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Planning and Managing the Contemporary Destination

Chapter objectives

After reading this chapter you will:

- Understand the key questions facing tourism planning as a field of planning.
- Recognise the five main traditions of tourism planning and their key features.
- Appreciate the difficulties of developing a sustainable approach to tourism.
- Recognise how changes in planning approaches may be related to changes in the intellectual and physical environment.
- Understand the differences between low- and high-road approaches to regional competitiveness and development.
- Understand key elements of the smart cities and smart tourism concepts

Introduction

Given the inherent characteristics of destination products in terms of their being an amalgam of separate firm and public products, and public and privately-owned tourism resources, it may seem unusual to some readers to be able to discuss destination management and planning. However, as the previous chapter indicated, it is the very nature of a destination that actually make planning processes so important. Although the desirability for tourism planning is generally accepted in most jurisdictions, the form and method of the most effective method of planning is a highly contested

concept (Sharpley & Telfer 2014; Milano et al., 2019). One of the seminal works on tourism planning by Gunn (1979) identified a number of foundation points for the development of an overall approach to tourism destination planning that still remain significant to contemporary tourism.

- 1 Only planning can avert negative impacts, although for planning to be effective, all 'actors' must be involved – not just professional planners.
- 2 Tourism is symbiotic with conservation and recreation, not a conflicting use with irreconcilably incompatible objectives or effects.
- 3 Planning today should be pluralistic, involving social, economic, and physical dimensions.
- 4 Planning is political, and as such there is a vital need to take into account societal objectives and to balance these with other (often conflicting) aspirations.
- 5 Tourism planning must be strategic and integrative.
- 6 Tourism planning must have a regional planning perspective – because many problems arise at the interface with smaller areas, a broader planning horizon is essential.

Tourism planning occurs at various scales from individual firms, to regions, nations and even planning on an international basis. Although such planning activities are interrelated the focus here is on planning at the destination level. The chapter first examines different traditions of destination planning and their relationship to other forms of planning. It then goes on to discuss the importance of sustainability as a part of the planning agenda. Finally, the chapter, examines some of the planning strategies that assist in the achievement of planning objectives.

The development of destination planning

Destination planning is a concept that has emerged only since the late 1960s. Prior to that time planning for tourism was primarily seen within the context of broader urban and regional planning activities (Hall, 2008). However, the rise of international tourism, with the advent of a new generation of jet aircraft and the consequent recognition of the real economic importance of tourism to places in terms of development and employment, saw the development of the first comprehensive attempts to plan for tourism. Nevertheless, destination planning remains very much connected to some of the broader issues and questions that occur within planning in its wider sense (Simão & Mósso, 2013; Fyall & Garrod, 2019). In a seminal work on planning, Campbell and Fainstein (2003) identified five questions with respect to planning theory, all of which should also be of concern in tourism planning.

1 What are the historical roots of planning?

This first question is one of identity and therefore history. Reflecting on the history of a field not only helps answers of how we got to where we are now, in terms of applications and intellectual developments, but also to their implications for planning practice, including being able to learn from previous planning mistakes. Arguably, in the case of tourism planning, one of the biggest issues is that most planning texts fail to acknowledge that tourism planning is grounded within contemporary capitalist society and that there are winners and losers in various types of developments.

2 What is the justification for planning?

The issue of justification raises the key question of why and when should the state intervene in order to change or modify an existing course of events? Planning, in the sense used in this chapter with respect to destinations, is primarily a public (state) activity that may be done in concert with private and other bodies but for which the original rationale lies within the broader issue of the role of the state. The question over what is the justification for planning therefore also raises issues as to why the state should intervene (Bramwell, 2005, 2011; Hall 2011; see also Chapter 6).

From the late 1920s on, planning in terms of intervention was often seen as a means to counter the effects of the market. This notion of a dualism between planning and the market continued through to the 1980s when, in light of the failure of much centralized planning to achieve desired societal goals, the market came to be championed as a resource allocation mechanism to replace planning activities. This perspective had substantial impact on government in many developed nations, as many government assets and authorities were privatized or corporatised in order to meet political demands for 'smaller' government. Tourism was not immune to such changes. In countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand, government's development function in tourism came to be replaced with a far stronger marketing role along with the development of new cooperative structures with the private sector, which lead to significant degrees of policy 'capture' by industry; i.e. tourism policy came to be defined in terms of the needs of industry rather than the needs of a destination, including the permanent residents.

More recent developments with respect to notions of governance (see Chapter 6) have also led to a rethink of the planning–market dualism. Instead, the necessity of steering hybrid public-private relationships, as well as the growth of non-government non-profit 'third sector' organizations, means a significant reinterpretation of the relationship between planning and the market is required (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Hall, 2011). Because tourism is a significant area of public-private relationships with respect to urban regeneration projects or infrastructure, such as airports, destination planning and tourism management, is strongly influenced by debates over what the nature of government intervention should be in destinations with respect to tourism, with a range of interventions being available, each with their own characteristics and assumptions (Figure 8.1).