SHORT BOOK

TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT

Adapting tourism sustainability evaluation methods to local needs

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BUILDING A COMMON APPROACH IN TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY EVALUATION

BUILDING A COMMON TYPOLOGY OF TOURISM COASTAL AREAS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The traditional type of mass tourism in the Mediterranean region which is mostly related to the 'sun and beach' model has been creating increasing pressures on the coastal and maritime environment and, therefore, it is considered as the least sustainable option for tourism development. The need for redefining the types of tourism development (e.g. high profile, niche tourism) is essential in order to better address the socio-economic and environmental pressures and added value generated by tourism activities.

The use of a common typology in tourism development can substantially contribute to the identification of goals and objectives, the highlighting of trends, problems, conflicts and opportunities for development, the improvement of the decision-making process and the production of alternative scenarios for each type of destination.

In CO-EVOLVE, the typology developed is based on two variables that form the basis for the classification. The first variable refers to the average share of overnight stays at each destination against the total overnight stays in the Mediterranean destinations (NUTS III regions of the northern Mediterranean). The second variable refers to the average annual growth of overnight stays at each destination.

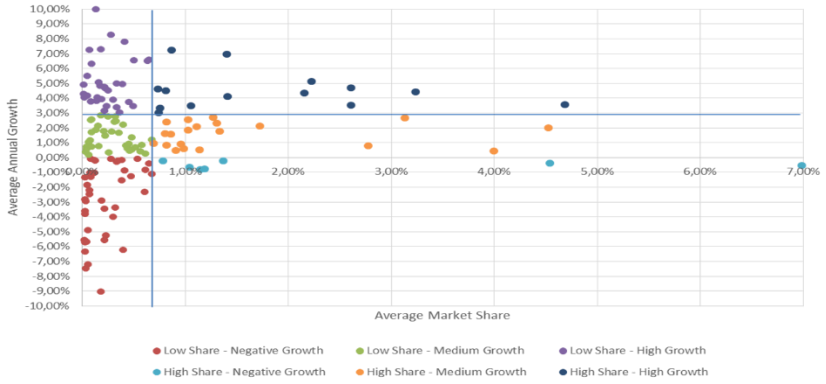

Figure 1: Tourism Share-Growth Matrix for Mediterranean NUTS III regions (2010-2015), UTH/ESPL elaboration

The classification deriving from the GSM (Growth-Share Matrix) provides useful insights about the state and prospects of the tourism sector in the Mediterranean regions also allowing its interpretation to be directly or indirectly linked to aspects of economic, social, environmental and governance nature. The distribution of the six types of destinations can be depicted in Figure 2.

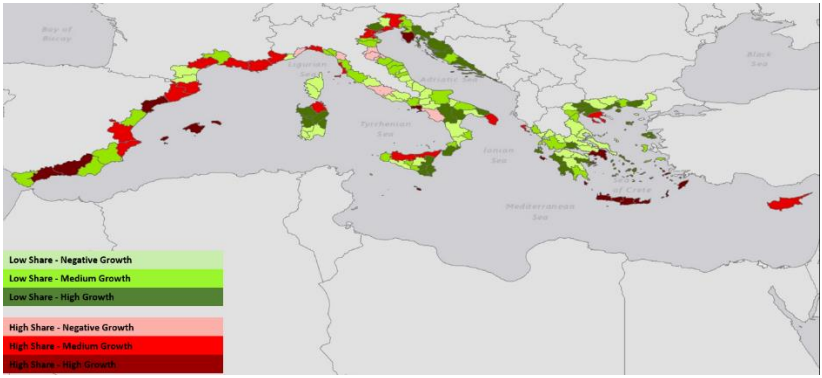

Figure 2: Distribution of the six types of destinations for the NUTS III regions of northern Mediterranean (n= 149), UTH/ESPL elaboration

CO-EVOLVE aims at establishing a common method for defining and evaluating tourism sustainability through the use of a conceptual model of indicators that addresses the key threats and enabling factors encountered in the Mediterranean.

Building upon the typology of tourism destinations as well as existing efforts of measuring tourism sustainability, CO-EVOLVE aims at establishing a common and yet flexible system of indicators which will assess sustainability at destinations in terms of criteria corresponding to the four dimensions of sustainability: environment, society, economy and governance.

CO-EVOLVE APPROACH IN DEVELOPING A TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT

The conceptual model of indicators developed in *CO-EVOLVE* represents an extended and flexible Tourism Sustainability Toolkit that can be customized according to the specific needs and characteristics of the highly diversified Mediterranean coastal destinations. The indicators are categorized into **three** distinctive types, thus, forming a three-tier system as depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Three-tier system of indicators developed in CO-EVOLVE, UTH/ESPL elaboration

The first refers to a set of 40 **core indicators** which have been selected from the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) to serve as the basis for comparison of the level and trends of sustainable development for all types of destinations.

The second refers to a set of **destination indicators** developed to address the specific issues of coastal areas according to the characteristics and particularities of the predominant type of tourism (Beach/Maritime tourism, Urban/Cultural tourism, Cruising, Recreational boating, Nature/Ecotourism) activity in each destination.

The third refers to a set of **Pilot area-specific indicators** developed to address area-specific critical issues with linkages to the main threats, enabling factors and governance issues identified in Mediterranean coastal areas.

This multidimensional approach represents an ideal set of indicators that addresses the key issues in typical Mediterranean destinations, as described in the context of CO-EVOLVE, and may serve as the basis for current and future planning and development by indicating the need to systematically collect the necessary data for measuring and monitoring tourism sustainability in coastal areas.

In addition to the proposed approach and in order to highlight a) the most essential and critical issues in most Mediterranean coastal tourism destinations and b) the most important specificities of different types of tourism activities, a set of indicators is selected and identified as **Priority Indicators (P.I.)** as a baseline to be used for comparisons among coastal tourism destinations in the Mediterranean basin. The CO-EVOLVE Priority Indicators list can be enriched and extended by each project pilot area according to its particular tourism characteristics, carrying capacity issues and availability of data.

The CO-EVOLVE Priority Indicators list can be enriched and extended according to the particular tourism characteristics, carrying capacity issues and availability of data encountered at each destination.

In this context, the conceptual model developed in CO-EVOLVE can be adapted at the local scale following a common methodological framework in order to feed and support future planning activities and strategies towards sustainable tourism development.

ADAPTING TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY EVALUATION TO LOCAL NEEDS

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY AT COASTAL DESTINATIONS

The process of customizing the sustainability evaluation toolkit and adapting the indicators for each CO-EVOLVE Pilot Area (PA) is divided in three stages (Figure 4):

i. *Identification of Pilot Area data availability*
The first stage is meant to ***limit the range of possible indicators and to highlight the most important ones that should be measured and monitored*** in each pilot area according to the specific needs and characteristics of each destination. It includes an overview of available data sources in order to identify the type of available data and highlight important data gaps. The use of Proxy and Qualitative data has been considered as an alternative solution in order to overcome potential gaps in quantitative data.

ii. *Customization of Pilot Area Indicators*
The second stage includes the ***development of separate customized tables*** specifically created for each pilot area taking into account the priority in measuring specific indicators, local particularities and tourism development patterns.

iii. *Development of Pilot Area customized toolkit*
Building on previous stages, the third step includes the ***finalization of the pilot areas' customized toolkits***. The toolkits comprise of the indicators identified as of high relevance and priority for each destination and also include some basic data and information regarding current state and future trends for each indicator.

Each indicator system is aimed to act as a starting basis in formulating sustainable development strategies and implementing strategic guidelines and actions in each destination/pilot area.

EVALUATION OF TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY IN CO-EVOLVE PILOT AREAS

The identification of major data gaps and limitations in data accessibility is critical for measuring sustainability in the CO-EVOLVE pilot areas and constitutes a key step towards guiding future efforts in prioritizing, evaluating and monitoring the sustainability indicators. Three dimensions are considered critical in order to assess sustainability at the local scale:

- **Type of available data and related data sources**
  - Quantitative data from official statistical offices, research projects, tourism boards etc.
  - Estimations based on proxy or qualitative data from statistical calculations, research projects, tourism agencies etc.
- **Spatial scale of available data**
  - Destination level
  - Different spatial scale such as municipality or NUTSIII unit
- **Definition of thresholds and evaluation of trends**

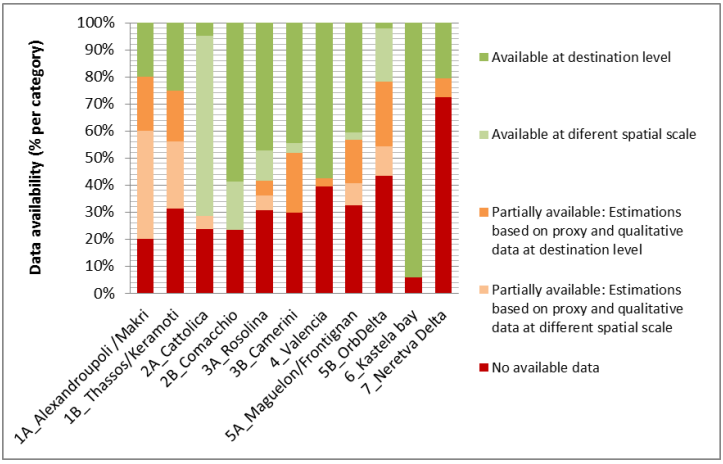

Figure 4: Data Availability in CO-EVOLVE Pilot Area, UTH/ESPL elaboration

Thresholds need to be defined in order to assess sustainability at destinations, even in cases where data availability allows for accurate analysis. Since thresholds inevitably involve a scientific and political dimension, special efforts should be given to actively involve stakeholders and experts in the process of determining the limits upon which to implement, evaluate and monitor future activities and tourism policies.

CONCLUSIONS

The customized sustainability toolkits (Figure 5) developed within the CO-EVOLVE project constitute a starting point for measuring and monitoring tourism development in Mediterranean tourism destinations as well as a basic guide for data collection and evaluation on key issues of tourism development. More specifically, the use of sustainability indicators can be used to:

- Provide hints for improving existing or shift towards alterative tourism models
- Highlight existing data gaps & provide guidelines towards relative measurements
- Measure and quantify stakeholders' perceptions
- Define thresholds through public consultation processes
- Develop probability scenarios to adjust future planning actions and policies
- Monitor changes in sustainability in the future

A key step in order to fully and accurately assess sustainability at the local level is the definition of thresholds through participatory processes that can ensure the integration of stakeholders' and experts' perception in the evaluation process and their active participation in future planning processes.

Core indicators	
C.B1.1.	Number of tourist nights per month
C.B2.1.	Average length of stay of tourists (nights)
C.B3.1.	Direct tourism employment as % of total employment in the destination
C.C1.1.	Number of tourists/visitors per 100 residents
C.D5.2.	% of tourism enterprises taking actions to reduce water consumption
C.D6.2.	% of tourism enterprises that take actions to reduce energy consumption
C.D6.3.	% of annual amount of energy consumed from renewable sources (Mwh) compared to overall energy consumption at destination level per year
Destination Indicators: Di.Beach/Maritime tourism	
Di.A4.	Number of second homes per 100 homes in coastal zones*
Di.B1.	% of tourist infrastructure (hotels, other) located in coastal zones*
Di.C2.	% of beaches awarded the Blue Flag
Di.D1.	Existence of up to date tourism plans and policies (YES/NO)
Di.D2.	Existence of a land use or development plan (YES/NO)
Pilot area-specific indicators	
P.A1.2.	% shoreline subjected to erosion
P.A1.6.	Coastal flooding events per year(number)
P.A5.1.	Total use of water by tourism sector (Tourism as a % of all users)
P.B1.1.	Existence of a coastal planning management system
P.B1.2.	Length of protected and defended coastline (km)

Figure 5: Customized Tourism Sustainability Toolkits–Example of Alexandroupoli/Makri/ UTH/ESPL elaboration

WHO WE ARE

CO-EVOLVE is a three-year project that aims at analysing and promoting the co-evolution of human activities and natural systems in touristic coastal areas, allowing sustainable development of touristic activities based on the principles of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)/Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP).

It couples a presently unavailable analysis at MED scale of threats and enabling factors for sustainable tourism with local studies on seven representative Pilot Areas, to demonstrate through pilot actions the feasibility and effectiveness of an ICZM/MSP-based planning process.

Finally, CO-EVOLVE contributes to the Strategic Theme 2 (Joint Action 2.1) of the Bologna Charter' Joint Action Plan: http://www.bolognacharter.eu/.

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