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Envisioning the futures of cultural tourism

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the future of tourism is a much-debated topic both in academic and non-academic circles with commentators expounding contrasting perspectives. This conceptual paper contributes to such debates and aims at envisioning plausible futures of cultural tourism, in particular. For that purpose, we first discuss cultural tourism trends and the future scenarios available in the literature. Then, we articulate three cultural tourism visions of the decades to come: a utopian, a dystopian and a heterotopian vision. Finally, we conclude that the heterotopian vision provides the most nuanced interpretation of the future of cultural tourism and we discuss the potential ramifications of such a vision.

1. Introduction

In a recent editorial note in the Journal of Tourism Futures, [Yeoman \(2020\)](#) suggests that with the current Covid-19 outbreak "the future of tourism is a blank piece of paper". In other words, what tourism may look like in the future can take different forms, and tourism futures are yet to be "written". The future of tourism is currently a much-debated topic both in academic and non-academic circles with authors expounding contrasting perspectives. Some conjure optimistic scenarios while others have a more pessimistic perspective. With regards to the latter, in a recent thematic issue on tourism of the French magazine [Socialter \(2020\)](#), most of the activists, practitioners, academics and politicians interviewed contend the lack of substantial governmental and industry commitment to transform the modus operandi of the tourism industry. While these concerns are directed to the tourism industry in general, these are also certainly true to specific forms of tourism such as cultural tourism. In fact, cultural tourism, which is estimated to account for about 39% of all tourism activities ([UNWTO, 2018](#)), until recently received extensive media coverage for its poor sustainability performance as epitomised by the overtourism phenomenon.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the tourism industry and the cultural and creative industries. According to [Gössling, Scott, and Hall \(2020\)](#), the international travel bans affected over 90% of the world's population, which resulted in about 80% decline in the international tourism economy for the year 2020 ([OECD, 2021](#)). During the first lockdown in spring, especially air travel and cruise lines were by far being hit the hardest due to the closing off of borders. Moreover, the introduction of post-travel quarantine periods has caused a significant decline in tourism demand, whereby accommodations and

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attractions have had to stop operations all together (Gössling et al., 2020). In addition, strict gathering restrictions have also affected people's mobility significantly, thereby causing cafes and restaurants to change physical operation to delivery mode, as well as postponing or cancelling any large events such as conventions, festivals and sports events. Within a few days only, many cities have shifted from a state of overtourism to one of non-tourism.

In this context, many people wonder how cultural tourism will look after the pandemic. Postma, Heslinga, and Hartman (2020) have discussed the possible future of tourism after the Covid-19 crisis, noting that, depending on the length of the pandemic and the type of governance (top down or bottom up), tourism may be "downsized" to a smaller scale, or quickly return to a "business as usual" situation, including issues such as overtourism. In their contribution, they note the need for further discussion on the future of tourism. This conceptual paper, therefore, aims at envisioning plausible futures of cultural tourism. To inform our conceptual analysis, we draw from recent discussions in the wider tourism scholarship. As a departure point in this endeavour, we acknowledge the context in which cultural tourism is embedded. We then proceed with a brief review of cultural tourism trends and of four scenarios for cultural tourism recently elaborated by Calvi, Moretti, Koens, and Klijs (2020). We discuss these trends and scenarios and articulate them under three cultural tourism visions of the decades to come: a utopian, a dystopian and a heterotopian vision. Finally, we conclude that the heterotopian vision provides the most nuanced interpretation of the future of cultural tourism and we discuss the potential ramifications of such a vision.

2. The context of cultural tourism and future scenarios

Any attempt at envisioning the future of cultural tourism requires a broad understanding of how several societal trends and global forces have contributed to shape how people live. Understanding the way cultural tourism is currently performed and consumed also necessitates exploring the link between the concept of *culture* and traditions, heritage, lifestyles, local values and beliefs. Additionally, any speculation about the future of cultural tourism is confronted with the speed and complexity of changes occurring in the world. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine each of these social trends and global forces, it is important to highlight a number of key phenomena that are relevant to our discussion. A central concept and multi-dimensional predicament to this discussion is the *Anthropocene*. The Anthropocene is a geological period, which refers to the human activities that have been impacting the planet since the industrial revolutions of the nineteenth century (Gren & Huijbens, 2014). Most of humans' detrimental impacts are linked to a highly unregulated, profit-driven system of extraction of resources and exploitation. Braidotti (2019) expounds that this toxic "system rests on advanced technologies, the financialization of the economy and the overwhelming power of the media and cultural sectors" (p. 40). To refer to the Anthropocene, Braidotti uses the term *Capitalocene*, which bluntly unveils the self-destructive power of capitalism, a worldwide prevailing economic system based on the private ownership of means of production.

The political economy of global tourism is intricately tied to the capitalist system, whereby tourism significantly contributes to environmental change (Hall, 2011) and social injustice (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Jamal & Higham, 2021), which seriously threaten cultural heritage (Hall, Baird, James, & Ram, 2016). Cultural tourism development is a considerable policy issue and policy making is a crucial element of the governance process (Hall, 2011). In the context of cultural tourism, the role of governance in a post-pandemic phase has been discussed by Calvi et al. (2020), who recognise that any attempt to identify future developments of cultural tourism requires an attentive consideration of the way culture is interpreted by destination managers and embedded in the tourism products developed. Informed by an extensive review of the cultural tourism and sustainability literatures (see Calvi & Moretti, 2020), these authors have identified two broad cultural tourism governance approaches: a "community-oriented" and an "economy-oriented" one. While the economy-oriented approach to cultural tourism relies on local cultural resources with the aim to maximise the economic benefit for the tourism industry, the community-oriented approach aims at revitalising local cultures, and at maximising community wellbeing.

Alongside these modes of governance, the authors regard cultural tourism demand as the other key parameter that has been shaping the evolution of cultural tourism. The last two decades have witnessed a shift in tourists' consumption of culture. On the one

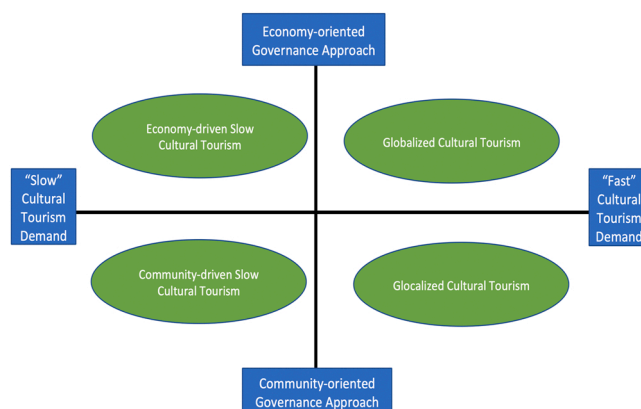


Fig. 1. Scenarios for the future of cultural tourism (Calvi et al., 2020).

hand, tourists are not merely seeking to experience iconic heritage sites and tangible cultural assets; instead, an increasing number of tourists are now looking for to experience authenticity in the contemporary way of life of the places they visit (Frisch, Sommer, Stoltenberg, & Stors, 2019; Richards, 2018). On the other hand, many tourists are also "actively and knowingly seeking the inauthentic as the basis of their experience" (Ravenscroft & Matteucci, 2003, p. 2). Smith (2016) refers to these individuals as "new leisure tourists"; such new leisure tourists are associated with *experiential tourism*, a subset of cultural tourism. Calvi et al. (2020) conceptualise these two separate consumer segments as a "slow" and a "fast" cultural tourism demand. The slow cultural tourism demand is characterised by small and fragmented niches, where people are eager to experience specific "authentic" elements of local culture, and willing to pay a premium-price for that authenticity. An example would be the flamenco tourists who partake in flamenco courses in Andalusia, Spain (Matteucci, 2018). The fast cultural tourism demand corresponds to a more uniform, global, less authenticity-driven type of demand, which is also focused on "consuming" local cultures as an element of a price-sensitive tourism experience.

Based on the intersection of cultural tourism demand and modes of governance, Calvi et al. (2020) have identified four distinctive scenarios of cultural tourism futures: (1) a community-driven slow cultural tourism, (2) an economy-driven slow cultural tourism, (3) a globalised cultural tourism and (4) a glocalised cultural tourism (see Fig. 1).

The model presented in Fig. 1 is based on the assumption that the supply side of cultural tourism will respond to consumer trends; yet Calvi et al. (2020) also recognise that the supply of cultural products may, to some extent, also be shaped by a destination's governance approach. Because, sometimes, the products and trends pushed by the supply side can significantly influence consumer expectations, the role and function of the cultural tourism supply is here emphasised. Each one of these four scenarios is briefly presented below.

The *community-driven slow cultural tourism* scenario combines the prevalence of a slow cultural tourism demand with the adoption of a community-oriented governance approach. In this scenario, bottom-up participatory initiatives steer cultural tourism development. What is considered "local culture" by the community, its social and ecological dimensions, becomes the core of the cultural offer. Tourism products and service supply mainly make use of local and regional products, using traditional production techniques and mostly employing local human resources. No mass-produced products are offered to tourists and each tourist experience tends to be personalised. As a consequence, in exchange of a personalised and authentic cultural experience, prices may be relatively high. Destinations may need to deploy creative strategies in order to attract specific types of cultural tourists - only a small portion of the global cultural tourism demand. A risk for destinations, however, may be that niches of cultural tourists may not generate sufficient benefits for fostering community prosperity.

The *economy-driven slow cultural tourism* scenario is characterised by the prevalence of a slow cultural tourism demand combined with the adoption of an economy-oriented governance approach. In this scenario, the top-down mode of governance prevails and it accommodates the governing elite's (political power, DMO, industry) interpretation of local culture, which stimulates its use with the core aim to maximise the economic benefit to the tourism industry (with moderate indirect and induced economic impact sprinkling to the community). In this scenario, Calvi et al. note that governance relies on a flexible regulatory framework to stimulate local entrepreneurship; however, due to the limited size of the slow tourism segment, most businesses may consist of small companies in terms of employees and profits. Rather than enabling genuine encounters, and due to compromises necessary to maximise businesses' profitability, elements of local authenticity are instrumentally exploited to stage "authentic" cultural experiences. As a consequence, tourism and cultural service providers sometimes make use of material, labour and techniques that are extraneous to the local fabric. Commodification processes may impinge upon the views of residents and tourists towards the "authenticity" of local cultures (Richards, 2007). The dangers with this scenario is that residents may blame tourism for commoditising their local culture but also that destinations may eventually lose their appeal.

Globalised cultural tourism entails an economy-oriented model of governance that caters to the "fast" consumption patterns of what McKercher (2002) has referred to as *incidental* cultural tourists. While tourists want to experience elements of the local culture such as "must-see" attractions, they are less likely to seek out the nooks and crannies of everyday local life. Due to the size of this mass market, the supply-side landscape is dominated by rather large companies such as international chains. In developing regions, low-skilled tourism jobs are mostly filled by locals, while non-local workers tend to occupy managerial positions. As the demand is more uniform, and the scenario is supply-driven, most of the tourism stakeholders are concerned with attracting growing numbers of visitors. The likely consequences of such a governance approach are the deterioration of the socio-cultural fabric, environmental damage, excessive economic dependence on tourism as typified in regions affected by overtourism.

Glocalised cultural tourism is characterised by a community-oriented governance approach and a "fast" demand for price sensitive tourism experiences (Calvi & Moretti, 2020). In this scenario, cultural tourism initiatives are mainly led by small and medium-sized local businesses that promote authentic aspects of local cultures. Tourists who constitute this fast demand not only have a limited knowledge of the local culture, but many are satisfied with or even expect inauthentic experiences. Therefore, glocalised cultural tourism may be confronted with the risk of a demand and supply mismatch, whereby a cultural tourism offer based on authentic cultural resources and manifestations may fail to meet tourists' expectations of less-authentic but entertaining cultural products. The local cultural tourism industry may be, therefore, compelled to find a challenging equilibrium between (a) partial adjustments of their cultural offerings to meet larger segments of price-sensitive and less authenticity-driven tourists (therefore shifting towards forms of globalised cultural tourism), and (b) the danger of community antagonism towards forms of tourism associated with overtourism. In extreme forms, this may even lead to specific tourism-oriented 'cultural tourism' areas where parts of an original destination are brought together in a more easily accessible and/or sanitised form.

3. The future of cultural tourism revisited: three visions

The four scenarios expounded by Calvi et al. (2020) provide valuable food for thought. When these authors contend that "resilient destinations will need to be prepared to adapt to any of these scenarios" (p. 38), they seem to suggest that the future of destinations will be shaped by one of these four scenarios. However, because destinations are complex, fragmented and multidimensional entities, one may argue that while some governance modalities may predominate in some contexts, all scenarios may coexist to various degrees at the destination level. Based on complex conjunctures shaped by social, cultural, political, environmental and economic contingencies, we therefore anticipate three potential cultural tourism futures that may unfold. We describe these as utopian, dystopian and heterotopian. We acknowledge that concepts like utopia and dystopia are contested and open to multiple interpretations (Isaac, 2015). In this paper, we consider these two as ideal types of cultural tourism development that are fitting with two concurrent narratives that appear to be taking shape in the tourism discourse with regards to post-pandemic development (Brouder, 2020; Zenker & Kock, 2020). By relating these to cultural tourism, it becomes possible to appreciate a range of possibilities and dangers that may lie ahead for cultural tourism. The heterotopian future combines elements of both ideal types and seeks to provide insights to the circumstances under which both ideal types may develop in real-life settings.

3.1. A utopian future

The future of cultural tourism is uncertain; yet, some positive changes can be anticipated. While the term utopia may be seen as both naive or unrealistic, the value of imagining utopias resides in illuminating the path we may need to take to an end goal (Yeoman, Palomino-Schalscha, & McMahon-Beattie, 2015). In other words, envisioning a utopian cultural tourism may inspire decision-makers such as tourists, hosts, planners and developers as well as business operators. Therefore, utopias possess a latent agentic power, which may be exercised in practice. Beyond mere recovery, the tourism industry has now an opportunity to transform itself. Before the pandemic outbreak, a number of critical voices (e.g., D'Sa, 1999; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Higgins-Desbiolles, Carnicelli, Krolikowski, Wijesinghe, & Boluk, 2019; Weaver & Jin, 2016) had already urged for an equitable transformation of tourism. Some of these calls for more sustainable tourism futures are embedded within anti-capitalist discourses of a new global order, which reflect wider and more dramatic global disruptions threatening mankind and life on earth. In our view, a utopian cultural tourism future would be characterised by greater collective wellbeing propelled by degrowth strategies led by post-anthropocentric community-driven modes of governance and slow tourism practices.

While the UNWTO has long been an advocate of sustainable growth, a growing number of researchers are now questioning whether sustainable growth is attainable at all (Fletcher & Rammelt, 2017; Hickel & Kallis, 2020; Parrique et al., 2019). Furthermore, some (e.g., Gascón, 2019) have criticised the UNWTO's tourism growth agenda as counter-productive to societal welfare. An alternative to sustainable growth is tourism degrowth (Fletcher, Mas, Blanco-Romero, & Blázquez-Salom, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019; Sharpley, 2020). Kallis et al. (2018) define degrowth as "voluntary, radical political and economic reorganisation leading to drastically reduced resource and energy throughput while welfare, or well-being, improves" (p. 292). Degrowth should not be confused with economic decline or recession. Hall (2010) equates degrowth to "steady-state tourism [...] that encourages qualitative development but not aggregate quantitative growth to the detriment of natural capital" (p. 131). In the same vein, Büscher and Fletcher (2017) specify that a radical degrowth should be accompanied by more sustainable modes of consumption and production. For example, Martínez Alier (2009) argues that if degrowth is to be socially sustainable in any region, a fairly substantial redistribution of wealth and resources will be a prerequisite.

Degrowing and slowing cultural tourism might be a daunting challenge; however, the concept of degrowth does fit with that of creative tourism and New Urban Tourism, both of which emphasise the importance of localhood and placemaking practices in the creation of cultural tourism (Bargeman & Richards, 2020; Frisch et al., 2019). Such a more localised place-based approach may contribute to a more equitable development of cultural tourism, in line with the destination that is visited. In a utopian future, leadership imbued with an ethics of care and strong political commitment (Guia, 2021) would facilitate a substantive paradigm shift in cultural tourism governance that stimulates such practices. A paradigm shift would entail abandoning the current anthropocentric view that nature is instrumental to human pleasure and embrace a post-anthropocentric ontology (Matteucci, Nawijn, & Von Zumbusch, 2022). Post-anthropocentrism not only ascribes equal status and intrinsic value to both human and non-human forms of life but it also highlights their fundamental interconnection and interdependency (Benson, 2019). Because wellbeing emerges through the dynamic interplay of material and non-material actors in the social-ecological system (Onfray, 2015; White, 2017), a post-anthropocentric mindset would seek to understand the complex role played by these various actors.

A utopian cultural tourism future would be one where local communities realised that it was their collective responsibility to effectuate change in order to prioritise residents' wellbeing. In this view, cultural tourism governance would be based on grassroots movements (Latouche, 2006), community partnership and ethical modes of consumption. Emphasis would be put on the local production and consumption of cultural tourism products and services that are endogenous. For being less dependent on outbound markets (Romagosa, 2020), domestic and proximity tourism would be prioritised. If local residents spent their time, money and energy in the vicinity of their home, social capital leakages would be avoided and place attachment would be strengthened (Hollenhorst, Houge-Mackenzie, & Ostergren, 2014). Utopian cultural tourism would also attend to cultural diversity as a key dimension of carrying capacity indexes (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019).

The lessons learnt from the first Neighbourhood Forum of Tourism held in Barcelona suggest that key tourism degrowth measures would consist of cutting funds and subsidies to tourism agencies and tourism promotion campaigns (a.k.a. demarketing) and, fostering modes of participatory tourism governance and urban planning processes (Milano et al., 2019). Participatory governance means

putting citizens at the centre of decision-making because cultural "tourists may have much to learn from host communities about sustainable living and the protection of natural and cultural resources" (Smith, 2016, p. 251). The *community-driven slow cultural tourism* scenario elaborated by Calvi et al. (2020) resonates with our portrayal of a utopian future. Furthermore, a utopian cultural tourism would be one that not only aligns with but also enforces the application of the SDGs and one that redefines the "right to tourism", ratified by Article 10 of the 2017 UNTWO's Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics (Tremblay-Huet, 2020). For a more equitable and sustainable future, Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) similarly argue that the rights of local communities would prevail over the rights of tourists and the rights of tourism multinational companies to make profits. In short, cultural tourism degrowth initiatives would offer a great opportunity for debates and dialogue to flow through and give impetus for multi-stakeholders to explore the underlying issues of overtourism (or mass cultural tourism). Although tourism degrowth faces critics, there may currently be few viable alternatives.

3.2. A dystopian future

The utopian picture presented above postulates that degrowth-based cultural tourism destinations would operate under very different social, economic, cultural and political principles from the ones that are currently dominant. A radical transition would need to happen fast in order to curb many of the ongoing anthropocentric disruptions. These disruptions include an accelerated loss of biodiversity, plants and animal extinction rates, global warming at an unprecedented alarming rate, plastic pollution and high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous in soils due to fertilisers (Carrington, 2016). Gowdy (2020) pessimistically argues that it "seems unlikely that the policies required to keep warming at manageable levels will be implemented in time to avoid catastrophic climate change" (p. 4). The Anthropocene impacts directly on cultural tourism as historic buildings, ancient city walls and cultural treasures are under threat from rising sea levels (e.g., cities like Venice, Lübeck, Sabratha are at risk). Extreme weather conditions also impact on cultural heritage in different ways. Periods of extreme heat can harm paintings, cloths, wallpapers or ornaments made of natural materials (e.g. leather).

Dystopian elements of a social and political nature can also be discerned with regard to certain current cultural tourism practices. This is exemplified by destinations seeking to add extraneous popular attractions to their cultural product portfolio (e.g., Christmas markets and branded museums) in order to find a competitive edge. This serial reproduction of culture (Richards & Wilson, 2006) has been associated with processes of cultural commodification and homogenisation as well as cultural identity alienation. Dystopia is also revealed in destinations suffering from overtourism, either because they are overrun with tourists, physical touristification (e.g., tourist shops replacing non-tourist services) or insensitive or inappropriate tourist behaviour (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018). It can also be that cultural heritage comes to represent such an economic value, that tourism and non-tourism actors compete for the use of public spaces. Such processes are already underway in historic cultural cities such as Barcelona and Venice, where residents feel their interests have become subservient to the interests of tourism (Milano et al., 2019; Seraphin, Sheeran, & Pilato, 2018). Rather than contributing to quality of place of a destination, this may lead to monocultural tourism ghettos. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that sudden undertourism has had strong negative impacts on cities like Barcelona where many people depend on tourism for income. Early experiences after the first Covid-19 lockdown and the subsequent situation of undertourism, suggest the pandemic has led to the rise of a discourse of quickly rebuilding tourism and facilitating tourism businesses to make up for lost income (e.g., by creating a green pass to facilitate travel in Europe or by giving up public space for the extension of terraces for cafes) (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). This discourse may further negatively impact on local cultures by commercialising sites of local importance and public spaces.

In a similar vein, in a dystopian future, being nominated as a World Heritage Site, is not necessarily positive. While World Heritage Sites attract large numbers of visitors, it is far from evident that this results in increased financial opportunities for local stakeholders or protection of the site (Caust & Vecco, 2017). Hollenhorst et al. (2014) likened tourism economies at a destination to "leaky buckets"; tourists may pour money in, but this leaks straight out to stakeholders outside of the local economy. In such a future, World Heritage status "could be seen as a marketing device more than a protection approach" (Caust & Vecco, 2017, p 8). When heritage becomes viewed more as a consumption good aimed at satisfying tourists' demands, instead of as an intrinsically culturally valuable asset (Simpson, 2016), this can also lead to local heritage being presented as more extreme and stereotypical. This is particularly worrying in places where the cultural product is not inherently positive (e.g., dark tourism, slum tourism), and a negative depiction can lead to entrenchment of prejudices or stigmatisation of host communities (Koens & Thomas, 2016; Rofe, 2013).

Even in cases where tourism enhances the public image of an area, and local community members are active participants in the production of cultural tourism, it can still lead to local community members being disempowered (Richter, 2010). Local communities and entrepreneurs may lose out to businesses from outside the locality, which have better connections and market access. As a result, locals may be used as low-wage staff instead, to provide a whiff of authenticity and presumed support of local culture (Koens & Thomas, 2016). As such, in a dystopian future, well-intentioned ideas for more social and sustainable tourism development can be corrupted or misused to serve the (economic) interests of a small number of stakeholders (Scheyvens, 2009). The same can be said about tourism employment. While tourism is often hailed as providing "weaker" groups in society with employment opportunities, Walmsley, Koens, and Milano (2021) note that this is not self-evident. They argue that unfettered tourism growth can lead to lower nominal and real wages, deepen divisions in the labour market, also between local and migrant workers, increase work pressure without sufficient remuneration as well as a deterioration of working conditions. This vision of the future is akin to the *globalised cultural tourism* scenario articulated by Calvi et al. (2020).

Although, in name, the importance of overcoming these issues is recognised within the wider tourism industry, they are insufficiently addressed, as supranational and business organisations have been described as ignorant and disinterested in tackling these issues (Gössling, 2020). Büchs and Koch (2019) contend that extant economic growth modes of governance are so deeply rooted in

modern societies that any potential transition would require a radical shift in the mentalities that underpin the system. It is unlikely that such a radical shift will come to be around the world. Instead, it appears more likely that the world of tomorrow, therefore, will be one of scarce environmental and social resources, competition over public space, and rivalry and conflicts. At the same time, such a dystopian future shall not be viewed as a fatality. Even in what may be presumed as potential dystopic places, initiatives are unfolding to come to positive change (Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019).

3.3. A heterotopian future

The likelihood of witnessing a radical political change that would re-focus policy from growth to degrowth and the fair distribution of the benefits of cultural tourism is questionable. Indeed, Sharpley (2020) deplores that more than twenty years of sustainable tourism scholarship and policy have led to little progress towards sustainable tourism development. This failure has been primarily attributed to four decades of neoliberal capitalism whose symptoms include weaker government roles and looser regulations, marketisation and privatisation of public space and services, reduced taxes on the rich, offshoring of wealth and power, and excessive individualism (Monbiot, 2016). Although neoliberal policies are everywhere plagued by market failures, neoliberal capitalism as we know it today may linger for a while. Indeed, as Aubenas and Benasayag (2002) observe, capitalism is not a historical upheaval; rather, it is a form of civilisation, a long journey of thought, of culture, of life, of which we are all a part. In fact, growth-based capitalism pervades all spheres of social life from education, research to welfare systems (Büchs & Koch, 2019). While a systemic change may be underway (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020), we fear that this change may be slow and firstly materialise in the form of pockets of resistance. Informed by Foucault (1986) essay entitled "Des espaces autres" [Of other spaces], we describe these pockets of resistance to mainstream neoliberal practices as heterotopian.

Heterotopias are frequently understood as counter-sites or sites of resistance (Topinka, 2010). Foucault argues that six principles characterise heterotopias; four of these are pertinent to our discussion. First, heterotopias can be found in any culture, yet through different forms, and in them, people's actions deviate from the norms to some extent. Second, people may use heterotopias in variegated ways over time; therefore, heterotopias embody processes of alternate social ordering (Hetherington, 1997). Third, although heterotopias are separate spaces, they are connected to other sites in that people can enter and exit them freely. The fourth principle is that heterotopias serve a function in relation to all other spaces, namely either heterotopias offer the illusion of a perfect social world or serve as sites of transgression where one can escape the normative behavioural patterns of the mainstream. Contrary to utopia, the heterotopia is a real space in which a utopian vision of the world can be enacted or, as Saldanha (2008) contends, "heterotopia is [...] more of an idea about space than any actual space" (p. 2089). In any case, the power of heterotopias lies in their potential to emancipate those who dwell in them.

Rather than merely being utopian or dystopian, we anticipate the future of cultural tourism, therefore, to be heterotopian. A heterotopian future would manifest itself as the multiplication of bubbles of ethical consumption and practices within a slowly decaying mainstream neoliberal order. These bubbles of ethical consumption and practices correspond to what we have introduced as pockets of resistance. Pockets of resistance already exist in the form of cooperatives, social enterprises and non-profit businesses. A Southern French example is *Hôtel du Nord*, a residents' cooperative network with an internet platform, which promotes the social value of heritage, and the recognition of Marseille' non-touristic districts through heritage walks and private accommodation services. The central concerns underlying this initiative are to keep alive the history of Marseille's northern and poorer districts, and to improve the lives of its most vulnerable residents (Miedes-Ugarte, Florez-Ruiz, & Wanner, 2020). Other examples include the European initiative Migrantour, which promotes cultural diversity by connecting migrants to cultural tourists (Vietti, 2018), and community-based projects in Latin America that are guided by the tenets of *buena vivir* [living well together], an indigenous philosophy underpinned by concerns about collective wellbeing (Chassagne & Everingham, 2019). These examples are heterotopian for their marginality, their heterodox practices based on the precepts of solidarity, social justice, cultural diversity and slow encounters, and for their emancipatory power.

The intrinsic value of these pockets of resistance or heterotopias resides in the production of the myriad experiences that would allow destination stakeholders to meet, exchange ideas, collaborate, establish new networks, join forces in order to hone development practices, which would produce relational goods. Creativity and learning may emerge from collaborative actions, which in turn, may foster socially inclusive political visions. In fact, White (2017) asserts that "relational goods can only be produced through collaboration" (p. 132). In a similar vein, for French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1988), the act of creation is in itself an act of resistance. For their place-specific character, grassroots cultural tourism interventions would represent singular, creative departures from the uni-dimensional mode of capitalist governance (Aubenas & Benasayag, 2002). While mainstream neoliberal policies would typically follow experiential marketing recipes to establish enclaves of superficial cultural consumption (see Simpson, 2016 for a compelling analysis of Dubai, Macau and Las Vegas), cultural tourism heterotopias would be spaces of creativity, social relationships, knowledge and citizenships. Creative slow tourism activities would be pursued in heterotopias whereby privileging social encounters, fomenting cultural skills and diversity and care for nature. Successful pockets of resistance may inspire other communities, particularly as it can be expected that there will be demand for alternative modes of tourism consumption. For example, the *economy-driven slow cultural tourism* and *glocalised cultural tourism* scenarios that were mentioned earlier in this paper would fit well within a heterotopian vision, where local bubbles of utopia welcome tourists that are upset with overtouristified destinations and seek ethical tourism experiences. Therefore, such cultural tourism pockets could multiply and sprawl to other neighbourhoods and regions.

4. Conclusion

This paper has presented three cultural tourism futures described as utopian, dystopian and heterotopian, which we expect to coexist to various degrees at a destination level even when some consumption and governance modalities may predominate in some contexts. A utopian future would be marked by global degrowth strategies led by post-anthropocentric community-driven modes of governance and slow cultural tourism practices. This utopian vision resembles the *community-driven slow cultural tourism* scenario and the perspective of [Matteucci, Nawijn, & Von Zumbusch, 2022](#), who urge tourism destinations to follow a new materialist governance approach, which prioritises the needs and concerns of local communities over those of tourists and the travel trade. While a utopian future would solve many of the predicaments of the Anthropocene, the past decades of tourism policy have revealed that policymakers are reluctant to embrace shifts in their governance paradigm ([Hall, 2011](#)). Indeed, as [Christin \(2020\)](#) notes, capitalism can digest Covid-19 very well with some adaptations and compensatory measures. For instance, in mid-May 2020, the French government released 18 billion euros to help tourism overcome what former Prime Minister Édouard Philippe described as "the worst ordeal" in the country's history. As Christin warns, with recovery packages on the horizon lies the illusion of green tourism growth that perpetuates an unsustainable tourism system, thus leading to a potential dystopian future ([Milano & Koens, 2021](#)).

A dystopian future would be one where community wellbeing is further undermined. We do not anticipate such an apocalyptic future as portrayed by [Wright \(2016\)](#) in which wealthy tourists hunt underprivileged residents in a safari-like fashion; instead, our dystopian vision would resonate with the scenario of *globalised cultural tourism*. Here, top-down cultural tourism governance would favour a fraction of powerful stakeholders at the expense of a majority of residents. The issues and dilemmas engendered by over-tourism would linger and possibly worsen; increasing conflicts may arise as residents' antagonism towards tourists and tourism grow. While a utopian future may be overly optimistic, a dystopian future characterised by business-as-usual practices may not be tenable for much longer. Informed by decades of tourism market failures and recent cultural tourism trends and debates, rather we anticipate the future of cultural tourism to be heterotopian.

A heterotopian future better accounts for contingencies, and the many struggles and social movements unfolding in many places. We suggest that pockets of resistance to mainstream cultural tourism practices will emerge in various forms. These pockets of resistance will be marked by ethical modes of consumption and governance, as well as by democratic and egalitarian relationships between tourists and hosts. Considering that it is unlikely that a governance paradigm shift takes place from one day to the next, we expect these bubbles of ethical consumption to develop slowly, spread and become role models for many community-led cultural tourism initiatives. As alternative creative practices and experiences, such cultural tourism interventions are deemed to be heterotopian for their rebellious character and their emancipatory power. At the same time, there is always the risk that they become elitist bubbles for a selected group of well-paying tourists.

Even if the future of cultural tourism remains uncertain, a growing number of voices (e.g., [Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019](#); [Jamal & Camargo, 2014](#); [Koens, Smit, & Melissen, 2021](#); [Matteucci, Nawijn, & Von Zumbusch, 2022](#)) are calling for the urgent need for cultural destinations to put local communities at the centre of tourism planning and management. As [Krippendorf \(1987\)](#) had already explicitly articulated in his seminal work the *Holiday Makers*, for cultural tourism destinations to be resilient, decision-makers will need to commit to "humanising" tourism. The recognition that tourism is a socially constructed phenomenon ([Cohen & Kennedy, 2013](#)) suggests that tourism activities rely on human conventions and decisions; thus, cultural tourism is not merely governed by inexorable economic forces. If tourism is dependent on human conventions, therefore, cultural tourism can be changed if decision-makers agree to do so. The vested interest of a few villains ([Weaver, 2011](#)) may, however, account for the key obstacle to meaningful changes in cultural tourism destinations. This being said, an affirmative philosophy of life appears more fruitful than indulging in denial or negativity. Despite the dark or "absurd" side of tourism, Albert Camus (1913–1960) would advise us to defy challenges, resist and face the future with zest and passion. Perhaps, the future of cultural tourism should be envisioned as one of rebellion against conventional bureaucratic practices and the power of big business. This way of apprehending everyday life would bring joy to those who seek to live more meaningful lives here and now. In the same vein, more than 30 years ago, [Krippendorf \(1987\)](#) had already pleaded for acts of resistance calling for "rebellious tourists and rebellious locals" (p. 107). Therefore, as long as there will be some injustice to overcome, believing in a better cultural tourism future will be a matter of action.

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