NEW ACTION TO PROMOTE GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN TOURISM
European experts forge stepping up in research, policy and action

Author: Krassimira Paskaleva-Shapira

Who: European "SUT-Governance' Project Conference
Organized by: Institute for Technology Assessment and System Analysis, Karlsruhe Research Center, Germany
Sponsored by: European Commission, Action 4 "City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage", "Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development" Program, "Fifth Framework Program", DG/RTD
Location: Heidelberg, Germany
With: 'SUT-Governance' Project Team, City of Heidelberg, invited guests and many others
24 June 2003

The Challenges

Sustainability figures high on the Strategic Agenda of the European Union as part of the implementation of the 2002 Lisbon process. Early this year, in her Welcome Speech at the 'Environmental Governance and Civil Society' Conference' in Brussels, Commissioner Margot Wallström, called for '**Sustainable development** becoming a Governing Principle underpinning everything that the Union does' with, 'the principle of **participatory democracy** turning into the indispensable premise for consolidating the European agenda for sustainable development'.

On their part, tourism experts from around the world speak out that the sector has well much to offer in this regard. Urban professionals alike assert **city tourism** in particular, as the fastest growing sector in Europe and a new phenomenon on the cutting edge of a trend should be in the vanguard. The increasing importance of the sector as a major contributor to local and regional economies and overall community prosperity highlights the need to pay a special attention to the **relationship between sustainable tourism and participatory local governance.**

European cities now face high and growing demands from tourism, and the pressures and problems associated with the management of visitors have to be systematically tackled by **all parties** concerned. **City authorities** in **multi-stakeholder partnerships** have to deal with sustainable management and development of urban tourism for the benefits of all – tourists and locals. Addressing the varied challenges of tourism requires advancing knowledge and practice about how municipal governments and other stakeholders can work together in sustainable tourism development to promote participatory governance and ensure long-term local development.

The Background

The international research and policy project **'Sustainable Urban Tourism: Involving local Agents and Partnerships for New Forms of Governance' (SUT-Governance)** of the European Union's 'Fifth Framework Program', addresses these complex interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral issues by examining existing practices of private-public-community partnerships of sustainable urban tourism.

The **principal aim** of the project is to develop, validate, and deploy a general framework for urban sustainable tourism partnerships that is applicable to a variety of urban municipal contexts by drawing on detailed field work in four European countries: Germany, Austria, Greece and Bulgaria. The **broader goal** of the project is to elaborate and promote innovative forms and instruments of local governance to improve urban tourism development involving the principles of sustainability and participatory decision-making. The **main outcomes** of this collaborative effort include (1) A Set of European 'Best practice' Partnerships for Sustainable Urban Tourism (2) Unified Framework Model for Effective Partnerships of Sustainable Urban Tourism (SUT Partnerships) and (3) SUT Partnership Benchmarking Tool for assessing practice, measuring success and improving performance of existing or planned collaborative initiatives in tourism.

The SUT-Governance project is the **first of its kind** to define the factors and agents of success of establishing and maintaining effective partnerships for sustainable urban development. Thanks to this study, public administrations and other interested stakeholder groups can begin making more informed choices and decisions about the opportunities and the potentials that partnership collaborations offer for improving the overall urban environment and the citizens' quality of life.

The Lack of Sufficient Practice and Experience

Sustainable tourism is a strategic policy pursuit of the European Union. The impetus is on 'promoting further progress towards the sustainability of the sector by stimulating multi-stakeholder efforts spamming across all territorial and administrative levels (DG Enterprise 2003 preparation of a communication: 'Basic orientation for the sustainability of European tourism'). Yet, the overall community perspectives are still to be considered. Furthermore, while much research has been undertaken on how to progress towards a more sustainable kind of tourism, much needs to be done to encourage the practical application of the concept in various settings and levels. Issues regarding integrated sustainability are yet to be regarded in local and regional development and policy.

In **governance of city tourism,** despite the strong political impetus and wide recognition of the long-term benefits of pursuing governance and sustainability in Europe, real life success stories in the sector are few. In today's volatile market conditions and after decades of unprecedented growth in mass city tourism, urban destinations must re-evaluate their futures. Re-engineering of city economies and administrations and managing risks and opportunities are becoming present challenges and opportunities for urban tourism. Gearing strategies towards sustainable community development by engaging all stakeholders – politicians, administrators, city planners, investors, residents, hospitality businesses, transport, culture, sports and entertainment providers, and tourists is now an ever-important challenge for both urban policy and action.

Forming **public-private partnerships** is proving an effective and rewarding way to go. Some progress has been already made, but important challenges need to facilities broader and more in depth debates about this **form of urban governance**. In light of the recently adopted 'Sixth Framework Programme' aiming sustainable development in Europe through the adoption of innovative polices and interdisciplinary approaches involving all stakeholders, using partnerships as an innovative and efficient policy implementation mechanism towards broad-based community sustainability is a call to pursue for all.

The SUT- Governance Project Conference

Against this background, the Institute for Technology Assessment and System Analysis of the Karslruhe Research Center, the City of Heidelberg, and a number of partners organized an 1.5-day International Conference to discuss innovative ideas of bridging science and practice in **Governance for Sustainable Urban Tourism** and advance the role of **Multi-stakeholder Partnerships** as effective means of delivering

urban tourism policy in the context of integrated and sustainable community development and broad-based local governance. The Conference took place in Heidelberg, Germany, June 23rd and 24th with the participation of 53 tourism and urban experts from Austria, Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, Russia, United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, and Serbia.

The event was organized around four **main topic sessions**:
- Participatory Governance for Sustainability: Building partnerships for enhancing urban tourism
- 'Best Practice' Partnerships for Sustainable Urban Tourism: Working together for the benefit of city's all
- Benchmarking Partnerships for Sustainable Urban Tourism: A tool for assessing, improving practice, and 'Best Practice' diffusion
- Governance and Sustainability of Urban Tourism: Integrating research, development, and policy for meeting the long-term European Agenda

The conference sessions featured **contribution**s from project partners, city representatives and tourism partnership experts, as well as leading personalities and professionals from industry, academia and civil society from around Europe.

The meeting **welcome address** was given by Mr. Eckart Würzner, Heidlebreg Deputy Mayor and Head of Environmental Department, who introduced the participants to Heidelberg – a city of sustainability and partnering and a second time winner of the Sustainable City European Award. **Introductory speeches** were given by the European Commission Principal Administrator and project Scientific Advisor Mr. Michel Chapuis, who underlined the importance of the SUT-Governance project for the EU sustainable tourism and urban development polices; Mr. Reinhard Coenen, Deputy Director of ITAS, who expressed the institute's delight to host the project and gave tribute to the work of the Project Director Krassimira Paskaleva-Shapira for initiating and successfully leading to the completion of this international effort; and finally, Paskaleva reiterated the objectives of the project in regard to the key European policy trusts in sustainable tourism, governance and integrated urban development: 'European cities are still far from taking a full advantage of the possibilities that governance for sustainable tourism can offer," she noted in conclusion, "The SUT-Governance event can become a milestone to realising these opportunities'.

Several **keynote speakers** addressed the latest trends and evolution of the discussed topics: Richard Butler, Professor at the University of Surrey, UK highlighted the global challenges of governance for sustainable tourism reinforcing the notion that 'achieving sustainable urban tourism requires desire, strategic planning, adequate importation tools and proactive not reactive direction'; Edward Cameron, Project Director of EC Environmental Governance Initiative, endorsed the visions that 'tourism must be sustainable in order to be competitive and of high quality' and 'sustainable tourism depends on 'good' governance'; Harris Coccossis, Professor from the University of Thessaly, Greece, asserted that 'sustainable tourism is a matter of individual (local development choice) and the need of management and policy is ever more important today when impacts of tourism on the city are diverse and both, positive and negative'. Furthermore, as he rightfully noted, 'sustainable tourism can be viewed as a process of governing at the local level and maintaining this process is a key necessity. Therefore, sustainable urban tourism must be taken as potential to the way we develop our cities'. Finally, Peter lane from the city of Cleveland, UK emphasized that 'benchmarking should become part of daily quality management practices of urban authorities but motivating the administrators to get involved requires an incentive system in place'.

Apart from the key speeches, the conference programme also featured several **key project reports** of conceptual, methodological and implementation nature. Four European **'Best Practice' SUT partnership cases** were presented underlining the key factors of their success. OGM, Brussels summarized the results of the analysis of the **SUT-Partnership Benchmarking Survey** outlining the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable urban tourism, the need for exchange of information and learning from Best Practice cases to improve performance and practice. City representatives shared their views on the **SUT Partnership Benchmarking Tool** and the perceived benefits of collaborating in the project. Experienced researchers and practitioners summarized the sessions' discussions and provided the **topics' key conclusions and their policy perspectives** at the final conference session. Mrs. Christa Morawa, Director of the German Federal Agency of Environment, Tourism Office presented the 'German standard' for sustainable tourism': 'Labelling environmentally friendly tourism offers'. At the end, Mr. Nils Kroesen, Director of the Heidelberg Congress and Tourism Association, gave some aspiring **concluding remarks** in support of the future action and European collaboration in governance of sustainable tourism.

Complimentary to this, Krassimira Paskaleva, the Project Director presented and asked the audience to adopt a Draft of the '**Conference Participants Statement'** to be further finalized for a press release on the event.

Overall, the event provided the opportunity to learn from other experiences in sustainable partnerships development and 'best practice' benchmarking in tourism from hands-on researchers and practitioners, high profile speakers and delegates. It also assisted in meeting like-minded professionals, establishing new contacts and broadening the networking capacities of the participants to seek innovative tools and techniques to improve and upgrade research, development and planning approaches and meet the future needs of tourism businesses, residents and tourists in the European cities.

The Confernce Results

All conference participants overwhelmingly emphasized the **importance of tourism for urban sustainability and governance** and the building of dynamic, competitive, quality and participatory-based urban economies in Europe. The following common concepts and approaches were reinforced jointly by the participating experts:

Sustainable Urban Tourism (SUT)
➢ **…**is a holistic, equitable, and future-oriented development strategy, part of the wider Urban Sustainable Development Agenda
➢ …is part of the principles and objectives of urban integrated development
➢ …is consistent with long-term community progress and prosperity
➢ …is a tool to increase social welfare, achieve greater and more equitable distribution of local wealth and enhance the integrity of the local ecosystems

Thus, proof of Sustainable Urban Tourism is the sustainable development of the tourist destination.

Operationalisation of Sustainable Urban Tourism requires the recognition of two fundamental principles imbedded in the sustainability-induced integrated development paradigm:
➢ Sustainable tourism implies sustainable ends (outcomes of tourism products)
➢ Sustainable tourism involves effective delivery means (strategic policy making and implementation) to deal wit the complexity and the feasibility of the process and ensure the fulfillment of the desired objectives)
➢ Sustainable tourism depends on the endorsement of both - suppliers and users. To succeed, tourists must demand sustainable and quality services and products.

Policy for Sustainable Urban Tourism calls for adoption of working approaches to sustainable urban tourism. In this respect, *SUT can be viewed as a consistent and continuous development strategy ensuring the balance of the present benefits of tourism with the future opportunities of the host community while maintaining its cultural, environmental, and economic quality, diversity, integrity and viability.* Thus, SUT
➢ … is a mean of
  o enhancing local development
  o promoting local identity and cultural and destination image
  o meeting the needs of quality of visitors experience and quality of life of residents
➢ …is a policy option with community-centered objectives
➢ …is a process of governing which has to be sustained
➢ …must affect urban policy and development, considering both, industry and community long-term progress
➢ …must account for both
  o tourism product and its sustainability implications
  o direct and indirect impacts

Thus, Sustainable Tourism maintains the capacity and offers potentials to the way we develop our cities.

Implementation of Sustainable Urban Tourism Requires a Multi-Stakeholder Approach: Sustainable Urban Tourism must deal with a variety of problems such as improving the urban fabric and infrastructure,

conservation of historic and cultural buildings and zones, controlling pressures for development, overcrowding, pollution, quality of jobs, new technologies and innovative business forms. The multifunctional nature of policies and actions call for a local participatory decision-making process to build consensus and share the responsibilities, risks and benefits from urban tourism in context of

Urban Governance, taken as relationships and collaborative actions between urban actors to plan and manage the city affairs aiming fostering democracy and societal and community prosperity and involving government, private sector, and civil society. In its 'Good' Application, Urban Governance must involve sustainability, decentralization, transparency, accountability, equity, efficiency, civic engagement, and security. To accomplish these

Public-Private Partnerships are need. They are generally considered as effective means to facilitate multi actor collaboration and development of sustainable urban tourism since they can provide for
- ➢ …enhanced tourism resources and services responsive to human needs
- ➢ …broad based sustainability gains
- ➢ …utilization of community and business links
- ➢ …increased effectiveness and efficiently of organizations
- ➢ …reduced conflicts, boosted trust and actor confidence
- ➢ …improved public policy and greater policy legitimacy
- ➢ …collective responsibility for planning, decision-making, problem solving, project implementation and evaluation
- ➢ …increased local capacity of action and control
- ➢ …networks to share knowledge, resources, and common goals
- ➢ …community dialogue, solutions, and change
- ➢ …creating responsible, engaged and involved locals and tourists
- ➢ …combating local inequalities and inclusion

Thus, forming partnerships must become a key principle of quality management of public services in urban tourism towards urban sustainability and more local democracy

Success of SUT Partnerships depends on the efficacy of the
- ➢ …partnership process
- ➢ …tourism activity and its implementation
- ➢ …activity resolutions for a long term and far reaching community sustainability

Both, 'Development' and 'Marketing' SUT Partnerships have the potentials for promoting sustainable community development:
- ➢ The first, by increasing and effectively managing the use and increase of the local tourism 'stock'
- ➢ The second, by sustaining and enhancing the partnership process and collaborative culture in the community

Implementation Opportunities for SUT Partnerships are various. Some include:
- ➢ sustainable tourist facilities
- ➢ cultural heritage attractions
- ➢ historic districts
- ➢ environmentally friendly transportation
- ➢ mitigating damage to destroyed environment
- ➢ informing on behavioural and risks
- ➢ education, research and information networks

Benchmarking SUT Partnerships is a key way to improve practices. It provides the

- ➢ …opportunity to integrate and internationalize the common understanding of the key principles, approaches, aims and role of forming and sustaining collaborative actions for sustainable urban tourism

- ➢ …lead indicators for various cities to assess their practice and improve future undertakings compared to other EU cities
- ➢ …chance to cities to re-evaluate past and current experience.

Therefore, Benchmarking should be further established as a tool for improving tourism partnerships to become a comprehensive system providing for references to best practice examples and a consistent part of urban tourism quality management practices.

In respect to the above, the participating delegates recognized the successful work and thanked the efforts of SUT-Governance team for the design and implementation of the project and for its warm hospitality and excellent organization of the event. They also recognized the special role of the local governments in the development of the SUT Partnership Framework Model and Benchmarking Tool.

In conclusion, the participants reiterated the importance of efficient distribution of information, the coordination of activities and, in general, improved communication between the stakeholders concerned. With these notions in mind, they reiterated their personal and institutional commitment to preserve and strengthen this forum for dialogue and cooperation, for which purpose they welcomed the proposal presented by the project Director Krassimira Paskaleva to adopt a **Joint Conference Statement** with which to reach out to all European stakeholders and citizens.

The Participants Statement

Enforcing Governance for Sustainable Urban Tourism
SUT-Governance' Project Conference Statement to the European R&D and Policy Community, June 24 2003

Our decision to adopt this **Statement** follows on the Commission's strategic commitment to *European Governance*, *Sustainable and Competitive Tourism* and I*ntegrated Urban Development*. With it, we aim to further assist the process of developing European policies that have positive impact on our cities and urban municipalities. We agree to endorse the development of **'Urban Tourism Governance Platform and Forum'** in which the city authorities are invited to play a major part. The working document that has been approved today sets out a number of essential principles that can guide the relations among the tourism stakeholders in the urban environments towards sustainability and participatory decision-making and defines the scope of their dialogue. It can be of particular interest to local authorities, urban and regional planners, government and tourism organisation officials, industry decision makers, academics and researchers, and civil society and consumer groups.

URBAN TOURISM GOVERNANCE PLATFORM

First and above all, we fully recognize that sustainable tourism, governance and overall community prosperity are inter-linked and that these elements depend on each other for successful long-term urban sustainable development.

We emphasize that tourism should serve all citizens of Europe – tourists, local residents and business entrepreneurs.

We reinforce the notion that tourism must be sustainable to be competitive and of high quality.

We affirm that sustainable urban tourism depends on good local governance.

We endorse the vision that strategic collaborative arrangements and cooperations at the levels of development decisions and policy making, together with the technical tools – multi-stakeholder partnerships, for addressing a particular problem or need can make an important contribution to the sustainable development of tourism and a balanced urban development.

We advocate that multi-stakeholder partnerships must become key to achieving urban sustainable tourism and broad based local governance.

We confirm that, to assist delivery of sustainable urban tourism, partnerships must engage all interested parties, involve overall community prosperity considerations, and drive urban tourism policy enhancement and impact policy-making towards participatory governance.

We assert that by creating and sustaining effective multi-stakeholder partnerships at the urban and local levels, we can arrive at new polices that will provide for a more just, equitable and sustainable community development.

We maintain that implementing tourism partnerships requires that cities lay down the groundwork for effective collaboration.

We urge European city governments to set up the example and establish and maintain a process of concerted action and cooperation in their urban communities.

We encourage the local authorities to take the lead in catalysing and facilitate urban tourism partnerships and become a key player as producers, enablers, promoters, and planners of the local governance process.

We promote the incorporation of sustainable tourism in the integrated sustainable urban development and in context of destination management to better manage urban tourism.

We invite urban authorities to use partnerships as a policy design and activity implementation tool in sustainable urban tourism.

We advance the facilitation and use of Local Agenda 21 for tourism as both advantageous and rewarding framework of action.

We believe, in the implementation of the Urban Tourism Governance Platform, the contribution of industry and civil society organizations is fundamental. Therefore,

We appeal to all groups concerned to join and support city efforts towards governance for sustainable urban tourism.

We believe that all those who care about the sustainable development of our cities should look at the Tourism Governance Platform as an opportunity to reinforce the role of EU governance, sustainability and responsible tourism policies.

Because, stakeholder involvement in policy and development foster attachment and ownership to local initiatives and helps maintain and improve the local values and amenities for the far-reaching future.

Overcoming the Challenges requires the efforts of all:

> ➢ **The urban community:** To build trust and understand each other's interests and objectives; build locally available information, experience, and institutional capacities; overcome underlying legal, political, and institutional obstacles; strive for innovation.

> ➢ **Local government:** To ensure the benefits for all from urban tourism development; transition from a provider and manager to enabler, regulator and collaborator; review and improvement of policy agendas to embrace sustainability and governance; involve NGOs; facilitate collaboration; implement sector reforms and develop strategies for participation.

> ➢ **Tourism industry:** To promote collaboration, openness and sector responsibility; invest in partnerships for long term returns and benefits; share resources, risks and benefits for increasing business efficiencies and potentials; create corporate responsibility and provide satisfaction to all - customer and citizens.

Key to Success *is promoting a local culture, practice, and policy of partnerships towards sustainable urban tourism and community well being.*

URBAN TOURISM GOVERNANCE FORUM

To fulfill the Agenda, stepping up of Europe's tourism research and innovation capacity is necessary.

We draw the attention on the need to build on the results of the SUT-Governance project and further study tourism governance and relevant community development issues.

The research needs to be tailored to help better structure the European research and to cope with the strategic objectives set out by the European heads of states and governments in Lisbon 2002.

The advancement of research should enable tourism to become a more responsible industry inclusive of urban community development and aspirations in the next ten years. To accomplish this goal,

We advocate for Forum **on Urban Tourism Governance** to engage all parties concerned and develop and further promote the Agenda of Sustainable Tourism in the European cities. **Focus** has to be placed on the need to enable innovation and collaborative work in the spirit of local governance and prosperity.

We believe that the establishment of a Forum will contribute to the consolidation of our objectives and assist in the achievement of the objectives specified in Statement. Therefore,

We call for ideas, allowing Europe's tourism and urban development community to propose and debate topics of common interest on-line and organise follow-up meetings and events.

We aim the establishment of *Urban Tourism Governance Framework* and the development of *Guidelines* for its delivery in the European cities.

We look forward to taking part in a constructive debate and to forming the agenda to reinforce the role of EU sustainable tourism, urban and governance policies.

We invite all key parties of urban tourism to join us in this Urban Tourism Governance Forum.

For its part, the Institute for Technology Assessment and System Analysis in Karlsruhe, will continue to support this process and the Agenda with a key goal of advancing the role of sustainable tourism for European Governance and Citizenship.

The conference participants' commitment is clear – and the tourism governance approach can support urban sustainable development.

This is our contribution to the Preparation of the Commission's DG Enterprise Communication on 'Basic orientations for the Sustainability of European Tourism", 2003.

Others' contributions may be sent to Krassimira Paskaleva-Shapira at the following e-mail address: paskaleva@itas.fzk.de. All comments and ideas will be made available on-line on the SUT-Governance Project Web page at the following address: http://sut.itas.fzk.de. They will be carefully reviewed with a view to draft the Communication that our Forum intends to adopt in the half of 2004.

Download the SUT-Governance Project Brochure
Download the List of SUT-Governance Conference Participants
Download the SUT-Governance Project Final Report