



EUROPEAN POLICYBRIEF

INTRODUCTION



POLICY BRIEF ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

First Policy brief on sustainable tourism concept, marginal areas and marginal heritage, methodologies and innovative approaches to achieve positive social, economic, cultural and environmental impacts.

September 2022

INCULTUM (Visiting the margins, INnovative CULTural ToUrisM in European peripheries) is a transnational and multidisciplinary consortium engaged in an innovation-action approach within 10 pilot cases in 9 European countries (Spain, Portugal, Slovakia, Italy, France, Greece, Albania, Ireland, Sweden). The project is part of the European Union's H2020 strategy for the revitalisation of rural areas. INCULTUM is in particular intended to complement the investigations of the RURITAGE project (RURITAGE 2020).

This document formulates **recommendations for the orientation of future research programmes** in the field of cultural tourism, rural heritage management and sustainable development of peripheral territories. It develops a transdisciplinary approach, combining socio-economic analysis and drawing on the achievements of the literature on tourism development and territorial management. It endeavours to articulate the diversity of the axes explored by the partners and the various aspects of the problem. This version 1 of the policy brief has been produced at the end of the first year of INCULTUM's activity and the consortium members intend to publish a revised version at the end of the project in 2024.

In order to formulate policy recommendations, we rely on the comparison and analysis of the conditions for the dissemination of innovative practices in the development of sustainable cultural tourism in the contexts in which the different members of the consortium operate.

It should be reminded that to be qualified as "innovative", practices must be original, functional, initiated locally and then adopted more widely (Frascati 2015). Cultural tourism, on the other hand, is defined by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as tourism centred on the tangible and intangible heritage of a territory that constitutes a unique object of attachment for its inhabitants and visitors. Heritage is one of the main drivers of tourism (UNWTO 2016) who, in turn, foster appreciation of local heritage and generates interest and increased investment in its preservation. It can thus serve as a development lever for less developed territories. However, it raises a number of challenges, notably that of balancing the economic benefits with the cultural, social, landscape and ecological integrity of the territories concerned.

The INCULTUM 10 local pilot cases share common points and deal with a wide range of issues relating to the development of heritage sustainable tourism:

- Most of the territories are on the fringes of areas of economic and demographic vitality. They have resources that are difficult to develop and they face a threefold disinvestment: they are poorly integrated into established economic circuits; their landscapes and heritage are not the subject of concerted development strategies; they are facing a strong demographic decline.
- This form of relegation has enabled them to preserve traditional practices adapted to local characteristics, giving them a particular form of resilience.
- These territories are also characterised by a specific heritage, whether archaeological, industrial, agricultural or landscape related. This heritage also has intangible components.
- The inhabitants and “users” of these territories show a strong attachment to the heritage elements, which thus form the basis of a heritage community.
- The work of the teams involved in the INCULTUM consortium consists of using this heritage to imagine a development that articulates preservation and adaptation to the challenges of transition.

These are the main criteria of peripheral territories as defined in the INCULTUM project.

The acceleration of the adverse, and often dramatic, effects of climate change is another parameter that is now essential for the definition of territorial projects, particularly in their tourism dimension.

What lessons can be drawn from the first experiences of INCULTUM? What are the conditions for the existence of a sustainable tourism development project that is adapted to local specificities and that does not present the risks of standardising the offer and massively increasing the number of visitors to the area? How can its integration into the overall territorial project be encouraged? How to involve a maximum number of stakeholders in its implementation? How to take into account the negative effects of climate change and the uncertainties it causes?

Based on the partial results of the first year of the project, we will attempt to raise a number of shared issues - necessarily provisional and incomplete - in order to identify common research problems. Particular emphasis will be placed on *heritage communities*, as a potential basis for joint action.



Fig 1. Ancient path in Bibracte, (France) INCULTUM Pilot

A common research problem

The Faro Convention (Faro 2005) refers to communities of people – *the heritage communities* - who share a strong attachment to a piece of heritage, especially the heritage elements that characterise their territory. These heritage communities **are the essential support for any cultural sustainable tourism development initiative. Nevertheless, a shared attachment to heritage does not necessarily guarantee the capacity of the members of heritage communities to coordinate spontaneously. The strength of the attachment of a group of people to a shared object can, on the contrary, trigger intense conflicts when, for example, some consider the use or benefits made of it by others to be illegitimate** (Veschambre 1998).

For an element of heritage (or any object of shared attachment) to become a true “common” (a community asset) and thus allow the development of sustainable tourism, three further conditions must be met: 1. all the members of the community must recognise each other as legitimate members; 2. they need to agree on a shared and precise definition of the common resource; 3. the community must establish and respect a set of rules organising access to and permitted uses of the shared resource, as well as restrictions and sanctions in case of non-compliance with them (Coriat 2015).

However, heritage is often the subject of uses and practices that give rise to conflicts between different members of these communities¹.

These contributions of the sociology of work and cybernetics to the analysis of organisations teach us that it is not enough to rely on reason, interest, or even goodwill to encourage categories of actors to cooperate, especially if they have something in common (in this case, attachment to a territory characterised by a heritage). The shared representation of what constitutes heritage can certainly help to solve the simplest problems, following the example of Schelling's (1960) focal point². But things get more complicated when it comes to determining how to exploit this focal point and, even worse, how to allocate or distribute the benefits.

The development of sustainable cultural tourism must also find solutions to guarantee fair access to resources for all stakeholders and also create viable economic models to encourage local investment.

¹To understand what separates a *de facto* community from a community *in action*, we need to apply the *strategic analysis* approach (Crozier & Friedberg 1977) and mobilise the concept of *bounded rationality* (Simon 1957). The *bounded rationality* represents a revolution in relation to the classical representation of rationality. According to Herbert A. Simon, there is no universal rationality (conceived as a general mode of calculation or rationality to which all particular modes of calculation could be reduced) but several heterogeneous modes of rationality, each of which may be more relevant in a given context, but all of which are not hierarchical in absolute terms. Thus, in an organized community - defined as a collective action involving the (synchronous or asynchronous) cooperation of several actors with distinct and complementary tasks and skills - an action that may seem irrational to one category of members may be considered perfectly rational to others. Even if they all theoretically share a common goal (that of the organisation), its members may not agree on the most appropriate method of achieving it (e.g. should they take the quickest or the safest route?). It is traditionally the role of the authority to arbitrate such conflicts. But the level of generality (the rationality of the whole - in this case the authority - versus the rationality of a part) is not necessarily a guarantee of superiority in reason. Indeed, an organisation's goal as well as the method defined to reach it (by the category of actors able to impose them at a given moment) can become perfectly unsuitable to a change of context. Nevertheless, characterising rationality as limited does not mean declaring the reign of absolute relativity. Crozier and Friedberg show how different categories of actors develop common forms of rationality according to shared (sometimes temporary) positions and interests. These heterogeneous forms of rationality can lead the different categories of actors to make choices that logically pursue specific interests and enable them to achieve these interests, but which sometimes lead to a total paralysis of the system.

²In game theory, Schelling point is a solution to which actors who cannot communicate with each other on the subject that unites them will tend to rally, because it seems to them to present a characteristic that will make the other choose it as well.

Any participatory initiative for sustainable cultural development integrated into a territory project must consider these difficulties and try to find solutions to them. Field experiences show that the attachment to heritage can serve to bring the different stakeholders around the discussion table, but this dialogue is not enough to produce a common action plan to manage heritage. On the contrary, the heritage shared attachment can be the cause of many conflicts.

The teams involved in INCULTUM aim to identify the difficulties and help the different categories of stakeholders in the field to develop concrete solutions to address these obstacles to their cooperation.

Concrete examples of potential conflicts around heritage

It is not surprising that, in a territory whose inhabitants and visitors have not signed any contract of objectives, the representations of what its development should be are **not necessarily homogeneous and give rise to conflicts** (Rautenberg&alii, 2000).

The territory's stakeholders, including all the local actors and their interests, can be reduced, for the current purpose, to a summary typology: public organisations, socio-professionals (including the tourism professionals), associations for the protection and enhancement of the heritage or the environment, those of the space users (themselves divided into categories) and the "ordinary inhabitants". This last category is heterogeneous: inhabitants can be divided according to their sector of activity (fully employed locally or teleworkers, retired and inactive people), the time they spend on the territory (permanent residents or holders of second homes) and their degree of integration to the local culture.

Let us outline some of the causes for misunderstandings, and to begin with, the institutional behaviour. Institutionals act within the framework of their mandates according to specific administrative logics, which sometimes result in regulatory constraints that are not always understood or accepted by the other actors. As official defenders of the heritage, the institutions representatives are in theory legitimate, but the regulations are necessarily formulated at a certain level of generality which cannot always take into consideration local specificities. **Interpretation plays a role here and it is always questionable.**

On their side, the different categories of economic actors (tourism professionals and the primary and secondary sectors professionals - farmers, foresters, local industrialists...) **rarely share the same objectives and the consequences of one activity can be perceived as a hindrance to the good functioning of the others** (Goebel &alii 2019). Industrial or agricultural activity may be perceived as harmful to the development of 'green' tourism, but – as long as one considers a sustainable tourism development – the two must strive to co-exist in an integrated territorial project.

Furthermore, the development of a residential economy dominated by holiday homes hinders the settlement of permanent residents because of the pressure on the housing stock. The scarcity of supply can make it difficult to establish workers, esp. in the services sector. The seasonal/irregular nature of the attendance complicates the long-term forecast for services managers (restaurants, shops, health facilities, etc.). Supply and demand in this area struggle to correspond. Moreover, the social categories that seek to settle in these marginal areas are not necessarily aware of these series of contradictions and aspire to live in a largely fantasised rural context (devoid of tractor noises, stable smells, or activities perceived as predatory of nature such as logging). **These aspirations can generate tensions between different categories of inhabitants.**

These practical difficulties involved in moving from a *de facto* community to a community of commons should not be underestimated. It seems necessary to create a shared vision, not only of what constitutes a common heritage, but also of the legitimate ways of using it, of the consequences of the actions of some on the uses of others, and of the perimeter of the people authorised to claim access to these uses. And as it is not enough to establish rules "once and for all" but to make them live as generations succeed one another and as

new visitors or inhabitants enter the territory, **it is very important to establish permanent arenas for dialogue and adjustment in order to guarantee the evolution of these norms but above all, the continuity of the desire of the members of the community to do things together** (Eldway & alii 2020).

The likelihood of all shareholders harmonising spontaneously is practically zero. Moreover, in marginal areas, institutional power is usually quite weak due to the demographic and geographical structure (it is always possible to proscribe or prescribe, but the chances of such pro/prescriptions being carefully implemented are low). The capacity to induce cooperation through economic leverage is weak as the expectation of benefits is not obvious. **While the constraints of the situation may make the need for cooperation obvious to an outside observer, experience and research show that actors only understand the value of collective action once they are involved (and see the first fruits)** (Reynaud, 1989).

The existence of a management team can therefore be extremely useful for getting the ball rolling, i.e. initiating cohesion around a concerted territorial project based on the preservation and enhancement of its heritage. The aim of the INCULTUM pilot cases is to document the conditions for success where this kind of concerted territorial project has emerged or to accompany and encourage their emergence. Let us now review some of the solutions envisaged within the consortium or in the literature.

Literature review and experiments

It is obvious that a sustainable cultural tourism development project has nothing in common with the tourism projects of the last century which relied on volume to guarantee an economic model. The 21st century tourists are not anonymous tourists, totally alien to the territory, who are taken from one "spot" to another without their consent, who buy standardised low-quality products and who will not come back, sucked in by the thirst for new destinations with an ever-higher carbon footprint. **This paradigm shift is becoming more pronounced with the climate transition and the accumulation of its negative effects (pandemics, depletion and discrediting of fossil fuels, etc.).**

The "sustainable" tourists are persons who are at least partially integrated into the heritage community. They intend to return to the area, or to stay there long enough to feel the local spirit, understand its logic, and move around slowly, so as to be able to grasp all its specificities. They appreciate local cultural and agricultural products, and in buying them, they contribute to local economy. Long-term relationships can be established between local actors and visitors, and the latter may choose to settle in the region in the long term (McGettigan, Burns 2004) **To encourage this type of interaction, it is important to act on both the supply and demand sides.**

Studies on the conditions for the development of demand in sustainable tourism (Huang & alii 2017, Santos-Roldan & alii 2020) show that the motivation alone (to reduce one's carbon footprint, to participate in culturally enriching activities) is insufficient to trigger the act of 'buying' a form of sustainable cultural tourism. They indeed insist on **the importance of the tourist's perception of the effects of their choice that are immediately perceptible not only on the natural and social environment, but also on their wellbeing and the quality of their stay.**

The promotion of sustainable cultural tourism must therefore implement radically different communication strategies from those traditionally used in this sector. They should be based in particular on the distinction, the uniqueness of the experience and its correspondence to a certain number of values while avoiding making it an object of repulsion for the popular categories.

Increasing opportunities for quality interaction between tourists and local actors (Murphy & Murphy 2004) and allowing visitors to participate directly in local cultural activity (Carvalho & alii 2016) are ways to contribute to this outcome. In this way, tourists are no longer seen simply as passengers in transit, casual encounters, but as potential members in the making of the heritage community (Sgard 2010). Experiments such

as Wellbeing tourism (Pyke & alii 2016), which are currently in full swing (Notteau & Lipinska 2022) in a context where tourism and mobility are undergoing unprecedented changes, imply a strong and visible commitment of tourism actors to the preservation of the environment and the cultural ways of existence of local communities.

However, these paths of innovation do not seem to be sufficient **to fully integrate initiatives for the development of sustainable cultural tourism into an overall territorial project**. Entering the process from the sole perspective of tourist activity presents risks: it can contribute to excluding the most fragile and “invisible” inhabitants from the process, and only be accessible to the social categories that have the means to finance luxury activities. Moreover, it risks to arouse the opposition of the rest of the actors contributing to the maintenance of the common good that is the landscape or, more widely, the heritage. These may indeed consider to be unrewarded for their efforts or even oppose the development of an activity that they consider harmful (Mora 2022).

Indicators still need to be developed to determine the acceptability thresholds (social, economic and environmental impact measurement) and to identify the characteristics that would make them more acceptable. According to another point of view, **the tourist economy must be thought out and developed within the framework of an integrated territorial project**, as promoted by BIBRACTE EPCC with the *Grand Site de France* approach³. This includes, in particular, **the hybridization of the different economic sectors and the promotion of the pluri-activity of the economic actors** (by reviving practices that were commonplace in the past).

Organisational methods inspired by the experiences of community-based rural tourism (CBRT, Ohe 2021) can help to resolve some of these difficulties. However, they can only be effective if an active community with the capacity for collective action can be identified and mobilised in the area - For example, within the pilot led by University of Grenada in Spain, farmers are paid for the maintenance of irrigation canals as an “ecological service”. But it also happens that the heterogeneity of the local population (produced by various causes such as ageing, rural exodus, the settlement of new inhabitants of diverse origins, notably migrants) and the erosion of customs complicate the implementation of this type of system.

The involvement of actors from the academic world (RURITAGE, De Luca & alii 2021) according to a specific methodology (*Community-based Heritage Management and Planning methodology* - CHMP), seems to provide partial answers to these difficulties. **The INCULTUM consortium complements these approaches by undertaking participatory action research to mobilise local stakeholders, listen to their diverse and sometimes conflicting perceptions and claims, and build with them the conditions for consensus and the basis for transactions (economic, but also symbolic in the sense of Lewin 1951) that are satisfactory to all.**

³The “Grand Site de France” is a French label which guarantees that a protected site is conserved and managed following sustainable development principles, which combine the conservation of the landscape, the ‘spirit’ of the site, the quality of the visitors’ experience and the participation of the inhabitants and partners in the life of the Grand Site. This label belongs to the French state. It is managed by the Ministry for Ecology and Sustainable Development. Its creation was an important stage showing the recognition by national policy of the importance of these truly inspiring landscapes and the commitment of local organisations and the French state to their long-term management. INCULTUM Partner Bibracte EPCC obtained the Grand Site de France label in 2008, which was renewed for the second time in August 2022.



Fig. 2. Different moments of participatory actions in INCULTUM Pilots

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the work of the consortium progresses, a number of recommendations are emerging that would deepen the understanding of the difficulties of developing sustainable cultural tourism schemes integrated into the territory's project. These recommendations are provisional and will need to be confirmed at the end of the project.

1. The intervention of the INCULTUM teams according to the action-research method makes it possible to reveal the elements of the local heritage which raise the attachment of most, if not all of, the inhabitants and visitors of the territory, so as to **build active heritage communities**. This approach is made more effective by the use of **participatory methodologies** that allow for the identification of heterogeneous representations and areas of potential conflict, as well as for imagining, with the stakeholders, ways to overcome these difficulties (Marcandella&alii 2020, Lloyd & Moore 2015). Particular attention must be paid to **identifying and formalising the thresholds of acceptability that the different groups present with regard to the actions of others** (i.e. how to make possible the coexistence of hikers and hunters on the same forest trails).
2. The different methodologies for animating emerging heritage communities (Ruritage 2020) still need to be tested, and the results of the research must be disseminated to all the stakeholders in the territories concerned to facilitate the spread of good practices. This dissemination cannot take the form of a simple "top-down" presentation, but rather of **action-training mechanisms that allow learners to play an active role, enabling them to co-develop the methods and adapt them to their local context**. If it is not possible to train the entire population, it is necessary to identify resource persons in the local ecosystem and to rely on their capacity to pass on information. Valuing the work of the facilitators is a key element in the success of this type of project. To facilitate these approaches, **the implementation of Rural Heritage Hubs** (conciergeries, third places) (RHH, De Luca & al 2021) seems to be of great help, but their animation represents a significant initial investment even if it allows for the generation of economies of scale later on.
3. The question of fairly sharing the costs and benefits of territorial development implies involving all stakeholders in the implementation of the sustainable cultural tourism project (Ozcevik et al., 2010). Regarding this aspect, it is necessary to examine several dimensions and identify some specific success factors, notably the **conditions for sustainable financing of territorial innovation and the economic and legal structure suitable for multi-activity**. It is also necessary to **evaluate the possibility of transposing local inventions that have been successful in other contexts**. The identification of the legal frameworks that can be mobilised locally must also be the subject of more

structured approaches, while a prospective effort is absolutely necessary on the evolution of national and European rules in this area at a time of upheaval brought about by the climate transition.

4. **The identification and the means of overcoming the material problems of marginal territories** (lack of infrastructure, logistical problems, especially including mobility) can be the subject of methodical approaches which will be enriched by comparisons and identification of good practices, notably by the analysis of the solutions provided by the collaborative economy allowed by the new technologies. When the solution exists, the conditions for its local implementation need to be studied. And when it does not exist, it is necessary to imagine the system that will provide the least costly response, as well as the potential financing mechanisms for its deployment.
5. In order to ensure that marginal territories and their potential wealth do not remain on the side-lines, the **European level is certainly relevant for setting up a network of territorial and scientific actors working to enlighten the conditions of success and encourage the construction and the management of heritage communities driven by their main stakeholders.** A specific attention to the uses of European funds and their effects on the field is also required.

Project's Summary

Tourism is more than travelling and consumption; it has great potential when it comes to culture, nature, knowledge, and personal experiences. Travelling is a way to learn and improve oneself, to enrich one's vision and improve mutual understanding. The INCULTUM project deals with the challenges and opportunities of cultural tourism with the aim of furthering sustainable social, cultural, and economic development. It will explore the full potential of marginal and peripheral areas when managed by local communities and stakeholders. Innovative participatory approaches are adopted, transforming locals into protagonists, able to reduce negative impacts, learning from and improving good practices to be replicated and translated into strategies and policies.

15 partners

An interdisciplinary group of partners including academia, municipalities and SMEs will effectively deploy knowledge and participate in the various project's activities.

10 local pilots

INCULTUM aims to demonstrate the high potential of the marginal and peripheral places, cultural heritage and resources when managed by local communities and stakeholders.

Data analysis

INCULTUM gathers quantitative and qualitative data on cultural tourism to produce innovative data analysis and new statistics on this phenomenon.

Participative methodology

INCULTUM findings are oriented to foster positive impacts of cultural tourism by using a participatory approach involving local population and stakeholders as communities of practices.

Synergies

INCULTUM fosters intercultural understanding through the implementation of bottom-up strategies that can have positive effects for both locals and tourists.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME	INCULTUM Visiting the margins: INnovative CULTural ToUrisM in European peripheries
COORDINATOR	José M ^a Martín Civantos University of Granada MEMOLab. Laboratorio de Arqueología Biocultural civantos@go.ugr.es
CONSORTIUM	University of Granada, Spain (Project Coordinator) Matej Bel University, Slovakia Copenhagen Business School, Denmark Promoter S.r.l., Italy (Network Coordinator) SDU – University of Southern Denmark, Denmark University of Pisa, Italy Uppsala University, Sweden G.A.L Elimos, Italy Eachtra Archaeological Projects, Ireland Bibracte, France The High Mountains cooperative, Greece Centre for the Research and Promotion of Historical Archaeological Albanian Landscapes, Albania University of Algarve, Portugal Provincial Tourism Board of Granada, Spain Municipality of Permet, Albania
FUNDING SCHEME	Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020), Societal Challenge 6 – Europe in a changing world: inclusive, innovative and reflective societies". TRANSFORMATIONS 04 2019 2020: Innovative approaches to urban and regional development through cultural tourism.
DURATION	May 2021 – April 2024 (36 months).
BUDGET	EU contribution: 3,487,411.25 Eur
WEBSITE	https://incultum.eu/
FOR MORE INFORMATION	Contact person: Antonella Fresa, fresa@promoter.it
FURTHER READING	INCULTUM deliverableD7.1 Stakeholder Map Report (PDF)

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