

Editorial

The Discourse on Sustainable Urban Tourism: The Need for Discussing More Than Overtourism

Carlo Aall ^{1,*} and Ko Koens ² 

¹ Western Norway Research Institute, P.O. Box 163, 6851 Sogndal, Norway

² Department of Hotel and Facility Management, Breda University of Applied Sciences, P.O. Box 3917, 4800 DX Breda, The Netherlands

* Correspondence: caa@vestforsk.no

Received: 31 July 2019; Accepted: 1 August 2019; Published: 5 August 2019



Abstract: The journal Sustainability has previously published special issues on sustainable tourism and on sustainable cities (both in 2014). This special issue presents recent insights from combining the two research topics. There is some convergence with respect to core challenges that sustainable urban tourism is facing. Firstly, relating to social sustainable development, there is the tension between the quality of life for residents in different ways and the development of cities to benefit the tourism industry. Secondly, relating to environmental sustainable development, there is the tension between residents and their desire for good local environmental standards and visiting tourists that create a number of over-tourism related local environmental problems. Thirdly, there are the challenges that so far have received less attention, but obviously are expected to become crucial in the years to come: The double climate change provides risks to cities from a changing climate and from more ambitious climate policies to come.

Keywords: urban tourism; sustainable tourism; climate change and tourism; urban sustainable tourism

1. The Case of Urban Tourism and Sustainable Development

Urbanisation is one of the most visible features of the age in which people live. It is even claimed that society has entered the century of the city [1]. If that is true, perhaps the same can be said about urban tourism, which also is increasing rapidly compared to other forms of tourism—maybe society is entering the century of the urban tourism.

Urban tourism stands out from other types of tourism in that people travel to places with a high population density, and that time spent at the destination usually is shorter than normally spent on vacation. In addition to being important destinations, cities have a significant role in the overall tourist system, by being gateways for international and domestic tourists, as well as being nodes in air transport systems and therefore acting as a place for stopovers in trips with multiple destinations [2]. Further, as cities are multifunctional entities, the tourists' motivation for visiting them can differ greatly [3]. Its multifunctionality allows for different experiences to be lived contemporarily, contributing to making the connection between urbanity and tourism complex. As tourists' and residents' desires and needs intersect, cities face different demands for services and facilities. The tourist load on a city can, in this sense, compromise its balance, possibly reducing the urban quality of life [4].

Despite the observed increase in recent years for urban tourism, it has received a disproportionately small amount of attention in academia, both from scholars of tourism and of the city [3] and of sustainable tourism. Barke and Newton [5] were among the first to point out that the concept of sustainable tourism rarely is used within an urban context, a claim that has been carried forward into the present by several authors [6–9]. Thus, this special issue aims at addressing more specifically the question of

what sustainable urban tourism can entail. In doing so, a broad approach to sustainability has been applied by including both the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development.

The journal *Sustainability* has previously published two special issues of relevance in this context—on sustainable tourism [10] and on sustainable cities [11]. This special issue tries to develop insights from these two previous special issues further and combines the perspectives already touched upon in the two previous special issues.

2. Urbanisation and Urban Tourism are Increasing

According to EU statistics, urban areas accounted for almost two thirds of the total number of tourist nights spent in EU member states in 2014. Tourism statistics show an increase in urban tourism and higher occupancy rates in urban areas compared to suburban and rural areas [12]. This can be explained by at least three driving factors. Firstly, by a general global increase in mobility; i.e., a combination of an increase in mobility demand from both the private and public consumers, and an increase in mobility supply by means of an increased mobility capacity of all means of transportation, in particular aviation [13]. Secondly, an increasing share of the world's population live in urban settlements, and these figures are expected to increase further. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) presents on a regular basis estimates on urbanisation prospects, with the latest being published in 2018. According to DESA, 55 % of the world's population are residing in urban areas in 2018, which can be compared with a corresponding figure of 30 % in 1950 and an expectancy of 68 % in 2050. According to DESA, this development is mainly driven by population increases and by the upward shift in the percentage living in urban areas [14]. Thirdly, business trips, which are included in the above cited statistics, usually take place in urban areas [15]. This segment of tourism has experienced a large increase in the last years “closely related to the overall economic development manifested worldwide, with the opening of new markets, the intensification of international relations and contacts of all kinds” [16] (p. 703). Seto and colleagues [1] point at factors like those that push for increased business trips which also push towards urbanisation itself, in what is denoted as footloose global capital in addition to urban governance, institutions and agglomeration forces. Thus, an increase in urban tourism and urbanisation appears to be pushed, at least in part, by the same kind of drivers.

3. Sustainable Development

During the 1980s, sustainable development became part of ongoing debates regarding on the one hand, the carrying capacity of nature for human use, and on the other hand on global justice, both of which have taken place since the late 1950s [17]. The most frequently cited definition of sustainable development is from the report that officially launched the goal of achieving a sustainable development, “Our Common Future” presented in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” [18] (p. 41). However, the following supplement is often forgotten, thus making the definition above far too narrow: “[Sustainable development] contains within it two key concepts: the concept of ‘needs’, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs” (Op. cit). Thus, what can be denoted as the original version of the sustainable development concept contained two core dimensions [19,20]: Ecological and socially equitable sustainable development. The first is about protecting and maintaining all major ecological and global life-support systems, whereas the later can be divided in two subcategories: Generational justice (that future generations should have equal rights to maintain their basic needs) and local and global justice (that everyone today should have equal rights to maintain their basic needs). When applying the goal of sustainable development to any sector of society, it is crucial to bear in mind the original and autorotative definition of the goal to prevent major dilutions—and thus

weakening—of the concept [21]. Furthermore, it is important to be aware of the danger that when downscaling the sustainable development goal to the local level, the focus tends to be on the economic aspects and the issue of how to create growth in tourism [22].

4. The Definitions of Sustainable Tourism

The origin of the discourse on sustainable tourism dates to 1993, when the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) presented their perspectives on the matter. The placement of sustainable development on the tourism policy agenda was a reaction to earlier developments in the sector, e.g., the growth in mass tourism and a market-driven expansion leading to social, economic and ecological problems. Thus, the concept of sustainable tourism grew out of emerging unease about tourism impacts on destinations and their residents and became a common theme in tourism research in the 1990s [23].

According to the UNWTO, sustainable tourism should “take[s] full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities [24] (p.12)”. They further explain the three pillars as follows:

- Economic sustainable development—generating prosperity at different levels of society and addressing the cost effectiveness of all economic activity. Crucially, it is about the viability of enterprises and activities and their ability to be maintained in the long term.
- Social sustainable development—respecting human rights and equal opportunities for all in society. It requires an equitable distribution of benefits, with a focus on alleviating poverty. There is an emphasis on local communities, maintaining and strengthening their life support systems, recognizing and respecting different cultures and avoiding any form of exploitation.
- Environmental sustainable development—conserving and managing resources, especially those that are not renewable or are precious in terms of life support. It requires action to minimize the pollution of air, land and water, and to conserve biological diversity and natural heritage.

Both the tourism industry, tourism policy actors and most of tourism academics have embraced this triple sustainable development concept. That is, the idea of balancing between environmental, social and economic sustainable development, and to treat them as concepts at par, although the view about the content of the three pillars often differ [21]. Also, the UNWTO definition has been criticized by some tourism academics as being too broad [17,25], and thus giving ground to formulate the somewhat provocative question—if sustainable tourism is everything, maybe it is nothing? [26]. The concept has been further criticized for allowing economic concerns to overplay environmental concerns [8] instead of seeking to create a balance among the three. Others are pointing to a lacking focus on social sustainable development, arguing that sustainable tourism traditionally has given more focus to environmental sustainable development and economic development [27]. The application within tourism of the term, balance, has also been criticized, arguing that tourism is only sustainable when there is an equilibrium in the relationship between the three sustainable development dimensions and that sustainable development ceases to exist if one aspect upsets the equilibrium [28]. Others are less optimistic about the possibility of ever getting to a state of balance or equilibrium, as the development of sustainable tourism involves tradeoff decisions which will skew the development in favor of certain aspects [27]. The discontent with the term balance was already expressed by Cater [29] in 1995, who pointed at the challenge of dividing sustainable development into three aspects, claiming that it can be misleading as economic growth through tourism often will conflict with environmental protection. Others point at the difficulties with implementing sustainable tourism even on a small scale, as “success in one area may be offset by tradeoffs in another area” [30] (p. 225).

In his critical discussion on the then prevailing understanding of sustainable tourism, Høyer [17] has presented a model to differentiate between categories of—and ways of addressing—sustainable development problems relating to tourism, in which he differs between mobile and stationary tourism activities and intensity and volume problems. In the case of intensity problems, this often refers to

the maximum number of people who can use a specific area per time unit without an unacceptable reduction in the quality of the experiences that visitors and residents may gain. Therefore, if the number of tourists is below the threshold, there are no problems (e.g., congestion of traffic). In the case of volume problems, the nature and extent of the problem in question has a linear relationship to the number of tourists. However, even with a low number of tourists, they contribute to the problem in question (e.g., emissions of greenhouse gases from transportation). Høyer argues that the sustainable tourism discourse has mainly addressed the stationary tourism activities and the intensity related mobile problems, thus leaving out the main source of energy use and emission of pollutants from tourism: The transportation to and from the destination. Thus, Høyer points out that the most important requirement for making tourism more sustainable is to expand the perspective to include the mobile volume-related problems.

5. Sustainable Urban Tourism

Applying the above referred discussion to the content of this special issue, urban tourism can be defined as the type of tourism which on the one hand takes place in urban areas, and on the other hand, may contribute to an ongoing process of (continuous temporary) urbanisation (e.g., by increasing the population and the density of physical infrastructure). To this definition can be added a condition about the type of attraction or reason to go. As for the case of the definition offered by UNWTO: “A type of tourism activity which takes place in an urban space with its inherent attributes characterized by non-agricultural based economy such as administration, manufacturing, trade and services and by being nodal points of transport” [31]. Adding sustainable to this would then imply that a sustainable urban tourism contains tourism activities as well as tourism transportation to and from the city that must be within the carrying capacity of the ecosystem and the level change acceptable to its inhabitants, and at the same time contribute to promoting generational and global justice.

When investigating the literature on sustainable urban tourism, Lu and Nepal’s content analysis from 2009 of the papers published in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism (JoST)* show that the clear majority (58%) of early stage JoST papers focused on nature-based or ecotourism, but that papers concerned with sustainable development in tourism in general has been growing significantly from 1993 to 2007 [9]. The number of papers focusing specifically on urban tourism, however, has remained low through this period. This low number of papers focusing on an urban context is in line with the general tourism literature, as mentioned previously. A possible additional explanation for the neglect of urban tourism in the sustainable tourism literature—at least as it has manifested itself in JoST—is according to Miller and colleagues [7] that sustainable development in a tourism context has traditionally been tied to rural and eco-tourism. That is, the types of tourism that are often considered to be special interest tourism, where the motivation for travelling is the visitor’s interest in something that can be pursued at a particular destination—which for the case of rural and eco-tourism mostly takes place outside of large urban areas and cities. Furthermore, Miller and colleagues explain how research on pro-environmental behavior primarily has focused on home-settings, the contrast between pro-environmental behavior at home and in a tourism context, and pro-environmental behaviors in niche tourism sectors, like eco-tourism and nature-based tourism. This has led to sustainable tourism largely being considered an alternative to regular or mainstream tourism, offering products and services that are different from regular tourism. At the same time, Høyer [17] noted that tourism practices presenting themselves as sustainable, using headings like eco-tourism, green tourism, sustainable tourism and the like, tend to imply longer travel distances to more remote places and more frequent use of air and private car transportation than the regular and mainstream forms of tourism.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, relatively many papers on urban tourism focus on social, rather than environmental aspects of sustainability. Earlier work already highlighted the negative impacts tourism can have on the quality of life in often visited cities like Venice, or in areas, where tourism is developing rapidly and rather uncontrolled [32]. This seems set to be exacerbated further by the debate on overtourism and tourism-phobia [33]. Many papers concerning urban tourism focus on perceptions,

either tourist perception or resident perception of the current or wanted state of tourism [34]. Whilst this is understandable, as it is highly difficult to establish objective indicators for social aspects of sustainability, and most attempts “fail to identify exactly what the various indices measure or what significance they might practically have for urban policy” [35] (p. 4). However, as Buckley argues, the indicators based solely on perceptions, either from tourists, residents or tourism operators, may be incomplete as people are not always able to perceive or understand their impacts, or even care about them [36]. Furthermore, as argued by Koens and colleagues [37], the main social issues underlying the debate of overtourism consists of three distinctly different problems that require different solutions: 1) Overvisitation, causing issues related to overcrowding and increasing pressure on infrastructure; 2) tourists’ behavior, causing nuisance and disturbances; 3) physical touristification, reducing both the availability of housing (due to short-term rentals) and facilities for residents (e.g., local supermarkets). In practice however, these three developments tend to develop around the same time and are difficult to discern. What most authors agree on though, is that better frameworks are required to measure sustainable urban tourism.

As a way of dealing with the governance of sustainable urban tourism, stakeholder involvement is frequently discussed in the literature. As shown above, the UNWTO states that sustainable tourism addresses the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities [24] (p. 12), while Savage and colleagues [30] claim that sustainable tourism in fact do, or at least should aim at implying a harmonious and productive relationship between host communities, visitors and the environment. Despite disagreements about the definition of sustainable urban tourism, which areas are being neglected and what aspects should be emphasized more, there appears to be an agreement in the literature that sustainable urban tourism requires cooperation among several stakeholder groups, but that this complicates the attempt to operationalize and implement sustainable urban tourism. Indeed, in their recent contribution on the topic, Koens and colleagues [38] argue that this represents a social dilemma, as tourism is discussed on different hierarchical levels of policy with limited communication between stakeholders, the unavoidable existence of conflicting co-existing values, priorities and interests, as well as a lack of time and knowledge to overcome these issues. They provide a framework to help overcome these issues.

Scott and Cooper [39] address the overarching question of whether one should develop sustainable urban tourism, arguing that this first needs to be recognized as a wicked question, involving tradeoffs between competing priorities. As the question of developing sustainable tourism is a normative question, it depends on the values of the stakeholders addressing it, which usually is a network of actors who debate, decide and implement tourism related strategies and policies. They further point out that the development of sustainable tourism could therefore be argued to depend on a critical mass of stakeholders sharing the same viewpoint. These networks of stakeholders are a recognition of a shift to a governance approach to questions regarding sustainable urban tourism. Traditionally, governments have been reluctant to require change in the tourism sector, and with the more recent privatization that dominates governance, regulations are even less welcome [28]. As the sector has become more fragmented, now consisting of networks where some actors have relatively more influence than others, it can be argued that sustainable tourism reflects economic interests, ethical beliefs of stakeholders and the effectiveness of lobbies [40]. Further, research suggests that tourism policy often is opportunistic and pragmatic, which in turn suggests that effectiveness of institutional arrangements related to tourism is subject to the personal and professional characteristics of stakeholders involved [41].

The implementation of sustainable development principles in urban tourism is by some commentators considered to be more complex compared to other industries because of the different needs and interests of the main stakeholders involved in urban tourism development [6]. The tourism industry is characterized by being diverse and fragmented and is possibly even more so in the context of urban tourism due to the multifunctionality of cities. This has prevented a strong leadership, leading Lane [28] (p. 23) to say that “in theory the industry leads; in practice the market leads, but it is leaderless”.

A major difficulty with the governance of sustainable tourism is that it spans diverse policy domains, leading to decisions affecting sustainable tourism being made in other policy domains, with little or no attention paid to how tourism may be affected by such decisions [39]. Further, research suggests that tourism policy often is opportunistic, with expanding tourism high up on tourism strategies securing increased revenue and employment [40]. Another issue relating to the public sectors' role in the governance of urban sustainable tourism, is that tourism governance is expected to alter over time due to the changes in the political context [42]. With the inherently long-term perspective that sustainable development and sustainable tourism require, this is particularly problematic, given that when dealing with sustainable development issues—in particular climate change—future consequences are dependent on present-day decisions. Further, tourism is just one of several economic activities in a city and must therefore compete with several other industries for the same resources. This has implications for the perceived importance of issues related to tourism among businesses, residential communities and governments. The planning and policy-making processes are, therefore, made even more complex, as they depend on the engagement of a multiplicity of public and commercial organizations with varying levels of involvement [2]. Whilst new technologies may aid in increasing resident involvement, the lack of sharing information is an issue that needs to also be addressed to solve this issue [43].

6. Sustainable Urban Tourism: Part of the Sustainable Development Problem—But Also the Solution?

Urban areas are recognized as places with a particularly high variations in both problems and challenges. With de-industrialization, urban policy has in many places been aimed at having to deal with problems of social exclusion and reduction in competitiveness [44], while at the same time, becoming more sustainable has been accepted as an increasingly important policy goal for cities worldwide.

The current adoption of sustainable tourism objectives by tourism businesses and governments could be a failure among policy-makers, as it has not halted the growth in tourism's contribution to environmental change. These differences between goals of sustainable tourism and actualities of the sector's impacts can be seen as an implementation gap, or an implementation deficit, and could be used to improve the development of sustainable tourism if reasons for previous failures can be identified and future failures can be reduced [45]. At the same time, some have pointed at the explosion of debate on sustainable development among politicians, academics, pressure groups and in the media, and that much of this debate has focused on the city. With growth in the tourism industry, urban sustainable development issues linked to tourism developments has also become a major priority area for policy makers [43,46].

Høyers [17] proposed a way of addressing tourism sustainable development problems which is still highly relevant when looking at literature on sustainable urban tourism. That is not to say that literature focusing on intensity problems are not acknowledging/recognizing the volume perspective, but that studies carried out locally in cities often focus on intensity problems like overcrowding [47], local mobility patterns or transport use [48] and discontent among residents with the tourism development in their city. However, since Høyer presented his model, major research efforts have been done on volume problems, particularly relating to climate change and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from tourism in general, and urban tourism in particular. Becken and Patterson [49] point to the fact that most tourism-related activities require some sort of energy either directly or indirectly, but that no country (possesses) comprehensive national statistics on emissions specifically resulting from tourism.

It is frequently cited in the public debate that cities create over 70% of global GHG emissions (see e.g., <https://www.c40.org/ending-climate-change-begins-in-the-city>). As pointed out by Sattertwithe [50], this is most probably a large overstatement, and the correct figure is probably closer to 50%, because of the contributions from agriculture and deforestation and from heavy industries, fossil-fuelled power stations and high-consumption households that are not located in cities. However, as stated by

Sattertweith [48] (p. 539) “if greenhouse gas emissions from power stations and industries are assigned to the location of the person or institution who consumes them (rather than where they are produced), cities would account for a higher proportion of total emissions”. Either way, a cities’ contribution to major sustainable development problems, such as climate change, is large, and their contribution is growing in accordance with the growing share of the global population living in urban areas.

An addition to being a decisive part of the climate change problem—by means of contributing substantially to the global GHG emissions—cities are also major victims of climate change. A recent study conducted by the consultancy firm Verisk Mapelcroft, combining United Nations projections on the rates of annual population growth in over 1800 cities with subnational data on climate change vulnerability, showed that of the 100 fastest growing cities by population, 84 are rated extreme risk, with a further 14 in the high risk category over the next 30 years [51]. Another recently reviewed study covering 520 major cities in the world, concludes that even in an optimistic climate scenario (the RCP 4.5 scenario) all the cities are likely to experience major climatic shifts by 2050 [52]. More specific, the study concludes that cities from the northern hemisphere in general are likely to experience a temperature increase equivalent to moving 1000 km south, whereas cities from the tropics are expected to shift to drier conditions. The study illustrates these shifts by predicting that by 2050 Madrid’s climate is expected to resemble Marrakech’s climate today, Stockholm is expected to resemble Budapest, and London is expected to resemble Barcelona. These rather serious issues, however, are under serious risk of being ignored as the current emphasis on overtourism seems all-encompassing in debates on sustainable urban tourism [36].

In addition to this, urban tourism may also be a victim of climate policy. The recent growth in urban tourism has been at least partially fueled by the rise of low-cost carriers [13]. Aviation is still outside of national climate policy, because the Kyoto protocol in 1992 assigned responsibility for mitigating GHG emissions from aviation to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). In 2017, ICAO presented its latest strategy on GHG mitigation which rests on two major efforts: Increase fuel efficiency and implement what they denote as carbon neutral growth from 2020 [53]. The increase of fuel efficiency so far has not been able to reduce the total GHG emissions from global aviation due to a corresponding growth in aviation and carbon neutral growth is largely based on offsetting. The ICAO acknowledges that absolute emissions from aviation are expected to grow by a factor 2.8-3.9 between 2010 and 2040 [54]. Thus, to achieve the 2.0—not to say the 1.5-degree goal—it appears necessary to include policy measures that reduce aviation in absolute terms in the next decades, either by means of putting tax on aviation or by direct regulation. This represents a major economic risk to tourism in general which also includes urban tourism.

A growing number of global, national and local initiatives have been taken during the last decades on making cities more sustainable, giving grounds to organizations and initiatives such as the Local Governments for Sustainable Development, Global Platform for Sustainable Cities, The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, C40 network of the world’s megacities committed to addressing climate change, and the like. Several initiatives state that cities are part of the solution to the climate problem, not merely as doing their share of the task by reducing GHG emissions (together with non-urban areas), but also that cities can have a crucial role in the necessary transformation of the whole of society towards a net-zero GHG emission society. There are two main arguments presented to support this position, as advocated by one of the initiatives listed above (the C40 network) [55]: (1) Cities—in particular the mega cities—have the power to change the world; (2) the particularities of cities—offering high density living environments—have the potential of providing lower carbon footprints through more efficient infrastructure and planning. The question then arises, what part can urban tourism play here?

If cities can, and in fact will, play an important role in changing the world and solving the climate change challenge, can urban tourism play a positive role here? Is this role most of all about reducing urban tourism, or at least reduce the GHG emissions from transporting tourism into (and out again) of the cities? Can urban tourism play an additional role? Aall and colleagues [56] argue

that during leisure time, people are particularly open to adopt new impressions and practices which may then be transferred to everyday life, and thus result in a double positive climate effect: Reducing GHG emissions during both leisure and everyday life. This is in line with the idea of transformative tourism [57]. Higgins-Desbiolles [58] points out that tourism has the potential of contributing positively in achieving societal change, but highlights an important prerequisite for this to happen (p. 1192): “Its capacities are unfettered from the market fundamentalism of neoliberalism and instead are harnessed to meet human development imperatives and the wider public good”.

The very real risks of climate change may also have to become a decisive factor in the question of social transformation. In the face of climate change, a main question is whether society is able to conduct a controlled and deliberate transformation or become transformed, due to inadvertently crossing thresholds which result from insufficient system resilience [59]. If many of the current major city destinations become transformed, due to effects like sea level rise, urban flooding, heat waves and inundation floods, then tourists are most likely to decrease at such destinations. The current effect-oriented solutions that are proposed with regards to overtourism and the wider debate on social aspects of sustainable city tourism development are insufficient to deal with these issues [36]. Rather, the emphasis on efforts of transforming urban tourism into becoming sustainable should be on dealing with the more short-term social elements of sustainable development and short-term environmental threats, like air and noise pollution, whilst at the same time considering the long-term threat of climate change [37].

7. Conclusions

As mentioned previously, urban tourism has been given little attention in the literature compared to other types of tourism. Further, as an increasing number of destinations experience challenges related to crowdedness, climate change and other environmental issues, sustainable development has become an increasingly important part of tourism research and tourism management. In this special issue, the authors wanted to address the questions on how sustainable development has been made sense of in urban tourism literature, and vice-versa, how urban tourism has been treated in sustainable tourism literature. When moving beyond the conceptual debate on the definitions and the understanding of sustainable urban tourism and despite the lack of a clear definition, there is some convergence with respect to the core challenges that sustainable urban tourism is facing. Firstly, relating to social sustainable development, there is the tension between the quality of life for residents in different ways (i.e., sense of place, affordable housing, facilities) and the development of cities to benefit the tourism industry. Secondly, relating to environmental sustainable development, there is the tension between residents and their desire for good local environmental standards and visiting tourists that create a number of over-tourism related local environmental problems. Thirdly, and even more important, there are the challenges that obviously will become crucial in the years to come: The double climate change risks of cities from a changing climate and from more ambitious climate policies to come.

By reviewing the papers in the current special issue, some things are mentioned more than others. The majority of papers deal with the social aspects of tourism, also in relation to the overtourism debate, whereas only one emphasises environmental concerns. A first group of papers in particular deals with the impact of tourists on residents and local stakeholders. Starting with the contribution by Koens, Postma and Papp [36], which provides a critical discussion on the concept of overtourism and placing the topic in the wider context of urban and social developments. In their conceptual contribution, Lerario and Di Turi [60] reiterate this as they emphasize the importance of active urban planning and the design of the built environment to reduce the potentially negative effects of tourism and suggest several mitigation practices for doing so. Blanco-Romero, Blázquez-Salom, and Cànoves [61] also touch upon this in their contribution which highlight the ways in which the commodification and gentrification of the city of Barcelona and insufficient regulatory controls with regard to tourism have led to a rise in social housing prices, pitting citizens against tourism. Rose and Li [62] focus on urban tourism in an

Indian context and highlight that the cities of Puri and Varanasi are relatively positive towards the sector. Notably, in this context, residents are particularly concerned about environmental issues.

There are two papers that look particularly at ways of managing tourism. Tescaşiu and colleagues [63] brought together different stakeholders to investigate the sharing economy. Their results revealed the difficulty in regulating sharing tourism practices, given that the most representative part of this sector is unregistered, and it works according to its own rules. The contribution of Lalicic and Önder [42] is interesting in that it moves beyond problematizing or describing residents' perceptions of urban tourism and instead looks at opportunities for using advances in technology to reshape tourism planning and resident engagement, in relation to a Smart City Perspective.

The tourist perspective was discussed, among others, in the contribution of Martinez-Garcia, Raya-Vilchez, and Galí [64], who draw attention to the micro-spatial and temporal dimensions of tourist behavior, by pointing to the significant heterogeneity among visitors in Girona, with regards to time consumption and the potential implications for sustainably managing tourism. Lai, Hitchcock, Lu and Liu investigated tourists' perspectives in tourism in Macao and highlight the importance of good tourist-resident relationships and a good safety experience for overall trip satisfaction and the word of mouth advertisement. Finally, Deng and Pierskalla [65] used structural equation modelling to confirm the commonly implicit assumption that attributes with lower importance ratings are likely to have little influence on overall satisfaction, regardless of their performance. Albeit that stated, importance may be more useful than previously thought.

The paper of Przybyla and Kulczyk-Dynowska [66] may not fit into one of these specific categories, but is of significant value nonetheless. They took a longitudinal approach to compare 18 Polish voivodship capital cities in the time period 2005–2015. In doing so, they can show tourism activities have increased particularly in already popular tourism cities, but that there also are cities where tourism intensities have declined. With so much attention focused on overtourism, it is easy to forget that there are places where tourism is in decline. However, the shrinkage and the implications that come with it may be particularly interesting even for those working on overtourism, especially as degrowth is increasingly put forward as a management strategy.

Funding: This research has been carried out as part of the project “Implementing energy efficient and social urban tourism solutions and creating citizen empowerment through Smart City Hospitality” (SCITHOS) funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No. 693443) under the Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe.

Acknowledgments: Thanks to research assistant Ida Marie Gildestad at Environmental Protection Agency for contributing with the literature review. The work with editing the special issue on sustainable urban tourism has been made possible due to the external research grant to the project SCITHOS.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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