

5rd Interregional Project Meeting

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FOLLOW-UP PAPER

Barcelona and Montgrí, Illes Medes i Baix Ter Natural Park



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Abstract

This document summarizes the second of the two planned visits throughout the Land-Sea project in Catalonia. During the three days of the visit an internal meeting of the partners, a technical seminar in the city of Barcelona and a field trip to the Montgrí, Illes Medes i Baix Ter Natural Park were held. Over the three days up to 25 people participated in any of the activities.

The technical seminar took place the first day (May 15th), where experts from the 4 participating countries made a total of 10 presentations related to the following 2 topics that were highlighted in the meeting:

- Analysis of the carrying capacity of a tourist territory: options for improvement through strategic planning.
- Strategies to modify and improve the landscape impact caused by tourism growth.

During the Montgrí, Illes Medes i Baix Ter Natural Park fieldtrip, the attendees discovered different relevant projects related to the former topics (and a glass-bottom boat trip to Medes Islands):

- Management of public marine uses in the natural park to avoid overpassing the carrying capacity.
- Sepia Project, a cephalopod conservation project linked with small scale fisheries and ecotourism
- LIFE Pletera project, a landscape restoration project based on an urban demolition initiative with the aim to recover ecosystem processes in the coastal marshes.

The internal meeting took place the last day and served to assess the status of the project after the first of the three years that will last, evaluate the work that must be done in the last year of the LandSea project.

Objectives

The objectives of the seminar and the field visit are:

- Analysis of the carrying capacity of a tourist territory: options for improvement through strategic planning.
- Strategies to modify and improve the landscape impact caused by tourism growth.

Thematic Seminar in Barcelona

The thematic seminar took place in the Marina Room at the Hotel Colon and started at 10:30 with a welcome speech by Susana Garcia from Barcelona Ecology Agency. The dynamics of the seminar was based on presentations of 15 minutes followed by 5 minutes for questions from attendees.



Presentations

Below we enclosed a summary of the papers that were presented, highlighting their interest in the Land-Sea project in general and for the subjects of the technical seminar in particular.

Costal Landscape for eco-tourism or eco-tourism for coastal landscape? An emerging paradigm in destination governance *Pasquale Contestabile (Member of expert panel for Basin District Authority)*

Pasquale Contestabile gave a presentation to highlight the interrelationships existing between the two main concepts – Ecotourism and Coastal Landscape - in the belief that their combined approach can support a more competitive tourism destination development. In the presentation has been emphasized the following points:

- several studies conclude that the surge of interest for the “Environmental awareness” also has brought with its questionable behaviors, both of several companies and communities portraying themselves as eco-friendly when in fact they are not.
- In the overall paradigm of sustainable development, it is evident that any sustainable development project has to put people in the middle. Tourism governance has to reflect and raise awareness on the themes of quality, slowness and local identity.
- A tentative inclusion of the ecotourism in the Weaver’s broad context model of destination development scenarios (Weaver, 2011) has been provided, by characterizing it in the “low tourism intensity and high regulation” context.

Finally, a case study is overviewed: the environmental restoration of Bagnoli area (Bay of Pozzuoli, Tyrrhenian Sea). It represents a unique challenge at European level, developing new approaches for the removal and remediation xenobiotic contaminants in the environment, the restoration of bathing conditions and the landscape recovery. Landscape architects, environmental engineers and marine biologists work together to restore the damaged marine habitat and return this scenic bay to its people and to tourists in an ecological perspective.

Enhancement of coastal protection measures as sustainable touristic added value. Best practice... and more. *Prof. Michele Greco (University of Basilicata. Regional Environmental Research Foundation)*

Michele Greco presented a study concerning the planning and management of coastal zone. In the study has been highlighted as erosion and flooding processes induce severe critical condition for both urban areas and local tourism economic. Coastal environment management, both terrestrial and marine, is always affected by several actions in environment resource conservation and improvement paying specific attention to risk forecasting and preventing. In such context the EU flood Directive 2007/60/EC, which requires Member States the assessment and management of flood risk, and the EU water framework Directive (2000/60/EC) are the key factors in the integrated river basin management to assure an efficient and rational use of resources. Afterwards, coastal risk assessment and mapping is a propaedeutic phase to plan and manage coastal areas. The combined application of coastal flooding and erosion risks in the activities carried out to prepare Regional Coast Management Plan for the Ionian coast of Basilicata Region located in the south of Italy, represents an



innovative approach to an ancient problem. In order to define the driving forces acting on the shore, high resolution lidar data, bathymetric information and wave climate statistics acquired by meteorological analyses on wind field data referred to different acquisition times are used. The systemic vulnerability estimation is achieved by composing both hazard factors combined in the Criticality Coastal Index depending on of the assessment of Coastal Flood Index and Coastal Erosion Index based on morphologic and socio-economic variables.

SWOT Analysis of tourism in Varna city – strategic planning *Velina Gorgieva and Velislava Tihcheva (Regional Administration of Varna)*

Velina and Velislava presented a synthesis of the SWOT analysis of the city of Varna that will give them an assessment of the state of tourism and its sustainable development in order to improve the strategic planning of tourism.

- *Strengths.* Among others, the 3 highlighted strengths are: 1) Strategic geographical location, 2) high level of bioclimatic potential and 3) well-developed tourism infrastructure.
- *Weaknesses.* Among others, the 3 highlighted weaknesses are: 1) Unsustainable development of sea recreation tourism, 2) Undeveloped in the technical/social infrastructure – community water supply, sewage systems, etc. and 3) Disregard of good practices in the development of tourism.
- *Opportunities.* Among others, the 3 highlighted opportunities are: 1) Creating of preconditions for effective fund absorption in the sphere of tourism, 2) Development and renovation of transport infrastructure-highway “Black sea” and 3) Cross-border cooperation in Tourism.
- *Threats.* Among others, the 2 highlighted threats are: 1) Natural risks and negative impact on natural factors (landslides, collapses, erosion, abrasion, etc.) and 2) Overbuilding in seaside resorts.

The main goal for tourism in Varna is applying a systematic approach to studying, monitoring and mitigating coastal erosion. Three types of activities will be done to achieve this goal: legislative, economic and management.

Moving towards the Hamburg Action Plan: Sustainable Tourism in Hamburg’s Coastal and Estuarine Areas. *Dr. Heike Markus-Michalczyk (Expert for the Hamburg Senate Chancellery)*

Dr. Markus-Michalczyk exposed the Wadden Sea Forum, an independent platform of stakeholders from Denmark, Germany and The Netherlands to contribute to an advanced and sustainable development of the trilateral Wadden Sea Region.

The preservation of valuable and protected habitats and species (EU Habitats Directive - Natura 2000) and the harmonization of ecological and economical demands in the area is a joint objective of the Federal Waterways Administration, Hamburg Port Authority and the neighboring states of Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony and Hamburg. For this reason, an integrated management plan was drawn up by 2012 with the following goals:

- Proposals for measures to achieve the objectives



- Guidance for projects and measures
- Additional basis for the assessment of plans or projects
- Improvement of planning security

Integrating Sustainable Tourism as a New Element in the Review Process of the Hamburg Climate Plan *Henrik Lesaar and Stefanie Wodrig (Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg)*

The two speakers introduced the Hamburg Climate Plan of 2015 which, however, lacks a clear integration of tourism – even though tourism more generally and coastal tourism in particular is an important sector within the city's economy and, hence, contributes to the city's CO2 footprint. Currently, the climate plan is in a stage of review, thus providing the possibility to address this gap. The Action Plan developed within the LandSea project shall make a contribution to this process.

Following the eco-tourism best practice launched in the frame of the project LIFE MAESTRALE

Federica Roscioni (Expert for the Molise Region)

The project LIFE MAESTRALE uses an integrated approach to mitigate the human impact on dune habitats of the Molise coast. The aims of the project are:

- Reduce threats intensity on habitats and species of community interest in the coastal Natura 2000 sites of Molise
- Improve the conservation status of Molise coastal habitats
- Promote the natural heritage of Molise coastal habitats
- Mitigate conflicts with stakeholders in coastal dune habitats
- Dissemination and environmental awareness

One of the targets is the involvement of citizens and tourists in environmental education activities and the actions to achieve its goals are:

- *Actions for public use management:* Installation of footbridges as protection from trampling of the dune vegetation, installation of access bars on the road to limit passage of motor vehicles directly on the dunes and installation of stakes delimiting the first dune formations.
- *Communication actions:* Communication actions specifically focused on the natural heritage and environmental issues of the Molise coast, promoting a prudent and informed management of these vulnerable and valuable ecosystems as environmental educational program addressed to schools, a travelling exhibition and wildlife workshops as recreational activities.

Land-sea touristic capacity and strategic sustainable measures in Molise Region. *Federica Roscioni (Expert for the Molise Region)*



Federica exposed that eco-tourism in Molise could be a driver for an expansion of the tourism industry. Indeed, is mostly unexplored in the touristic point of view and Molise represents the 0.1% of tourism industry at a national level and is visited by 0.2% of foreigner tourists and 0.1% of italian tourists.

With the action plans LandSea project will actually participate to the tourism development suggesting eco-sustainable practices in the strategic planning. All best practices acquired by this project will be helpful to develop this industry in a harmonic way with the environment. Slow mobility and sustainable accomodation facilities will enhance it

Productive ecotones. Tourism & nature (re)claim projects

Martí Franch (EMF landscape architecture)

Martí Franch presented three landscape restoration projects in the Catalan coast where he has participated as the main architect:

- Demolition of the holiday complex of the Club Mediterrané in the Natural Park of Cap de Creus and the creation of an interpretative itinerary in the site totally integrated in the geological landscape of the surroundings.
- Creation of the Món Natura Delta, in the Natural Park of the Ebro Delta. It is an ecotouristic infrastructure centered on the construction of facilities (visitors' center, observatories, store, etc.), the recreation of the process of obtaining saltwater by evaporation and the naturalization of an old fish farm to favor an endangered fish.
- The management of public use on the Castell beach in Palamós, a public land with problems of massification and degradation of its habitats.



Study visit to Montgrí, Illes Medes i Baix Ter Natural Park

The selected site to develop the study visit in this meeting was the Montgrí, Illes Medes i Baix Ter Natural Park. The reason is that we can find examples of the two main issues of the meeting in the same place. Within a few kilometers we have:

- An effervescent diving activity in a very vulnerable and fragile habitat that needs to be managed to avoid overpass the carrying capacity.
- A paradigmatic example of the deconstruction of a promenade in the Baix Ter wetlands followed by a landscape and ecological processes restoration.

The management of diving and other touristic activities in the Natural Park

Brief description

At 10:30 Ramon Alturo, director of the Natural Park welcomes the LandSea participants in a meeting room and made a presentation about the natural values in the park and the tourist activities that have to be regulated in order to not exceeding the tourist carrying capacity of the ecosystem.



Main highlights

- *CETS*. The parc is in the process of obtaining The European Sustainable Tourism Chart.
- *Advice council*. The management of the natural park is very participative, with an advice council formed by more than 40 members, including municipalities, touristic companies, fishermen, universities, ONG, land owners...
- *Diving pressure*. A busy diving activity occurs in Medes islands: 20 diving companies provides divers from around Europe the services for visiting the underwater wonders of the park. More than 75.000 dives are made every year in only 10 diving sites.
- *Uses and management plan*. In 2019 the number of divers that can dive in Medes islands have been established in order to prevent damage in the marine habitats. Diving operators wanted 400.00 dives/year, scientific monitoring recommended no more than 4.000 and the plan permits 75.000.

Sepia project

Brief description

Sepia project (www.projetesepia.com) was born as a collaboration of local fishermen with the Natural Park to recover an ancestral activity that was being lost: cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis*) fishing tackle. At the same time, the project includes concrete actions for the conservation of the fishing resource (refuges,



incubators ...). Boris Weitzman explained us the project in the harbor.

Main highlights

- *Integrative project:* Projecte Sepia is a project that links marine species conservation, artisanal fishing and ecotourism.

Visit to Medes Islands

Brief description

The Medes Islands can be visited in two ways. Or actively: kayaking, diving, snorkeling... or comfortably seated on a glass bottom boat. We did it in the second way. The boat departed from l'Estartit harbor and took a 1,5 hours trip around Medes Islands and the Montgrí Coast.

Main highlights

- *Habitat diversity.* In a very short time participants could observe the diversity of habitats of the marine area of the park: the bird community of the Medes archipelago, the coastal cliffs and the submerged posidonia meadows.
- *Touristic facilities.* The glass bottom boat allows to every single person to visit the most iconic a valuable habitats of the park: the submerged habitats of Medes Islands and its inhabitants: fishes, seagrass meadows, urchins, octopuses, sea stars...

Pletera wetlands restoration

Brief description

A part of the Baix Ter wetlands were close to disappear at the end of the 80's under urban development due to tourism. Fortunately, the urban development project stopped, but an important part of the lagoons had already dried up and streets, lighting and a seafront had been built. The LIFE Pletera project aims to demolish the built-up elements and recover the ecological functionality of coastal wetlands. His technical manager accompanied and show us the details of the project.



Main highlights

- *The 5 criteria:* The managers followed 5 basic criteria to restore the marshes:
 1. *Restore ecological processes.* It means to create 4 parallel coastal habitats from the sea to inland: coastal dunes, hind dunes, lagoons and marsh.
 2. *Fartet conservation.* The new lagoons are created with the characteristics to favor fartet in front of other fish species.



3. *No intervention.* Actions are not undertaken in these areas where some ecological interest is remaining (i.e. marsh vegetation).
4. *Restoration of former topography.* When is possible the old topography will be restored.
5. *Urbanization memories.* The design has to remember the visitor that there was an incomplete urbanization process



Lessons learnt and remarks from partners

Stefanie Wodrig (Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg)

“The LIFE project in the Baix Ter wetlands is a very insightful example for the restoration of a coastal landscape that had disappeared due to tourism development. In the city of Hamburg most of the original coastal habitat also got lost, not so much because of tourism development but flood protection and harbour infrastructure. At the same time, the disappearance of the natural habitat negatively affects the coastal ecosystem, thus creating incentives to restoring the ecological functionality esp. of tidal wetlands. This is why, from a perspective of Hamburg, the study visit of the Pletera project and the explanation of the approach was particularly relevant.”

Regional Administration of Varna (Phd Filiz Arifova)

“We learned something more“

About 5rd Interregional Project Meeting, who was organized by Barcelona Ecology Agency from 15 to 17 May 2019, we can only say that it was very interesting and useful. During the three days we had a thematic seminar and a study visit in this meeting was the Montgrí, Illes Medes i Baix Ter Natural Park.

The thematic seminar included two topics:

- Analysis of the carrying capacity of a tourist territory: options for improvement through strategic planning.
- Strategies to modify and improve the landscape impact caused by tourism growth.

The presentations showed us how Land Sea project actually were working to the tourism development suggesting eco-sustainable practices in the strategic planning. All best practices acquired by this project will be helpful to develop coastal protection and eco-tourism.

We always expected the Discussions with Xavier Cazorla from ELEMENTS, which gives them a scientific character. We agree with that now is creating an emerging paradigm for the Coastal Landscape for eco-tourism or eco-tourism for coastal landscape.

Our action plan won't be with investment character, our actions are legislative, economic and management. For us is the most important to find the way to solving to the landslide problem in the coastal zone and options for the Fortification of the costal line and recover of beach sands. We are starting with submitting proposals to the state bodies that have the needed powers to make an institutional measure to change the policy instrument Operational programme "Regions in Growth".

