

TRAVEL TO *tomorrow ...*



**En route to a
flourishing destination**

**Innovators are
designing the future**



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“Who is this place?
What stories live here?”

— Chené Swart

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TRAVEL TO tomorrow...

“It’s the economy, stupid!” . This campaign one-liner from 1992, from the former American president Clinton, has dominated the past few decades. In times of economic turbulence, when there is pressure on labour markets and everyone’s household budgets, the importance of the economy and ‘growth, growth, growth’ as an abiding principle continues to prevail.

For the sake of clarity: there is nothing wrong with growth per se. But... it is possible to have too much of a good thing if the associated costs are not mitigated. The consequences are well-known and, in some places, painfully clear. Amsterdam, Venice, Dubrovnik, Barcelona... In the recent past, every holiday period has seen newspaper pages filled with worrying articles in which residents curse the unwanted flow of visitors.

In Flanders, thankfully, we’re not there yet. Here, we can still accommodate healthy growth. And in all honesty, the hard work that all of those within the broad tourism sector have put in over the past few years has paid off. The commemorative period for the Great War was, according to our benchmarks, a genuine success and the Flemish Masters programme is well on the way to doing even better. Flanders, the cities, regions and local authorities continue to invest in the public space that has benefited local residents and entrepreneurs as well as visitors. Year after year, we see more arrivals, more receipts and greater turnover.

According to the accepted success criteria, the tourism policy in Flanders is very successful. Even if we have not (yet) managed to reach out and provide all people living in poverty with the basic right to enjoy a holiday. However, we have been asking ourselves a few fundamental questions recently: how do we ensure there is a **healthy balance** between the interests of residents and visitors? How can we honour and maintain the **natural richness** and **historical authenticity** of our destinations? How can we read the signs of the times in order to ensure that our beloved Flanders remains a pleasant place to live, do business in, and visit? How can tourism ensure that our local communities in all of those wonderful places continue to thrive in such a way that genuine hospitality goes without saying?

It is precisely this love for our little place in the world that drives us, with great curiosity and an open mind, to set out with you on a quest to find the answers to all of these questions. Because yes, I must confess, the government doesn’t have all the answers.

That is why we focussed on listening. In a very broad listening exercise, we probed into the added value of travelling and holidays: what made such an impression during your holiday that you were, quite literally, transformed? What changed your view of something, altered your opinions, or your behaviour? For example, alongside measuring visitor numbers to Flanders Fields, what they did and how much they spent, we considered it worthwhile to find out what made such an impression that they genuinely felt a sense of added value.

This could be an encounter with a local resident, a service provider or organisation; an experience that made a lasting impression, whether as an individual or in a group at a specific place. In turn, this can add significance to the destination itself, and allow residents to see their environment in a new way, through the eyes of the visitor. And to (re)discover why they are so proud of the place they love, which they call home.

What would happen if we could strengthen this **positive power of tourism**? So that visitors would feel like a welcome part of the local community and go home feeling appreciated, with a desire to return? So that residents enjoy providing hospitality and become proud ambassadors of their community across the globe? From Adinkerke to Zoutleeuw, there are residents who share a common love and passion for the place where they live. Tapping into this positive energy will help ensure that travelling to Flanders in the future is also an enriching experience.

In ‘Tourism Transforms’, we set to work across the whole of Flanders with our partners. The (provisional) result of this exceptional and co-creative process is this magazine. We hope that you are inspired and that it can support you in your efforts with your ‘place keepers’. Whatever the case, it is an ongoing invitation to work together and to build on the **tourism policy of the future**.

Peter De Wilde
VISITFLANDERS

PS: Credit where credit is due: even though the current policy is a success, according to the success criteria that are presently applied, and acknowledging that we have still to determine how we will measure success in a ‘new model’, our minister is nevertheless giving us the freedom to explore new horizons. Many tourism professionals and passionate entrepreneurs have taken the time to accept our invitation to collectively ‘not know’ and then to start work on this basis. They are courageous choices, but they are the only right ones. We are genuinely thankful to all.



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TOURISM *transforms*

Travel to tomorrow Tourism can change the world for the better, according to Peter De Wilde. If we complete our story, and focus more on the context and social setting in which tourism takes place and look more closely at the interactions between travellers, place and inhabitants. The structures and processes that are needed to ensure those interactions generate net benefit for all parties have not yet been defined. And that is pretty exciting. Local governments, enterprises and residents hold the keys to harnessing the positive power of tourism in their places and then applying it so that the visitor has opportunities to be moved, enriched, enlivened and enchanted by the unique spirit of a place. It is with this hope that VISITFLANDERS started its journey to tomorrow. A voyage of discovery, chock full of stories and encounters. A journey that included numerous provocative and inspirational moments.

The first stage of Tourism Transforms began in April 2017 when members of the VISITFLANDERS team got together to discover the power of travelling. They told one another travel stories and discovered the transformational power of travelling in their personal lives.

The travelling community grows On 3 October 2017, around 130 professionals from the Flanders tourism sector listened to one another's travel stories. They told one another about travel moments that had impacted

upon their lives. Anna Pollock, founder of Conscious Travel, stimulated their creative thinking and introduced the concept of a 'flourishing' destination.

Asking questions along the way At the same time, Visit Flanders embarked on a mammoth listening exercise to better understand how travellers from home and abroad experienced travel personally.

Understanding what we experience Between January and June 2018, tourism professionals came together for five think-tanks. Stimulated by a variety of tourism experts, the participants examined the power of travelling and the flourishing destination. They reflected upon the leadership and actions that could help transform tourism in Flanders.

Daring to experiment After storytelling and reflection, there comes action. The 'Kreken' area started working on practical aspects and, in March 2018, held a workshop called 'Working on the future'.

Integrating travel experiences and coming home On 10 and 11 September 2018, VISITFLANDERS and its partners co-created a vision for tourism in our region. Their work was the stimulus for this magazine and provided input for it.

Start again Now the magazine has found you. We offer refreshing insights and inspiration. We invite you to travel with us to tomorrow.

FACTS & FIGURES

Tourism is growth and economy

In 2017, 1.3 billion international arrivals were counted worldwide. By 2030, the UNWTO forecasts that this volume will grow to 1.8 billion international arrivals. Add domestic tourism and daily excursions to that figure, and the overall total is far higher than that.

In Flanders, we had 7 million international arrivals in 2017. If we maintain just a modest annual growth of 2.4%, this number will increase to 10 million international arrivals by 2030. This excludes domestic tourists and daily excursions.

With everything that tourists buy and consume, their contribution to the Flemish economy equates to 2.5%. Visitors to Flanders travelling for leisure spend an average (per person, per night) of: 150 Euro in the art cities, 89 Euro in the Flemish regions and 67 Euro at the coast.

Tourism in Flanders provides over 250,000 jobs within the broad tourism sector! Residents also believe that tourism strengthens the local economy; 8 in 10 residents in the Flemish art cities (Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent, Leuven, Mechelen) agree with this statement.

Tourism adds more than just money to the equation

Over three-quarters of residents in the Flemish art cities believe that tourism in their city helps to maintain cultural identity and restore historical buildings. Half of them also say that there are more recreational opportunities for residents as a result of tourism.

Over 3 in 4 inhabitants in the Flemish art cities are proud residents thanks to tourism. And proud residents are more likely to support tourism.

Travelling leads to broadening a person's world-view, increasing self-confidence, better awareness of people and places and so on.

Sources:

- > UNWTO
- > General directorate of statistics and processing VISITFLANDERS
- > TSA - VISITFLANDERS
- > Research about the leisure travel market in Flanders - VISITFLANDERS, art cities, PTO's, Westtoer
- > Rsz-Rsvz
- > Listening exercise 'Power of Travelling' - VISITFLANDERS
- > Residents study - VISITFLANDERS and Flemish art cities
- > Art cities study 2017/2018 - VISITFLANDERS and Flemish art cities
- > phys.org

But sometimes it can be too much of a good thing

If residents in our art cities experience nuisance by tourism, it's primarily due to 'too many people or much crowding' and, as a result, 'dangerous traffic situations' in the city centre. There are few complaints about rubbish or noise. In the bigger cities there is an increased attention among residents for the quality of life due to the pressure of tourism.

Visitors who come to Flanders also have an opinion on the possible crowding that they encounter. 3 in 10 leisure, overnighting tourists in our art cities found certain spots too busy during their visit.

All in all, tourism created 8% of the global CO2-emissions in 2013.



1,800,000,000 worldwide international arrivals in 2030
10,000,000 international arrivals in Flanders in 2030



tourists contribute 2.5% of the Flemish economy



according to 8 in 10 residents, tourism strengthens the local economy



a recreational overnight visitor spends an average of 150 Euro per night in the art cities



tourism contributes towards maintaining cultural identity and restoring historical buildings, according to > 75% of residents



more than 250,000 jobs in the tourism sector in Flanders



3 in 10 tourists in the art cities think that certain locations are too busy



tourism is responsible for 8% of global CO2-emissions

EVERYONE WELCOME

Hold tight; international tourism is set to increase to around 1.8 billion international tourists by 2030. This is the result of the fact that growing numbers of people throughout the world will have the disposable income and time to travel. This growth will primarily originate from so-called emerging markets such as China and India.

Visitor flows are often unevenly distributed. Some destinations find it hard to appeal to visitors while others struggle with overtourism. How do we tackle these (future) challenges? Is this growth a threat to our destination or are there also opportunities? Some tourism experts (participants in the two-day writing workshop) shed some light on the issues. They all agree: by choosing the concept of a flourishing destination, making deliberate choices with respect to infrastructure, offering tourism that sits well with our unique sense of place (the DNA of a destination) and with targeted promotion, we can affect the type and number of visitors to our destination.

Mass tourism is a complex interaction of infrastructure, pricing and offering. Huge flows of tourists do not just appear overnight. Overtourism is often a consequence of the interaction between the local bodies that facilitate specific investments to attract more visitors or a private sector that depends on expanding volume in order to survive and thrive.

If the capacity of the infrastructure (cruise terminals, hotels, airports,...) exceeds the ability of the local destinations to cope, we are creating our own problems for the future. We must therefore enter into discussions with local bodies and infrastructure managers to avoid creating flows that are detrimental to residents, spoil our visitors' experience, and degrade the natural and cultural environment.

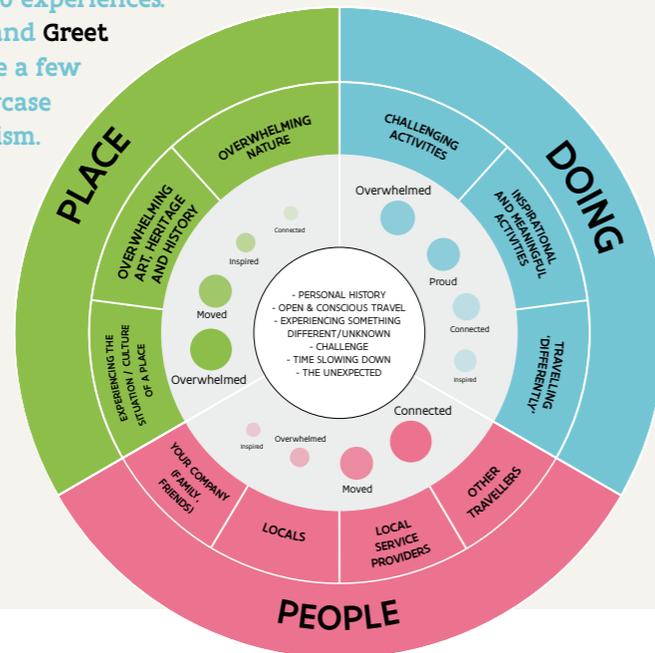
Uncovering the transformational power of Tourism

1,600 impactful travel experiences inspire the future of tourism

Travelling does something to us. Holidays, travelling, tourism... the mere thought stimulates the imagination. We long for these moments and often reminisce about them thereafter. Some experiences leave a greater impact in our lives than others. What or who plays a role herein? What makes some experiences stay with us forever?

In order to learn from real stories, 24 students and 20 staff members from VISITFLANDERS set out to listen to stories of over 1,600 experiences.

Here Vincent Nijs and Greet Vandenberg provide a few insights that showcase the power of tourism.



From the analysis of over 1600 experiences it is clear that 3 elements determine an impactful travel experience:

1. the experience of a **place**
2. encounters with **people**
3. **activities** or travel formulas that inspire, challenge or invite the traveller to experience 'something different' in terms of a place or its residents.

The intense experience of a place

The most important factor for a powerful travel experience is the **intense experience of a particular place**. This is clear for 50% of the travel stories. In the first instance, the culture (lifestyle and values) and the socio-political-economic situation (22%) is the most dominant factor. The experience of nature (18%) and art and heritage (11%) also creates a very lasting impression. Travellers are moved by the stunning beauty of the natural world, by the art created by people, and by the appeal of a lifestyle. Also the confrontation with poverty, war and terror, insecurity and environmental damage has a significant impact. The fact that it is **different/unknown** plays a central role in the intensity of the experience of the place. The stories teach us that 'being different' often lies in small things, that we regard as ordinary or commonplace, such as learning how to ride a bike, eating chips on the street, the multicultural street life... It helps us to value these small things, that we often overlook.

Warm encounters with people

Encounters with other people play a central role in 30% of the stories. Not the bombastic experiences make memorable moments, but a series of **brief, minor, welcoming moments and encounters** with other travellers.

These findings are just an introduction to the results of the large-scale listening exercise. Curious about the rest of the study and the stories? Read the full report on: www.traveltomorrow.be

residents, guides, taxi drivers or other people from the tourism service sector. Even if the contact is fairly brief, a strong connection may be created between the people concerned. Links that last long after the trip may be made. The surprise is the 'difference' of the people that are met, and also the hospitality and open-heartedness. A genuine welcome, commitment and a willingness to help that goes much further than expected. The attitude of the host makes a huge difference. People who know their place, who are proud of it and who welcome their guests can leave a lasting impression. This listening exercise shows that, within tourism, every encounter has the power to be a significant moment that is embedded in the memory of the traveller. Also the **close bonds formed with the travelling group** are central. Many of the stories are about breaking out from the routine and having the time and opportunity for long conversations, leading to people getting to see and experience one another in a different light. The travellers break through old roles and discover new sides to one another.

Challenge, inspiration, seeing things differently, slowing down, reflection

The activity or travel format is the determining factor in the impact of the travel experiences in one in five of the stories. This concerns activities that

challenge us to push physical or mental boundaries, or which inspire us and contribute towards personal growth or a better world. Travel arrangements that encourage us to slow down and relax, enable encounters with other people, immerse us in nature and culture and allow us to see things differently, whether it's a place or people; these go hand-in-hand with an impactful travel experience. It could be cycling and walking, long boat or train journeys, back-packing... Just having the time to focus on what people experience and reflect on it is of crucial importance.

The power of travel

An impactful experience goes hand-in-hand with strong emotions. People feel overwhelmed, connected, moved, inspired, proud... These emotions ensure that the experiences stay in our memories long after the trip. The impact is overwhelmingly positive (92%) and often very significant. Four in ten experiences still have a 'very high' or 'high' impact today. Almost four in ten have a 'reasonably high' impact. Travellers gain new insights, another world-view and greater self-awareness or confidence. They feel a strong connection with others. On this basis, they sometimes opt for different lifestyle choices and approach things differently. Travelling, therefore, has the power to bring about profound and positive change in both people and their environments.

REFLECTING

Take us with you to a moment that was important to you, during a trip. Tell us about a moment that you cherish. What happened? Who was with you? Where were you? What sounds, scents and colours were there? Was there beauty, art, nature? What did you feel? What do you feel now that you're talking about it? What impact does this experience still have on your life today?

Travel experiences: Finding meaning in Norwegian nature "At a stunning wild-camping location in Norway, I sat alone on the banks of a stream, day-dreaming. Suddenly I felt overwhelmed. I realised that I was in a place, with its rocks, water, moss and waterfall, which had been there for centuries, perhaps even millennia. I felt part of a larger entity, the cosmos. A beautiful, gratifying and fulfilling feeling. The experience enabled me to see, at a later stage, that it is possible to have a spiritual experience without belief and religion. It gives me strength even now in my work in a hospital, where I care for sick people."

Travel experiences: Cycling to new experiences "After a serious illness, I set myself the goal to cycle over a few days from our home in Limburg to the sea, in a group. The cycle trip was very challenging as the weather was awful. When we arrived in Cadzand after 3 days of pouring rain, I was overwhelmed by a sense of happiness that I had been physically able to complete the journey. Since then, we've been on lots of cycling holidays as a couple or with a group, to discover the world in a different way. The link between sport and discovering new places is a very enriching experience for me."

A heavy price for breakfast "We were with friends on a trip to Croatia. During breakfast in our apartment, we started talking about our grandparents. Everyone had a story to tell; a grandma with Alzheimer's, grandparents they'd never known, grandpa always causing arguments,... After wiping away a few tears, we all felt quite relieved. I think we had seen another side of one another. We had been friends for over 6 years but there were still things between us that we'd never talked about."



From change to transformation

The end of an era?

Worldwide, there is a great deal of movement within the travel and hospitality sector. The digital revolution, the sharing economy and the huge growth in the number of travellers has led to significant changes in the sector. "But the operating system is not keeping up", says British tourism expert Anna Pollock. Growth is accelerating at a huge pace but this is having a major impact on the earth and local communities. Anna champions another type of 'better' tourism. This concerns a flourishing visitors economy that doesn't cost the earth, in any sense.

The operating system for the tourism sector is rooted in the traditional, industrial model, according to Anna Pollock. Each trip consumes energy, water and raw materials for the transportation and accommodation of travellers; takes up space; generates waste and makes demands on the hospitality of local hosts. There also seems to be little evidence that the long-term consequences are being considered. Anna sees this as a characteristic of the post-war economic model. The industrial machine that emerged at that time focussed on efficiency, price-led competition and volume growth. We can see this in the tourism sector too, says Anna, who blames this for the lack of a long-term vision.

System errors and their consequences

Anna: "What we've actually done is copy a successful production and consumption model designed around the manufacturing things to another

domain. However, there is an important difference: in the domain of tourism, it's not about goods but intangible time and place-specific services. For a long time, this was fine but now we are beginning to identify problems. There are not only inherent weaknesses in the system itself, there is also the fact that the planet is beginning to fill up and that we have to compete with other sectors from the economy for the same raw materials. Aside from this, we have not been held accountable for the full cost of the travel process. And there are other factors too, such as climate change and the proliferation of automation technologies that are necessitating a re-think."

By deploying such a mass production and consumption model, with few barriers to entry and sale of a perishable experience that cannot be stockpiled, the returns for all of those involved tend to diminish over time, explains Anna Pollock. Dependence on volume growth is built into the system.

Anna: "For example: If my B&B room is not rented by five o'clock, I may be tempted to reduce the price. Another example: a new competitor is coming to your site. Your first response could be: lower prices. But, of course, that loss must be recuperated elsewhere. Wages may be reduced and, in turn, the employees' motivation and, ultimately, the service provided will diminish. In the end, the well-being of the guest, the employee and even the investor is adversely affected. This is a dynamic that we have ignored up to now."

"The problem is that we have convinced everyone that travelling is good, that it is a right and that it is always beneficial. Huge numbers of organisations now focus on developing and expanding tourism. The big issue we face collectively, is how do we create a better model that generates more net benefit for all concerned?"

From overtourism to flourishing local communities

The consequences of excessively rapid growth are now becoming clear.

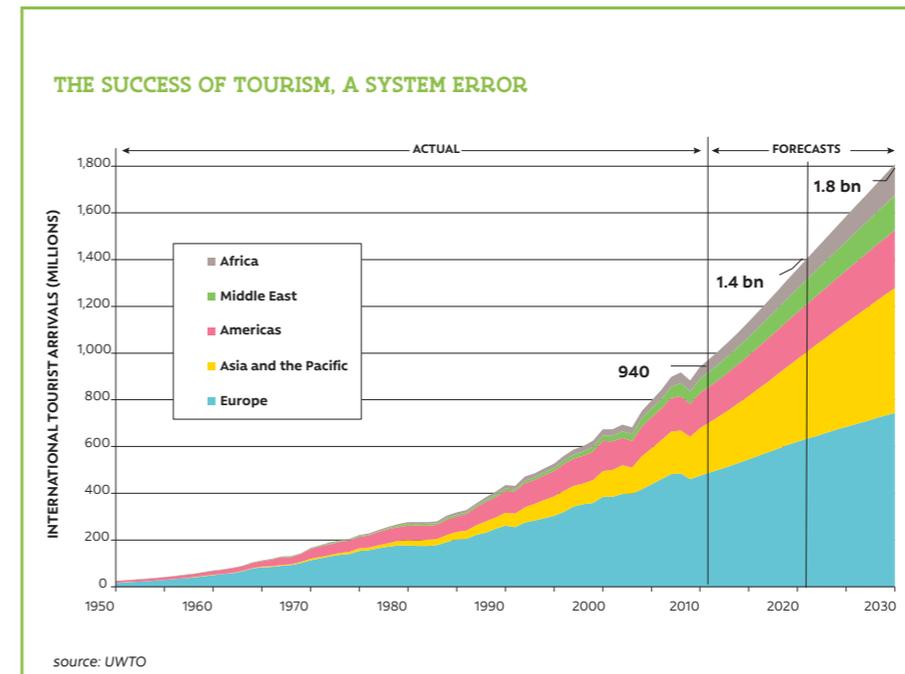
Anna: "Until recently, the growth of visitor numbers was a goal for every tourist destination. But, as we've seen in the past few years at various places, e.g. Amsterdam, Barcelona, Venice, Machu Pichu, to name just a few, success can lead to major problems and even destruction. If growth is the only objective, we are heading for disaster."

The British tourism expert doesn't claim to have the answers. She warns the sector not to choose quick-fixes for the current problems as these will not address the deeper-lying issues. Furthermore, the solution does not lie in slowing growth and making the travel industry 'greener' even though sustainable practices designed to reduce our footprint are still essential.

"We don't need change; we need a transformation. Just doing things differently is not enough. We need a shift in our values, our entire approach."

We don't need solutions that are thought up and imposed by experts (without partnership with local communities). We need bigger ambitions, according to Anna Pollock. The tourism sector needs to focus on helping a community survive, thrive and evolve.

Read the full article
by Anna Pollock at
www.traveltomorrow.be



REFLECTING

Tourism of the future is not separated from life, according to Anna Pollock. It will flourish if the destination itself flourishes. Have you had an experience during which you realised that tourism has a darker side too? That tourism could damage something valuable? Tell us more: where were you, what did you see, what concerns did you experience? What did this concern make you want to do? If change is insufficient, and transformation is imperative, what can we do, in your opinion?



WHAT IF ... we would no longer fly under 750 km?

Are you a vegetarian who doesn't eat meat due to environmental/climate issues? A return trip from Brussels to New York is as damaging as eating one thousand Big Macs. Have you had a water-saving shower-head for two years? One return flight to London, and the CO2 you've saved has been emitted again. Or have you installed environmentally-friendly LED bulbs in your home? The CO2 benefits that you realise in 5.5 years are all cancelled out by one return trip to Barcelona. That's what Jelmer Mommers from De Correspondent argues [1].

He offers a few figures that demonstrate the uncomfortable truth that flying is a disaster for the planet. "It always strikes me how people start shifting in their seat when this subject comes up. Isn't it normal that I'd like to show my children some of the world? Isn't it normal that I'd like to take a well-earned break in the sun? If you look at the impact of air-travel on the climate however, that's just not normal. We are collectively sticking our heads in the sand, when it comes to its impact. So shouldn't

we fly at all (anymore)? That's not the point I'm trying to make. My point is that we must use our common sense. By, for example, choosing not to fly under 750 kilometres. By making smart investments for the future (i.e. no new airports for short flights but investments in train and bus connections). Saving flights for longer holidays (which means not jumping in a plane several times a year for city breaks). This is the kind of challenges our society is facing today. However, a ground-breaking, high-impact shift is absolutely possible if enough people take the plunge. We have created the systems in which we live ourselves and we also have the power to change them. From consumer to policy maker. From tour operator to airline company."

Eva De Groote,
author of 'Na de regen'
(After the rain)

[1] Read the full article
by Jelmer Mommers at
www.traveltotomorrow.be



THE FUTURE OF TOURISM IS LESS BUT BETTER

Leo Van Broeck, Flemish Bouwmeester (architect) since 2016, has gotten under the skin of many people with his ambitious plans for the creation of more nature and his drive towards living smaller and closer. "Every local decision must be seen in a perspective of responsible handling of the planet. You can't act locally without thinking globally", he says.

When this principle is applied to tourism, he comes up with a few interesting insights. He sees synergies with respect to infrastructure. "Why not open a hotel swimming pool for the locals? Or turn the restaurant in an old people's home into a tourist restaurant?"

Leo Van Broeck champions a genuine 'sharing economy' that creates greater equality and facilitates the redistribution of capital. The profits from Airbnb, for example, would be injected back into the local economy. "If profits are drained back to a few rich people on the other side of the ocean, the local economy will end up just processing the waste and fine particles." Overall transport needs should be reduced, in his opinion. "Can you try to limit the number of trips you make?" Short flights, under 1,000 km must be eliminated. "We shouldn't wait for Elon Musk's hyperloop; the high-speed train is good enough." When he looks towards the future, both in terms of urban development and tourism, the Flemish Bouwmeester concludes: "We must decrease on every front."



WHAT IF... the summer holiday lasted 7 weeks instead of 9?

11% more bookings for Belgian tour operators. Fewer car accidents. Less stress and burn-outs for teachers. Pupils who perform better. According to a study by the Vlerick Management School [*] these are a few of the benefits of spreading the holidays in Belgium more effectively. Their study examined the advantages and disadvantages of an alternative holiday calendar.

Their proposal? Shorten the summer holiday from 9 to 7 weeks, make the autumn holiday 1 week longer, create 1 week extra holiday in May and ensure that the holidays in Flanders and Wallonia only partially overlap.

In the summer holiday, there would be a 3-week overlap; in the autumn holiday, a 1-week overlap. All possible stakeholders were consulted during the study: mobility, education, environment, tourism, healthcare, ... Although a few disadvantages were identified, the overall conclusion was that the idea would have primarily positive economic and social effects. Food for thought then?

Louise Derre,
VISITFLANDERS

[*] On behalf of
Thomas Cook Belgium

THE FUTURE OF TOURISM IS CUSTOMISATION

Dutch professor Jan Rotmans is an expert on the subject of transition management and sustainability who is much sought-after, both at home and abroad. As a 'progressor', he also endeavours to translate theoretical transitional science into concrete actions and advice for entrepreneurs, governments and organisations. The most frequently quoted phrase from Rotmans is: "We are not living in an era of change but in a change of era."

Jan Rotmans has identified specific challenges for tourism. "It is one of the most rapidly growing sectors world-wide, but we are gradually realising that it is one of the most damaging sectors when it comes to ecology and the environment." However, neither the travel sector nor the consumers are questioning the model.

"The idea that they should go on holiday less or differently is a bitter pill to swallow", he observes. In his opinion, there is a distinct lack of pioneers, or heroes, in the tourism sector, whose behaviour can be emulated.

Jan Rotmans believes that the major transition will occur in tourism within five years from now. In other sectors, such as energy and care, these transitions are already under way. As a result, a third to half of the companies fail. He warns that the majority of

operators and tourism organisations may not survive.

"They are too cumbersome, too bureaucratic, have excessive overheads and are insensitive to signals from outside. This likely means the end of the huge tour operators and travel agencies that we have today." Organisations that will survive the transition are the ones that are highly versatile and can provide customisation. According to Jan Rotmans, that is the tourism of the future: "Much more diverse than now. With infinitely more opportunities, both close to home and further afield. Much of which will be personalised, or customised. It will also be largely sustainable and circular. Quality will become increasingly important; people will pay for it and will demand quality in return."



Towards a flourishing destination

Four challengers have their say

The tourism of tomorrow will be different, whether we like it or not.

What tourism can we create that matches the challenges of the future and establishes a positive balance for the traveller, host and place?

And just as important: how do we shift in that direction, what do we need to see and do differently? Various voices were heard during think-tanks.

The Canadian organisation expert **Gervase Bushe** delved deeper into how transformation works and proposed a new leadership vision in this context.

Stefaan Vandist suggested designing tourism concepts on the basis of new balances. **Jan van der Borg** emphasizes attention to local carrying capacity.

And **Anna Pollock** is launching the concept of flourishing destinations.



Gervase Bushe
Leadership in transformational times

Gervase Bushe, Canadian expert in leadership and organisational development, takes an in-depth look at how transformation works and the role that leaders take in this context. Bushe suggests that it is important to start by clarifying why transformation is required. "Stop focussing on growth and redefine the success of tourism", says Gervase. "Design an appealing, generative image for the future and start with many, small experiments that fit into the generative image. And, just as important, welcome people and organisations that wish to take part in the transformation."

What type of leadership is required in order to take us into the future with confidence?

- > Recognise that change and innovation comes from below
- > Understand that partnerships flourish on the basis of equality
- > Ask questions (instead of giving answers)
- > Welcome experiments as a learning opportunity (and not as a threat)
- > Realise that people are encouraged by the question; "How can what I do be a solution for what you encounter?"
- > Recognise and nurture people's potential, qualities and talents
- > Be aware that nobody is responsible for someone else's interpretation
- > Understand that change and innovation occur when people share a goal and an identity
- > Know that context is everything and every situation requires a different approach (copying a model or approach doesn't work)

Jan van der Borg
Local carrying capacity as an anchor-point

Carrying capacity is the most important anchor point for the policy of every tourism destination, says Jan van der Borg, professor in geography and tourism at the KU Leuven. A destination can only develop sustainably if the overall, collective benefits from tourism are greater than the costs. If the costs outweigh the benefits, the destination will reach a turning point. Then further development will significantly damage the destination. This collective tipping point defines the carrying capacity of the destination. For example, tourism can help to ensure that valuable heritage is retained, thanks to income from visitors. If the same location sees too many visitors, however, the heritage will suffer. Or, visitors can create a cosy atmosphere but if there are too many of them, this same crowds can lead to irritation. Professor van der Borg suggests that the big challenge for tourist destinations is understanding where you are in relation to that collective tipping point. It is up to local governments to find out when the balance at a location is under threat, what added value and negative effects tourism brings, and what external influences affect this.

REFLECTING

Tourism of the future is for everybody. For travellers, residents, entrepreneurs and policy. Innovation, beauty, connections and hospitality can be created anywhere in society. Look around you. Listen to the place where you live or work. What do you love about it? What is the place asking you? What is your dream? What surprise would you like to pull off? With whom? Leadership is not about being the boss. Leadership means believing in something, daring to stand up for something. Which initiative needs your leadership? What quality can you use to help build a flourishing community and destination?

Stefaan Vandist
Designing on the basis of new balances

We asked trend-watcher and innovation expert Stefaan Vandist how we can create (tourism) experiences that lead to added value for residents, visitors, other stakeholders and the place itself? Stefaan introduced the concept of a compass. This provides direction for designing innovative tourism experiences. The central point of the designs is a quest for new balance. Then, the question becomes: what happens with the balance between technology and tradition? Between profit and significance? Between competition and collaboration? The idea of Jo&Joe hotels, for example, was developed in this way. A hotel created by millennials, for millennials. The concept is based on stimulating encounters between residents and visitors and among visitors themselves.

Anna Pollock
The flourishing community is the basis

The tourism of the future emerges out of flourishing local communities, according to Anna Pollock, from the UK. She defines tourism destinations as places where travellers are welcome and the encounter between guests and hosts have a positive impact on the whole system. We must focus on the host, suggests Anna. We can encourage local hosts to build a relationship with the place where they live and work. Generate a love of the place and help them become aware of the unique qualities it has. "This will infect the visitor with amazement and consideration, which then goes home with them." The potential transformational power lies in the encounter between guest and host. And that cannot be organised in a standardised manner. Anna: "If you can engage the host's talent for welcoming people, it will really enrich tourism. What you then create is not something that has to grow bigger but something that must thrive and evolve." Anna is inviting the sector to take a broad view of reality. Just like every living system in nature, we must see the system in its context, and on this basis, take up a valuable position in the world and undertake responsible actions. Not only to do well as a company or sector. But to do well so that the whole world, communities and people can flourish.

More media about our four challengers at www.traveltotomorrow.be



The Lime, heart of a flourishing place

Symbol of travel to tomorrow

The tourism of tomorrow will be rooted in local communities. In neighbourhoods, villages and cities that thrive and, as a result, enjoy welcoming enthusiastic visitors.

A flourishing community is very much connected to its specific place; where people work together, where visitors can feel at home and residents can nurture and share their love for the place.

Lime tree

In the heart of almost every village in Flanders, there is a Lime tree. Laws were applied under its leafy canopy by our forefathers. According to tradition, the Virgin Mary had a spot by the trunk and the village events were celebrated in its shadow. It is a place where people come together to create memories.

A tree is firmly rooted in its spot. It is connected to other living organisms and forms part of a greater entity. The tree blooms if all of the elements, e.g. sun, oxygen and water, are provided.

The Lime as a symbol of flourishing destinations signifies the connections of people with the place and between residents, entrepreneurs and visitors. The local community, in turn, is part of and also inherently connected to the bigger world.

Place keepers under the Lime tree

A flourishing community is created where people and organisations feel connected to their place and one another. They work on behalf of their place and the community. Their actions form the roots of the Lime tree.

It's about an awareness of this commitment, assuming responsibility, collaborating, creating connections between people and a place and doing business on the basis of passion and creativity.

We call them 'place keepers', the people who work with the place and one another on the basis of their commitment and take the initiative on behalf of their flourishing community. They are the backbone of a flourishing community, the trunk for our tree. They need encouragement, support and space for experimenting.

We'll tell you more on the following pages. You will discover experiments, steps and practices that may help you to say yes. Yes to travel to tomorrow. Yes to stepping up and becoming a place keeper.

THE PLACE

VISITOR

FLOURISHING COMMUNITY

RESIDENT

ENTREPRENEURS

PLACE KEEPERS





In a flourishing community, all of the participants experience the added value of tourism. But what does this added value involve? Balance is a collective endeavour. What does flourishing mean for the place, its residents, entrepreneurs and visitors? The think-tanks provided inspiration but you must make your own interpretation of what this could mean for you, your community and your place!

A community thrives when the visitor

- > feels genuinely welcome
- > can experience the essence of a place
- > feels a positive impact of his stay; new energy and inspiration, personal development, commitment to the place and the people that he/she meets
- > respects nature, culture and the characteristics of the place
- > takes the people and place to his heart, feels involved and wants to return or recommend the place to others
- > ...

A community thrives when the entrepreneur / service provider

- > is vital and profitable and can adapt effectively to change
- > has good working conditions and appreciation
- > is passionate and innovative/creative in terms of his product or service and monitors its uniqueness
- > is an ambassador for the place where he/she works
- > strives for high levels of satisfaction by means of genuine hospitality and professionalism
- > takes account of the impact of his activities on the other place keepers and the place itself
- > makes a positive contribution to the health of the society/ community/place in which the business is situated
- > ...

A community thrives when the place

- > is appealing, pleasant and safe
- > encourages encounters between residents, entrepreneurs and visitors and does not exclude anyone
- > showcases its unique character, and retains its identity, nature and culture
- > offers space for creativity and experimenting
- > draws upon the intellect of the local community
- > connects to the rest of the world and makes a positive contribution to a flourishing planet
- > ...

A community thrives when a resident

- > loves living in the place, knows the place well and is proud of it
- > is involved in the (tourism) policy of the place so that he/she supports the desired development of their place
- > enjoys the positive impact of tourism: retention and strengthening of facilities, heritage, culture, income, jobs, intercultural encounters, ...
- > is not inconvenienced by tourism
- > ...



INNOVATORS ARE DESIGNING THE FUTURE

Four transformational steps & a bundle of inspirational practices

Our voyage of discovery in a world full of change is a quest to find the ingredients for a flourishing destination. Fifty people gathered for a two-day writing adventure. They reflected on the discoveries from studies, workshops, conversations and think-tanks. They identified four key elements for transformational tourism. Not as linear, consecutive steps but interwoven with one another. Transformation is not a linear process, as we learnt from the transition experts. The skill is to see what is shifting and support the things that are flourishing. We share our discoveries and reflections here. With all their imperfections and incompleteness.

The four key elements focus on **raising awareness** of the need to change, knowing that things can be different, that everything is connected and that everyone can have an impact. On this basis, you can **take responsibility** for ensuring the desired elements flourish and making a start wherever you can. We can only do this together. We have to **collaborate**. Because the best way to predict the future is to create it together. We find that **connecting** adds something special to an impactful tourist experience: people connect with people and people connect with the place.



becoming aware



taking responsibility



collaborating



connecting



BECOMING AWARE

© Jan D'Hondt

Becoming aware that things can be different and the willingness to change are key to the change process. How do we find confidence in the uncertain steps that we will take? What do we want to keep unchanged; what can change completely? What is going well already and what shall we retain for the future?

More aware travellers and tourism businesses

(Tourism) businesses are increasingly encountering consumers who are aware. More people are seeking a life that is meaningful for them and that also

sustains a flourishing biosphere. The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) speaks of a growing group of cultural 'creatives' who have made a significant shift over the past few years in terms of world-view, values and culture. They attach greater value to the environment, human relationships, collaboration, peace, social justice, spirituality, personal growth and authenticity. These travellers demand more sustainable and ethical offers, making responsible choices whereby diversifying the supply. On the other hand, we also see socially and environmentally aware hosts.

Koen van den Bosch from the Association of Flemish Travel Agencies (VVR) admits that tour operators are becoming more aware of the need for sustainable holidays and that

the offers are evolving. "Here, it is important to develop an affordable, sustainable offer. Research shows that the customer wants to travel more sustainably but on the condition that it doesn't cost more."

The fact that the tourist is seeking holidays that are more meaningful for him and the world, is crystal clear from trend reports too. Travelling is increasingly regarded as a method for personal growth and self-realisation. In one study, conducted by SKIFT among 1,350 travellers, 54% gave a value of 7 to 10 in relation to the importance of transformational travelling, while 52% indicated that this was becoming increasingly important to them. Transformation, expanding their world-view and learning are the top 3 motivations for the adventurous

traveller, according to research from 2017.

What if we could use that power to change, that transformational power of travel, to make the world a better place and to create more sustainable tourism?

The 1,600 travel stories from our listening exercise made it clear that travelling can have a very positive impact on travellers and their environment. Yvette Reisinger from Temple University Philadelphia sees many opportunities. Travelling is a perfect activity for challenging us. Events, experiences and encounters on holiday require the traveller to take a different approach, think in a different way. Traveller and host/place have an impact on one another. The

traveller takes his experiences home as memories. The host sees through the eyes of the guests and sees his destination from another perspective. They infect one another with new ideas.

"There is no greater force for change than a community that has discovered what it wants to care for"

— Margaret Wheatley,
author of 'Walk out Walk on'

Travel encompasses promising potential for bringing about positive change, according to tourism experts. More people are aware that change is required. The tourist's travel motivation is shifting towards greater depth and significance. The world is ready for this change.

Everything is connected to everything

"If you ask me about the opportunities with regard to the tourism of the future, I think that tourism is part of a larger transformation across the world. It is coming back to the connections with one another, coming back to the connection with the earth. Then tourism will become participative citizenship."
Chené Swart,
author of 'Re-authoring the world'





TAKING RESPONSIBILITY



Tourism contributes towards a flourishing community when the balance between the added value and detrimental impact of tourism on the place, residents, entrepreneurs and visitors is monitored. In this context, Professor van den Borg talks about the carrying capacity of the community and the place.

Taking care of what's around you

Connected with other parties and aware of the impact on the environment, everyone is positively committed to the community and takes responsibility for their (physical) place.

But does everything need to change at once? 'Il faut cultiver son jardin' wrote Voltaire. Let's do what we can do to bring about change and improvements in the world and start close to home; let's start with our own gardens. What can we do ourselves? Where is it happening already?

Taking responsibility is: engagement in both word and deed ...

"When Koen De Weerd, director of holiday company Vayamundo, talks about his passion, we feel a huge sense of respect for him. Equality and diversity are not just hollow concepts; they are the day-to-day terms that refer to realising the right to a holiday. As a result of the well thought through design, their building is quite literally open to all, even if you have a disability. And, once inside, everyone is warmly welcomed, without distinction. A limited budget? With an all-in pricing format, you'll never have any unpleasant surprises. And it's not just tourists who are welcome. Local associations can use it for meetings and local traders can sell their products. In short, Vayamundo knows how to apply a contemporary vision of social tourism, with huge appreciation for the historical roots, at the same time."

Eva Vynckier, Network Everyone Deserves a Holiday

... and ambitious work on what is future-focussed and sustainable

"Against all expectations, I was surprised by the 'Village Nature' concept presented by Euro Disney and Pierre&Vacances-Center Parcs. Not far from Paris they and their partners have built and are running an eco-resort where environmental-friendliness is the priority. It is really interesting how mass tourism can be organised in a sustainable manner and how they have tried to keep the ecological footprint of the holiday park to an absolute minimum."

Mia Lammens, VISITFLANDERS

"Center Parcs and Sunparks Belgium are also taking their responsibilities and signing up to corporate social responsibility. They have a range for people with low income, also value sustainable forestry, welfare on the work floor and giving opportunities to youngsters from vulnerable families so that they can move on to the regular labour market."

Carine Geboers, Network Everyone Deserves a Holiday

"The above example makes me think of my visit to Thon Hotel EU in Brussels. That hotel surprised me too, with activities relating to corporate social responsibility. This hotel has chosen to reduce its ecological footprint and work on sustainable food, with its use of local and fairtrade products. It is also an inclusive workplace."

Kristof Lataire, Kapittel

"In Palau, a small island group in Oceania, you may only visit once you have signed a contract to say that you won't create any waste and that you are committed to not polluting the island. This is a powerful statement. Tourists are thus committed to take care for the place they are visiting. Simultaneously, a link is made between the visitors and the host. It is terrible that Palau was recently hit by a tsunami. Hopefully, the residents will find the resilience they need and also be offered the required help."

Elke Dens, VISITFLANDERS



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COLLABORATION

The building blocks for a high-impact tourism experience and a flourishing destination do not all lie within one, delineated sector. Culture, heritage, nature, residents, entrepreneurs; everything is connected. People, organisations, events and places have an impact.

Guest happiness

"They are special words. They say something about the happiness of people who feel appreciated and welcome. And something about the joy that hospitality offers to the host. That illustrates the essence of how rewarding it is to work in the tourism sector. What could be better than that?"
Hilde De Laet, Hidrodoe

Tourism centres on hospitality and that is something between people. Whether a visitor feels welcome does not depend on just the entrepreneurs or policy makers. It lies in the hands of everyone who encounters a tourist, from the quality of the meeting itself to the power of the place.

"It all starts with asking the right

questions", says Jan Rotmans. "And it's really useful to have free-thinkers and fresh-eyes on board too. Of course you have to work with the people in the tourism business in order to come up with future visions, but that's not enough. You must also invite people from outside, people who operate in different fields and sectors. These fresh-eyes and free-thinkers will open a whole range of topics up for discussions. Anything that seems obvious must be discussed. You must look in from outside rather than the other way around. You must see what's going on in the world. Otherwise, you'll just come up with standard questions and ordinary solutions and won't get anywhere."

Where is it happening already?

Collaborating to safeguard nature ...

"The Hoge Kempen National Park is a unique nature reserve covering over 5,700 hectares of heath land and forests in the Regional Landscape of Kempen and Maasland, where many partners, each in their own workspace, would like to achieve the very best results. As a result of collaboration and co-ownership, the National Park has become a success for nature, tourism, heritage, spatial development and science. In order to realise this, there is collaboration with a range of partners, including nine local councils, the provincial board, agencies and services provided by the Flemish government (infrastructure works for creation of wildlife corridors and the management of forestry and heath land, tourism,...), tourism services, nature and environmental associations, hospitality businesses and residents (including voluntary site management and rangers). The area has thus expanded to become a flourishing place that is much more than the sum of its parts. Tourism is the result of investments in the quality of an area."

Johan Van Den Bosch, Regional Landscape of Kempen and Maasland

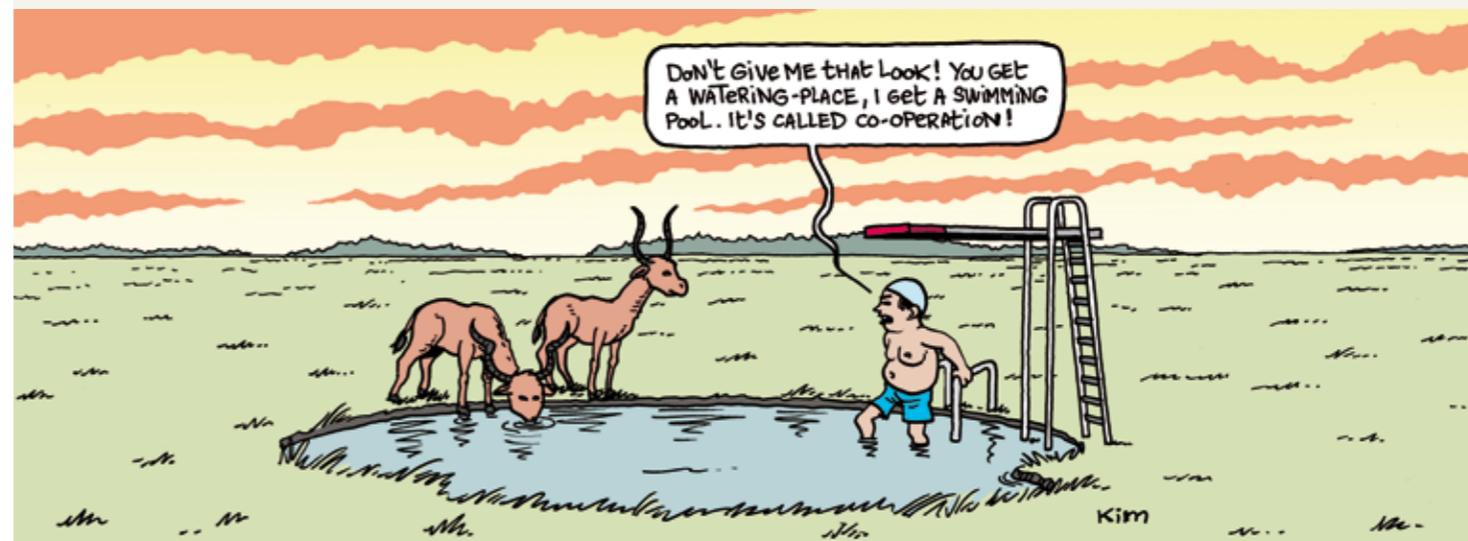
If we see the destination from a broader perspective, rather than just in terms of the actors that earn money from it, we will gain additional benefits. This approach encompasses the community which facilitates the activities that take place.

— Marianne Schapmans, Network Everyone Deserves a Holiday

...and open up unique sites for the neighbourhood

"The Abbey Neighbours is a great example of citizen participation. In 2007, some of the neighbours in the Machariuswijk in Ghent put their heads together to talk about the St Bavo's Abbey. It is an intriguing site with a stunning garden in the centre of the city that, at that moment, had been closed to the public for five years. The neighbours succeeded in reopening the site to the public. Sometime later, TRACK took place in the area (art event of SMAK in 2012, at various locations around the city). The gatehouse from the old abattoir next to the Abbey site was repurposed as a temporary meeting place under

the name Herberg Macharius. The Abbey Neighbours seized upon the opportunity and, once TRACK had finished, created a permanent activity centre at the location, for and by the locals. It is inspiring to see how collaboration around a place can lead to further initiatives. A few of the Abbey Neighbours became involved in the challenge of renewable energy. They wondered if they could realise this via the strong neighbourhood alliance. A cooperative has now been created to accelerate the transition to renewable energy. The EnerGent energy cooperative was formed four years ago and became a city collaboration that has now realised a whole range of objectives. It's amazing, what a few astute neighbours can realise together."
Eva De Groote, author





Connecting people

Impactful travel experiences go hand in hand with encounters between people; small, treasured moments with other travellers and residents, encounters with guides, taxi drivers and other people from the tourism services industry. Geniality, a warm welcome, involvement and a willingness to help all contribute towards a high-impact travel experience. The appeal of a place, therefore, is largely based on the hosts (residents and service providers) and the encounters between visitors and residents. It is therefore all about the experience of the person-to-person relationship. Proud hosts are delighted to share their place with visitors. Pride in your 'place' is an important ingredient in a flourishing community.

Connecting with the power of the place

The large-scale listening exercise (p. 8) showed that a powerful travel experience often corresponds with an intense experience of the place itself. It's all about experiencing the specific identity of an area; the lifestyle and values, the socio-political situation, the natural world, art and heritage. Each place showcases its own unique character, has its own DNA and preserves its natural and cultural heritage. Consequently, the place is distinct from others and thus becomes more appealing. Residents are proud of their place and visitors are surprised. They are inspired and challenged, and feel committed and connected. They remember the place. Places have a soul, they are home to people. The strands of a place's DNA encompass the stories, history, important moments, functions, heritage value, traditions, culture,

the community life. The DNA is what makes a place so unique. The identity of people, communities and organisations determines how the DNA of the place is approached, experienced, and how it is handled. It is important to identify the location's DNA and to communicate about it honestly. That's what 'expectation management' is all about. However, that's not to say that you should adapt the place to expectations, wishes or the sensitivities of the audience. But it does mean that a place may evolve or even mutate. A place is a dynamic entity that is constantly developing.

Place keeper(s)

Aside from a legal owner, most places also have many other 'owners'. They feel connected to the place, live within it, manage and cherish it. These 'place keepers' could be residents, entrepreneurs, associations, organisations and governments. They experience the place's unique spirit and soul and make sure it continues. A place keeper can fulfil various roles. He can strengthen, monitor or support the location by talking about it. A place keeper can give a place a voice and strengthen its future opportunities so that people have a more impactful experience and learn more about it, and the community gains more benefits. A place keeper can set and monitor the boundaries of a location so that the DNA is retained and the location is respected. Examples of place keepers: Rangers for the Hoge Kempen National Park, the residents of Venice, a city council that imposes a maximum number of visitors per guide,...

Connecting people with places and with one another via art, for example ...

"A beautiful example of a cultural project whereby tourists are connected to residents is the Triennial in Bruges." All over the city, you can find modern artworks that can 'touch' you and encourage discussion. "During the Triennial, you see a blend of visitors and residents around the city. The place in the Reien where you can swim, for example, attracts the local youth but also the tourists who come to see the art." The artists were invited to collaborate with residents on their project. "This project also helps to illustrate a different, contemporary Bruges. It connects the old Bruges with contemporary art. It fits into the city's DNA and showcases the fact that the city is not just an open-air museum but also a living place."

Vincent Nijs, VISITFLANDERS

Or these beer makers...

"I'd love to tell you about Jazz Bilzen Beer. In 2017, a group of friends took the initiative to create a new beer, to honour the Jazz Bilzen festival and cherish the corresponding memories. Jazz Bilzen, the legend, was launched in April 2018. A community has grown around the beer, involving people who love the beer itself, and the memories of the festival, explain its significance to visitors, and toast the stories from the past. Every year, for seventeen years, a special beer will be brewed. That beer will always hark back to one of the festivals. This can then link into some sort of tourist event. The development of a Jazz Bilzen experience, i.e. stories, music, the place, exhibitions, brewing beer and tasting. And what's even more amazing: there is no clear plan and no leader. There have been no subsidies or enormous investments. Jazz Bilzen Beer is the result of a desire, connection and voluntary efforts, along with the goodwill of a few entrepreneurs who have offered investment and support."

Griet Bouwen, Nieuwmakers



How can you strengthen the place? Where is it happening already?

- > **Experiment with other forms of travel** and new opportunities for (tourist) experiences and involve the location's DNA. Visitors will learn about the place in a different way as a result. Examples: bare footpaths, wild camping, canoeing in the city...
- > **Support people who keep traditions alive**, who bring the DNA to life. Examples: The Last Post at the Menin Gate, prawn fishermen in Koksijde, ...
- > **Involve new people, add new elements, and broaden existing elements** to make the place more dynamic or to redesign it. Examples: Bulskampveld, t'ij in Kruikebeke-Bazel, The taste of Jazz Bilzen Beer ...
- > **Make financial investments** in the place. Examples: Flanders Meeting & Convention Center Antwerp, The English Convent, cultural Hostel Bed Muzet...
- > **Create new forms of investment:** public/private whereby the public element also includes various organisations or citizens, such as cooperatives and crowd-funding in the local community. Examples: the picnic months at farms (Westtoer), cinema Roma...
- > **Make places virtually accessible.** Examples: the heritage app Faro, Historium...
- > **Develop experiences in a multi-sectoral and sensory manner.** Examples: art project Palingbeek, Art in the Landscape, Triennial Bruges...
- > **Use the available expertise to strengthen the DNA.** Examples: mills and bakery in Bokrijk where traditional craftsmanship lives on in a contemporary economy...



Flourishing places are created together



Entrepreneurs & government together to the future

© Christophe Vander Eecken



Tourism is more than just the economy. As a visitor, you will bristle with creativity in some places and find profound inspiration in others. The passion that residents show, ensure that some places are full of inspiration and therefore remain with you. Entrepreneurs do not exist separate from the community but are part of it. They can function as the driving force behind sustainable change. Tourism-related businesses found one another during the process Tourism Transforms. They connected with each other and entered into dialogue with the government. These conversations created insights that could provide a future guide for both the entrepreneurs and the government.

"Believing in the power of a place is retaining the place's DNA, and I want to work with partners on this basis. However, I look around and see what others are doing too. In the TV programme 'Columbus', Wim Lybaert sets out each week to find the good life, with a celebrity guest. Wouldn't it be great, I thought, to have a hotel on wheels? Where you don't stay in one place but your guests can choose which destination you go to visit. Ideas are all around us. Then I came across the story of Tim and Valerie from Antwerp. They bought a 12-metre long, yellow American school bus and converted it into a hostel with all the required facilities! Roof terrace, fitted kitchen and leisure equipment such as fishing gear, sports kit and guitar. Today, they travel with their daughter, dog and their visitors from one place to another. How amazing is that."
Kristof Lataire, Kapittel

Nathalie Boyden, owner of Park Costa, a camp site in Bredene, is happy to work towards a warm future. The drive for her is social responsibility. Marcel Buelens, regional airport Ostend- Bruges & Antwerp: "If we don't do it, someone else will. We have to take up the reins ourselves." Veerle De Boeck, Federation of Belgian Bus and Coach businesses, is even clearer: "As entrepreneur, you have to work on the future. We must rediscover ourselves in order to guarantee our place in the future. If you just do what you've always done, you will disappear." Katelijne Haelters, Hotel The Pand in Bruges, explains it as a choice between resistance or resilience. Resistance is the first response. "But, as far as I'm concerned, that's out of date. Also, it's not just the government who should outline the future. Entrepreneurs are usually ahead of the game and therefore influence how things evolve."

How do we end up with a flourishing place?

According to Katelijne Haelters, everything starts with participation and input. There are very specific challenges for every city or destination. If every community was allowed to determine the top 3 challenges, then entrepreneurs, residents and the government could work on the challenges that get the most support. Nathalie Boyden sees an important role for the government. They must ensure that the passion for entrepreneurship remains. At the moment, entrepreneurs and their initiatives often find themselves lost in ambiguities or slow/ contradictory procedures. Transparency is key for Marcel Buelens: "Within which bounds should I work and go for it? And it must all be fair; the same rules apply to everyone."

Government and entrepreneurs in the same boat

The entrepreneurs all agree on this; the first step is conversation. This means listening to one another, determining together what is important, and sustaining the balance between the various interests. Katelijne: "We could do an exercise with all the partners; what are the challenges and problems a specific place is facing? Can we sit around the table with the various parties to see which choices can be made?" Marcel adds: "With a focus on transparent regulations and a level playing field."

The government must create a framework, based on these conversations with residents and entrepreneurs. In this regard, there are already some excellent examples of well-functioning advisory boards separate from politics. Nadine De Weirdt, 'Flanders Innovation and Entrepreneurship', emphasizes the importance of information. Well informed partners can make good decisions. Participation without information and insight doesn't work. The government can play an important role in this. They can inspire and support the tourism sector, among other things by encouraging and creating networks and knowledge-sharing. The government can be a major player in terms of providing advice and financial support for experimenting.



FIVE TRANSFORMATIONS FOR ENTREPRENEURS



1. THE EXPERIENCE IS THE ESSENCE

We must start thinking differently and involve the visitor, according to entrepreneurs. The visitor's experience is key. The large, disruptive players within the tourist landscape have understood this. Their offer centres around the client. Airbnb facilitates

"I am a huge fan of the atmosphere in Hotel Bitter&Zoet! And the way in which they integrate the history of a place into their company. The hotel encompasses stunning, historical buildings called 'Toewijding' (Dedication), 'Bitter en Zoet' (Sweet and Sour), 'Plichtgevoel' (Sense of Duty) and 'Vertrouw op God' (Faith in God). The premises are connected with one another by a modern construction. Hotel Bitter&Zoet is a care-hotel without the hospital vibe that is often associated with that type of setting. The managers are genuine champions of hospitality: welcoming, friendly, caring, genuine and transparent for each guest. They are also committed business people who are devoted to their company and who are

a local experience for the tourist. i.e. staying at home with the residents and/or residents who provide their visitors with a tour around their place. Uber facilitates transparent and efficient passenger transport. What else can we learn from these new players? The new earning models focus on a personalised approach; a customised offer with room for flexibility. These things are popping up in the tourism landscape and their importance is increasing.

very conscious of environmental issues. They apply themselves to sustainability and the 'short chain' in a very no-nonsense manner. They work together with many small entrepreneurs in the vicinity. They also take up an active role in Veenhuizen, a rather isolated village community. The hotel, for example, bakes bread for its own guests, but residents can also buy bread and cakes in the hotel. And they take initiative! This summer, for example, they held a series of heritage dinners to celebrate the 200-year anniversary of Colonies of Benevolence. They thus made a connection between a specific place, historical menus and contemporary gastronomy."
Geertje Bernaerts, Karvansera



Business owners play with new concepts. Hospitality instead of tourism providers. Welcoming instead of providing. Words that have previously been tinged with

economic considerations are currently shifting. As a result, the characteristic passion and inspiration of tourism is becoming more apparent.

2. CHANGING USE OF LANGUAGE, BACK TO THE ESSENCE

Which words feel more welcoming?

accommodation providers	hosts
consumers	travellers
selling	enabling
rooms	experiences
products	places
packages	experiences
consumers	guests
supplier	host
wholesaler	partner
efficient	fulfilling
price	value
...	...



How can tourism make connections? How can different working areas come together? What stimulates this cross-pollination? Multi-functionality and rejuvenation are often used in this context. It's happening at various places already. A heritage location provides a boost for social employment while the guests can enjoy a unique setting. International visitors experience

something extra when they attend a meeting or conference at a spectacular location. Entrepreneurs work together with social organisations on realising the right of everyone to have a holiday. And local residents can also use the hotel gym or swimming pool. These are all examples, but many more options are out there. "We must not stay in our little corners", say the business owners.

3. OUT-OF-THE-BOX THINKING, CONNECTING INTERESTS

"Another perspective on travel and tourism? That's what I found with tour operator Joker, when I was looking for work in the tourism sector in the nineties. Both the workplace itself and the range of travel options prioritised sustainability, experiences and people (colleagues, local entrepreneurs at the destination and the tourist). Being encouraged, remaining amazed and always entering into dialogue were the key values. The inspirational leader, Bob Elsen thus created a place where everybody felt good. And that includes the tourist, because the updated travel concept which is ever-evolving, is a very appealing prospect."
Griet Geudens, VISITFLANDERS



A successful entrepreneur sees and reflects on what is going on in society. He looks further than his company or sector. The sharing economy, whereby usage is preferred over ownership, is flourishing. These are interesting developments for entrepreneurs in the sector. Buying light, for example, instead of lamps. The supplier is thus motivated to provide equipment that will last a long time

and can be repaired and you have an inherently sustainable system. Innovation can correspond with uncertainty and anxiety. It takes resilience and courage to seize change as an opportunity and a chance to learn. An open mind to experiment, embrace change, and to permit complexity and uncertainty; this requires a curious, open and flexible attitude, also from entrepreneurs.

4. EXPERIMENT WITH NEW BUSINESS MODELS

"I love the Jo&Joe initiative by Accorhotels. Major entrepreneurs that dare to listen to their future audience; that gives me hope. Together with young students, a new concept has been developed and placed in the market. The concept has been customised for and by travellers and residents. It has been designed in order to simplify encounters and encourage good cohabitation. There are common spaces both indoors and out. Townsters and Tripsters can find one another there. Whether you're travelling on your own, as a couple, as a family or as a group, everyone can find something to suit them. It makes me think of a similar initiative in the Bruges Hostel De Snuffel. This also prioritises encounters between travellers and locals."
Jeroen Marijsse, Network Everyone Deserves a Holiday



5. KNOWLEDGE IS EXPANDED THROUGH SHARING

In order to explore and shape the future, entrepreneurs also need spaces where they can meet one another and people from other sectors. They would like to exchange experiences and expertise, share insights and collaborate across the regular sector boundaries. They want to work with the government, education, professional organisations and federations, users and visitors. Uniting expertise is the start of finding solutions. Daring to not know and, finding out starting on this basis, is the first step towards an appealing future.

Experimenting in Meetjesland

Giving meaning to the flourishing place

Inspired by his participation in the Tourism Transforms project, Erik Hennes from Tourism Meetjesland created a core group in order to raise the issue of tourism of the future in the 'Kreken' area (a part of Meetjesland).

In a change from the usual routine, the first meeting was not merely with representatives from the region. Everyone was invited to join in, to find connections between them. The invitation was pretty vague and was widely distributed in the municipalities of Assenede and St. Laureins. "We had no idea who would show up", explains Erik. It was great to see that the rather vague invitation to work on something together brought new people in. "Half of those attending were new to us, people we otherwise may not have reached, but who all put their hearts into tourism in the 'Kreken' area."

45 people attended and were enthusiastic to share their experiences, wishes and dreams.

"Collaborating on the tourism of the future generated a great deal of energy among the people present and the initiators. It brought us back to the essence, why we are all doing it. It forces us into a new position: not formulating proposals but asking what drives people, what they want to realise. Today, the participants are moving things forward, to ensure the project doesn't falter."

The core group reflects carefully on the project and is continuously learning from the process. Step by step and sometimes with a step backwards. If things go too quickly, we slow things down to the rhythm of the group; we also take a step back when necessary.

'Working on the Tourism of Tomorrow' started with a presentation from Anna Pollock about 'Flourishing destinations'. Then there was an interactive part asking 'How do we turn the 'Kreken' area into a flourishing destination?' In small groups, the participants discussed ideas and future initiatives. Where do we as residents, regions/municipalities and entrepreneurs want to be in five years? And what are the conditions required in order to fulfil these dream scenarios?

The theme was also integrated in an international project called 'Flourishing destinations' with Scotland and Romania. Interested to know how things are going? Find out what's going on in Meetjesland.

More information on the experiments in Meetjesland
erik.hennes@toerismemeetjesland.be

EXPERIMENT TO LEARN

They are also experimenting in **De Kempen** and **Mechelen**. Would you like to share ideas or find a sounding board? We'd love to hear from you. Then we can look at the options and connect you with our contacts.



From the old system to the new

The transition: which role suits you?

OdeGand, © Thijs de Lange

Being aware, taking responsibility, connecting and collaborating: the four ingredients for making the transition from a tourist destination to a flourishing place and community. We explained that entrepreneurs are happy to make a contribution. The government is listening and trying to find out how to strengthen its role. And there are also people who are proud of their place, who offer hospitality with an open heart. Residents, entrepreneurs, policy: all place keepers. And what about you?

Being aware that everything is interconnected ...

"As simple as that. The policy in Vlieland, one of the Wadden islands in the north of the Netherlands, is honest and simple. The local economy in Vlieland is mainly centred on recreation and tourism. The success of Vlieland is its natural, small-scale, peaceful character with few cars. The residents love their rural views and the interaction of sand, wind and water. They share their personal relationship with the island, when asked, with the tourists. In order to retain this character, the municipal council made a simple but far-reaching decision. No further overnight accommodation will be built. If the available tents and hotel beds are full, you'll have to come at another time. This is incredibly courageous and

also very straightforward. For me, it's a powerful decision, which means that the relationship between Vlieland and tourism will not end in tears." **Bart Rondas, VisitGent**

And that everyone can realise something

Others demonstrate how, as an aware individual, you can realise major achievements: Lanzarote stayed authentic thanks to the vision of just one man.

"Thanks to the impact and courage of the artist, architect and resident of Lanzarote, Cesar Manrique, no high-rise buildings were built, the colours of the buildings are traditional and there are no high-impact advertising boards. That's why I think it's such

a great example. As a result of this powerful vision, Lanzarote has not lost its authentic style and unique landscape. And this is precisely why so many tourists love the island. Lanzarote is a rough, barren and rugged island with numerous adorable, modest little villages. Despite the fact that Lanzarote is dependent on tourism for its economy, the island has not gone through the same development as many other sunny destinations: a coastline covered with high-rise buildings with bold colours and shapes. Cesar Manrique believed in sustainable tourism long before it became fashionable. He showed that the very nature and authentic character of a place can be retained without eliminating tourists from the area." **Filip Standaert, Handelsreizigers in ideeën**

You are part of 'everyone' too

Transition means a great deal of uncertainty and is complex to summarise. Author Deborah Frieze sees two movements that offer alternative methods for being and doing in the transition from old to new. She summarises these movements in two curves (see diagram). To the left, you can see the creation, growth and decline of the current system. This could include an economy which is fed by petroleum or the industrial production of food. Mass tourism is another example. To the right, the new curve starts: the emergence of alternatives, such as renewable energy, organic food and tourism that thrives in flourishing destinations. At the moment, we are somewhere in between the two flows, right in the transition.

Deborah Frieze uses this diagram to show how people and organisations can each contribute to this process of transition between old and new. She calls upon everyone to take action in their specific locations, in collaboration with others, to bring about a change. And she says that everyone can take part. Because every major transition requires pioneers, but also people who highlight the initiatives and make connections. Certain people are required to look after the old system until the upgrade is strong enough, and some build bridges between what exists now and what is being created.

What are the roles in changing times? And what suits you?

Pioneers experiment with alternative ways of thinking and doing. They implement new initiatives or create systems that contrast with the dominant flow. Pioneers are often misunderstood or feel alone and invisible as the people around them don't understand what they mean or what they're doing. That is why connection between pioneers is so important.

Highlighters help to raise the profile of the alternatives. Their focus and stories allow others to discover the new things, to understand them and to get enthusiastic. Not only best practices deserve attention in this context. Highlighting is also intended to be a learning opportunity, a chance to share and connect. Highlighters are curious, love to tell stories and have an image of how the new world should look. They help us to make smart decisions.

Protectors offer the pioneers space, opportunities and the freedom to nurture and test their ideas. Transitional phases also require breeding grounds where experiments can take place and also fail, where things can be learned and inspiration gained. Deep within institutions and organisations, they offer pioneers adequate protection for their experiments.

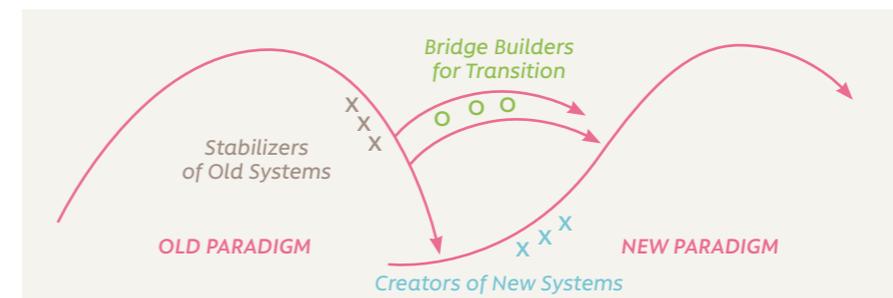


Caretakers guide the systems through transition periods. While experiments are being conducted and learning is taking place, the process also requires people who simply continue working according to the old system, to ensure that no vacuum is being created between what there is and what there will be. Caretakers ensure that today's life carries on and take care of the transition from the old to the new. They keep the current system on track until the new one is strong enough. They keep an eye on the difficulties for people in the old system and take care of anyone suffering uncertainty, loss and change.

"Rather than identifying what the change will be, leaders need to identify and lead processes for engaging the necessary stakeholders in emergent change processes."

— Gervase Bushe

The creator of this transition diagram suggests that we have all believed, for too long, that change comes from other people. But in living systems, we need everyone. All four of the roles help the transition to take place. Then comes the question for the place, residents, entrepreneurs and place keepers: if the current approach cannot create solutions and new things are required, what contribution can each of us make?



REFLECTING

- Where are we now?
- What role could you take on?
- What do you need to get started?
- Who can support or inspire you?



GET TO WORK

Literature



Walk Out Walk On – Meg Wheatley & Deborah Frieze

"If the future looks bleak and the task impossible, I pick up this book. It is an exceptional and hopeful book about people and communities across the world that overcame insurmountable challenges together by uniting their collective insights and force. It offers a view of how the future should be. An educational trip towards resilient communities. Stunning isn't it?"

Marianne Schapmans, Network Everyone Deserves a Holiday

Flourishing Enterprise – Chris Laszlo & Judy Sorum Brown

"This book contains many reasons and examples of why we in the industry have to shift from sustainable to flourishing. Flourishing, i.e. the quest to ensure that people and life in general will prosper on the earth for centuries, should be a goal for every company today." Anna Pollock, Conscious travel

Wie (niet) reist is gek (People who (don't) travel are mad) – Ap Dijksterhuis

"On the basis of amazement, a person can become genuinely happy. I found a like-minded individual in this Dutch psychologist: "Of all the ways to sustain our spirit, travelling is the most gratifying and natural method". I completely concur. Dijksterhuis offers six reasons. Greater empathy, it offers space, it stimulates creativity, you seem to have more time, travel makes you happy. In my opinion, it should be part of the learning plan for 10 to 18-year-olds: to get to know the 'anatomy of wonderment', travel as a ritual in development, to round a headland alone... What are we waiting for when it comes to including 'learn to travel' within education?"

Filip Standaert, Handelsreizigers in ideeën

Doughnut Economics – Kate Raworth

"This sets out seven options for thinking like a 21st century economist. Is economy the same as growth? 'There is no alternative' is forcefully refuted here. Raworth suggests other objectives: the retention of a quality world and social aspects. The balance is better if the boundaries on both sides, hence the doughnut, are not exceeded. You can apply this doughnut to tourism: objectives for the population, for travellers and also objectives for the planet and the population that works in the sector. Social status is not particularly strong across the board. We must ask questions about this too."

Sepepe Dams, Network Everyone Deserves a Holiday

Videos



Chené Swart

How can stories transform tourism? Stories teach us about genuine concepts regarding what is important for visitors as well as hosts. Chené Swart talks about this in this film.



Gervase Bushe

How can a tourism leader help with the transformation? Everything starts with detecting and supporting small, local innovations (or experiments). Gervase Bushe offers his vision in this film.



Taleb Rifai

Taleb Rifai, former Secretary General of the UN World Tourism Organization, talks about how tourism can transform the lives of hosts at a tourist destination.

Online

www.traveltotomorrow.be

To read this magazine and many other media online.

www.connectyourstory.org

about the power of travelling across the world.

TRAVEL together TO tomorrow...

A year after the start of the journey, some answers are on the way. Yes, tourism can transform people and places. Yes, to enable that, the sector is heading into transformational times. And no: this transformation cannot be managed by the government, at most it can be facilitated. Just like a ranger can't make a tree grow but can create the conditions in which the biodiversity of the forest does what it needs to do. We need you. Your love for the place where you live or work. Your appetite for travelling. Your hospitality. Your expertise and engagement. And your faith in tomorrow.

What is your hope or dream?

Tell us!

Are there any concrete ideas there?

Choose one!

Who would you like to work with to explore this idea?

Dare to approach at least one!

And voilà, you're involved.



So now, it's over to you ...

What has moved you when reading about this future vision?

What is your hope or dream regarding this future vision?

Which concrete ideas are bubbling up as you read about this future vision?

Who would you like to collaborate with for this?

Respond to this future vision via this reader's letter:
attn Peter De Wilde, Grasmarkt 61, 1000 Brussels
yourresponse@traveltotomorrow.be or via www.traveltotomorrow.be



"Travel doesn't just stop when you come home. Organise your experiences, think about what you've learnt, about the meaning you attach to it. Then, travel becomes part of who you are and how you see the world. That is why tourism is my passion. I hope that government leaders realise that tourism is worth focussing on. Tourism is more than just economy. It opens our society up to differences, and we all become better people as a result."

– Taleb Rifai (SG UNWTO 2010-2018)



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tomorrow

