

Undoing conventional framings of tourism sustainability

Duedahl, Eva; Liburd, Janne

Publication date:
2021

Document version:
Final published version

Document license:
CC BY-NC

Citation for pulished version (APA):
Duedahl, E., & Liburd, J. (2021). *Undoing conventional framings of tourism sustainability*. Syddansk Universitet. TIC TALKS No. 8

Go to publication entry in University of Southern Denmark's Research Portal

Terms of use

This work is brought to you by the University of Southern Denmark.
Unless otherwise specified it has been shared according to the terms for self-archiving.
If no other license is stated, these terms apply:

- You may download this work for personal use only.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying this open access version

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details and we will investigate your claim.
Please direct all enquiries to puresupport@bib.sdu.dk

Undoing conventional framings of tourism sustainability

Duedahl, Eva; Liburd, Janne

Publication date:
2021

Document version:
Accepted manuscript

Document license:
CC BY-NC

Citation for polished version (APA):
Duedahl, E., & Liburd, J. (2021). *Undoing conventional framings of tourism sustainability*. TIC TALKS No. 8

Go to publication entry in University of Southern Denmark's Research Portal

Terms of use

This work is brought to you by the University of Southern Denmark.
Unless otherwise specified it has been shared according to the terms for self-archiving.
If no other license is stated, these terms apply:

- You may download this work for personal use only.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying this open access version

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details and we will investigate your claim.
Please direct all enquiries to puresupport@bib.sdu.dk

Undoing conventional framings of tourism sustainability

By

Eva Duedahl and Janne Liburd

TIC TALKS no. 8, November 2021

TIC is University of Southern Denmark's multidisciplinary research centre with focus on tourism, innovation and culture. The centre is based at the Kolding campus. TIC strives to transform the university to an engaged, collaborative institution where academics and students pursue an unrelenting examination of knowledge, and its uses. TIC defines the university as a centre for a higher order knowledge development, and for collaboration with, and for society. We do this through research-based education, education-based research, and collaborative engagements. We aim to charter new territory in international academe, as well as in multi-level collaboration based on interdisciplinary research with a strong foundation in the Humanities.

TIC engages in research dialogues through both a traditional peer-review publication strategy and through free access to knowledge in progress. Supplementing traditional journal articles, TIC TALKS is TIC's contribution to open access sharing and collaborative development of knowledge.

To cite:

Duedahl, E. & Liburd, J. (2021). *Undoing conventional framings of tourism sustainability*. Kolding: University of Southern Denmark. Center for Tourism, Innovation and Culture. ISBN 978-87-85268-65-5 [CC BY NC](#).

TIC TALKS are provided by Centre for Tourism, Innovation and Culture, University of Southern Denmark. Universitetsparken 1, Kolding, DK-6000

http://www.sdu.dk/en/Om_SDU/Institutter_centre/C_Tik.aspx

Undoing conventional framings of tourism sustainability

Abstract: This TIC TALK contribution critically questions conceptualisations of post-pandemic tourism recovery and resilience to alternatively suggest how future research may begin undoing conventional framings of tourism sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism development; COVID-19; resilience

Author bios: Eva Duedahl^{a*} and Janne Liburd^b

Eva Duedahl^a, Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Vormstuguvegen 2, 2624 Lillehammer, Norway, eva.duedahl@inn.no, +47 612 87 486;

Janne Liburd^b, Centre for Tourism, Innovation and Culture, University of Southern Denmark, Universitetsparken 1, 6000 Kolding, Denmark, liburd@sdu.dk

Author bios:

^aEva Duedahl is Lecturer at the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Vormstuguvegen 2, 2624 Lillehammer, Norway. Her research interests span across co-design methodologies and methods, innovation and sustainable tourism development.

^bJanne Liburd is Professor and Director of the Centre for Tourism, Innovation and Culture at the University of Southern Denmark, Universitetsparken 1, 6000 Kolding, Denmark. Her research interests are in the field of sustainable tourism development, innovation and tourism higher education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19) has been widely acknowledged for providing the tourism industry the much-needed shock to bounce onto a ‘new normal’ better aligned with sustainability. While the COVID-19 pandemic is still unfolding, early conceptualisations of tourism recovery and resilience are traceable through range of abductive tensions that re-set, re-boot, re-discover, re-define, re-imagine, re-calibrate, re-generate, re-make and re-think tourism and its relations to sustainability. These variations of interpretations of tourism recovery and resilience principally spin around ideas of growing or de-growing; returning or reforming tourism, and what the implications might be (e.g., Schweinsberg, Fennell & Hassanli, 2021). Tourism scholars appear to have united behind two key arguments that (1) pre-pandemic tourism was unsustainable, and (2) something needs to change (e.g., Lew et al., 2020).

In this research note we argue that the accelerated applications of resilience to reduce the unsustainability of tourism direct attention away from the broader underlying problems that make it necessary for tourism destinations and civic society to become resilient in the first place. We briefly unfold some of the inherent premises of resilience and next elaborate on the problematic implications before positioning how future research may begin undoing conventional framings of tourism sustainability.

2. TOURISM RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Resilience originates from the late 16th century Latin word ‘resilio’, which refers to the ability of a system to spring back, rebound, or bounce back to a normal state or equilibrium in response to events of change, stress, and shock (e.g., Hall, Prayag & Amore, 2017).

Resilience theory accordingly positions that because all things change over time systems, whether a single entity, tourism, or the entire planet, must find ways of adapting to their changing context, or perish (Lew, Cheer, Haywood, Brouder & Salazar, 2020). Resilience is captured as:

The capacity of individuals, communities and systems to survive, adapt and grow in the face of stress and shocks, and even transform when conditions require it. Building resilience is about making people, communities and systems better prepared to withstand

catastrophic events – both natural and manmade – and able to bounce back more quickly and emerge stronger from these shocks and stresses (Rockefeller Foundation, 2016 cited in e.g., Hall et al., 2017, p. 47)

Aligned with these characteristics, global tourism has been viewed as one of the most resilient activities capable of quickly bouncing back from a multitude of local, regional and global crises (McKercher, 2021). While COVID-19 provided a shock for the tourism industry and a need to bounce back, or forth to a ‘new normal’, will it become more sustainable? What made the industry so vulnerable, even if resilient? Why were individual destinations, countries, and the international community not better prepared? How and what kind of changes are needed for tourism to mitigate harm from future risks?

3. BEYOND RESILIENCE

Principally a systems property, resilience says little if anything about whether the range of post- pandemic tourism scenarios envisioned are good or bad, better, or worse, nor to whom. For instance, invasive species that cause large-scale rupturing changes to existing ecosystems remain the quintessential living example of resilient communities. On human resilience, Kaika (2017) points to the President of the Louisiana Justice Institute, Tracie Washington. Part of a public New Orleans campaign, Washington insisted that policymakers and the media stopped calling Hurricane Katrina and the British Petroleum Deepwater Horizon oil spill victims ‘resilient’:

Every time you say, “Oh, they’re resilient, [it actually] means you can do something else, [something] new to [my community]. ... We were not born to be resilient; we are conditioned to be resilient. I don’t want to be resilient [I want to] fix the things that [create the need for us to] be resilient [in the first place] (p. 95)

Washington’s objection to being called resilient speaks to current understandings of resilience in tourism, which explicitly or implicitly centres around making people, communities and systems better prepared to withstand catastrophic events; being able to bounce back better, more quickly, stronger; and being able to survive and even thrive no matter the type of shock or stress. By implication civic society should be able handle further future suffering and environmental degradation. The consequence of Washington’s objection

would be to stop focusing on how to make tourism destinations more resilient ‘no matter what stresses they encounter’. Such shift might encourage tourism researchers and practitioners to direct attention toward the underlying root problems that make it necessary for people and environments to become resilient in the first place.

The still unfolding COVID-19 pandemic represents not only a tourism crisis. Rather, being a global health crisis, COVID-19 has exposed and, in several cases, augmented existing environmental, social, economic, and political crises that further undermine commitment and progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were already off track before COVID-19 (e.g. Rastegar, Higgins-Desbiolles & Ruhanen, 2021). Already between 1977-1984, three UN Commissions were given mandate to address the rising predicament of the environment and development and established an interlocking crisis of the global commons (Liburd, Duedahl & Heape, 2020, p. 3). Today, COVID-19 has accentuated how the vexing challenges of poverty, inequality, health, well-being, and climate change remain interlocked, interrelated, and interconnected.

As tourism can be considered a lens through which one can begin understanding contemporary society (Liburd & Edwards, 2018; MacCannell, 1973), COVID-19 has revealed a highly unequal and unjust world. Consider the strikingly uneven COVID-19 vaccine rollout across the globe. In January 2021 a \$50,000 (USD) package holiday went on sale. Included is transportation by private jet to Dubai where the customer receives a COVID-19 vaccine at a private facility and 30 nights of accommodation while they wait for their second dose (Robson, 2021). In addition, Emirates Airlines offers \$1,800 (USD) to help cover funeral costs in case the traveller dies from the virus. By contrast, affluent Western countries have started injecting a 3rd ‘booster’ vaccine. In September 2021 the World Health Organisation reported that only 2-3% of the more than five billion doses given globally have been administered in Africa and in the absence of vaccines. Each hour, 26 Africans die from COVID-19 (WHO, 2021).

4. UNDOING CONVENTIONAL FRAMINGS OF TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY

The international community has entered the critical decade of actual delivery on the transformative pledge made in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to: “Shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path by 2030” (UN, 2016, preamble). The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the limits of conventional framings of sustainable tourism

development, including the SDGs. How can tourism researchers and practitioners begin to undo the conventional models and thinking about sustainability? This includes, but is not limited to, linear reductionist models narrowly focused on economic growth, and not taking seriously issues of (in)equity (e.g., Liburd et al., 2020; Sharpley, 2020). Leach, MacGregor, Scoones, & Wilkinson (2021) explain how individuals and communities across the world can alternatively be seen to respond to COVID-19 that:

... create new spaces and opportunities to engage with complexity,
promotes efforts to make connections and break down silos, and
allows for different [sustainable development] thinking and action to
emerge through engagement with actors whose voices are less
commonly heard (pp. 1-2)

Novy (2021) describes how COVID-19 emptied Amsterdam of visitors and residents described the situation as a “a blessing in disguise” when the otherwise permanent noise, litter and tourists were replaced with a newfound tranquillity. To Amsterdammers, a return to pre-pandemic tourist numbers became a threat, not a promise. Residents and other stakeholders had for years been promised that tourism should become sustainable, without much agreement on what it might look like in practice. Instead, they created series of initiatives better aligned with the city’s vision that: “Visitors are welcome but not at any price.” These include new practices to prevent souvenir shops from displacing local businesses, developers from turning residential spaces into holiday lets, and alternative measures to reduce so-called incivilities (i.e., littering, and public urination) by the ‘no-strings-attached’ visitors.

The Amsterdam example is interesting not by its ability to leverage resilience, but in its ability to undo conventional models and engender resourcefulness through “Shared capacity to behave together for the common good [...] wherein existing knowledge can extend, interrelate, co-exist, and where new ideas and relationships can emerge prosthetically” (Jennings, 2018, p. 249). It enables those involved to reclaim their commons through alternative values and ways of being- and-becoming with others (Liburd, Duedahl & Heape, 2020).

In closing, if the renewed call for greater resilience of tourism in a post-pandemic era remains wedded in conventional models and thinking about sustainability, chances are it may come to serve as a paradigm nudge rather than a transformational paradigm shift (Weaver, 2009). Such undoing would reject incremental adaptations to the dominant paradigm and insist on addressing the root problems that create the need for destinations and civic society to become resilient in the first place.

REFERENCES

- Hall, C. M., Prayag, G., & Amore, A. (2017). *Tourism and Resilience: Individual, Organisational and Destination Perspectives*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Jennings, G. (2018). Reflections on research paradigms. In J. Liburd & D. Edwards (Eds.), *Collaboration for sustainable tourism development* (pp. 244-268). Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers.
- Kaika, M. (2017). 'Don't call me resilient again!' The New Urban Agenda as immunology ... or ... what happens when communities refuse to be vaccinated with 'smart cities' and indicators. *Environment and Urbanization*, 29(1), 89-102. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247816684763>
- Leach, M., MacGregor, H., Scoones, I., & Wilkinson, A. (2021). Post-pandemic transformations: How and why COVID-19 requires us to rethink development. *World Development*, 138, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105233>
- Lew, A. A., Cheer, J. M., Haywood, M., Brouder, P., & Salazar, N. B. (2020). Visions of travel and tourism after the global COVID-19 transformation of 2020. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 455-466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1770326>
- Liburd, J., Duedahl, E., & Heape, C. (2020). Co-designing tourism for sustainable development. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1839473>

- Liburd, J., & Edwards, D. (2018). Introduction. In J. Liburd & D. Edwards (Eds.), *Collaboration for sustainable tourism development* (pp. 1-7). Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers
- MacCannell, D. (1976) *The Tourist. A theory of the new leisure class*. New York: Schocken
- McKercher, B. (2021). Can pent-up demand save international tourism? *Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights*, 2(2), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annale.2021.100020>
- Novy, J. (2021). Amsterdam is laying down a model for what tourism should look like after COVID. *Tourism Geographic*. Retrieved September 25, 2021, from: <https://medium.com/tourism-geographic/amsterdam-is-laying-down-a-model-for-what-tourism-should-look-like-after-covid-68a133a1738>
- Rastegar, R., Higgins-Desbiolles, F., & Ruhanen, L. (2021). COVID-19 and a justice framework to guide tourism recovery. *Annals of Tourism Research*, [ahead-of-print]. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2021.103161>
- Rockefeller Foundation (2016). Resilience. Retrieved September 21, 2021, from: <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/the-city-resilient/>
- Robson, M. (2021). Vaccine vacations — getting a private Covid-19 shot abroad. *Forbes*. Retrieved September 23, 2021, from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michelerobson/2021/01/17/vaccine-vaccationsgetting-a-private-covid-shot-abroad/?sh=bb1c33a76be6>
- Sharpley, R. (2020). Tourism, sustainable development and the theoretical divide: 20 years on. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 28(11), 1932-1946. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1779732>
- Schweinsberg, S., Fennell, D., & Hassanli, N. (2021). Academic dissent in a post COVID-19 world. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 91, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2021.103289>

United Nations. (2016). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. Retrieved September 25, 2021 from <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

Weaver, D. (2009). Reflections on sustainable tourism and paradigm change. In S. Gössling, M. Hall, & D. Weaver (Eds.), *Sustainable tourism futures: Perspectives on systems, restructuring and innovations* (pp. 33-40). New York: Routledge.

World Health Organisation. *Eight in 10 African countries to miss crucial COVID-19 vaccination goal*. Retrieved September 24, 2021, from: <https://www.afro.who.int/news/eight-10-african-countries-miss-crucial-covid-19-vaccination-goal>