



CO-EVOLVE

Promoting the co-evolution of human activities and natural systems for the development of sustainable coastal and maritime tourism

FACTSHEET #4

Operationalising Tourism Carrying Capacity Assessment for Coastal Destinations

SUMMARY:

Tourism constitutes a complex issue and receives different definitions in international research since it is not clearly defined as an economic sector but as a multibranch activity that involves spatial, environmental, social, cultural and political dimensions. The composite nature of tourism renders the assessment of its sustainability as a complex task. More specifically, regarding the sustainability of destinations, a major issue to be addressed is Carrying Capacity, meaning the extent to which a destination is saturated in terms of tourist arrivals and activities, challenging its own attractiveness.

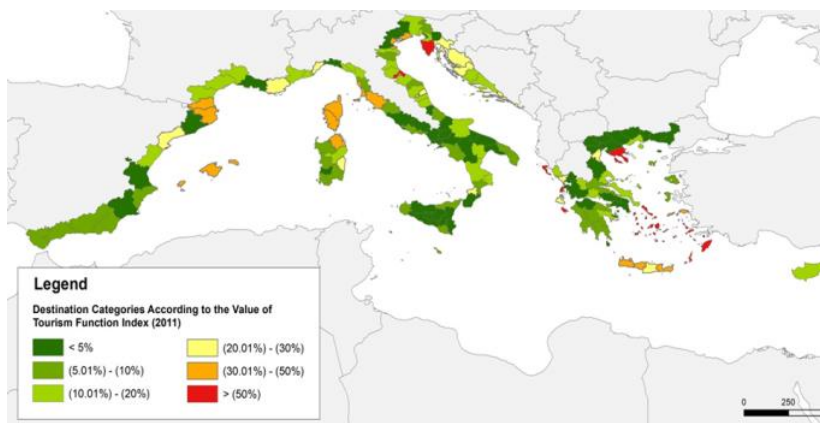
The incorporation of Carrying Capacity (CC) assessment in planning strategies is of particular importance in coastal areas where conflicting interests between public and private stakeholders often emerge, in terms of protecting tourism resources and profitability of the market. In this context, it is essential that the different levels of capacity in

accommodating touristic fluxes and the particularities in different destinations are taken into account when CC assessment is to be conducted.

The use of indicators may prove valuable in linking tourism development to specific limits that may affect the sustainability of a destination. Among the large number of

interacting factors that affect the ability of a destination to support and host tourism activities, four factors seem to emerge: a) Ecological capacity; b) Social and cultural capacity; c) Infrastructural capacity; d) Management capacity.

In this context and according to CO-EVOLVE rationale, a twofold strategy is employed



Eurostat (2017); UTH/ESPL elaboration based on Data of National Statistical and Tourism Authorities

in order to assess the Carrying Capacity of Mediterranean destinations. Initially, the Tourism Function Index (TFI) is calculated to indicate destinations that provide hints for exceeding carrying capacity.

The most intense tourism development, potentially adding pressures to the local population, is found at destinations where the TFI score exceeds 40% (mainly in Greece, Italy and Spain). Among the project's pilot areas, Rimini, Dubrovnik and Herault exceed the Mediterranean average (16.1 %), while the rest of them range between 12.9 % and 3.3 %.

NUTS III Region	TFI Value
Herault	17.3%
Valencia	3.3%
Rovigo	12.1%
Ferrara	9.5%
Rimini	51.3%
Split	10.7%
Dubrovnik-Neretva	25.8%
Evros	4.1%
Kavala	12.9%
Mediterranean Mean	16.1%

Eurostat (2017); UTH/ESPL elaboration based on Data of National Statistical and Tourism Authorities

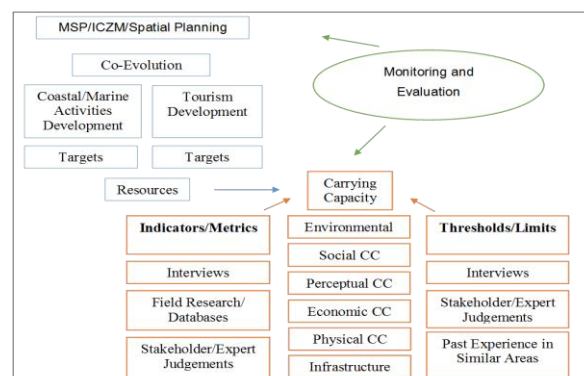
Although TFI is indicative of the level of tourism intensity at each destination, it is only tackling one dimension of Carrying Capacity and, in particular, the adequacy of tourism infrastructure in relation to the local population, and encounters important limitations in terms of available data.

Moreover, two critical issues emerge when conducting TCC assessment. The first refers to the definition of the CC thresholds. The second challenge is to ensure that TCCA entails a dynamic character and its results will be used in order to feed the general management and planning processes of the destination, such as spatial plans, MSP, ICZM etc. In order to achieve this target, TCCA should be enriched with a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system directly

linked to the respective system of the local planning framework.

Taking the above into consideration and moving to the second part of the strategy, CO-EVOLVE develops a comprehensive assessment framework which integrates all aspects of tourism sustainability and should be adopted by each destination. The framework is adjusted to incorporate all six internationally recognised dimensions of TCC and more specifically: a)Physical CC; b)Perceptual CC; c)Economic CC; d)Social CC; e)Environmental CC; f)Infrastructure CC.

Specific metrics/indices for assessing TCC are defined for each dimension. The proposed system of metrics for TCCA is divided into the five dominant types of tourism encountered at Mediterranean level, taking into account the specific challenges raised by each type of activity for the sustainable co-evolution of uses: a)Beach Tourism; b)Urban/cultural tourism; c)Cruise tourism; d)Recreational boating and e)Nature/ecotourism.



UTH/ESPL elaboration



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