

## SUSTAINABILITY ANGLES

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### **Abstract**

*The article approaches sustainable development through two of different significant angles to lead communities to local and national progress and profitability. The two domains interphere each other and supports themselves towards sustainability if an efficient management policy is carried away. The angles we turn to are urban tourism and transportation.*

*Several results from analysing the status in Romania on this respect reveal us a few shortcomings.*

*The measures to be taken with hope of improvements in the central and local management policies should focus on: long term urban visionary policies; continuous adaptation of tourism products to market demand; harmonize the local and central authorities, the profile private sector, the NGOs and local communities for pro-active travel strategies and face challenges of climate change, geo-politics obstacles, too crowded cities; speed and wisdom towards tourist experience changes; existing infrastructure recovery; implementation of multimodal transport system; accessibility to significant destinations.*

**Key words:** sustainability, urban tourism, transports, management policies

### **Introduction**

Starting from the definition of sustainable development – to be that form of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [1], we could pick up different angles through which we regard future chances for prosperity and advancement of our regional communities.

Sustainability becomes that feature possible to be shared by more domains if its content is properly applied at micro or at macro level. Starting from that initial definition, the concept becomes a bridge between areas of development to complement one another, combining in such a way as to enhance their own qualities.

Let us stop to two areas of development from a multitude of domains, watching sustainability from these respective angles. One is tourism, particularly urban tourism. The other one is transports.

### **Urban tourism as sustainability angle**

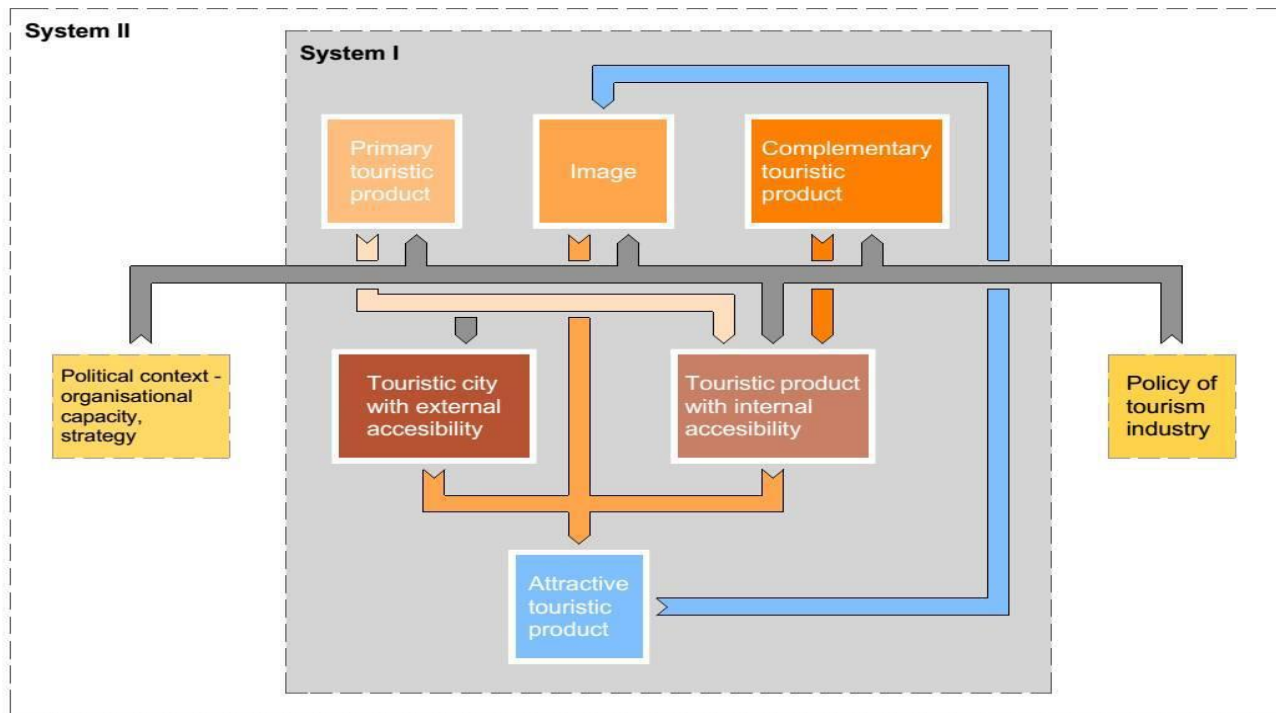
**Tourism** is regarded as a form of recreation and of spending spare time [2] and involves a temporary movement of people to destinations outside the area of residence and activities within destinations during the time spent there [3], influencing local communities. **Urban tourism** is primarily a movement activity through which tourists make exchanges and transformations of goods, individual values and cultural models, shaping in this way a tourism system. This modeling has proven to be a difficult phenomenon because it is in constant contact with the geographical space, having an impact on it often irreversible [4].

Urban tourism has gained importance as a distinct field of study in the 1990s, when there was an explosion of publications [5] on tourism, from books, edited volumes in scientific articles, standing out studies from Law (1993), Page (1995), Cazes (1996), Potier (1996) Murphy (1997), Mazanec (1997), and Fainstein Judd (1999), etc. Since that time, we find increasingly more research and publications related to urban tourism, which identifies it as a complex phenomenon that affects many stakeholders in the value chain and we need to link the field to sustainability. For example, the low cost airlines has led to increased interest in cities and their development in terms of tourism; e.g. many European cities have had to adapt their marketing activities to attract a new type of product, the city breaks, which seems to remain in the attention of future travel generations, as well.

The city is generally the place with strong economic base, served by major professional and business activities, important network of public transport that acts as a gateway to other areas, labor intensively represented, but generally perceived as artificial environment. Due to their complex nature, cities can offer visitors a wide range of experiences more or less linked to specific facilities or tourist attractions. Cities meet also important functions in the operation of global tourism, both being major gates for domestic tourism as well as internationally, given their nodal position in the air transport system and the stopover role to other destinations [6].

Coming back to what urbanity could provide in the sense of sustainable development, we need to consider the components of the tourism system: the geosystem (the ecosystem that depends on natural factors), the territory (consisting of accessibility, natural resources, tourism heritage, and tourist infrastructure) and the landscape (the visible part of the territory). The spatial consideration helps tourism development with regards to future strategies, including transports.

**Figure no. 1**  
**Place of accessibility within urban tourism system**



**Source: adapted after Van den Berg et al., 1995**

The tourism system, highlighted with basic components [7] reveals us also the connections to determine its sustainability (Figure no.1).

As one can see, the urban tourism product consists of five components [8]: the primary tourism product, the complementary tourism product, the touristic image, the external accessibility (how to reach the destination) and the domestic accessibility (easy movement within the destination). We consider the internal and external accessibility of the destination as key factors in relationship with the other components of system I (the primary and complementary tourism product, which form a complete tourism product and the touristic image, exercised through the market perception) and with system II, having impact on sustainable development of the related region.

Tourism is a rapidly growing phenomenon and has become one of the largest industries in the world. Although it plays an important, usually positive, role in the socio-economic and political situation of the countries of destination, it could also have a negative impact on the natural and cultural environment, which gave in fact rise to the need for sustainable tourism development[9].

We already see a connection to the other area in discussion, transportation.

### **Transports as sustainability angle**

Cities breathe through valid ways of transport and maintain themselves as top destinations also thanks to an efficient infrastructure, capable to face requirements of present and future tourist generations. But building an efficient and sustainable **transport system** requires

the creation of special conditions in terms of safety, comfort, mobility, speed and regularity of the transport of people and goods, under the circumstances of continued growth of environmental protection. This is a general status for many regions and specifically, in urban areas, on all continents.

Besides this general situation, in Romania's case, the main problem of transports is the inadequate offer of infrastructure. The quality, the level of modernity and the coverage of demand for transport offered by Romanian transport infrastructure for all modes, are low compared to the European average. The low level of funds attracted in recent years to finance development and modernization of infrastructure and the inconsistent policy of the state have essentially contributed to this state [10]. Currently, there are efforts to recover these gaps. The share investment is net in favor of road transport, which looks good from urban tourism point of view, but this encourages development of the most polluting mode of transport.

A solid angle of view for sustainability in the transport system involves the implementation of clean modes of transport or having a low impact on the environment and health, by increasing the energy efficiency of fuels and decreasing, in general, fuel consumption, by increasing use of fuels from renewable resources and the continued decline of solid and liquid waste resulting from construction, maintenance and disposal of vehicles.

Achieving a sustainable transport system for cities as tourist destinations requires a compromise among the size of the economic and social benefits, the decline in impacts of associated environmental costs and the transportation security. The constraints of the specific requirements of sustainable transport must be accompanied, however, by increasing the quality of service - safety, speed and variety.

**Table no. 1**  
**Transport infrastructure quality in Romania, in 2014**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Mark Min/Max</b>	<b>Average achieved</b>
Transport infrastructure	106	2,0/6,64	3,0
Quality of infrastructure	88	1,85/6,61	3,8
Quality of roads	121	1,92/6,61	2,8
Quality of railway infrastructure	59	1,13/6,70	2,9
Quality of harbor infrastructure	104	1,28/6,81	3,4
Quality of airport infrastructure	105	2,11/6,76	3,6

**Source: World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness. Report 2014-2015. September 2014.**

**Note: Number of analyzed countries: 144; marks covering a range from 1 as minim to 7 as maxim**

If we look an eye at our country, using a globalizing analysis in terms of transport infrastructure and its quality, out of a total of 144 countries analyzed, we find that Romania ranks 106, with an average rating of 3.0 (Tab. No. 1). A surprising element of this analysis is a relatively good location on the railway infrastructure [11]. Therefore, there are real prospects that

rail transport could play a more important role than today, if rebalancing modes of transport will become truly real objective in decision-making, useful in connecting destinations within country and from abroad. For other modes of transport, existing infrastructure is far from able to support Romanian sustainable transport, tourism default.

**Table no. 2**  
**Structure of gross added value generated by tourism industries in Romania, in 2011**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>%</b>
Services for accommodation	13
Foods and drinks	14,2
Railway transport for passengers	5,3
Road transport for passengers	41,3
Water transport for passengers	0,6
Air transport for passengers	8,0
Tour operators/ Other booking services	2,6
Cultural services	5,7
Leisure and sports services	4,1
Specific domestic goods and services	5,1
Rental transport equipment	0,1

**Source: National Institute of Statistics (a), 2014, p. 16**

Let's consider the contribution of urban tourism in the creation of national income by the fact that specific activities do not cover the "raw material" on which they develop, but these can even enhance the value. The more so, it is still an opportunity for recovery cultural or natural resources.

Gross added value in the tourism industry, in 2012, was of 26831.5 million Lei, for example [12]. As can be seen from the analysis of elements that form the gross added value for the tourism industry (Table no. 2), the largest share belongs to passenger road transport (11082.8 million Lei), followed by serving meals and drinks (3807 million Lei) and by accommodation services (3488 million Lei).

A strong link between tourism and transports highlights the influence and impact these two domains have to each other. As these represent needs for people and communities that satisfy interests from economic and cultural point of view – they become valid angles to regards sustainability.

### **Conclusions**

Transport is a key element not only for the general economic development of a region, but also of urban tourism. At the same time, though, it is, unfortunately, the main consumer of non-renewable energy and one of the biggest polluters of the environment. Therefore, Romania should establish as a priority objective in this area, increasing the competitiveness of the sector by establishing a network of fully integrated transport, which would allow full interoperability

between different modes of transport and thus achieve a structural balancing between the various modes of transport.

In achieving this goal, an important place is held by multimodal transports development. By reducing energy consumption and environmental pollution, by fluency and efficiency, this complex approach will ensure sustainable development opportunities for communities and, thus, tourist destinations.

Tourism planning strategies must take into account environmental issues (natural and built) and industry interests, by using a long term vision. Urban planning in tourism should involve several levels of government and administration, partnerships with industry, with private sector - whose representatives are often best placed to identify areas where state intervention policy is useful - and the civil society. Strategies in the field of tourism therefore reflect the need for an integrated approach, as well. It is necessary, thus, ensuring a clear and integrated planning framework, based on which should be achieved components of local and regional tourism.

Sustainable development in the tourism industry, with accent on urban side, should cover among others the following aspects:

- promotion of sustainable tourism products by using tools and market-related incentives, such as: contests, certification project model quality labels on environmental and social sustainability;
- reducing improper use of local resources at the expense of imports, waste reduction and recycling, ensuring safe waste disposal, development and implementation of sustainable transport system;
- providing information to genuine tourists, enabling them to understand all aspects of the environment and related tourism;
- availability of information on compliance the natural and cultural heritage of the destination targets.

Tourism policy attention must turn to the options available to reduce the negative effects of climate change, either by adaptation (accepting the inevitability of climate change and identify measures to restrict the negative effects) or by mitigation (ie measures to reduce greenhouse gas production).

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