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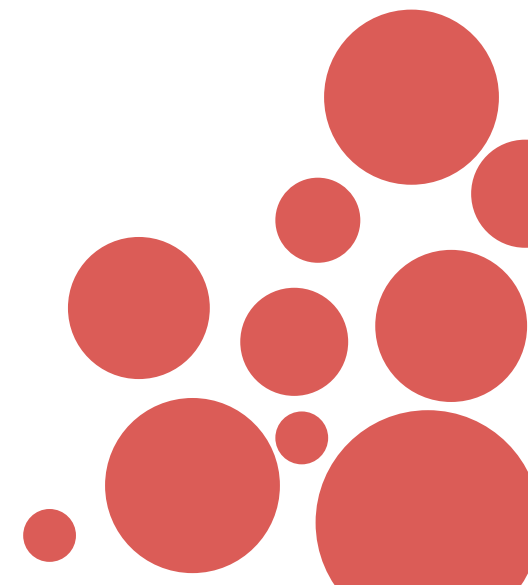


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Polycentric Sustainable Tourism: Identification of a strategy towards the sustainability of the sector

Polycentric Tourism Definition

Researched by IPVC and ATU



Polycentric Tourism



Tourism plays a crucial role in the development and vitality of a destination.

When managed well, tourism can enrich a destination and its community, but it must balance growth with sustainability to avoid negative impacts.

POST project has detected that negatives impacts are not always so easy to avoid... And aims to explore innovative ways to make tourism in the Atlantic Area sustainable through the development of this new concept.

•**Tourism's Role:**

- Key to economic development and community vitality.
- Requires balance between growth and sustainability to avoid negative impacts.

•**Challenges Identified by POST:**

- Negative impacts of tourism are not always easy to mitigate.
- Need for innovative approaches to sustainable tourism in the Atlantic Area.

•**POST Project Overview:**

- Collaborative initiative by Spain, France, Ireland, and Portugal.
- Focuses on "polycentric tourism" to address regional imbalances.
- Funded by the Atlantic Area and supported by Eixo Atlántico.

•**Objective:**

- Promote sustainable tourism that respects natural and cultural resources.
- Resolve urban-rural and coastal-interior disparities by leveraging regional strengths.

•**Key Features:**

- Participating regions rely heavily on tourism for GDP.
- Resources and attractions are dispersed, unlike concentrated global tourist hubs.

Polycentric Tourism strategy

POST project identifies and develops the concepts of tailor-made tourism and polycentric tourism, with the aim of generating tourism products of excellence that not only capture the attention of the quality and purchasing power market, but also redistribute tourist flows and spending throughout the territory, relying on real networking.

A committee of experts is actually drawing up the strategy and tools that will

- first be tested in each of the countries and then
- transferred to any Atlantic territory that needs them, always under the umbrella of sustainable tourism, which is already a must that shouldn't even be talked about, as well as destination planning and management..... and
- with the aim of increasing territorial cohesion where necessary and
- avoiding the negative effects of mass tourism, where this is already happening...

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Over-tourism challenges

- Over-tourism is currently one of the main constraints affecting not only tourist destinations (and their communities), but also the sustainable development of the regions of these destinations around the world; it's true that in this region (as well as in the partner regions), seen globally, 'from a bird's eye view...' this problem doesn't seem to exist; but this isn't absolutely true, because when we 'zoom in' we have points with too much pressure and isolated measures (in some cases, very poorly thought out at municipal level) trying to mitigate it. In general, the Atlantic Area is no exception either, and Spain (or rather, Spanish residents) are 'leading' the protest movement against the negative impact of over-tourism on local communities and residents' quality of life.



Redistributing tourism flows

Tourism Flow Imbalances in the Atlantic Area

•Challenge:

- Uneven tourist distribution creates territorial inequalities.
- Non-coastal areas face:
 - Aging populations.
 - Shortage of qualified human resources.
 - Limited opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

•Opportunities:

- Non-coastal areas have excellent tourism resources and attractions.
- Well-developed tourism products are ready to attract visitors.

•Key Message:

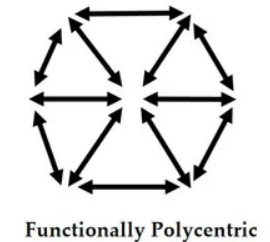
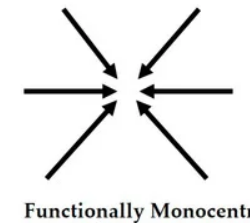
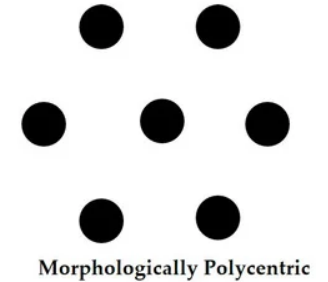
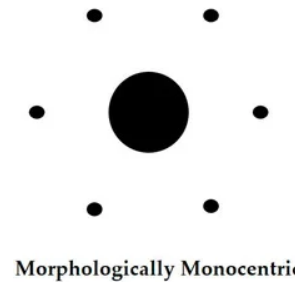
- Non-coastal regions are prepared to welcome tourists and drive balanced development.



Why Polycentric Tourism?

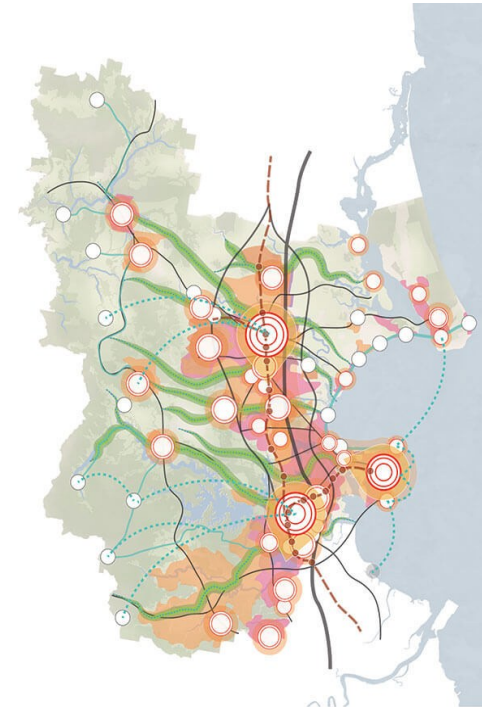
Traditional tourism models often focus on a single central destination, leading to overcrowding and environmental strain.

- Polycentric tourism offers a more balanced and sustainable alternative by encouraging the development of multiple interconnected destinations.
- This approach aligns with modern sustainability goals and regional economic development strategies.
- It helps distribute tourist flows, reducing pressure on over-visited areas while boosting lesser-known destinations.



Key ideas

- **Network Approach:** Strengthening connections between destinations rather than competition.
- **Sustainability:** Reducing overcrowding and promoting responsible tourism.
- **Regional Development:** Enhancing economic opportunities across multiple locations.
- **Visitor Experience:** Offering diverse attractions and experiences across the region.
- **Resilience:** Creating a more adaptable and crisis-resistant tourism model.

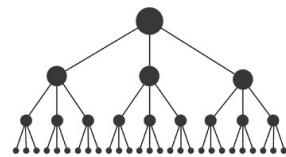


Moreton Bay Polycentric City Vision | Archipelago
and Moreton Bay Regional Council | Photographer:
Archipelago

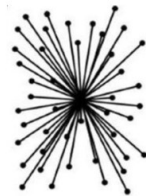
Approved definition

- Polycentric tourism development is an innovative approach that aims to enhance regional appeal and promote sustainability by fostering connections between multiple micro destinations within a region. This model moves away from the traditional focus on a single central destination, instead emphasizing the creation of networks among several destinations. And overall, this model works as a rebalancer of tourist flows in the sense of unloading destinations that suffer from overcrowding in the network, and benefiting those with the potential to improve their own.*

Forms of governance:



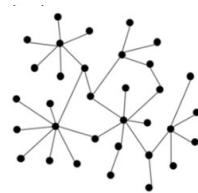
a. Hierarchical



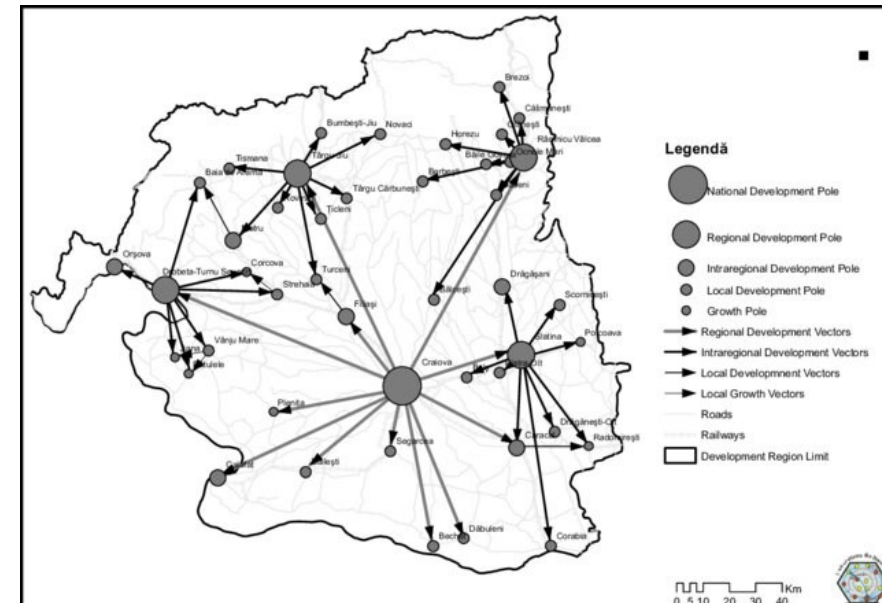
b. Centralised



c. Polycentric distributed



d. Polycentric decentralised



SO...

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- It may seem like a utopia, but this time, and with POST, it seems to us that the solutions to some destinations' problems can be opportunities for others to take advantage of.
- For this ideal scenario to happen, many elements will be needed, and the next step, once the strategy will be agreed is the test in pilot territories.
- What can be relevant if we demonstrate that it works.... And very relevant, difficult and sensitive in our journey.... Political concessions...



Sources



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