derive your own actions, your own behaviour on vacation from this? I believe that this requires a great deal of reflection, including reflection on one's own privileges as a traveller. On the other hand, it also requires a certain tolerance for mistakes, a certain curiosity on the part of the hosts towards the guests. They have to acknowledge that the guests are coming from a different reality and have a different perspective, and they should be curious about that, too. It reminds me of something that Nina Sahdeva from 'fair unterwegs' said in an interview. She asks us to be honest in how far we are open to welcome tourists and to invite them to authentic activities. Imagine you are living in a very overcrowded destination. Honestly, when a tourist asks you something, most of us hope the question will pass quickly. Hopefully, it's just a question of how to get from A to B. But as a traveller yourself, do you want to be invited to a private dinner? Who among us invites a tourist to a private dinner in our cities? That happens extremely rarely. So, to some extent, we have to accept that all social interactions in the destination have an economic context in tourism. It is not a 'normal' interaction among equals. I doubt whether it can be implemented in commercial tourism at all. The concept of Destination Conscience already exists in the non-commercial tourism sector. Community partnerships, exchanges, university exchanges, for example, all these things are tourism, and we have an honest interest in the other. We have a willingness to let ourselves be questioned on our positions. But in commercial tourism, on vacation, do we really want that? The tourist product today has become a clinically clean, anti-septic process in which you do not really want to be surprised anymore or even challenged because normal life is exhausting enough, and that's actually what you want to get away from. I have my doubts whether that can be combined with the commercial product. Nevertheless, this could be discussed.

**Harald Pechlaner:** I find this antiseptic process of the tourist experience very interesting and somehow accurate: developing empathy is exhausting, as you say, and nobody actually wants the stress.

**Antje Monshausen:** I would be more optimistic with the travellers – they are really interested and curious, but don't realise that real authentic experiences are not easy to get. When I wrote my diploma thesis in Bolivia 20 years ago, I heard a sentence that has accompanied me very much since I have been dealing with tourism criticism. A tourism entrepreneur told me that people want to know how farmers live but they do not want to live like farmers: I want to know it, but I do not want to feel and experience it myself. Now we have a new group of travellers who say that they actually want to feel it but of course only to a certain extent. I want my bed to be two metres long, even though the local population is smaller than Europeans are and the beds are 1.80m long. I still want to have a big bed. Even with this new generation of travellers, I still believe that the interest in authenticity has its limits.

**Harald Pechlaner:** During a presentation at ITB Berlin (the world's leading travel trade show), I said that tourism is actually the perfect distraction industry: we distract ourselves from our problems. Everyone has enough problems, and you do not want to have any on vacation. Holidays should be as antiseptic as possible

and not complex or costly. Developing the personal dimension or empathy: these are all small acts of energy. If you develop partnership and empathy for each other, it means more than having satisfied the requirement that the bed must be 2m long. Then the question is how far can you go, how far may you go? This is perhaps also a question of conscience: how far do I want to go? 'How far do I have to go?' says the commercial provider, whereas the non-commercial provider says, 'how far can I go?'. I feel there is a gap in between. I am not sure what a travel conscience looks like in the commercial sector, but maybe we can start there again. The guest wants to relax, and the commercial provider knows where people's worries and needs are. Tour operators and commercial providers want to offer the tourists the relaxation they want, and that is what tourists are willing to pay money for. However, where do we get out of this? Is there a chance that you can also secure more of this conscience on the commercial level?

**Antje Monshausen:** I am not sure if you have to do that at all as a commercial provider. There are minimum requirements that companies must fulfil, when it comes to human rights, environmental safeguarding and participation. In the context of tourism, a company should fulfil these requirements actively because they are the basis of a good tourism experience. In no other product does the consumer notice so directly and immediately whether he is wanted or not. No one wants stones to be thrown at their tour bus because tourists are not wanted there. Therefore, if you want to offer a high-quality product as a tour operator, you have to rely on the local population to stand behind the product. Participation and consent, based on informed exchange, are actually necessary for a quality product. This is simply a question of quality.

Many tourists claim that they are interested in authentic experiences. I would completely question whether that is even possible in tourism because what tourists perceive as authentic is just a reflection of their own assumptions. People recognise a street market situation in South Africa as authentic, but a shiny shopping mall as artificial and not typically 'African' – even though both the local street market and the large shopping malls are a reality in South Africa. People perceive something as authentic if it confirms their clichés, not what reality looks like. Poverty seems authentic to people, wealth does not seem authentic to them. It seems authentic to them when a family has no electricity, but if a family has electricity and then watches some American soap operas, then there is this kind of cultural relativism that this is not authentic. So, I have to question this authenticity, whether it exists at all. I think it is okay to acknowledge this limitation. Moreover, once you have acknowledged your own limitation as a traveller and that there are clichés, that's the first step to actually recognise what is authentic.

**Harald Pechlaner:** You are right. Let us now go back to 'Tourism Watch', as part of the Christian development organisation Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World). For you, a strong civil society is important for tourism. To what extent can criticism of tourism help foster a sense of conscience among both non-commercial and commercial actors?

**Antje Monshausen:** We have discussed this with our partner organisations. In 2017, we got together with 35 people from 19 countries and discussed what kind of tourism we actually want. Not on the very concrete level of tourism products

but more generally and holistically. Tourism is not an end in itself; it should help to enable social progress, a self-determined social and economic development. We have defined that there are three principles if tourism wants to contribute to sustainable development. The first is respect for human rights – and thus also the right to say no to tourism. The right to determine what form of tourism, how much tourism and whether tourism takes place in destinations at all. So, participation and human rights as a first principle.

The second is a fair distribution of the benefits of tourism – not only the economic but also the social benefits that tourism has. In the negative, as well as in the positive, they must be equally distributed. Therefore, it cannot be that a certain actor gets only the benefits, and the costs are outsourced.

The third principle is that tourism should enable mutual respect. Namely, that it is an enriching and positive experience for both the travellers and the hosts. These three principles should guide any tourism development.

At Tourism Watch, we talk to the tourism industry and the public policy sector in Germany to convince them to design their tourism activities responsibly in terms of human rights and climate justice. The second pillar is the South-North and South-South exchange – we try to strengthen civil society networks around the world. So that they can learn from each other, share common experiences, cooperate in lobby and advocacy actions. The third is awareness raising and public relations work, which also means influencing the discourse so that people look at travel differently – and do not just take it as a pure consumption product.

**Harald Pechlaner:** The three points you mentioned: participation and human rights, the distribution of benefits and the cross-fertilisation through an enriching mutual respect between guest and host. In summary, this could be the formula for conscience – to come back to our topic. Thank you very much, that is already going in the right direction.

Shall we revisit the ongoing discussion about the Global North and Global South, which seems to be a never-ending construction site? And, returning to your earlier point about establishing partnerships, does this concept pertain only to traditional host relationships, or does it extend to the relationship between the Global North and Global South as well?

**Antje Monshausen:** There is, after all, this difference between travelling in the Global North and travelling from the North to the South, or the wealthy travelling to economically weaker countries. Tourism in Europe has grown in an evolutionary way. That means, the first trips were domestic or to nearby regions. Then at some point in the 1960/70s, hundreds of thousands of Germans travelled over the Alps to discover Italy and other Mediterranean countries. Then, when flying became more affordable, they started to discover Mallorca, Turkey and the North African countries. And it is a relatively new phenomenon since the millennium that Germany is also a destination that foreigners visit as travellers. This is a relatively evolutionary development. First, we were travellers and later became hosts. In the Global South, it was revolutionary because tourism came from the outside. Countries just appeared on the world map of tourism – for many of them, tourism was a neocolonial economic activity. The Gambia, for example, declared its independence and four months later, the first international

travellers arrived. If we look at the history of decolonisation and how tourism has worked there, then a new dependency has emerged from an old dependency. And with it a tourist product that is completely dependent on the perspective of the traveller. We have tourism for three months in the year during the European winter season. At that time, there are charter flights that are usually not offered. It is a tourist product, which is oriented between the rich and the poor. We have a huge phenomenon of travel with sexual motives, especially women travelling to Gambia for sexual adventures. We have a very homogeneous tourist product with beachfront, all-inclusive tourism at the core.

With this experience, the Gambia is not alone. This applies to most tourism active countries in the Global South and especially those that freed themselves from colonial rule in the 1960s and became independent. There are countries in the Caribbean and in Asia where the emergence of international tourism and decolonisation took place at the same time. In this context, I would not speak of decolonisation but of neocolonisation because new colonial dependencies (indebtedness, etc.) arose. A high level of indebtedness that makes self-determined economic development impossible. For some countries, the pandemic has led to the fact that even those responsible for tourism in politics have seen that this dependence is a dangerous path. They started to develop more domestic tourism, for example. I have a bit of hope that the window will open for tourism to develop in a somewhat more evolutionary and healthier way. Healthier in that context means more economically and culturally beneficial, with less emissions and more resilient than before.

What we can learn from the Global South, that's the other question. We see very exciting initiatives have survived in the Global South, and we have to be very careful not to destroy them. I am afraid that with many tourism development schemes, we are cannibalising healthy tourism initiatives in the Global South. They are highly participatory. Tourism is an additive income there, which is fantastic for resilience. Tourism decision-makers in the destinations are promoting tourism on the assumption that every farmer wants to become a tour guide – this is wrong, and a good tourism is integrated in other economic activities in the destinations.

**Harald Pechlaner:** Yes, tourism is an expression of our capitalist system. That's where dependencies are created.

**Antje Monshausen:** Exactly. To get back on topic of Destination Conscience, resilient tourism models that are grounded in a local diversified economy are more authentic: this is a pioneer of a Destination Conscience. Because if I do not see tourism as my main income, but as an additive income, then I have other areas of the economy, then people still have a life outside of tourism, a life outside of those costumes and facades that the tourists want to see. Then, a destination actually becomes attractive for travellers who are looking for something like that. I have actually had discussions with people about what a 'Just Transition' looks like in tourism. How a transformation from an old, destructive, fossil and exploitative tourism model into a sustainable tourism activity is possible. In countries that are extremely dependent on international aviation-based tourism, such a just transition must take place. That means people have to be empowered to go into other

areas of the economy. People must be empowered, for example, through education to offer a better, higher quality, more diversified tourism product. That actually secures the sustainability of these destinations, and it lays the foundation for what you call Destination Conscience.

**Harald Pechlaner:** Yes, and wherever it has become too much, it is overtourism again. It's the same in the Alps, which I know very well: in the end, it went beyond the limits. People need to be empowered to think in a diversified way to think in other economic and social categories because dependency creates a cultural framing that people cannot get out of. Tourism has always existed, will always exist and be needed. Then narratives develop, like the one that tourism brought us prosperity: if everyone just says tourism brought us prosperity, then everyone believes it. There is probably not much difference between the Gambia and an Alpine Region. Then again, tourism is a crucial factor for visibility and empowerment of local communities. The community-based approach to tourism is quite often seen as the central approach. How can Destination Conscience encourage it?

**Antje Monshausen:** I think the question should actually be phrased differently. Because when we have strong and visible communities, they are the prerequisite for authentic tourism. Authentic tourism does not enable and promote them; it's exactly the other way around. That is why the mind-set of the tourism players has to change. I just want to give an example. We always talk a lot about the fact that we need to diversify the supply chains or the value chains in tourism. No. We need local resources to have an impact on tourism value chains. This may turn things around. Therefore, if you want travel to include an authentic encounter, you have to think from the perspective of the host and not exclusively from that of the tourism product or the travellers. Of course, there are certain determinants to be taken into account, accessibility, for example. There are certain determinants that are given, but regarding everything else, we should clear our minds and think about how we can actually do justice to this desire for authenticity, for fulfilling our economic needs and social standards.

**Harald Pechlaner:** I completely agree with you. This is a very deep reflection. It is actually about strengthening and promoting local communities – which are also able to develop responsible tourism and not only the other way round. I would now like to approach the issue of digital media and platforms. I feel a lot in this field has already changed, both for better and for worse. The world is changing, and tourism can do an incredible number of things, thanks to digital media, but we also must consider the consequences. Perhaps you can explain how the issue of managing digital media could be part of a Destination Conscience.

**Antje Monshausen:** You now put two things together that I would take apart. One is social media as a form of communication. It allows people to keep in touch before the trip and after the trip. I believe the preparation and follow up of the trip is again of elementary importance for Destination Conscience. Of course, social media offer an opportunity to communicate with each other and to communicate directly without intermediaries. At the same time, we see repetition of clichés on social media. This has become stronger with Instagram and TikTok. A more differentiated perspective is actually hardly possible. This means that it is



even more difficult to fight these clichés and to unmask them to a certain extent than it used to be without social media.

The other aspects you asked about are the commercial booking platforms. They are the complete opposite of this paradigm shift that we have just described. They want to generate bookings; their goal is to keep bookers on the platform and to create as many offers as possible on the same platform. Therefore, they think radically from the booker's point of view. And that, of course, is the exact opposite of what we just described. On the booking platforms, for example, forms are provided in which accommodation providers can enter which services are available on site. We know community-based tourism providers who, for example, have left the platforms because the constraints of the platform did not let them adequately describe how diversified and differentiated their product actually is. So of course, I see the advantages that social media and the booking platforms could potentially have. But my conclusion is that they are currently more of a handicap for this Destination Conscience that you are talking about.

**Harald Pechlaner:** Great, thank you very much. Coming to an end, let's get back to the subject of training. What can we do? Where do you see our tasks, also as universities, of course?

**Antje Monshausen:** I think that universities in particular play an important role to change the mindsets of future decision-makers. They have to look beyond the current mainstream of economics and open their curricula for alternative and successful economic models. For example, they should learn to understand welfare economics and their logic in terms of business models, broader benefit sharing and in terms of corporate governance. Sociocratic decision-making, which exists in social entrepreneurship, is an already existing, successful governance model. The dominant narrative in economics so far only counts jobs and income. I observe a certain amount of mental laziness and blindness towards other means to count well-being and contributions of business activities to society – including also social and environmental effects. My goal would be for professionalisation to enter the debate because it does not help when the crackpots from civil society say that we need an economy for the common good and degrowth. In the end, it has to be backed up by tough economic models. In Germany, I am afraid that we lose ground in the scientific quality in tourism because most universities are too closely connected with tour operators and their agendas. Concepts like Destination Conscience need more than just (sustainable) management capacities, they need a new form of independent, holistic and critical thinking.

**Harald Pechlaner:** Yes, you are right. As a university, we also have a certain amount of responsibility. A new master's programme will start in autumn, and I think this could be an opportunity to bring responsible tourism, which you have been preaching for many years, back into the logic of the teaching system. We would like to approach teaching in a more project-oriented and cooperative manner – which should also consist of an innovative format in terms of teaching. So, 20 years of the Tourism Chair also means a caesura. We have never been purely economic: we consider geography and economics. This was already a first

step, but in the future, it will be about fundamentally questioning the entire model again. I think the pandemic may have been the right moment to question many issues – also for the overtourism discussion, which already existed before the pandemic. At the very least, as you said several times today, these signals have shown us that tourism does not work as a purely economic model. It does not work either for the Global South, which ends up getting into dependency. All this is about making something like a Destination Conscience possible by acting in ways you mentioned at the beginning of this conversation: through partnership and empathy.

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