Journal of Sustainable Tourism

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsus20

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To cite this article: Xavier Matteucci, Jeroen Nawijn & Jennifer von Zumbusch (2021): A new materialist governance paradigm for tourism destinations, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, DOI: 10.1080/09669582.2021.1924180

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1924180

Published online: 01 Jun 2021.

JOURNAL OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1924180

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

A new materialist governance paradigm for tourism destinations

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ABSTRACT

Until the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the growth of tourism had confronted many destinations with policy decisions that had impacted regional ecosystems and the quality of life of their resident population. To counter the threats driven by dominant tourism growth models, a number of tourism scholars have called for revisiting the philosophical foundation upon which tourism activities are developed. Informed by debates in philosophy and the wider social sciences, including tourism scholarship, this conceptual paper, therefore, suggests an alternative governance paradigm for tourism destinations, which is articulated in four propositions that reflect a new materialist perspective. These propositions are a monist post-anthropocentric ontology, a participatory epistemology, resilient forms of tourism and participation as methodologies, and social eudaimonia as societal value. The core argument presented in this paper is that the Anthropocene requires tourism destinations to espouse alternative governance approaches drawing from ideas emerging from new materialist scholarship.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 30 October 2020
Accepted 25 April 2021

KEYWORDS
Governance paradigm; new materialism; social eudaimonia; post-anthropocentrism; destinations

Introduction

Many regions use tourism as one of their development strategies based on the arguments that tourism helps to generate employment, provides income from tourists' expenditure, and supports the improvement of local infrastructure (Du Cros & McKercher, 2015). However, tourism growth in economic terms does not always translate into greater well-being for host communities (Jurowsky et al., 2006). In fact, several commentators (e.g., Hall, 2011a; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Sharpley, 2020) have blamed the continued growth of tourism as a policy failure for its detrimental impacts on communities and the environment. While humans' activities have always impacted the environment, their detrimental force has been accelerating since the industrial revolution; a geological period described as the *Anthropocene* (Gren & Huijbens, 2014). The excesses of the Anthropocene (or the Capitalocene) put the sustainability of the planet in jeopardy (Braidotti, 2019). In addition, the adverse effects of the recent COVID-19 pandemic on tourism growth cast shadow on the future of tourism destinations.

A few years ago, Pollock (2012) had described the dominant business-as-usual tourism model as the *Road to Decline*; a model based on production, extraction of resources, and economic

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growth. Among others, Weaver (2014) contends that alternative and more sustainable forms of tourism have similarly failed due to their dependency on mass tourism support systems (e.g., airlines). Guia (2021) also resents that the increasing commodification and depoliticisation of alternative forms of tourism have hindered their emancipatory potential. While many commentators are hopeful that the pandemic will lead to a paradigm shift towards more sustainable tourism futures, others anticipate a sheer return to previous contexts (Cheer, 2020; Hall et al., 2020). In the midst of the pandemic, with the deployment of stimulus packages, tourism recovery seems to be on the agenda of many governments, and this raises some important questions such as how public money will be used and who will benefit from it? Beyond optimistic and pessimistic post-pandemic scenarios, several pre-pandemic serious issues remain.

Tourism has been blamed for eroding host communities' quality of life and lessening the quality of visitors' experiences in many overcrowded urban tourist destinations (Koens et al., 2018). Mass tourism, recently labelled *overtourism*, has affected many popular destinations such as the European cities of Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, and Venice. Notably, the detrimental repercussions that overtourism brings to destinations are socio-economic, cultural, and environmental (Peeters et al., 2019). Economically, overtourism causes inflationary effects on the housing price resulting in diminished resident purchasing power (Milano et al., 2019). Overtourism also leads to outsourcing labour forces. Environmentally, the tourism sector has a high climate and environmental footprint, as it requires both heavy energy and fuel consumption (UNWTO, 2018). Thus, overtourism stretches the pollution problem even greater, causing challenges for tourism destinations to protect endangered sites and sustain biodiversity in vulnerable ecosystems. Socio-culturally, overtourism causes commercialisation resulting in the dilution of local cultures. The commodification of cultures is problematic because cultural heritage is tied up with cultural identities, values, social interactions, and cohesion (Cassar, 2009). Subsequently, overtourism has caused tourismophobia in many destinations, whereby residents have been voicing their dissatisfaction with the pressures linked to tourism growth (Ballester, 2019).

Considering these titanic challenges, destinations are confronted with policy decisions that will impact regional ecosystems and the quality of life of their resident population. It goes without saying that the success of destinations depends on their capacity to effectuate positive change that will widely benefit local communities. For a sustainable future that reduces the throughput of tourism and prioritises the needs of host communities, Hall (2011a) but also Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) and Dwyer (2018), amongst others, warn that a policy paradigmatic change is imperatively needed. It has been recognised that a policy paradigm change is more likely to occur as a result of an exogenous crisis affecting the wider public because the public would exert pressure on policy makers (Hall, 1993). With the hope that the current pandemic will drive a paradigmatic change as a backdrop, this conceptual paper is therefore concerned with how tourism destinations can best bring about positive change to resident communities. This attempt echoes Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) view that it is the responsibility of tourism scholars 'to imagine ways tourism can be developed to enable human thriving and ecological recovery' (p. 620). This paper further responds to Jamal and Camargo (2014) call for revisiting the philosophical foundation upon which tourism activities are developed. Our objective, therefore, is to propose an alternative paradigmatic framework for the governance of tourism destinations.

Guba (1990) defines a paradigm as 'a basic set of beliefs that guides action' (p.17). Lincoln et al. (2011) clarify that a paradigm consists of four basic beliefs, namely beliefs about the nature of the world (ontology), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), the ways of learning about the world (methodologies), and the role of values (axiology). Each of these beliefs is of critical importance in forging tourism governance practices and outcomes. Our conceptual endeavour, therefore, presents four propositions: an ontological, an epistemological, a methodological, and an axiological one. To come to grips with new realities and devise a governance paradigm for sustainable tourism destinations, this conceptual analysis draws on discussions in philosophy and the wider social sciences, including tourism scholarship, which present opportunities to transform

tourism destinations. This paper commences with a theoretical examination of the concepts of destination, and governance and resilience, which sets the scene for the proposition of an alternative governance paradigm.

Governance and tourism destinations

The destination is the space within which tourism takes place. Early management concepts presented the tourism destination as a rather static system of actors (consumers and service providers) and physical attributes. Sociological analysis suggests a more fluid and interactional or performative view of places and spaces. Indeed, Allen et al. (1998, p. 2) point out that destinations are simply not 'out there'; instead, places are the fruits of the complex interplay between social, cultural, political, and economic relationships. Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) refer to Läpple (1991) who suggests four constitutive elements of place, namely *materiality* (the physical bedrock of social relations), *practices* (production, use and appropriation of materiality), *institutions* (organs of regulations and control), and *representations* (symbols, maps and narratives that convey meanings about a place). Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) conclude that the inseparability of the four place-making elements points to the necessity to account for heterogeneity, complex social relations and networks, and processes of change. Further, Ateljevic (2000) observes that tourism is increasingly enmeshed within the social and spatial fabrics of everyday lives which raise important questions about the roles and positions of different local actors. In their review of tourism destination concepts, Saraniemi and Kylänen (2011) similarly remark that new developments in cultural studies and geography have underscored the more processual and experiential nature of human encounters with places and cultures, more attention being paid to practices and performances. These authors suggest that understanding tourism destinations through a cultural lens allows a deeper symbolic-emotional consumption of cultures rather than the plain satisfaction of visitors' needs. The cultural lens also invites host community members to take greater responsibilities and actions in shaping their home region. Although cultural identities are tied to territories, Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot (2021) note that heritagization is a fluid process, shaped by locally rooted perspectives and external influences. Aligned with this more fluid cultural perspective, we understand a sustainable tourism destination as

> a rural, urban, or mixed geographical area in which various institutions, local community actors and visitors interact in a way that contributes to its resilience and the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of local development processes for the primary benefit of host communities, as well as to safeguarding and enhancing the diversity of local cultural resources for future generations.

Understanding the tourism destination this way, coupled with the urgency to address both local and global challenges, requires destination organisations to adopt alternative tourism governance models.

In a tourism context, governance consists of processes, policies, and stakeholders involved with the interrelated areas of tourism, culture, and development (Robinson & Picard, 2006). Karim and Wayland (2001) explain that 'governance is concerned with issues as diverse as administration, law enforcement, civic engagement, citizen participation and promotion of equality' (p.45). Hall (2011b) distinguishes four main governance frameworks, namely *hierarchies*, *markets*, *networks,* and *communities*. A hierarchical governance framework is characterised by state-led policy and administration. The use of the markets as a governance mechanism supposes that economic criteria are best suited to measure efficiency and foster well-being. The markets governance model is rooted in neoliberal doctrine (Harvey, 2005; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006), characterised by a free market economy with limited government power and intervention. Typically, hierarchical and markets frameworks consist of top-down approaches guided by the public sector but largely influenced by external organisations and corporations (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). In dominant models of economic growth, businesses operate for-profit and are primarily responsible for their shareholders

rather than society (Friedman, 1970). These growth models have been associated with many of the crises we have to face today, namely resource depletion, loss of biodiversity, extinction of wild species, pollution, homogenisation of cultures, social alienation, changes in land cover and land use, exploitation of ecosystems and indigenous cultures (Gössling & Hall, 2006).

The networks governance framework consists of public-private partnerships whereby actors within the network negotiate resources allocation and policy directions (Hall, 2011b). Such frameworks have the capacity to address the issue of procedural justice, which has to do with fair, inclusive decision-making processes (Jamal & Camargo, 2014). Beaumont and Dredge (2010) suggest that inclusive collaboration and governance frames are 'idealistic', revealing a struggle between the primacy of community members and the primacy of local government. Governance as communities tends to be locally or regionally focused and resident groups typically self-steer project development with or without support of the government (Schaap & Edwards, 2007). While self-governance or community frameworks have also been criticised for being too idealistic (Hall, 2008), many scholars still recognise the need to include citizens in tourism planning processes (e.g., Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Murphy, 1985; Volić, 2017) because these frameworks seem to be best suited to resolve issues of equitable access to resources and fair distribution of tourism economic benefits (Jamal & Camargo, 2014).

Based on resilience theories, Cochrane (2010) develops a model of tourism resilience which emphasises three core elements: the ability to harness market forces, stakeholder cohesion, and strong and consistent leadership. Cochrane links the ability to harness market forces to the triple bottom line of sustainability. Stakeholder cohesion entails that destination resources are shared equitably without dismissing the needs of future generations. Strong leadership should resolve or prevent stakeholders' conflicts and demonstrate commitment to better and ethical destination futures. Cochrane argues that for the sustainable management of resources, flexibility to accommodate stress, adaptability to other systems, and learning about other systems are needed. Given the complexity of socioecological systems, those concerned with the resilience of destination areas will, therefore, need to ask themselves 'resilience of what to what?'; a crucial question raised by Carpenter et al. (2001, p. 779). This question may be well addressed by local innovation systems, such as territorial intelligence (Miedes-Ugarte et al., 2020), that are based on 'collective learning about adaptation to local conditions and resources' (Bryden & Gezelius, 2017, p. 110).

In brief, this short review of literature has revealed that destination communities are confronted with complex, interrelated issues, and constant changes that require new ways of thinking about tourism, destinations, and sustainability. To counter the threats driven by dominant tourism growth models, in the subsequent sections, we suggest an alternative governance paradigm articulated in four propositions, which reflect a new materialist perspective.

Proposition 1: a monist post-anthropocentric ontology

A much-debated term within the natural and social sciences, *Anthropocene* acknowledges humans' activities (such as tourism) as radical drivers of change on Earth (Revkin, 2016). Dominant neoliberal growth models stem from the anthropocentric view that nature is instrumental to human pleasure (Braun, 2015). Anthropocentrism is largely imbued with the Judeo-Christian belief that humans are separate and superior to all other forms of life on earth, and nature can be exploited for the benefits of humankind (Onfray, 2015). Cognizant of the need to ecologise the relation between humans and nature (Gren & Huijbens, 2014), and in rejection to an anthropocentric view of the world, we see urgency for destination stakeholders to operate from a monist post-anthropocentric ontological stance. Post-anthropocentrism is associated with post-humanism and both concepts belong to the emerging field of scholarship across the humanities and social sciences labelled *new materialism* (Benson, 2019). Braidotti (2019) differentiates post-humanism from post-anthropocentrism in that the

former is concerned with the critique of the hegemonic human systems of value creation and meaning-making, while the latter 'criticises species hierarchy and human exceptionalism' (p.32).

A monist new materialist ontology posits that humans and non-humans (e.g., plants, animals, minerals) are equally agentic and intricately intertwined in one immanent level of existence. In a monist ontology, humans are of the same matter that constitutes the rest of the world; humans are made of an assemblage of atoms as much as lobsters, chestnuts, and ladybirds (Onfray, 2015). This immanent new materialist ontological position, therefore, grants equal status and intrinsic value to both humans and non-human forms of life; it points to their fundamental interconnection and interdependency. In *Cosmos*, Onfray (2015) draws from 2nd-century Greek philosopher Celsus who defends the idea that there are a number of qualities common to humans and animals. Onfray reports that Celsus militated for an ontological equality; one that intimates a difference of degree and not a difference of nature between humans and animals. By turning to materiality as plural, relational, contingent, and complex, new materialism seeks to collapse the boundaries between the social concerns of culture and the non-human question of nature. Because heritage is commonly understood as a cultural process and practice - hence deeply rooted in social constructivism, Sterling (2020) questions the coherence of addressing issues of cultural heritage (that tourists seek to experience) through new materialist lenses. Yet, drawing on Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2013), entangled humanism (Connolly, 2017), agential realism (Barad, 2003), and nomadic becoming (Braidotti, 2019), Sterling concludes that post-humanism (new materialism) offers ways to think creatively beyond the prism of liberal humanism whereby a host of inequalities, hierarchies and injustices may be unveiled.

Post-anthropocentrism, therefore, implies complex system thinking. System theory and its capacity to espouse the complex and fluid nature of reality, Benson (2019) remarks, is particularly appropriate 'in the environmental governance context with the relatively recent embrace of resilience as a management paradigm' (p. 256). Rind (1999) explains a complex system as 'literally one in which there are multiple interactions between many different components' (p. 105), and Arthur (1999) adds that the multiple elements in those systems are 'adapting or reacting to the pattern these elements create' (p. 107). Complex system thinking is highly relevant to tourism because, as Hall and Brown (2006) note, tourism is not an isolated phenomenon; it operates within a wider system comprising society, the environment, and the economy. If tourism destinations' appeal and survival depend on their scenic beauty, safe environment and the preservation of their cultural heritage, human life similarly only has a viable future through the protection of ecosystems. The complex tourism system includes interconnected political, social, cultural, economic, historic, ecological, and legal dimensions amongst others (Lepp, 2008). Complex system thinking resonates with the concept of resilience, which refers to the amount of impact a system can absorb without significantly changing its state. In their discussion of researchers - or policy makers or business decision-makers - as embodied beings, part of a whole social and ecological order, Reason and Bradbury (2008) warn that 'we will not be able to address the ecological devastations wrought by humans until we fully experience the universe and Earth as a community of subjects rather than as a collection of objects' (p. 9). This argument points to two observations: Sustainable tourism governance will necessitate actors to share their knowledge, ideas, skills, and aspirations (a point addressed in the following section); legislators will need to strengthen the protective measures to non-human life on Earth. Therefore, if we were to take the value of nature seriously, Fremaux (2019) forcefully argues, ecosystems would need to be represented legally in judicial systems. If ecosystems had legal rights and were constitutionally and politically defended, human and non-human life would enjoy greater protection.

Proposition 2: a participatory epistemology

Epistemology is the study of how we come to learn about the world. From a new materialist perspective, ontology and epistemology cannot be separated as reality is relational. In other words,

all forms of life including humans are not parts of but constitute *nature* (Onfray, 2015); learning and well-being are the fruits of our interactions in and with the world. It appears reasonable to think that tourism governance should be informed by the knowledge produced by a diversity of stakeholders. A participatory epistemology (and a new materialist ontology) entails non-hierarchical collaborative practices. Multi-stakeholders' participation in tourism planning is an emerging normative ideal. The notion of *participation* simply refers to 'involvement in public decisions, as distinguished from other forms of community involvement' (Banyan, 2007, p. 663). In the context of tourism governance, participative epistemology relates to a way of thinking about the relationships between a complex set of fragmented destination actors including, for instance, non-governmental organisations, scientific expertise, civil society members such as artists, heritage conservation and education professionals, groups of neighbours and associations, and tourism decision-makers. Participatory epistemology intimates a political dimension in asserting people's right and ability to express their views and concerns about decisions which may impinge upon their lives (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). An emanation from a participatory epistemology is the governance concept of *participatory democracy*. Schaap and Edwards (2007) explain the core tenet of participatory democracy as:

> that people have equal right to liberty and self-development, which can only be achieved in a society that fosters a sense of political efficacy, nurtures a concern for collective problems, and contributes to the formation of a knowledgeable citizenry capable of taking a sustained interest in the governmental process. (p. 664)

The notion of collaboration is germane to the mode of participatory governance insofar as collaboration leads to pluralistic forms of knowledge. Liburd (2018) suggests that collaboration implies that 'two or more parties join forces to achieve a shared objective' (p. 9). McDonald (2009) argues that complex system thinking will 'serve to move beyond narrow sector focus in favour of dynamic, holistic understandings of sustainable tourism development that are informed by peoples' values and perceptions' (Liburd, 2018, p. 14). In complex system thinking, resilient governance models necessitate the inclusion of a multiplicity of local stakeholders as 'makers and shapers' of interventions and in decision-making processes (Gaventa, 2004, p. 42); unfortunately, community members' interests and well-being are often neglected dimensions in tourism planning (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016). The latter point raises issues of representation, empowerment, inclusion, power relations and democracy in tourism governance generally. Although increasingly invited to the tourism planning table, civil society members may only have an advisory role, leaving much of the decision power in the hands of government officials.

To tackle the issue of participatory democracy at community level, a starting point, Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) argue, would be to redefine tourism from a business sector to 'a human endeavour based on the rights and interests of local communities in welcoming tourists' (p. 1941). The key argument put forward by Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) is that, by redefining tourism, the rights of local communities would take precedence over the rights of tourists and tourism corporations to make profits. This important argument joins the slowly maturing ethical debate within tourism development about the right to travel versus the right to live (Perkumienė & Pranskūnienė, 2019). Perkumienė and Pranskūnienė (2019) emphasise that their review shows that it is important to rethink sustainability as concept in tourism. They stress that it is necessary to develop sustainable goals that balance the rights to travel and to live. For successful development programmes that prioritise the needs of local communities, and revivify marginalised heritage narratives, political powers should be imputed to local authorities as these local or regional bodies seem to be best suited to implement participatory governance systems (Bramwell, 2010). In a similar vein, White (2017) argues that participatory governance would promote community interactions that can foster relational goods. The challenge for destinations will be to incorporate democratic forms of participation that are most effective in empowering community members and fostering bottom-up community-based initiatives.

Proposition 3: Resilient forms of tourism and participation as methodologies

We associate tourism governance methodologies with various forms of tourism activities and with participation modalities in planning, managing, experiencing, and monitoring those activities. Furthermore, demarketing destinations, localhood and the creation of third places are three strategies that may degrow mass tourism and enhance community well-being.

From a post-anthropocentric perspective, the cultural activities and experiences offered through creative tourism, slow tourism, and proximity tourism seem to have the most potential to contribute to destinations' resilience. Important to the concept of creative tourism is the active participation of tourists in creative activities; thus, emphasising the *doing* rather than the *being there*. In fully engaging in cultural activities, participants are likely to enhance some skills and develop some knowledge about the activity, the local culture, and the community (Matteucci, 2018). The development of place-specific creative tourism activities has been linked to the quest for authenticity and memorable or transformative experiences (Richards & Wilson, 2006). The benefits of creative tourism to local communities are that, by building upon their endogenous resources, communities may revitalise their cultural traditions and practices, diversify their cultural offerings, support local innovative processes, empower local talents and by so doing strengthen local pride and identity (Richards & Wilson, 2006). Richards (2021) also notes that, contrary to conventional tourist-service provider interactions, residents and visitors who have a common interest in creative processes tend to 'encounter one another on an equal footing' (p. 41). Communities can also preserve a distinctive cultural identity (thus reducing the threat of cultural homogenisation), and by focusing on intangible heritage, creative tourism can overall improve the sustainability of destinations (Richards, 2011).

Likewise, slow tourism involves doing things at the right speed, changing attitudes towards time and the use of it, seeking quality over quantity (Peters, 2006) and a desire to connect with people, culture, and places (Slow Movement, 2020). Slow tourism combines the elements of slow travellers' enjoyment of the entire route journey at a slow pace, qualitative experiences at the destination, as well as the benefits they provide for local stakeholders (Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011). Environmentally, slow tourism minimises the resource demands and waste production of what mass tourists would generate (Conway & Timms, 2012). Economically, slow tourism destinations involve more local stakeholders by supporting different local small-scale or family-run businesses, such as producers, craftsmen, farmers, and retailers (Shang et al., 2020) to combat economic erosion caused by globalisation. Socially, slow tourism destinations aim at promoting their unique and authentic culture through highlighting different traditional characteristics and natural environments (Manella, 2018) by fostering common interests between the host population and tourists (Conway & Timms, 2012).

In a similar vein, proximity tourism, which emphasises travel near home, presents a viable solution for European destinations that are less dependent on outbound markets (Romagosa, 2020). In the past, proximity tourism has proven that it is a mechanism of adaptation in a context of economic crisis (Callot, 2013). Not only is proximity tourism a form of tourism that promotes environmental awareness (Diaz-Soria, 2017) for its low-carbon modes of transportation, but it also brings social benefits to tourism destinations, whereby promoting their unique cultural heritage, which in turn reinforces local identities (Arrieta Urtizberea et al., 2016). Proximity tourism has been theorised as *locavism* by Houge Mackenzie and Goodnow (2021), who argue that micro-adventures undertaken close to home are likely to drive psychological, financial, and social investment in disadvantaged rural areas.

Creative tourism, slow tourism, and proximity tourism, amongst other forms of soft tourism (see Krippendorf, 1987), can be powerful methodological tools for sustainable development if embedded within a relational approach to governance. Based on an extensive review of the literature, Beaumont and Dredge (2010) identify seven parameters of good local tourism governance, namely: (1) positive cultures, constructive communication, and engaged communities, (2)

transparency and accountability, (3) vision and leadership, (4) acceptance of diversity and the pursuit of equity and inclusiveness, (5) developing knowledge, learning, and sharing expertise, (6) clear roles and responsibilities of participants and (7) clear operational structures and processes of the network. These parameters are consistent with the participatory governance literature reviewed by Schaap and Edwards (2007). Where top-down hierarchical and market-led modes of governance have failed to deliver benefits to communities, participatory governance, such as self-governance or partnership, seem to be the most promising alternatives for addressing issues of direct democracy, community empowerment and community well-being. Chassagne and Everingham (2019), who draw from community-based experiences from Latin America, assert that 'host communities receive equitable redistributive socio-economic effects from tourism through strategies that come from slow, informal and bartered exchanges' (p. 13). This view is also reflected in the *Smart City Hospitality* (SCITHOS) Framework (Koens et al., 2021) as a governance tool for analysing the complex issues of overtourism in urban environments. A key proposition of this framework is that all destination stakeholders will be jointly responsible to shape the tourism system.

Beyond the forms of tourism and the modes of governance discussed so far, a number of destination strategies may also contribute to greater community well-being. For instance, Çakar and Uzut (2020) studied Istanbul's overtourism situation and pointed towards demarketing and 'localhood' tourism activities as keys to degrowth. Localhood tourism approaches are in line with sustainable development goals (SDGs) 9, 11, and 12 of the 2030 Agenda, according to Boluk et al. (2017). Localhood tourism concerns adopting a different developmental mindset in which visitors are not seen as tourists, but as temporary locals, enabling them to have a more authentic experience, while simultaneously making locals the focal point of the tourism supply side (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017). The intrinsic value of localhood lies in promoting non-instrumental (or non-commercial) interpersonal relations between visitors and residents and among residents themselves. Drawing from Oldenburg (1999), Marujo et al. (2020) argue that 'one way to mobilise relational and public happiness' is by establishing *third places*, considering the physicality of everyday spaces (p. 313). The term 'third places' refers to places between home (first place) and work (second place) such as locations where people can hang out, play, or exchange ideas in a casual way. Third places are the fertile grounds for social relationships, inclusion, and democracy.

Proposition 4: Social eudaimonia as societal value

While the sustainability concept has been frequently discussed within academic circles, to date, little has been achieved in terms of promoting economic linkages and empowering vulnerable communities (Weaver & Jin, 2016). Chambers and Buzinde (2015) similarly deplore the persistent inequitable distribution of power and resources in tourism development. In light of the failure of the tourism industry at large to prioritise the needs of communities and to prevent negative destination impacts, alternative forms of tourism have come to the fore such as *justice tourism* (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Scheyvens, 2002), *hopeful tourism* (Pritchard et al., 2011), *responsible tourism* (Goodwin & Francis, 2003), and *pro poor tourism* (Ashley et al., 2000). A common denominator to these alternatives to mass tourism is a greater focus on ethics. In 2005, MacBeth argued that morality should be at the centre of tourism policy and tourism research. Since then, other commentators have followed suit. For instance, Weaver and Jin (2016) advocate *compassion* as a powerful facilitator of sustainable change. In his discussion of responsible tourism, Fennell (2008) suggests a Kierkegaardian focus on altruistic love as the foundation for tourism development. From a complex system perspective, Liburd (2018) has also recently proposed *collaboration* and *stewardship* as two complimentary concepts capable of creating resilient destinations. Liburd

(2018) cites Neubaum (2013, p. 2) who defines stewardship as 'caring and loyal devotion to an organisation, institution, or social group'. Liburd expounds that:

> stewardship resonates well with the concepts of collaboration and complexity theory because stewardship puts an emphasis on the people involved in conservation efforts, and recognises intrinsic as well as personal values and dynamic interrelations beyond selfish gain, while not excluding the latter. (p. 25)

For collaboration to work, it requires reciprocal caring and trust. In essence, Liburd notes, collaboration is not a neutral endeavour, and it implies that one takes responsibility for others which echoes the notion of stewardship. Compassion, stewardship, or an ethics of care, all point to social eudaimonia. Eudaimonia is an Aristotelian concept that refers to human flourishing by living a life of virtue (Deci & Ryan, 2008), and eudaimonic affect encapsulates deep emotional states such as feelings of compassion (Lengieza et al., 2021). Lengieza and his colleagues (2019) have found that greater care for others and the natural world beyond self-interest (self-transcendence) is linked to eudaimonic reflections. Eudaimonia, or the good life in Aristotle's virtue ethics, thus entails pondering what is the right thing to do in each context. The term *social eudaimonia* is used by French philosopher Michel Onfray (2008) to broadly refer to a new materialist philosophy of collective happiness. While eudaimonic well-being is commonly employed to research individual happiness, social eudaimonia is a far-reaching concern for community well-being. Contrary to the cultural myth that autonomous individuals are happier (White, 2017), social eudaimonia acknowledges the value of relationships. The question of societal happiness has a long history in philosophy from Aristotle, utilitarian philosophers William Godwin, Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill, to Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, and Michel Bakounine (Onfray, 2008). For instance, Aristotle thought that citizens' happiness is at its peak when rulers are virtuous in that they set up policies that respond to collective welfare.

A social eudaimonic ethics is supported by subjective well-being research that indicates that collective happiness is greater than a simple sum of individuals' happiness (Uchida & Oishi, 2016; White, 2017). Social eudaimonic well-being arises from shared experiences of living in community. For Onfray (2008), community well-being unfolds through mutually enabling interactions among human beings and between human beings and the material world. Onfray does not discard individual happiness; yet he argues that individual happiness should not undermine collective well-being. A social eudaimonic ethics is not merely moralistic in character, rather it is politically enacted through social contracts and actions (Onfray, 2008). Social contracts underpinned by an ethics of reciprocal care should structure tourism activities in variegated ways depending on cultural contexts. As much as the act of creation is in itself an act of resistance (Deleuze, 1988), social eudaimonia can only be attained through resistance in the form of dialogical and creative social processes. The paths towards greater collective happiness at community level are manifold and need to be agreed upon by local actors. For instance, we cannot assume that a community's cultural identity can contribute to enrich humanity's diversity if it is subsumed by universal paths to societal well-being (Lucas, 2020).

Drawing from Aristotle's idea that humans belong to a political community, social eudaimonia entails democratic encounters, debates, and collective actions. In other words, community well-being is only possible through multi-stakeholders' active participation in planning and governance of their places of residence (Jamal & Camargo, 2014). Social eudaimonia, as collective well-being, is therefore a function of dialogic actions by community stakeholders driven by the shared values of solidarity, respect and responsibility for others and ecosystems (what is the right thing to do for *us all in our local context*?). The precept stating that the freedom of some ends where the freedom of others begins is useful in formulating the social eudaimonic precept that individual (e.g., tourist) pleasure ends where community well-being begins. The generative quality of a social eudaimonic perspective is critical to positive societal change. Through this lens, we believe that sustainable tourism development is likely to (1) foster greater societal equity, (2) promote community empowerment, (3) reduce

economic leakages and provide quality employment, (4) enhance local sense of place, (5) preserve the integrity of local cultures, and (6) foster place attachment and healthier living.

Discussion

This paper suggests that considering tourism destination governance through a new materialist lens opens a fresh outlook on more positive modes of being (or becoming) in the world. Table 1 below presents a summary of the core tenets of a new materialist governance paradigm for tourism destinations. A new materialist ontology, which collapses the boundaries and hierarchies between humans and non-humans on an immanent plane of existence, 'provides the inspiration for progressive and emancipatory policies concerning non-human others and the environment more broadly' (Sterling, 2020, p. 1033). A new materialist process-ontology provides an alternative to neoliberal governance (Braidotti, 2019) and it requires decision-makers to ask themselves 'what it means to treat other people like subjects instead of objects in the context of our tourism world' (Caton, 2012, p. 1907). From a new materialist perspective, natural habitats would be treated as subjects; therefore, ecosystems and animals would be represented legally (by humans) in judicial systems (Fremaux, 2019). A new materialist perspective is in accordance with the recent experiential and performative understanding of destination (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011) that highlights the inseparability of place-making elements and which points to the necessity to account for heterogeneity, complex social relations and networks, and processes of change (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015).

Furthermore, a new materialist epistemology entails collaborative practices for tourism governance. Braidotti (2019) argues that the complex encounters and assemblages of human and non-anthropomorphic elements confer new materialism a vital force for new knowledge production. Thus, Braidotti (2019) sees the post-human relational praxis as an opportunity to weave new alliances capable of 'overthrowing negativity' (p. 51). Currently, residents typically form initiatives to stand up against tourism development when their livelihoods are negatively affected by overtourism (Alvarez-Sousa, 2018). Rather, the voice of the residents that are now excluded need to be taken more seriously. Inclusive development is part of the SDGs set by the United Nations and, therefore, the involvement of residents is key to achieve more inclusive tourism

Table 1. Four propositions for a new materialist destination governance paradigm.

Propositions	*Key Characteristics*	*Governance Implications*
Monist post-anthropocentric ontology	- Humans and non-humans are equally agentic and interdependent in one immanent reality - The world is complex and fluid - Subjectivity as an expanded self	- Complex system thinking - Actions are context specific - Ecosystems are constitutionally and politically defended - Tourism is not central to local economies
Participatory epistemology	- Non-hierarchical relationships - Multi-stakeholders' participation and collaboration	- Residents have equal right to self-development - Critical analysis of power and discourse - Multiple residents' perspectives are heard - Local actions and collective learning - Cultural diversity is acknowledged and valued
Resilient forms of tourism, and participatory governance as methodologies	- Slow travel/tourism - Proximity tourism - Creative tourism - Social tourism - Community participation in decision-making	- Low carbon travel and activities prevail - Small-scale businesses are supported - Endogenous resources are used (e.g. cultural assets, local supply chain) - Emphasis on educational activities - Non-instrumental host-guest relations
Social eudaimonia as societal value	- Collective well-being - Affirmative ethics - Equity, solidarity, stewardship, and political responsibility as values	- Rights and needs of locals are prioritised - Public policy focus on qualitative social change (public good production and social justice) - Transformative relational encounters

development (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). A relational approach to destination governance is invaluable in that it fosters social learning (Bramwell & Lane, 2011) and policy learning (Hall, 2011a). Also, a relational approach to cultural heritage may reconnect heritage production to localised heritage experiences (Gravari-Barbas & Jacquot, 2021) and it may generate socially inclusive political actions (White, 2017). For its inclusive, collaborative, and relational character, the notion of participatory governance relates to new materialist onto-epistemologies. Because relationality can structure actions and sustain relationships, it is critical to positive social change (White, 2017). These arguments are in line with Jamal and Camargo (2014) 'call for an ecocultural, participatory and integrated framework of justice and care to guide sustainable tourism' (p. 26). It appears, therefore, more ethical for destinations to adopt participatory governance systems to empower civil society members in tourism planning, management, and evaluation processes (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Although we recognise that participatory governance is gaining momentum in tourism discourse, in practice it is not taking hold.

The forms of tourism and concepts presented as methodologies have their place in a new materialist framework. For instance, for their reliance on genuine social encounters, collaborative practices, and experiences of endogenous cultural heritage and of the lived spaces of the everyday, creative tourism and slow tourism go well with the new materialist perspective. Richards (2021) provides evidence that resident-tourist relationships based on culture and creativity can improve residents' quality of life and more generally contribute to the sustainability of areas. Furthermore, because locals tend to be on an equal footing with tourists who seek out their creativity and expertise (Richards, 2021), the tourist-local encounter is deemed to be more egalitarian. Not only the value of relational encounters (e.g., through creative and social tourism activities) resides in their capacity to foster local knowledge production (Braidotti, 2019), but these also promote creativity (Bryden & Gezelius, 2017), care and preservation of heritage as well as stewardship (Sterling, 2020). By way of further illustration, the concept of localhood resonates with the notion of heritage community articulated in the Faro Convention, which predicates that heritage attachment takes precedence over geographical proximity in its formation (Gravari-Barbas & Jacquot, 2021). Thus, understanding local heritage as a cultural process and practice (Sterling, 2020) points to the transversal and fluid nature of heritagization that involves humans (locals and visitors) and non-humans (e.g., places of historical significance, cultural landscapes, natural habitats, wildlife). Moreover, more sustainable forms of tourism can be facilitated through participatory governance practices associated with networks and community-based initiatives such as cooperatives and social enterprises (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Miedes-Ugarte et al., 2020).

Central to new materialist philosophy is the affirmative potential of relationships; that is the co-creation of ethical forces and political actions (Braidotti, 2019). This commitment to what is ethically transformative and politically empowering resonates with social eudaimonia, a happiness concept, which foregrounds collective well-being rather than individual flourishing. A core tenet of new materialist thought is the emphasis given to the political. Contrary to theorists such as Hannah Arendt who regard the political as a space of freedom and public deliberation, Mouffe (2005) understands it as a space of power, resistance, and antagonism. The hope for a rational universal consensus on sustainable tourism development appears naive and at odds with the current state of tourism affairs impacting underprivileged groups, animals, and ecosystems. As Mouffe (2005) observes, 'what is happening is that nowadays the political is played out in the moral register' (p. 9). While moral engagement and humanitarian compassion are commendable, political action and praxis are the missing ingredients to enacting positive social change (Guia, 2021). Social eudaimonia, as conceived by Onfray (2008), rests on dialogic actions by individuals who are bound to the shared values of solidarity, respect and responsibility for others and ecosystems. For its affirmative ethical dimension, social eudaimonia resonates with the concept of stewardship (Neubaum, 2013).

Finally, it is worth noting that at least five of the seven parameters of good local tourism governance identified by Beaumont and Dredge (2010) are germane to a new materialist world

view. Parameters one (positive cultures, constructive communication, and engaged communities), two (transparency and accountability), three (vision and leadership) and four (acceptance of diversity and the pursuit of equity and inclusiveness) clearly relate to the principles of an affirmative ethics, whereas parameter five (developing knowledge, learning, and sharing expertise) represents an intrinsic benefit of a relational ontology.

Conclusion

What the past decades of neoliberal policies have demonstrated is that the role of the state to protect the interests of residents has only benefited a minority of already well-off individuals in the state. The moralistic discourse deployed to justify tourism development has, therefore, undoubtedly failed to promote collective good. This failure has been linked to the dominance of neoliberal values in tourism policy and governance (Guia, 2021). For instance, because the triple bottom line accounting framework suggests that profit seeking be combined with social concerns, policy, and industry initiatives have tended to favour profits over community well-being (Bryden & Gezelius, 2017). Furthermore, the transformative potential of tourism for communities has not yet been achieved because the ontological and ethical assumptions on which tourism development is based have remained unquestioned (Cohen, 2019; Fennell, 2008; Guia, 2021; Jamal & Camargo, 2014). In a recent special issue on justice and ethics in this journal, Jamal and Higham (2021) argue that the advancement of justice in tourism will require scholars to bridge across disciplines in which theories of justice are being addressed.

This paper represents one of such attempts. Inspired by new materialist scholarship, this paper presented an alternative governance paradigm for tourism destination articulated around four propositions, namely an ontological, an epistemological, a methodological, and an axiological one. Some may reckon that a post-anthropocentric mindset and participatory *modi operandi* for tourism destinations are overly idealistic ideas. Some may also critique that small-scale, local, or regional governance will fail to address global social and climate disorders. These points may be valid. Yet, what is needed is a more holistic view of development rooted in this idea of the right to travel versus the right to live (Perkumienė & Pranskūnienė, 2019). Moral standards are fundamental for those who share them but cannot be imposed as universal for all human beings of all times and places (Lucas, 2020). Indeed, the good life, as Jamal and Camargo (2014) contend, will be conceived differently by different cultural groups in different places. The new materialist concerns with collective well-being and issues of social and environmental justice underscore the necessity for contextualised political actions for the benefit of residents. This view echoes Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) argument that it is imperative to redefine tourism in order to place the right of local communities above the rights of tourists.

The governance paradigm proposition presented here is conceptual and preliminary only. For instance, we have not addressed the question of how to empower the silent voices that make up the majority of destination areas. Likewise, we have not addressed the daunting challenge how to compel policymakers to ignore the narrow interests of the tourist trade. In fact, a key obstacle, Hall (2011a) deplores, is that policymakers seem reluctant to embrace shifts in their policy paradigm. Perhaps, as Jost Krippendorf had already pleaded in 1987, 'what we need, then, are rebellious tourists and rebellious locals' (p. 107). Focusing on rebellious behaviours against business-as-usual practices in tourism represents a valuable line of future inquiry.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors. The contents of this paper are the sole responsibility of the authors and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the Research Executive Agency and European Commission under the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme.

Funding

European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme.

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