

Sustainable Accessibility to small tourist areas

One of the major foundations of tourism is the travel or transport component. A destination is in many respects defined by its ability to provide appropriate visitor access into a destination and dispersal throughout the destination. The dispersal of visitors throughout a region can provide economic and social benefits including improved services to the host community. Development of appropriate access for visitors to and within a destination includes consideration of a number of key factors.

Transport is acknowledged as one of the most significant factors to have controlled the international development of tourism. It provides an essential link between tourism origin and destination areas and facilities: the movement of holiday makers, business travellers, people visiting friends and relatives, and those undertaking educational and health tourism.

A large number of European policies have a direct or indirect impact on tourism. This is particularly true of transport policy: sustainable mobility, passenger rights and safety and transport quality. Tourism policy is characterised by its transverse nature.

Ensuring sustainable development, and then limiting the dramatic pressure of demand, requires the adoption of an integrated set of strategies that combine tourism, transport and land use related measures. The control of accessibility and mobility to and within a tourism destination is one of the most important management tool to regulate visitor flows, reduce traffic congestion and pollution and meet tourists' and residents' requirements. These objectives should be achieved by coordinated actions involving public and private operators alike. The current debate has focussed on the subject, such as finding new "routes" to access tourism destinations, enhancing the use of space and traffic controls to reduce residents' dissatisfaction and improve tourists' quality of visit, using information to fill the gap between final users and tourism and transport service providers.

Accessibility planning is now a statutory requirement of local authorities in the environmental impacts considered (climate change, air quality, noise and nature/ landscape), climate change generates more than half of the externalities of tourist transport and that tourism is one of the major carbon dioxide-emitting activities that are still growing, and growing rapidly. It represents the production of 4–6% of all greenhouse gases (GHGs), 80% of which is derived from transport activities.

Changes in accessibility have major implications for tourism. Thus, for example, extensions of airline networks, frequency of flights and sizes of planes have greatly increased long-haul travel and the accessibility of distant locations. However, improved accessibility does not always stimulate tourism businesses. For example, Lundgren (1983) has shown how improvements in road transportation have allowed individuals to travel farther more quickly, thereby turning overnight into day-trip destinations and undermining the market for small accommodation establishments in intermediate locations. More generally, accessibility may be influenced by factors other than proximity, for example price, membership status and licensing regulations. Thus, even though a potential user may be very close to an opportunity, use may be prevented by barriers other than distance.

There are many factors conditioning the tourists accessibility of one destination that can be resumed as:

- **Barrier-free destination:** infrastructures and facilities
- **Transport:** by air, land and sea, suitable for all users
- **High quality services:** delivered by trained staff
- **Activities, exhibits, attractions:** allowing participation in tourism by everyone
- **Marketing, booking systems, web sites & services:** information accessible to all

Existing barrier-free tourism product concerns transportation, accommodation, tourism sites and services, and tour programmes. But it should also involve the destination's information and training systems.

The increase in the number of short holidays goes hand in hand with tourists' requirements in terms of service quality.

A quality service delivered by trained staff in a tourist area accessible to all also means that it is applicable to every individual regardless of their particular circumstances: disabled and people with special needs, parents with infants, elderly, children. Disabled people require adapted services throughout the tourism chain and so are likely to encourage the development of innovative services dedicated to cultural sites discovery.

Making cultural areas accessible means enabling it to be understood. In the context of tourism, multilingualism is essential. This aspect is becoming increasingly important, especially with the emergence of new geographic entities in the tourism market.

The need to improve visibility and reinforce the attractiveness of regions will have a significant influence on ICT-based cultural tourism development policies. In addition to the technical issues involved, organisational and strategic changes has become apparent.

Sustainable and competitive tourism are not achievable without a consumer response. More should be done to raise awareness. However, messages should be positive and consumer focussed, putting across the benefits to them of forms of tourism that are socially and environmentally responsible.

Raise awareness and sensitivity amongst tourist industry companies and local and regional administrations about the importance of taking accessibility into account when planning and implementing tourist industry policies is surely one of the most important strategies in the framework of CUSTODES project.

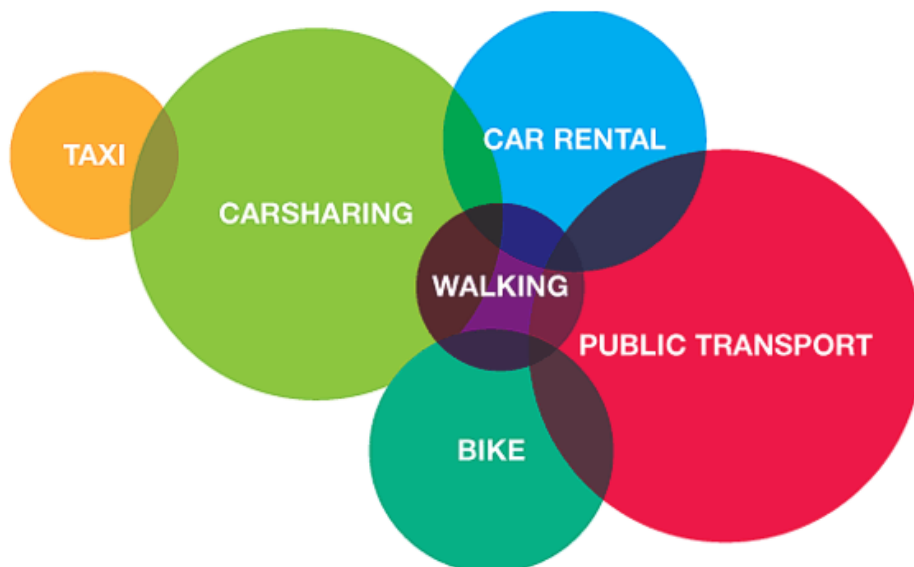
Accessibility destination planning tools

TRANSPORTS	TECHONOLOGY	COMMUNICATION	EDUCATION
Planning routes including last-mile access to the site			
Inter-modality		Marketing Price Lever	
Rent a bike along the routes, walking routes		Minor impact on transportation	Slow Mobility
Assure public transport Electric means		public guides on board, video transmission	Mobility as an educational tool in tourism and in every day-life
	CO2 Savings Calculator	Raising awareness on individual environmental impact	
	Applications <i>on demand</i>		Improve the knowledge on the tourism destination.
	“Augmented reality”		Rebuilding daily reality as it was at the time
Improve rail networks		Campaigns supporting the train for short-medium distances	
			Sensible Guides, Territorial Mediators
	Improving signposting by geolocation	Detailed maps of the sites easily available in all the regions	
Horse / carriage, boat for in-site transfers		Experience the cultural destination	
		Signs on the territory, Tourist information services to be improved	
	Live Chat to answer questions immediately, SMS for real-time logistics updates	Up-to-date destination, close to the need of tourist	
	e-Portal Web 2.0 platform	accurate, reliable and accessible tourism information	

Soft mobility

Planning for the long-term transport and access infrastructure for a destination needs to take into consideration a destination's geographical location, community needs and values, planning and legal restrictions and investment potential as well as the potential ecological, economic and social impacts of development. These factors can influence significantly the type and scale of transport development that can occur in a destination. A destination that is situated close to an existing major airport may focus more on the development of linkages between the airport and the destination rather than investing in the development of their own hub facilities.

The CUSTODES pilot areas are all near to major tourist destinations (far no more than 50 km), so the project had the task to implement strategies for attracting tourists already visiting them. In the framework of accessibility, each partner investigated on the possibility to reach the pilot area by the different public means of transport and then to move within the area for tourism scope.



<http://www.gflcarsharing.org/about-carsharing.htm>

Visitors can use a wide range of different transport types during their trip including flying, driving, catching a bus or train, walking, cycling or cruising. Ensuring linkages and connectivity between transport options is important in providing a destination that is easy to reach but also easy to travel within. Connectivity between visitor attractions in terms of access routes and transport options can also influence a visitor's initial destination choice, length of stay and overall satisfaction. Integrated transport plans should be developed in pilot regions to ensure transport linkages and services based on demand from residents and visitors.



The tourist movement should transfer towards more sustainable modes of transport (modal shift). This could be encouraged by combining modes (inter-modal) like waterborne, rail, public/collective transport. For many short distance car journeys, an efficient alternative exists.

For in-site journeys every destination need to promote a combination of walking, cycling, car sharing, carpooling and public/collective transport use (inter-modal chain). This should go hand-in-hand with better mobility management and outbound accessibility.

Land-based transport incorporates a wide range of access options that are used by visitors when travelling to and within a destination including self-drive (car, caravan or RV), coach, bikeways, walkways, and public transport on rail and bus networks.

Encouraging regional dispersal through an efficient transport network provides numerous benefits to a destination including extended length of stay and increased expenditure.

- *Connectivity between the different modes of transport*, including linkages between train and bus services and transport to and from the airport. This includes the provision of appropriate signage and way- finding tools and maps to allow for easy navigation through a region;
- *Connectivity between transport and visitor attractions* to ensure ease of access and encourage increased length of stay and expenditure;
- *Changes in consumer travel behaviour and preferences* including the trend towards less frequent and shorter holidays and the demand for experiential/vocational tourism;
- *The impact of economic and social trends* such as fuel prices and climate change awareness on the demand and use of transport types;
- *The increasing use of the internet for trip planning* and the impact on the types of promotional activities used and the way in which destination information can be communicated;
- *Touring routes, itineraries and interpretative trails* are just some of the techniques employed to alter the land travel paths of visitors.

For many regions, particularly those destinations that have limited public transport or air access, self-drive tourism is the major mode of visitor access. Planning and development of required road infrastructure for drive tourism needs to be matched with appropriate product development and an understanding of visitor characteristics and preferences.

move ► green



- Avoiding, reducing and limiting volumes of road and air transport, i.e.: go for prevention.
- Transferring a considerable part of transport to more sustainable modes, such as inter-modal, waterborne, rail, public/collective transport and non-motorised individual mobility;
- Improving the performance of all transport modes, i.e.: build an energy efficient transport system via operational and technical improvements;
- Offering a free bike rental service,
- Reporting on mobility and the environment enumerating best practises, "soft measures" on green mobility, as well as information on CO2 emissions,
- Installing a mobility desk in the tourist offices on public transport, cycling and walking paths
- Creating pedestrian and cycling areas along the cultural itineraries,
- Improvement of the connection nodes to the urban centre: airport, station, cultural centre transport, park and ride services close to urban areas, in particular through public transport options;
- Development of an integrated and flexible mobility system avoiding use of the private car: modes of transport on tracks, shared transport systems also for private use (car sharing and shared taxis), integrated networks of slow mobility;
- Promotion of the use of public transport: integrated tariffs, regional discounts for partnerships between different transport and tourism stakeholders;
- Improving bicycle lanes and pedestrian zones, linked to public transport options, with an integrated transport plan;
- Reduction of negative impacts due to (tourism and non-) freight traffic: city logistics and co-ordination among product types of various companies;
- Improving the accessibility of the destinations, tourist accommodation service and facilities to host people with special needs in the best way.

ICT & Accessibility

One of the principle obstacles to the development of local cultural heritage is that it is the subject of initiatives targeted on the local population. One of the challenges of the projects as CUSTODES is that it aims to develop initiatives targeting a broader population for the natural and cultural heritage development of the pilot areas involved.

Sustainable tourism is a tool for the preservation and development of natural and cultural heritage and it is within this convergence of resource preservation and development that ICTs open up new prospects for cultural and tourism policies.

The table below resumes the five most important uses of ICTs in Tourism sector:

I. Selecting & developing tourism site	Geospatial Information Technologies
II. Marketing	Inbound (Market Research) Outbound (advertising, promotions, etc.)
III. Customer Relationship Management	Home -Destination -Home Turn prospects into customers Book -travel, lodging, tours, more Trip Management: pre, during, post
IV. Operations	Buying, managing services and supplies Managing value chain
V. Managing & monitoring tourism site	GIS & GPS

Developing natural and cultural heritage using ICTs through innovative tour media is an opportunity for public players to promote more attractive discovery activities and to reach publics who would not normally be drawn to outdoor or cultural activities. But the “gadgetization” of heritage discovery activities may also alter the cultural and pedagogical dimension of these services. Hence projects integrating the most innovative and attractive technologies need to skilfully adopt a dual approach: cultural and educational through the discovery of resources and entertaining through the use of ICTs. The aim is to achieve a genuine improvement in understanding and develop a sincere interest in the wealth of heritage that exists.

ICT usages by tourists are increasing and diversifying, and the success of trips and holidays with a strong heritage component seems to becoming well established. It is for this reason that heritage discovery services supported by ICTs can be a considerable source of income for regions.

The use of the Internet by 23% of European web users when planning their holidays and the 95% and 98% of European web users who take their mobile phones away with them illustrate the opportunity for the development of cultural sites discovery services based on ICTs. In particular, these may take the form of online services relating to tour and discovery activities: the sale of digital information that can be integrated into mobile terminals such as mobile phones, PDAs or iPods for example.


Technologies relating to virtual reality and more specifically "augmented reality" through 3D modelling appear to have the potential for significant development. Virtual technologies are starting to be recognised as a medium enabling users to visualise, imagine and understand

aspects of heritage that are difficult to depict using traditional supports. They are particularly favoured in the development of building heritage. From a technical point of view, development opportunities lie in the modules that enable visitors to interact with the information they are seeing.

These mobile multimedia systems are inextricably linked with satellite technologies and, combined with cartography, are likely to advance further. The mobility and independence offered by these technologies and their implications in terms of flow dissemination will undoubtedly influence ICT-based heritage tourism development policies.

While public players often intervene on-site, they also contribute to the development of heritage by promoting the cultural and natural resources of their regions to potential visitors. The most commonly employed initiatives involve the creation of heritage offer information systems that are accessible online. Often based on geolocation, these media provide a global vision of the region and can be used to highlight sites that are sometimes poorly identified in the region or have to compete with better known sites. Remote promotion initiatives now include virtual tour solutions, with the use of video for example. From the point of view of tourism, it is the first step towards the integration of these sites into an itinerary or tour put together by visitors themselves. These systems often provide complementary and essential information for tourists, particularly relating to accommodation and public transport. Tourism-related sites and Internet portals are widespread.

The example of *germany-tourism.co.uk* portal

<p><i>Zoom-able interactive Map of Germany with a selection of several topics.</i></p>	
<p><i>Germany Travel Highlights</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Capital of Culture RUHR.2010 • Walking Holidays • Parks & Gardens • Events • Traveller Reviews • Win a trip to Germany 	<p><i>Think Germany for...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Travellers • Disabled Travellers • Gays & Lesbians • Religious Travellers • Young people • Reasons for going • What to see and do

CUSTODES Accessibility Approach

The CUSTODES innovative referring to the strategies currently adopted – usually based on the promotion of tourism focusing only on the attractiveness of the cultural areas - are in the approach that the project has been adopting, where the promotion is integrated with the creation of new sustainable tourism infrastructures at local level, well integrated with and benefitting from the proximity of a well known tourism destination not too far from the cultural site (max. 50 km). The CUSTODES accessibility approach to cultural destinations consists in the promotion of the integration of soft mobility into local transport systems for the sustainable development of the whole area.

According to this model, the project will promote the development of "slow routes" characterized by inter-modality at low environmental impact: cycling itineraries connecting and finding synergy with horse paths, with waterways, plain trekking itineraries identifying new sustainable development potential in connection with different peculiarities of the rural territories such as historic-cultural peculiarities, landscape and typical products.

Pilot actions relating to accessibility will mainly consist in:

- Mainstreaming on enforcing public transport to minor tourism products;
- Raising Awareness among stakeholders about soft mobility;
- Organizing guided tours and providing maps for cycling/walking tours;
- Increasing the accessibility to and within the area through the ICTs tools;
- Monitoring the data and tourists feedbacks;
- Exchanging best practises for the development of tourism infrastructures and services.



But Custodes intends to promote slow mobility as a way of benefiting from tourist activities, to sightseeing a few places by entering in deep contact with them, live them and at the same time to protect them as invaluable human and social heritage belonging to all mankind and that need to be saved for the next generations too. Exhorts demanding curious, educated

visitors to live intense emotions each corner of the territory, to discover also the unknown and remote places which also are part of the local culture, of the daily nature, worth to be discovered and appreciated in its real aspects. Rediscovering the natural rhythm of things, listening and observing small treasures off the beaten tracks, trying to understand the spirit of places and the fragile balance with their people.

Conclusions

A destination is defined by its ability to provide appropriate visitor access into a destination. In order to develop tourism in a small cultural areas, connectivity between transport and visitor attractions should be guaranteed in terms of access routes and transport options, because it can influence a visitor's initial destination choice, length of stay and overall satisfaction. Because sustainable mobility stands at the basis of a more sustainable tourism, the tourist movement should transfer towards more sustainable modes of transport, and accessibility planning has become a statutory requirement of local authorities.

In order to preserve the ancient value and sense, it is fundamental the promotion of a responsible and sustainable tourism, protection and safeguarding of valuable tourist destination, towards the training and information of the visitors and residents (tourist operators, local administration, citizens etc.).

Tourism development requires community participation as the key ingredient. The local community must understand and agree on the level and type of change likely to occur. This would encourage local community participation in tourism planning and management. Cultural tourism should maximize benefits to the community and distribute those benefits equally while conserving the environment and maintaining the community's traditional culture and way of life. Capacity building of local population – giving the tools as to manage the local resources and get advantage of them without damaging the community's balance.

Destinations can utilise ICTs to strengthen their competitiveness and capture profitable market segments; in particular the accessibility requiring market. An e-Portal that provides accurate, relevant, reliable and accessible tourism information is required. Building and operating such a portal entails critical technical challenges, namely: Interoperability, Content Integration, Accessible Design and Personalisation. Results indicate a number of trade-offs that system developers need to decide upon when incorporating user requirements in the design process.

Finally a strategy, common to the culture and tourism sectors, on a regional level, seems to be an appropriate solution to the major challenge associated with ICT-based heritage tourism development, i.e. that of finding a fragile balance between accessibility for all to the wealth of heritage and the preservation of these resources.