

SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT IN BAVARIA: INCREASING TOURISM ACCEPTANCE BY APPLYING PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES?

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Abstract

Purpose – The article examines whether and, if so, how systematic citizen participation in the planning and decision-making processes can improve the acceptance of tourism in three popular Bavarian destinations — the Franconian Lake District, Tölzer Land, and Munich.

Methodology – The article draws on a qualitative study, comprising 33 expert interviews with representatives of politics, administration, tourism organisations, tourism service providers, associations, and local communities. The expert interviews were analysed using the qualitative research method GABEK. Selected findings were subsequently visualised through causal network charts.

Findings – The findings revealed a fundamental dissatisfaction with the prevailing political planning and decision-making processes. More support from politics and a clear commitment to tourism value creation is required. Greater citizen involvement in the strategic development of tourism is desirable. The implementation of citizen participation is fraught with many difficulties, including lack of political goodwill, and is therefore either not or only insufficiently developed in the participating Bavarian destinations.

Contribution – Against the background of recent and contemporary social developments, strategic citizen participation in tourism planning processes was identified as an important approach for the continued successful and sustainable development of Bavarian tourism destinations and living spaces. The findings can be regarded as an urgent appeal to initiate systematic participatory processes in Bavaria, guaranteeing a framework for a continuous exchange between the local population, politics, and administration, enabling better incorporation of the needs of the local population into tourism planning objectives, and increasing the acceptance of tourism.

Keywords: Overtourism, Tourism Acceptance, Citizen Participation, Bavaria, GABEK.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many sought-after tourism destinations have seen a paradigm shift — a positive attitude of *local communities* towards tourism has been gradually replaced by a critical and, at times, aversive attitude as the limits of socially acceptable tourism development have been reached (Kagermeier and Erdmenger 2019a; Scherle et al. 2021). Following the growth-focused mindset of tourism policymakers and providers of tourism services, the success of the tourism industry has been measured in terms of visitor numbers for decades (Dodds and Butler 2019). According to the notion that destinations should be managed as competitive units, the needs of markets (profit and efficiency) and the needs of visitors (satisfaction and experience) prevailed. Consequently, little emphasis was placed on the needs of local communities — the central actors in the

tourism industry (Ap 1992; Haywood 1988; Herntrei 2014, 2018, 2019; Murphy 1983) — whose well-being was regarded as a mere constraint to efficiency (Cracolici et al. 2006). After numerous worldwide protests against tourism in the second half of the 2010s — having indicated sharply decreasing *tourism acceptance* (Herntrei 2019; Milano et al. 2019a; Novy and Colomb 2017) — the term *overtourism* has come to prominence (Gössling et al. 2020).

The advent of the essentially socio-psychological phenomenon of overtourism has sparked a renewed interest in the perceptions and needs of local communities which are increasingly placed at the forefront alongside the developments and needs of the market (Becken and Simmons 2019). As such, tourism acceptance has become a highly relevant topic in contemporary tourism research — particularly in Europe and specifically in Germany (German Tourism Association [DTV] and German Institute for Tourism Research [DIFT] 2022; Herntrei et al. 2022; Schmücker and Eisenstein 2021).

This article draws on an application-oriented qualitative study funded by the Bavarian Centre for Tourism (BZT) and conducted in the timeframe 2020–2022. The study focused on the question of how the acceptance of tourism by the local population in three Bavarian tourism destinations — the Franconian Lake District, Tölzer Land, and Munich — can be sustainably increased. In doing so, a distinct focus was placed on *citizen participation* as an opportunity to improve the acceptance of tourism policy planning decisions.

An improved citizen participation culture should serve the objective of sustainable destination development and increase the acceptance of tourism among local communities (Herntrei 2018). Following Ap's (1992) Social exchange process model, the key to the improvement of tourism acceptance and thus to the reduction of overtourism in its socio-psychological sense lies in participatory tourism planning. Accordingly, participatory tourism planning not only strengthens the competitiveness of a destination but primarily improves the quality of life of its population. The central stakeholders are involved in the relevant planning and decision-making processes as early as possible, enabling them to express and defend their needs and interests and to identify more strongly with future tourism development. Against this background, local communities ideally decide whether and, if so, how they would like to develop tourism offers in the destination while retaining control over the local development of tourism (Herntrei et al. 2022).

In this article, selected research findings from the three Bavarian destinations involved are presented. At first, the theoretical foundations on the topics of overtourism, tourism acceptance, and citizen participation are provided. Afterwards, the research methodology is introduced. The core of the article constitutes the third chapter in which the empirical findings are introduced. The article ends with a problem-focused conclusion, outlining possible implications for tourism practice and research.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM ACCEPTANCE AND PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In previous years, the tourism industry has increasingly come under public scrutiny. Discussions on tourism-induced climate change and the spread and impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are only a few examples, underlining this statement. As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of international tourist arrivals in Germany fell to the level of the early 1990s after ten consecutive years of growth (German National Tourist Board 2022). However, tourist flows, in particular those of same-day visitors, have not come to a complete standstill during the pandemic but instead have shifted in space (Scherle et al. 2021). While urban tourism in Germany, for instance in the city of Munich, has seen a sharp decline (Schmude et al. 2021), neighbouring recreational areas of the metropolitan regions have experienced increased visitor pressure. Examples of such developments could be found in the Tegernsee region where an increasing resentment of the local population against same-day visitors from Munich has been publicly voiced (Mehr and Reichl 2020), in the Tölzer Land region (Vecchiato 2020), and, to a certain extent, in the Franconian Lake District (Ritzer 2020). In other words, the phenomenon of overtourism has gradually been manifested also in Germany.

1.1. Overtourism

In 2017/2018, many public protests against tourism arose around the world — among others, in Barcelona, Palma de Mallorca, Lisbon, Rome, Venice, Dubrovnik, Hong Kong, and New Orleans (Novy and Colomb 2017). Central to these protests were the deteriorating quality of life and well-being of local communities. The term overtourism was subsequently coined and received substantial media attention (Gössling et al. 2020; Kagermeier and Erdmenger 2019a). Having proven to be particularly marketable, the term was trademarked by the market research company Skift in 2018 and has developed into an overused and under-conceptualised buzzword (Koens et al. 2018). Nevertheless, in addition to the media, overtourism has found increased attention also in academia and politics (Milano et al. 2019a).

Despite the topicality of the term, overtourism is not a new phenomenon (Bauer et al. 2020). The potentially disruptive occurrences and risks related to the excessive development of tourism to local communities were increasingly recognised by the scientific community as early as the 1970s (Boissevain 1979; Butler 1974; Doxey 1975; Krippendorf 1975; Pizam 1978; Williams 1979). Therefore, overtourism is argued to be merely old wine in new bottles (Dredge 2017). However, although the problem as such is well known, the media attention and the intensity of the public protests have been exceptional (Herntrei 2019; Novy and Colomb 2019).

In the German-speaking countries, Krippendorf's work *Die Landschaftsfresser* (The Landscape Eaters) (1975) can be seen as a starting point for a critical and scientifically based examination of the ambivalent implications of tourism, having led to calls for careful tourism planning. During this time, further notable works were published such as those of Butler (1974), Doxey (1975), Pizam (1978), and Williams (1979). A common

concern raised in these considerations was that excessive tourism can harm the environment and lead to negative attitudes of local populations towards tourism.

Without specifically referring to overtourism, the aforementioned works have already approached the contemporary understanding of the phenomenon. Particularly discussions on the social impacts of tourism have, however, faded into the background in the following years, respectively decades, being overshadowed by the prevailing growth paradigm (Dodds and Butler 2019), the influence of market-oriented corporate management (marketing, focus on the needs of visitors) and the understanding of the tourism destination as a competitive unit (Herntrei 2014) in which the sensitivities of local communities represent merely an efficiency disadvantage (Cracolici et al. 2006).

Overtourism is a complex phenomenon that is simplistically approached as a tipping point of tourism development beyond which adverse impacts occur (Milano et al. 2019b). The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2018, 4) defines overtourism as “the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors experiences in a negative way.” Very similarly argues Goodwin (2019), highlighting that the perception of too many visitors is highly subjective and contextual. Consequently, measures that do not consider the multidimensional and fundamentally socio-psychological nature of overtourism are insufficient to address the phenomenon purposefully. Examples of such measures include:

- rules, regulations, and restrictions,
- timely and spatial redistribution of visitors,
- and price-based strategies and tactics.

Nevertheless, these measures correspond with the proposals of McKinsey & Company and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) (2017) and are taken up by academics and practitioners alike.

The guiding definition of overtourism in the context of the conducted study has followed Gössling et al. (2020) who conceptualise overtourism as a psychological reaction of local populations to tourism pressure. It should be emphasised that overtourism is a timely and spatially demarcated phenomenon. Overtourism occurs mostly seasonally and is predominantly limited to a few sub-areas of the tourism destination (Peeters et al. 2018). Temporarily high visitor numbers are likely to be found in most tourism destinations of the Free State of Bavaria, for instance, at attraction points and transport hubs. However, these concentrations do not necessarily lead to the occurrence of overtourism (Butler 2019). Decisive for the question of whether overtourism develops from an increased volume of tourism is the destination-specific tourism acceptance of the local population (Herntrei et al. 2022) — the key prerequisite for successful tourism development in any destination (DTV and DIFT 2022).

1.2. Tourism Acceptance

The advent of overtourism has triggered a renewed interest in the perceptions of local communities compared to previous decades in which the focus was on the perceptions

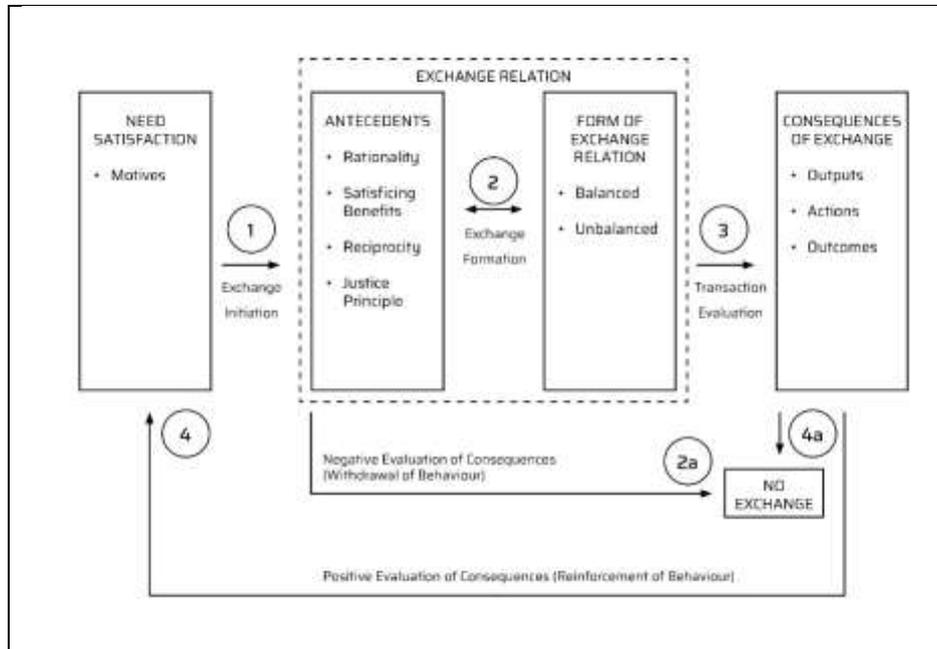
of visitors (Becken and Simmons 2019). Alongside tourism providers on the one side and visitors on the other side, the local community as a new stakeholder group is increasingly coming to the attention of destination planners and developers (DTV and DIFT 2022). This shift in focus was already indicated several years ago (Herntrei 2014; Steinecke and Herntrei 2017). Some underlying reasons are that locals act in different roles as hosts and co-creators of visitors' experiences, they are an integral part of a destination brand, and its important ambassadors (Braun et al. 2013; Herntrei et al. 2022). Local communities consequently act as key actors in tourism who have a considerable influence on whether a destination and its stakeholders succeed in creating tourism value (Ap 1992; Knox 1982). A successful destination needs not only satisfied visitors who feel welcomed but also satisfied local communities who feel comfortable with the local development of tourism (DTV and DIFT 2022). However, in many destinations, local communities perceive tourism less and less positively which has a negative impact on the acceptance of tourism and leads to its rejection and overtourism.

Tourism acceptance has been defined as the degree to which the local population perceives tourism in the respective place of residence as positive or negative (Schmücker and Eisenstein 2021). This raises the question of which factors influence local populations' perceptions of tourism. Over the past decades, an extensive number of influencing factors have been identified. Socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, language, education, and income (Brougham and Butler 1981; King et al. 1993; Perdue et al. 1990; Wang et al. 2007), the economic dependence on tourism (Dogan 1989; King et al. 1993; Perdue et al. 1990; Pizam 1978), personal benefits obtained from tourism (Perdue et al. 1990; Wang et al. 2007), the distance from the tourist areas (Pizam 1978), the similarity of lifestyles between locals and visitors (Dogan 1989), the spatial and temporal distribution of visitors (Peeters et al. 2018), the speed of tourism growth rates (Kagermeier and Erdmenger 2019b; Peeters et al. 2018), and the extent to which avoidance options are available for the local population (Dumbrovská 2017; Kagermeier and Erdmenger 2019b) represent only a small share of the factors examined by the scientific community. Herntrei (2019) has reviewed the extensive literature by Williams and Lawson (2001) and Brida et al. (2011) on the factors that influence tourism acceptance and has outlined the existing ambiguity and, at times, the contradictory findings of studies. Different theoretical-conceptual frameworks and an almost infinite number of different measurement methods have been namely used (Lankford and Howard 1994), making any comparability hardly possible. Therefore, some authors call for a standardisation of the approach (Brida et al. 2011) and propose Ap's (1992) Social exchange process model as a suitable unified theoretical framework.

1.2.1. Explaining (the Lack of) Tourism Acceptance Using the Social Exchange Process Model

In tourism destinations, several exchange processes take place between local populations, visitors, entrepreneurs, administration, and politics. The central question is how the exchange process between the local population and the responsible persons for planning is organised. According to Ap (1992), the perception of tourism by local populations depends primarily on the evaluation outcome based on the Social exchange theory.

Figure 1: **Process Model of Social Exchange Theory**



Source: Ap (1992, 670), Graphic: J. Eder

Ap's (1992) Social exchange process model (see Figure 1) suggests that local communities evaluate tourism development in the destination according to the benefits that tourism brings to their economic, social, and psychological needs — thus according to the extent to which tourism contributes to an increase in their quality of life. The starting point of the model is the needs of local communities and their motives for satisfying these needs, representing the central driving force for any social exchange process (Houston and Gassenheimer 1987). The major motive of local communities is the improvement of their quality of life (Ap 1992). An exchange relationship is initiated either for one's own need satisfaction or by a superordinate authority responsible for planning (exchange initiation). The prevailing initial situation is characterised by an imbalance: the local population is forced into the exchange process to avoid perceived personal disadvantages. The core of the model represents the actual exchange relation. This is defined by the antecedents of the exchange and by its forms (forms of exchange relation). Both have a decisive influence on the exchange process (exchange formation). When an actor considers the consequences to be negative or the process to be already unsatisfactory (perceived benefits [rationality, satisficing benefits], reciprocity, justice), the exchange process is aborted. Only through the distribution of resources and power — supplemented by the aspect of mutual dependence (cohesion) — equal exchange processes (balanced mutual exchange) develop that are beneficial from the perspective of all participants. A strongly unequal distribution of power, by contrast, leads to a disadvantage for a weaker actor who in turn negatively evaluates the actions resulting from the exchange process. In summary, Ap's (1992) model provides a target-oriented

theoretical and methodological framework for assessing and analysing the effects of systematic participatory processes in tourism development. Drawing on Ap (1992), participatory tourism planning represents the key to the improvement of tourism acceptance of local populations and thus to the reduction of overtourism in its socio-psychological sense.

1.3. Citizen Participation

The importance of citizen participation in tourism planning has been highlighted by the scientific community for decades (Andriotis 2007; Dangi and Petrick 2021; Haywood 1988; Herntrei 2014, 2018, 2019; Herntrei et al. 2022; Lalicic and Önder 2018; Marzuki and Hay 2013; Murphy 1983; Simmons 1994; Tosun 1999). Tosun (1999) speaks about the popularisation of citizen participation in tourism planning and development processes particularly between the 1960s and the early 1980s with an increasing number of studies, focusing on the arguments for its importance ever since. Citizen participation in tourism planning is a multidimensional concept, including representation from many disciplines. It is defined as a process of involving all relevant and interested parties such as local government representatives, local communities, developers, and entrepreneurs in a way in which decision-making is shared (Haywood 1988). A straightforward description is given by Koens et al. (2020), referring to citizen participation in tourism planning as a chaotic and messy process in which many interdependent stakeholders need to work together towards solutions.

Tourism is to a great extent taking place in a publicly accessible space, the living space of local communities (Goodwin 2019). From this perspective, local communities should be granted the right to be involved in key decisions that directly affect the future shape of their living space and thus directly affect themselves (Lalicic and Önder 2018). Pinel (1968) argues that participatory tourism planning leads to less depleting tourism industry, being in accordance with the needs, desires, and capacities of the local population. Although citizen participation in tourism planning is more time-consuming than a top-down planning approach and requires the patience of all stakeholders, its results are often more effective in the long term. Enabling local populations to co-determine tourism plans can increase their identification with local tourism offers and convey a sense of belonging, having in turn a positive impact on tourism acceptance and thereby the visitor experience itself (DTV and DIFT 2022). Further benefits of citizen participation are seen in the areas of social cohesion and social justice, improved quality of services, the use of local knowledge, and greater legitimacy of the outputs of planning processes. Additionally, citizen participation is an investment in local democracy (Návrát et al. 2016).

However, in practice, participatory planning approaches have proved to be difficult to implement (Koens et al. 2020). The basic prerequisite for successful long-term citizen participation is political goodwill (Haywood 1988; Herntrei 2014). A culture of participation can only be developed when it is supported by the highest levels of politics and administration (Herntrei 2014). Lack of political goodwill, the unwillingness of stakeholders with the planning authority to redistribute power and share information, lack of time and resources, overlapping interests, strong fragmentation of the tourism

industry, swift changes in governance, vaguely defined purpose of participation, and the perception of citizen participation as a time-consuming process that requires the efforts of entire planning departments and slows down decision-making are included among the challenges, effectively hindering participatory processes per se (Arnstein 1969; Haywood 1988; Koens et al. 2020; Marzuki and Hay 2013; Návrat et al. 2016; Tosun 1999). Incorporation of public views into planning processes is therefore rather rare and has little influence on policymaking (Andriotis 2007; Joppe 2019). Even if ambitious plans on how to mitigate the negative impacts of (over)tourism by involving local communities in tourism planning are increasingly formulated by tourism policymakers, they are rarely implemented in practice (Jamieson and Jamieson 2019). In other words, “while some stakeholders may 'talk the talk,' very few 'walk the walk,’” particularly if the realised plans would question the priority of economic growth (Dodds and Butler 2019, 217).

The participatory procedures practised in Germany usually merely aim to inform, legitimise, and reach compromises (Sperber et al. 2007). Arnstein (1969) refers to these practices in her Ladder of Citizen participation, one of the most frequently cited typologies of participation, as tokenism — local communities are heard but they lack the power to ensure that their views will be considered in the planning process. Expressed differently, such practices are far from systematic and equal participation of the local population in strategic planning processes.

The next chapter provides an overview of the research methodology followed by an introduction to the research findings.

2. METHODOLOGY

The underlying BZT study of a qualitative nature was conducted in three popular tourism destinations of the Free State of Bavaria. To ensure the highest possible transferability of the findings to other Bavarian destinations, destination areas differing in development and type were selected:

- A: Urban area: The City of Munich
- B: Transition between urban and rural areas: Tölzer Land (near the metropolitan area of Munich)
- C: Rural area: Franconian Lake District (near the metropolitan area of Nuremberg)

The core of the qualitative study consisted of expert interviews with 33 stakeholders, living and/or working in the three participating destinations. The interviews with an average duration of one hour were conducted with central representatives of politics, administration, tourism organisations, tourism service providers, associations, and local communities (see Table 1). Due to the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews were carried out virtually based on a guide, audio-recorded, transcribed, and anonymised.

Using open questions, the interview partners were encouraged to talk about those aspects that are important from their point of view, thus underlining the explorative character of

qualitative research. The open-question format allows the interview partners to express their personal experiences, preferences, and wishes and does not force them into any predefined answer options in areas where they may have little experience or may not have clear opinions. As a result, the verbal data collected in open questions tend to offer solutions to problems that are highly relevant — considerably more than data collected in narrowly defined closed questionnaires (Zelger 2002).

Table 1: Interviews by Tourism Destination and Group of Persons

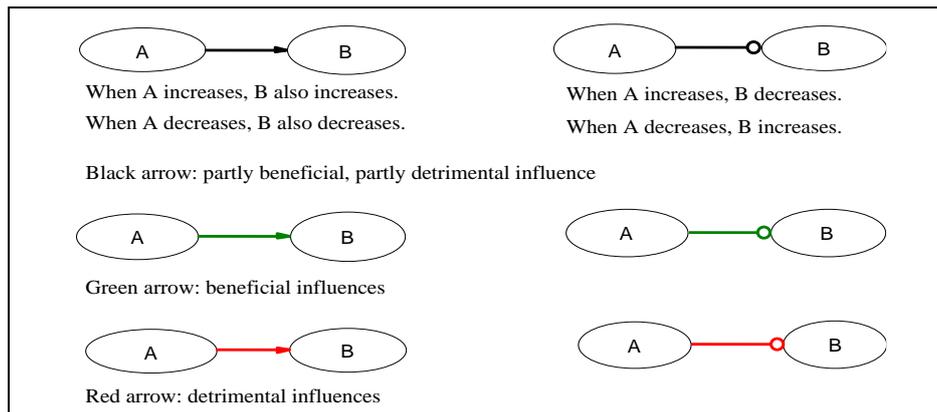
Tourism Destination	Group of Persons	Conducted Expert Interviews
Franconian Lake District	Politics and Administration	1
	Tourism Organisation	2
	Tourism Service Providers	2
	Clubs/Associations/Cooperatives	3
	Citizens/Active Individuals	2
	SUM	10
Tölzer Land	Politics and Administration	1
	Tourism Organisation	2
	Tourism Service Providers	2
	Clubs/Associations/Cooperatives	4
	Citizens/Active Individuals	1
	SUM	10
Munich	Politics and Administration	4
	Tourism Organisation	1
	Tourism Service Providers	1
	Clubs/Associations/Cooperatives	3
	Citizens/Active Individuals	4
	SUM	13
	TOTAL	33

Source: Own table

The expert interviews were analysed using the qualitative research method GABEK® (Holistic Coping with Complexity). GABEK is a computer-supported research method for the analysis, organisation, processing, and presentation of unstructured everyday language (Zelger 2004). Structuring of everyday language is facilitated by the software WinRelan® (Windows Relation Analysis) developed for GABEK applications, enabling a holistic understanding of complex social phenomena such as, for instance, tourism. This method is particularly suitable to capture and vividly visualise the attitudes, values, and knowledge of the interview partners without neglecting the verifiability of the findings (Zelger and Oberprantacher 2002).

The cause-effect relationships expressed explicitly and implicitly by the interview partners were evaluated and visualised with GABEK according to the principles displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Legend for Causal Coding



Source: Adapted from Zelger (2002, 130).

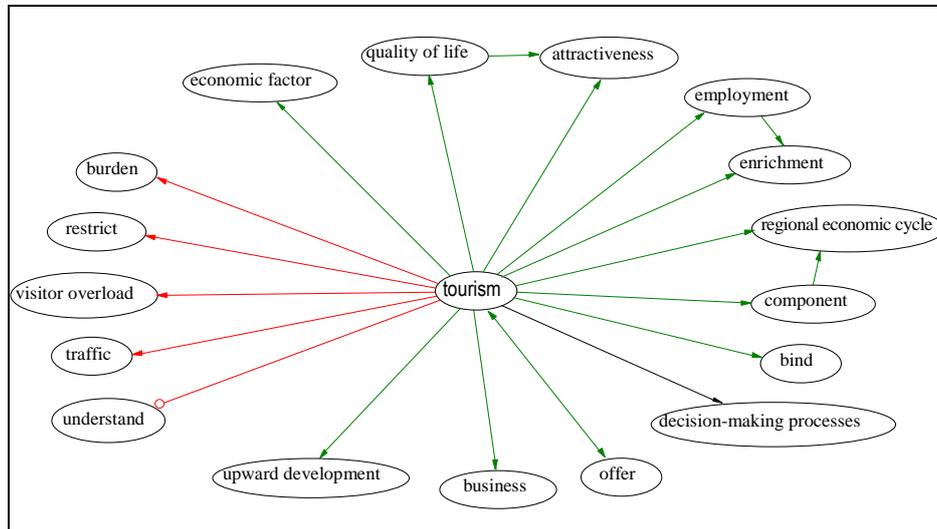
Selected findings from the expert interviews are presented in the following chapter.

3. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AS A KEY TO HIGHER ACCEPTANCE OF TOURISM (POLICY)? EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

3.1. Franconian Lake District

The effects of tourism, an industry representing an important component of the regional economic cycle in the Franconian Lake District, are viewed by the interviewed experts as predominantly positive (see Figure 3). In addition to the economic effects (an economic factor, employment, businesses), the positive effects of tourism on the attractiveness and the quality of life in the region were emphasised. However, the negative effects of tourism are perceived as well. Particularly the volume of traffic and visitors at peak times is regarded as a considerable burden, resulting in restrictions for the local population. In the perception of the experts, there is a lack of understanding of the necessity and effects of tourism and its associated development potential.

Figure 3: Perception of the Effects of Tourism by Experts in the Franconian Lake District

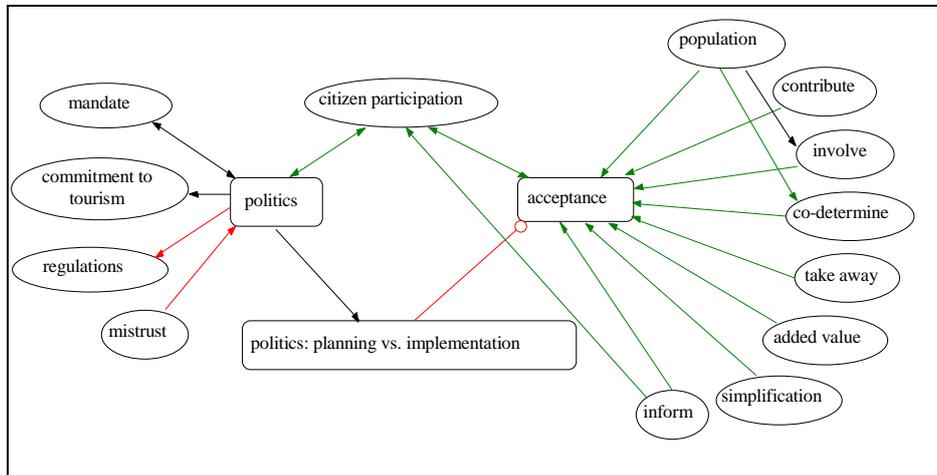


Source: Adapted from Herntrei et al. (2022)

The role of politics in tourism planning and development in the Franconian Lake District is, however, assessed rather negatively. Politicians are recognised as having the mandate to shape the future by strategic development of the destination. Nevertheless, the policy implementation tends to be perceived negatively against the background of several shortcomings, including top-down processes via guidelines and regulations accompanied by too much distance from the local population and its needs. Moreover, according to many interview partners, policy decisions are planned yet not accompanied by implementation. Furthermore, some experts raised the question of whether politics stands behind tourism. From their perspective, a clear commitment to tourism is namely missing. A strongly perceived mistrust towards politicians and their (in)ability to fulfil their mandate makes cooperation in planning and development processes consequently considerably more difficult (see Figure 4).

In the view of several interview partners, systematic citizen participation can contribute to the effective support of politics in its formative role. The involvement, information, and participation of the local population are seen as having a positive effect on the acceptance of planning in general and on the acceptance of tourism in particular.

Figure 4: **The Franconian Lake District: The Tension Between Politics, Public Participation, and Acceptance**

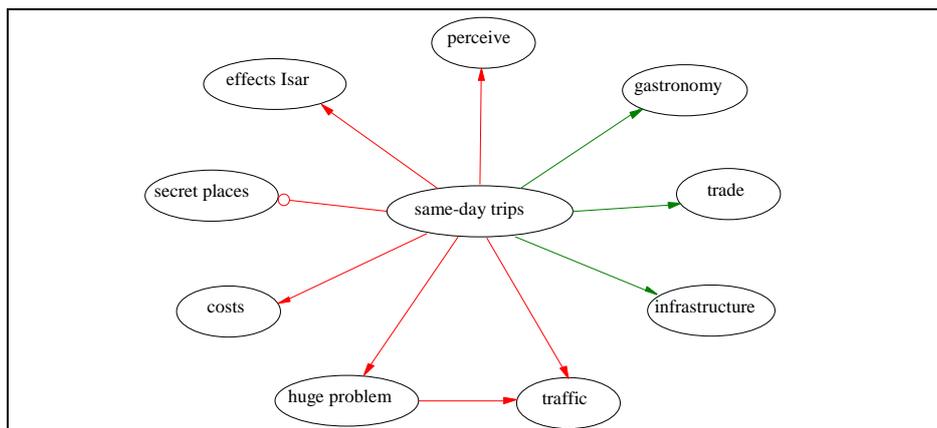


Source: Adapted from Herntrei et al. (2022)

3.2. Tölzer Land

As previously mentioned, particularly neighbouring recreational areas of the metropolitan regions have recently experienced increased visitor pressure, not least due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated shift in demand towards more rural destinations. Such a development has also been seen in Tölzer Land. Figure 5 depicts the perceived effects of same-day trips in the destination of Tölzer Land from the perspective of the interviewed experts.

Figure 5: **Perception of the Effects of Same-Day Trips by Experts in Tölzer Land**

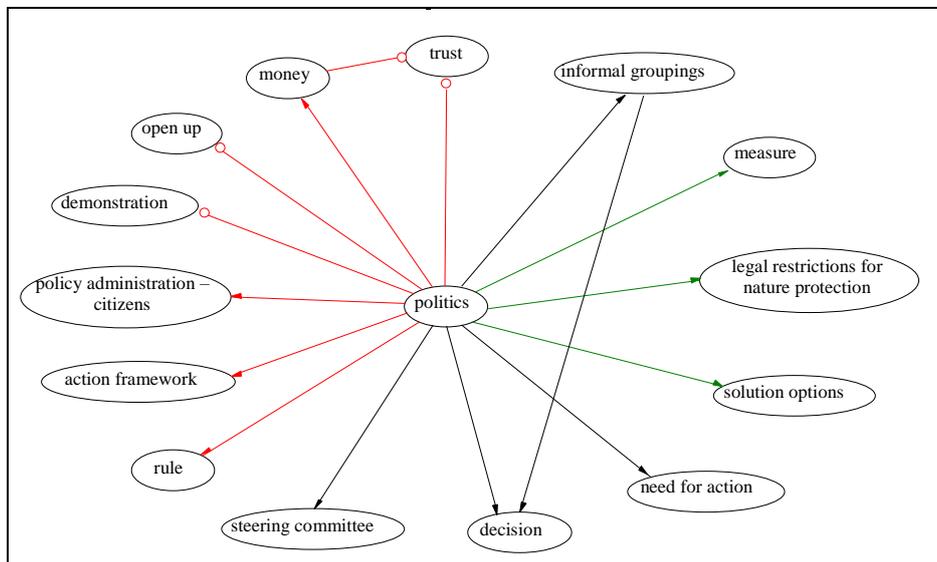


Source: Adapted from Herntrei et al. (2022)

Among the positive effects of same-day trips in Tölzer Land rank the tourism-specific demand in terms of trade and gastronomy. However, the negative consequences of the increasing touristification of public space were not disregarded by the interviewed experts. The problem of traffic, stemming from same-day trips, was highlighted as was the fact that the formerly secret places of the locals are now also intensively visited by same-day visitors. Furthermore, the perceived negative effects of same-day trips on the Isar River were emphasised. The Isar River in Tölzer Land is characterised by a particularly vulnerable environment, requiring legal protection with regards to boat tourism and access to the islands.

The following Figure portrays the interdependencies of political work in Tölzer Land.

Figure 6: Experts' Perception of Political Work in Tölzer Land



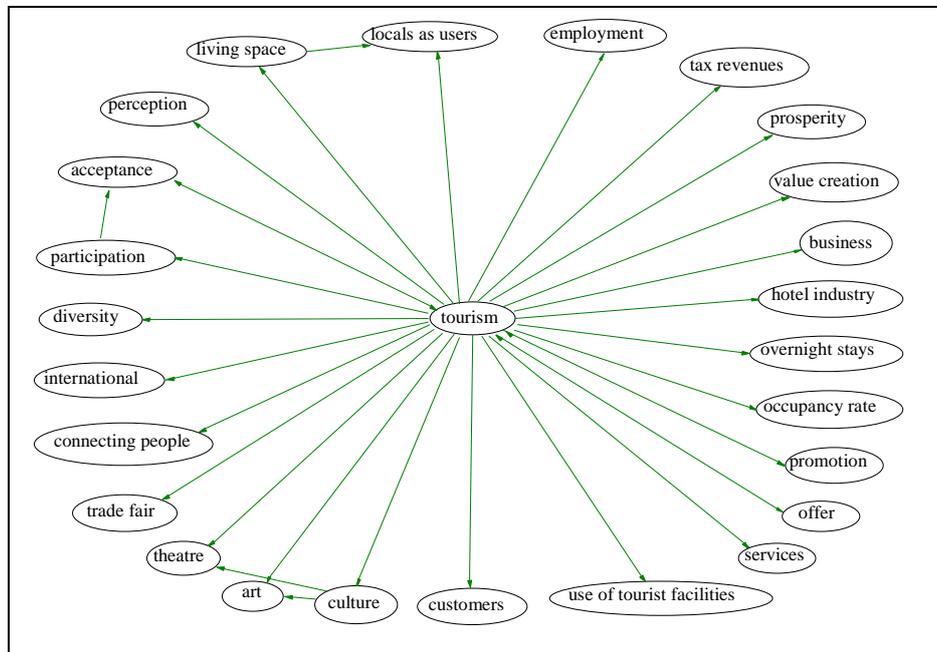
Source: Adapted from Herntrei et al. (2022)

Generally, the experts do not recognise any approaches to participatory planning in Tölzer Land. Instead, there is a distinct power imbalance between decision-makers and the local population. Even occasional demonstrations have not made much difference. The prevailing negative image is reinforced by the fact that, in the perception of the interview partners, informal groupings exist that prepare and enforce policy decisions. Although a serious need for action is perceived, there is therefore a rather low level of trust in the formative power of politics.

3.3. Munich

As compared to Tölzer Land (see Figure 5), tourism in Munich is viewed positively (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: The Effects of Tourism from the Perspective of Experts in Munich

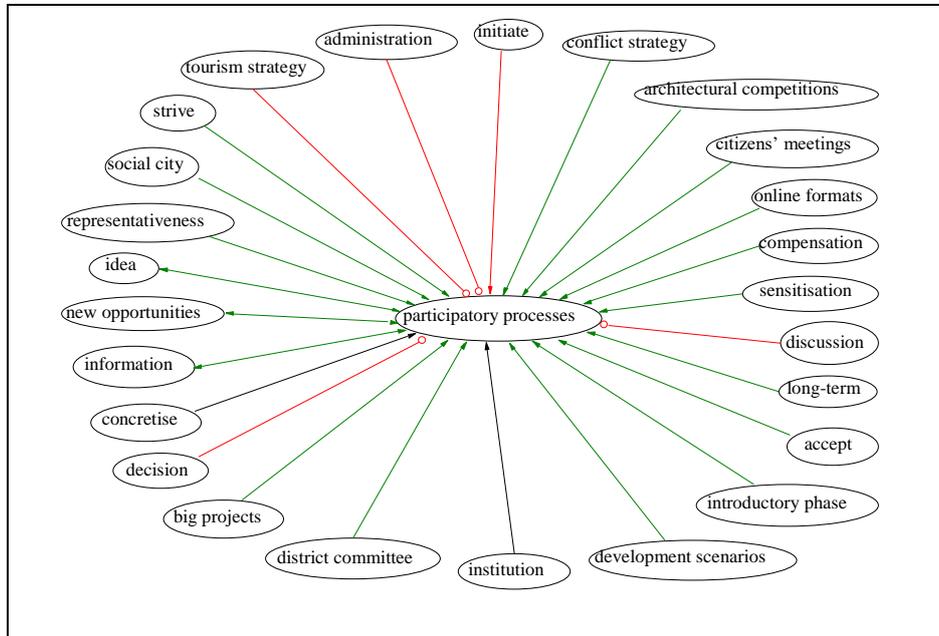


Source: Adapted from Herntrei et al. (2022)

The positive economic effects of tourism (prosperity, tax revenues, employment, occupancy rate, etc.), as well as its positive influence on the local cultural landscape (theatre, art, diversity, etc.), were highlighted. It was also noted that tourism connects people and improves the quality of living space for the local population. Given the increasing urban social mobilisation in recent years (see section 1.1.), the latter statement seems to be rather unexpected. However, the experts emphasised that as tourism grows, so do the related problems — for instance, regular crowding at Gärtnerplatz and Marienplatz.

As opposed to the Franconian Lake District and Tölzer Land, in the city of Munich, various participatory formats such as architectural competitions and citizens' meetings have been developed in recent years. Moreover, district committees exist to address the respective needs of citizens, and online participatory platforms are being tested (see Figure 8). However, as underlined in expert interviews, these formats have so far not contributed to the involvement of the local population in the questions of strategic development. In fact, the existing political and administrative structures seem to hinder rather than encourage the development of a participatory culture. The district committees are currently perceived as too politically motivated to provide any concrete added value or an effective platform for target-oriented bottom-up participatory processes. This also corresponds with the expressed concern that politicians selectively choose results from participatory processes to legitimise their own policies. Nevertheless, despite these concerns, the city of Munich is showing a tendency towards greater participation, and this tendency is generally perceived positively by the experts.

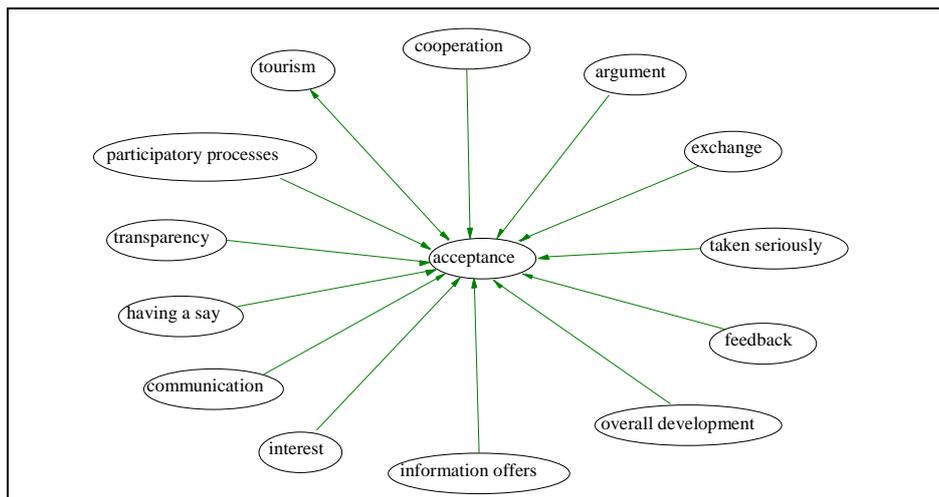
Figure 8: Perception of Participatory Processes by Experts in Munich



Source: Adapted from Herntrei et al. (2022)

Participatory processes are seen by several interview partners as an effective method for increasing the acceptance of policy decisions among the local population in Munich, including the field of tourism, and thus the acceptance of tourism as such (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Causal Relationships of Acceptance in Munich



Source: Adapted from Herntrei et al. (2022)

Participation, transparency, open communication, an exchange on an equal level as well as a sincere interest in citizens' concerns are central success factors which, in the view of the Munich experts, influence acceptance positively. Nevertheless, despite digital support, the corresponding efforts for greater participation and transparency will not be beneficial if politicians and administration do not meet the basic needs of local populations when interacting with them.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK: WHICH IMPLICATIONS ARISE FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE?

The underlying study focused on the question of whether and how an improvement of tourism acceptance by involving local communities more strongly in participatory processes can be achieved. The findings revealed a fundamental dissatisfaction with the prevailing political planning and development structures in the three Bavarian destinations — the Franconian Lake District, Tölzer Land, and Munich. In the perception of the interview partners, the implementation of systematic participatory processes is lengthy and complex. However, first and foremost, political goodwill for any implementation is mostly missing. Consequently, partnerships on an equal level — a precondition for any successful exchange process (Ap 1992) — between politics, administration, and local communities are hardly recognisable in the Bavarian destinations involved. Specifically, a lack of rationality and reciprocity, imbalances in the exchange between the participating actors, and unsatisfactory results are identified as the central factors of discontent with the existing policy and administrative exchange. In such cases, the exchange is often disrupted (Ap 1992), leading to a decline in tourism acceptance and, in the most critical case, to protest movements (Klages 2011). A strongly perceived mistrust of local populations towards politicians is pronounced and the ability to fulfil their political mandate responsibly is questioned. An existing lack of trust consequently results in a steadily increasing gap between the political establishment and local communities, representing a fundamental challenge (not only) for the tourism industry.

Inherently, the tourism industry strongly affects the living space and thus the quality of life of local populations. Tourism in the three participating Bavarian destinations is recognised to be a source of several positive yet also numerous negative effects. As such, legitimisation of tourism is necessary. The tourism industry must demonstrate its contribution to the quality of life of local communities on which it thrives. Adhering to long-established top-down planning processes does not appear to be a target-oriented option against the background of growing dissatisfaction. More involvement of local communities in planning processes is desired and citizen participation is an important problem-solving approach for the successful and sustainable development of tourism destinations and living spaces in Bavaria. Systematic participatory processes were identified as a suitable method to guarantee a continuous exchange between the local population, politics, and administration, to incorporate the legitimate needs of the local population into planning objectives, and to increase the acceptance of tourism.

To address the current discontent, political support for tourism, political responsibility for decisions made, and systematic citizen participation in strategic planning processes — ideally instigated and led by the elected head of the territory — are necessary.

Given the decades-long recognition of the social impacts of tourism development and the essential role of local communities in the tourism industry, Bavarian tourism destinations are advised to take the current transformation processes seriously and not to negate them. The findings of the undertaken study, being in accordance with other German studies (see DTV and DIFT 2022) can be understood as an urgent appeal to fundamentally adapt future planning and development processes in Bavarian tourism destinations to current requirements — requirements that relate to the quality of life and well-being of local communities and focus on qualitative growth, thus following the previously outlined recent and contemporary paradigm shift in the perception of the tourism destination.

Considering the nature of qualitative research, the presented findings cannot be regarded as representative of the Bavarian population. However, having consciously selected destination areas differing in development and type (urban area, urban–rural transition area, and rural area), the research methodology can be deemed transferable to other Bavarian destinations. Further research might address the questions of how barriers to citizen participation in terms of the lack of political goodwill (and the reluctance to the redistribution of power) can be overcome in (hierarchically constituted) Bavaria and which new skills and competencies does citizen participation in tourism planning place on tourism authorities in contemporary sought-after destinations.

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