Network-based planning for the sustainable development of tourism destinations: conceptual approach

Planeamento em rede para o desenvolvimento sustentável de destinos turísticos: abordagem conceptual

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Abstract | Tourism planning applies to the tourism system, the same basic concepts and approaches of global planning. Among other goals, it aims to bring benefits to local actors while maintaining the sustainability of tourism industry. The sustainability of tourism demands for the development of effective networks between economic actors. The community involvement and participation both in the planning process and in networks is crucial. Considering that the dynamics between tourism stakeholders may result in constraints to sustainable planning due to the diversity of interests, it is important to involve the local community through a network-based planning process framed in collaborative policies. The present paper aims to conduct a state of art review about the tourism planning processes, the sustainable development of tourism destinations and the role of networks in linking these dimensions. The main objective is to create a conceptual framework for networked tourism planning processes supporting destinations' sustainable development.

Keywords | Networks, planning, sustainability, development, tourism destinations

Resumo | O planeamento turístico aplica ao sistema do turismo os mesmos conceitos e abordagens básicos do planeamento em geral. Entre outros objetivos, pretende trazer benefícios para os atores locais, mantendo a sustentabilidade da indústria turística. A sustentabilidade no turismo implica o desenvolvimento efetivo de redes entre os atores económicos. O envolvimento da comunidade e a participação, tanto no processo de planeamento como nas redes é crucial. Considerando que as dinâmicas entre os stakeholders do turismo podem resultar em obstáculos ao planeamento sustentável devido à diversidade de interesses, é importante envolver a comunidade local através de um processo de planeamento em rede enquadrado em políticas colaborativas. No presente artigo pretende-se analisar o estado da arte sobre os

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processos de planeamento turístico, o desenvolvimento sustentável de destinos turísticos e o papel das redes na articulação destas dimensões. O objetivo principal é criar um modelo conceptual para os processos de planeamento turístico em rede que suporte o desenvolvimento sustentável de destinos turísticos.

Palavras-chave | Redes, planeamento, sustentabilidade, desenvolvimento, destinos turísticos

1. Introduction

Although networks are essential for sustainable tourism development, the research on the topic is sparse. This paper provides a systematic literature review focusing on network-based planning in tourism destinations. In this paper it also will be analysed the conceptualization and framework of planning and its relations with the sustainable development, as the quality and sustainability of a tourism destination depends on planning processes and networks. The paper begins with a conceptualization of planning and sustainable development, followed by the definition of networks and a presentation of network theory. Finally, the process of planning within networks for the sustainability of tourism destinations is focused. The article ends with a conceptual model of networked sustainable tourism planning. By identifying the main areas of intervention, it may contribute to the development of research on the topic, but also for the design of planning processes by destinations' managers and planners.

2. Network-based planning for the sustainable development of tourism destinations

Tourism is one of the major world industries as it represents 10% of gross domestic product; 7% of world's exports and 1 in 11 jobs (WTO, 2016). Despite contributing to world economic development, tourism also has created negative impacts due to its unplanned growth. These undesirable side-effects have led to an increasing concern on the conservation and preservation of tourism resources (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). Subsequently, the sustainability concept was adopted in tourism, being common to refer to the desirable tourism development as sustainable tourism development (Butler, 1999). However, sustainability is not possible if there is no cooperative behaviour and the involvement of all stakeholders. Thus networked planning approaches play an important role to achieve sustainability in tourism destinations.

2.1. Frameworking planning and sustainable development

Planning is carried out at all levels and has been developed through the centuries since the Mayas civilization (Costa, 1996, 2001; Gunn, 1994; Inskeep, 1991). The concept and approaches of planning have changed throughout the years. In the beginning it was believed that the elaboration of a master plan was enough to control the development, but throughout the years it was proved that they were very strict, so they were not feasible on the long term (Inskeep, 1991). Nowadays, the used approach changed and it is considered that "planning is a continuous process and must be flexible, depending on changing circumstances, but still achieve the basic development objectives" (Inskeep, 1991, p. 26).

Tourism planning adopts the same basic concepts and approaches of general planning to the tourism system characteristics (Inskeep, 1991). However, in opposition to town planning, it has

often developed as a reaction to particular situations and market interests (Costa, 1996, 2001). In the post-war period tourism developed into a mass industry (Murphy, 1985), despite this rapid expansion the tourism planning did not progress that much during this period. The expansion of the tourism industry was left in the hands of entrepreneurs, and this led to an unplanned development of tourism destinations, which brought huge social, economic and physical implications. This failure of tourism planning was caused by the absence of specific tourism planning controls, the inadequacy of legislation, and poor and ineffective tourism organizations (Costa, 1996, 2001, 2006).

The inadequacy of tourism planning practice led to claim for alternative and more efficient and effective planning approaches and, consequently, tourism planning models were created (Costa, 1996, 2001; Costa, Panyik, & Buhalis, 2014), such as the PASOLP model (Baud-Bovy, 1982, cited in Costa, 2001, pp. 430-431) and the Getz (1986) model. These two models contributed to shift the tourism planning emphasis towards a corporate and a systematic approach (Costa, 1996, 2001). As planning deals with people, their wishes and motivations after the 1980s, public participation has emerged as a need (Costa & Brandão, 2011). Thus the future of tourism will be flexible, segmented, customised and diagonally integrated instead of the 1970s mass tourism that was rigid and standardised (Poon, 1993).

The beginning of the 21st century has been characterised by massive changes that are determining the future of the tourism industry. Better legislation, funding and planning are required to facilitate sustainable growth and the equitable distribution of wealth. This led to the spread of the professional planning of tourism industry. The economic crisis of the beginning of the 21st century pushed the planning and organisation of tourism in new directions, as it was needed to reduce public debts and bring more efficiency and effectiveness to public operations. Due to this economic crisis, destinations must be planned and managed according to its products, territories and level of the tourism industry. Planning was undertaken by local and regional-level organisations as it is at these levels that impacts are felt and, consequently, more effectively managed (Costa, 2006; Costa et al., 2014). "In the first quarter of the 21st century it is believed that the evolution of successful planning and organisation in the tourism sector should take account of the development of the territory and its governance" (Costa, Panyik, & Buhalis, 2013, p.5). Some countries "introduced forms of comprehensive regional and local tourism planning, others moved on and enacted legislation where the planning of the tourism industry started to be undertaken alongside traditional urban and regional planning" (Costa et al., 2014, p. 463).

Tourism planning has to be rethought due to the increasing competition, in the past destinations competed individually in the world's market, but the increasing competition demands more coordination, new forms of planning and modern organisations (Costa et al., 2014). Considering that sustainability is crucial to the competitiveness of a destination, it is essential that planners and managers understand it and include it in tourism planning and practice. And the planning of tourism development underlies a set of approaches and principles, towards the promotion of a sustainable tourism development.

The original definition of sustainable development was advanced by the World Commission on Economic Development for the United Nations (WCED) 'Our Common Future' Report (also known as the Brundtland Report), which defines it as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987).

The emergence of the sustainable development concept led to its adoption in many areas, including the tourism industry, and thus appeared the sustainable tourism notion. The environmen-

tal, economic and sociocultural dimensions are the base of sustainable tourism, and balance must subsist between these three dimensions for tourism to be considered sustainable (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Stabler, 1997; WTO, 1998). Currently, some authors suggest more dimensions such as the technological (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006) and the political (Butler, 1999; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Mowforth & Munt, 1998) dimensions. The technological dimension (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006) includes the internet that enabled host communities to create communication networks and divulge their destination, and allowed tourists to become acquainted with destinations all around the world. It also includes environmentally mobility systems; energy efficiency; and scientific knowledge and technological support that allow evaluating and monitoring tourism impacts, as well as providing alternatives to avoid future negative effects (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). The political dimension is about the renegotiation of goals and establishment of a system of governance that enables the implementation of tourism sustainability at all levels (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). In fact, it is important to politicise the tourism industry to avoid corruption and the transformation of nature, culture and society, and, simultaneously, move towards sustainability (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). All the dimensions are interconnected and serve as a basis for development of sustainability indicators, and indicators are crucial to monitor tourism and its impacts on the tourism destinations.

Contrary to what might be expected, there is still no consensual definition of sustainable tourism (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Stabler, 1997). This, in a way, justifies the lack of monitoring of tourism and its sustainability because adopting a definition that focuses mainly on one of the dimensions, and neglect the others, could destroy elements that make the region unique (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). "Sustainable tourism implies that the natural, historic and cultural resources for tourism are con-

served for continuous use in the future as well as the present. In fact, these resources can be enhanced by tourism where needed" (WTO, 1998, pp. 13-14). Sustainable tourism is increasingly in vogue and many tourists are looking for this type of tourism. For that reason several entities use this term to attract tourists, when in reality it is no more than a slogan as sustainability in those destinations is non-existent, which leads to discontentment (Butler, 1999; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Liu, 2003; Mowforth & Munt, 1998).

In 1992 a comprehensive action programme entitled as Agenda 21 was adopted, which led to sustainability being the fundamental development policy of several governments (WTO, 1998). The growing concern for sustainability in the tourism industry induced to the creation of Agenda 21 for the Travel Industry and Tourism, which established the priority areas of action for government authorities and for the tourism companies.

However, for sustainability to occur it is necessary to take into account the different above mentioned dimensions of sustainable tourism, as well as to encourage the participation of the local community. To designate a form of tourism as 'sustainable tourism' does not imply that it is effectively sustainable, hence it is extremely important to monitor the impacts to determine whether, in fact, it is sustainable. It is also important that all stakeholders are interested in actually participating in the process. In this process, the public sector plays a very important role as it is responsible for outlining a strategy and regulating the industry in order to make it truly sustainable.

Sustainable tourism development seeks to encourage appropriate forms of tourism and does not generate serious environmental or sociocultural problems. Therefore when developing in a sustainable way environmental quality is maintained or improved; cultural well-being and economic prosperity are enhanced; tourist markets are retained and the benefits of tourism are widely optimised and spread throughout the community improving

their quality of life, due to a high level of tourist satisfaction (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Stabler, 1997; WTO, 1998), and community involvement is fundamental. Besides community involvement it is crucial that all stakeholders cooperate, especially due to the small size of the majority of tourism enterprises, otherwise the sustainability may not be achieved. This cooperation may be through the establishment of networks, so it is important to understand this concept.

2.2. Understanding network concept and theory

> Although the terms partnership, strategic alliance, coalition or cooperative agreement are frequently used to describe forms of collaboration, partnerships between actors in tourism are often operationalised as 'networks'. Technically, these descriptors differ with regard to their degrees of integration and organisation but social interaction between actors is a common theme (Albrecht, 2013, p. 639).

Network analysis has started to emerge in the literature in the late 1980s (Scott, Baggio, & Cooper, 2008). The increasing participation of multiple stakeholders in tourism planning and development gave relevance to network theory, since the network concept is based on the relationships between entities (Farmaki, 2015; Scott et al., 2008).

Originated in mathematical graph theory, networks in their basic form consist of 'nodes' ('actors') and 'edges' ('ties'). From a social sciences perspective, networks represent actors and their relationships: network theory is concerned with the links and relationships between actors (Albrecht, 2013). And Jamal and Getz (1995) and Murphy

(1985) may be considered as the earliest works on collaboration in tourism (Morrison, Lynch, & Johns, 2004).

A "network defined as a specific type of relation (ties) linking defined sets of persons, objects or events" and these "sets of persons, objects or events on which a network is defined are called actors or nodes. Thus, a network consists of a set of nodes, and ties representing some relationship between the nodes" (Scott et al., 2008, p. 2). Tourism is a networked industry where clusters and networks of cooperative and competitive organisations within a destination cooperate and compete in dynamic evolution.

> [And] the concept of a network and the techniques of network analysis provide a means of conceptualising, visualising and analysing these complex sets of relationships. It provides a method for simplifying and communicating these relationships and so can be useful in promoting effective collaboration within destinations. It allows the identification of critical junctures in destination networks that cross functional, hierarchical or geographic boundaries, so ensuring integration within groups following strategic destination restructuring initiatives (Scott et al., 2008, p. 3).

Morrison et al. (2004, p. 198) employed a working definition of a tourism network to guide their research:

> A set of formal, co-operative relationships between organisations and individuals to achieve a particular purpose within the tourism sector that may result in qualitative and/or quantitative benefits of a learning and exchange, business activity, and/or community

nature relative to building profitable tourism destinations.

Network theory offers avenues for exploring collaboration, trust, interdependence, reciprocity, conflicts of interest, leadership and other issues in the interaction of stakeholders (Albrecht, 2013). This led to the adoption of a network analytical approach by several researchers (Farmaki, 2015), which should be considered by planners and managers when developing a tourism destination, as network-based planning is important to achieve sustainability.

2.2.1. Networked planning for the sustainability of tourism destinations

Tourism destinations "have a greater chance to be competitive on a national and global basis when their businesses are competing and collaborating at the same time" (Novelli, Schmitz, & Spencer, 2006, p. 1142). Cooperative behaviour in tourism destination communities is a condition for sustainable planning and development of destinations (Beritelli, 2011). In fact, one of the key determinants of tourism industry's sustainability is the development of effective networks and partnerships between actors (March & Wilkinson, 2009). According to Dredge (2006) network theory provides an important analytical approach for the study of local tourism policy development in the context of tourism destination planning and management.

Tourism planning aims at bringing certain socio-economic benefits to society while maintaining sustainability of tourism industry through protecting the environment and local culture (WTO, 1998). It should be understood as a problem avoiding tool, and not a problem solving one, and, simultaneously, should not be only planning for, but planning with (Gunn, 1994).

Tourism planning must follow an approach that emphasises community involvement and participation. It should be carried out according to a sys-

tematic process in order to be effective. The planning process varies depending on the type of planning and local conditions. It should be developed and implemented following a strategic framework of action based on a global and integrated perspective of the tourism system (including the community), likely to be implemented and monitored and, if applicable, revised without abrogating the basic objectives (Inskeep, 1991; WTO, 1998).

Despite physical planning is still a dominant objective due to the need to ensure ecological and social sustainable environments, tourism planning is now moving towards creating new models able of bringing together the regulation of the destination, and the coordination and stimulation of private and public participation (Costa, 2006), as well as linking private and public sectors (Gunn, 1994). Public participation prevents that a group is favoured and leads to the development of adjusted policies (Costa, 2001).

Gunn (1994) states that: the integration of planning at all scales is essential; clustering is a basic principle of planning and design; planning should encompass all travel; planning must predict a better future (long-term betterment of all involved); economic development must not be an exclusive goal of planning; planning processes are becoming much more interactive (top-down planning is being replaced by bottom-up planning). And since the end of the previous century, decisions have to be designed and implemented bearing in mind that:

> planning is to be designed with the aim of providing solid ground, bring efficiency and increase the multiplier impact of private sector's investment; and sustainable tourism calls for more comprehensive and inclusive forms of planning (Costa & Brandão, 2011, p. 5).

The Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry aims "to establish systems and procedures

to incorporate sustainable development considerations at the core of the decision-making process and to identify actions necessary to bring sustainable tourism development into being" (WTTC, WTO, & The Earth Council, 1996, p. 38). Some of the priorities for the government organisations are: planning for sustainable tourism development; providing for the participation of all sectors of society in tourism; and partnerships for sustainable development.

The governmental organisations are the main responsible for the sustainable or unsustainable development of a territory. So they should: plan; assess the capacity of guaranteeing a sustainable development; involve all the sectors in the planning and development process; and monitor the results obtained to ensure the sustainable development of the destination(s). The involvement of local communities in private and public actions is fundamental as without their involvement the tourism activity cannot be planned and developed in a sustainable way (WTTC et al., 1996).

Agenda 21 for Travel and Tourism focus the development of partnerships to facilitate responsible entrepreneurship, and the most effective ones are likely to be those developed for mutual benefit. Concerning companies this Agenda has as objective to form partnerships to bring about long-term sustainability. And mutual effort (of industry, organisations and government) is needed to bring about long-term sustainability. Governmental organisations can create an enabling policy environment that is supportive of partnerships between the public, private and community sectors, as it is very important to incorporate communities in the planning process (WTTC et al., 1996).

Governments became progressively aware of the economic advantages that tourism could bring to development, and tourism planning started to be seen much more from a strategic point of view. And, as government budgets are shrinking it is crucial to involve the private sector and local communities, and, consequently, governments must take into consideration the interests of private sector organisations and local communities (Costa, 2006; Dredge, 2006) to develop destinations sustainably.

A sustainable tourism destination strategy requires collaborative and inclusionary consensus-building practices (Presenza & Cipollina, 2010), so it is necessary to consider the trust dimension. In fact, sustainable tourism requires the community support, and that is only possible when there is trust, otherwise partnerships and collaboration may be undermined (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016). And planners "in order to increase cooperation or launch collective action" must pay attention to "installed bonds of trust and understanding among actors, recognizable through intense communication" (Beritelli, 2011, p. 624). And as Dredge (2006) mentions, the communities comprise a variety of stakeholder groups that interweave across networks of actors of private and public institutions. These networks may be formal contract-based or informal relation-based types of cooperation, as it depends of the conditions and circumstances actors convene and on the agreement specificity.

Sustainability would not be a reality unless tourism industry joins forces. The partnerships and the creation of tourism network(s), between tourism industry and local communities, are fundamental for the formation and management of sustainable tourism policy. Tourism policies should be designed involving directly all stakeholders as it is very important their support (Costa et al., 2013; Waligo, Clarke, & Hawkins, 2013). A coherent and integrative tourism policy enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of a destination (Manente, Minghetti, & Montaguti, 2013; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) playing networks a critical role in achieving effective public participation (Costa et al., 2013). Dredge (2006) asserts that inclusivity, participation and networking can significantly contribute to the management of tourism in a more sustainable manner.

Practical application lies as a problem to sustainable implementation. The stakeholder relations are identified as a barrier to sustainable tourism development, partly due to different stakeholder interests, numerous policy domains, poor coordination of activities and failure to include communities in policymaking. Tourism industry is increasingly becoming network-based, and the effectiveness of partnerships in achieving sustainability in tourism is fundamental. So when analysing networks it is needed to consider socio-cultural, economic and environmental factors. In fact, networks are considered as channels for managing social relations between stakeholders (Farmaki, 2015).

Sustainability and networks are concepts that have a close relationship with planning, developing and managing a tourism destination. When planning, one should take into account: the sustainability; the local community (their participation and involvement) and their need to work together through formal networks. Jamal and Getz (1995, p. 200) add that in "addition to aiding public-private sector interactions, collaboration may provide an effective mechanism for community involvement in tourism planning, through selection of key stakeholders to represent the various public interests." The tourism system requires integrated planning, which will benefit private and public sectors, especially if they cooperate (Gunn, 1994). "More local input and involvement at the planning stage will give destination communities a greater stake in the industry and create a more responsive partnership" (Murphy, 1985, p. 153).

More flexible and horizontal approaches are gaining importance, and they imply interaction, better coordination of the tourism stakeholders, and closer links between private and public sectors. This lead to the creation of networks and partnerships as a means of collaboration between the main players, which is fundamental in sustainable development (Costa, 1996, 2001; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Representatives of all tourism sectors – governments, non-profit organizations, and enterprises – have the most to gain by cooperating on tourism planning (Gunn, 1994).

> [Public and private sectors networks] are increasingly important in shaping tourism planning and development. In many destinations, the formal and informal relationships between local government and industry have a considerable effect on the capacity of the destination to harness these public–private partnerships (Dredge, 2006, p. 269).

The capacity for building public–private partnerships is best understood at the level where tourism planning, product development, packaging and marketing takes place (Dredge, 2006). In networks, public and private sector, as well as local community, cooperate and they interact in decision-making and planning. Besides this sustainable coordination and the involvement of everyone implicated in the industry, a shared vision is required for effective sustainable development (Farmaki, 2015). Networking allows actors, including small, to take part in the decision-making process which is fundamental for sustainable tourism development. Networking is a mechanism that helps spreading the sustainable planning in destinations, as well as promotes collaborative policy formulation and implementation (Barrutia & Echebarria, 2015). "In an era where tourism is dominated by requests for tailored experiences, SMEs play a key role in providing adequate products and services to tourists by responding to their most specific requirements" (Novelli et al, 2006, p. 1141). Public-private partnership (PPPs) networks became popular because they represent the mutual dependency between the government and the private sector, which encourages integrated decision-making and effective planning. PPPs represent holistic governance that is in line with

sustainability principles, as they, among others, foster entrepreneurship and innovation as government and private sector share resources; and embrace local interests and increase coordination among tourism actors (Farmaki, 2015).

There is a general belief that participating in a collaborative tourism network produces benefits for tourism firms (Morrison et al., 2004; Novelli et al., 2006). Networks bring numerous benefits to tourism destinations by the promotion of an integrated planning process, inclusive decision-making, increased synergies, and, consequently, the support of the sustainability notion (Farmaki, 2015).

The need for cooperation and collaboration in tourism planning leads to the formation of policy and planning networks. Cooperation and collaboration are major issues in the tourism planning (Bramwell & Lane, 1999; Timothy, 1999) as they are linked to the idea of sustainable tourism development. These networks play important roles in enhancing community participation and organisational integration (Caffyn & Jobbins, 2003; Tosun, 2000). Policy networks may be vertical or horizontal in structure (Erkuş-Öztürk & Eraydın, 2010).

The findings of Erkuş-Öztürk and Eraydın's (2010) study indicate that the main motivation for tourism agents to engage in networking is economic, whereas the large and highly-qualified companies and tourism associations have deeper concerns on environmental issues. And "policies and support mechanisms should be developed to increase the motivation of organisations to engage in collaborative projects and organisation building in environmental protection schemes" (Erkuş-Öztürk & Eraydın, 2010, p. 123).

Network theory provides an important analytical approach for the study of local tourism policy development in what concerns tourism destination planning and management. Understanding the power differentials between actors is important to encourage engagement and participation of local government and tourism industry (Dredge, 2006).

> Framing an analysis of tourism planning and policy processes around concepts of networks opens up opportunities for enhanced understandings of how policy emerges from a complex web of interactions between a diversity of public and private sector actors and agencies. It allows the development of understanding about interdependence, reciprocity, mutual interest, trust, representativeness and leadership. […] The networks can be used as an organising concept to understand the messiness of local tourism networks (Dredge, 2006, p. 271).

According to Presenza and Cipollina (2010) there are two main streams of application of networks: networks are seen as an important conduit for managing public-private relationships; and they are understood as a useful framework for analyzing the evolution of business, product development, packaging and opportunities for further development. Planning and regulatory environments that are flexible and capable of opportune response are required by networks (Dredge, 2006). A variety of relations can be identified in tourism networks, which are recognized as complex and mutable entities that develop and evolve over time in response to environmental and organizational developments and demands (March & Wilkinson, 2009; Presenza & Cipollina, 2010).
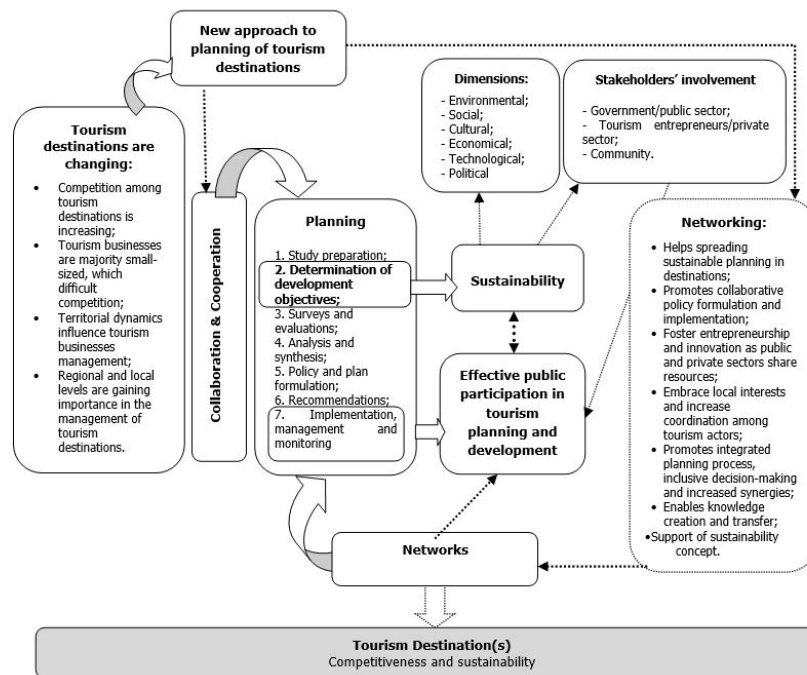
Figure 1 | Network-based model for sustainable destination planning
Source: Own elaboration based on Barrutia and Echebarria (2015); Beritelli (2011); Costa (2006); Costa and Brandão (2011); Dredge (2006); Farmaki (2015); Gunn (1994); Inskeep (1991); March and Wilkinson (2009); Morrison et al. (2004); Novelli et al. (2006); WTO (1998); WTTC et al. (1996).

Tourism industry is increasingly becoming network-based and tourism system requires integrated planning which will benefit all actors if they cooperate on tourism planning. The network-based planning for the sustainability of tourism destinations may be translated into a conceptual model such as the one proposed (Figure 1). This conceptual model highlights that cooperation is a condition for sustainable planning and development of destinations, as this networks are key determinants of tourism sustainability. Tourism planning must be carried in a systematic way and it should be implemented, monitored and, if needed, revised according the defined sustainable goals. The goals state what is expected to be achieved through tourism development and should be decided at the beginning of the study taking into account the sustainability concept, as well as the several dimensions of sustainability. These objectives should be determined in close coordination with the community.

Cooperation and collaboration are important in tourism planning as they are related to the sustainable tourism development idea and, consequently originate policy and planning networks, which play important roles in enhancing community participation. Community involvement and participation should be stimulated, as well as the promotion of networks between the private and public sectors because sustainability and effective planning require the involvement of all. And networks play an important role in achieving public participation, which is fundamental to design coherent and integrative tourism policies that enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of a destination.

3. Conclusion

This article aimed to synthesise the work developed in the last three decades and presented the results of a literature review of network-based plan-

ning for sustainable tourism destination(s) development. Due to the complexity of tourism system and of the sustainability application networking is fundamental to effectively develop sustainably a tourism destination, especially as most enterprises in this industry are small sized.

The achievement of sustainability for tourism destinations is only possible if a comprehensive and inclusive form of planning is adopted, and effective networks and partnerships between tourism actors are developed. Therefore, network-based planning is essential as it allows planning with, i.e., design, plan, implement and monitor a strategic framework of action involving all (including local community). And it should aim at bringing benefits to local actors while protecting the tourism destination(s) features, i.e., taking into account the sustainability concept. Sustainable tourism requires the community support, so it is crucial to involve everyone at all levels of tourism planning, and enhance the creation of networks between them, otherwise sustainability would not be a reality as it is necessary that tourism industry join forces. Cooperation between community members is essential to destination(s) planning and development, and networking allows all to take part in the planning process. It also helps spreading the sustainable planning, as well as promotes collaborative formulation and implementation of policies. So, networked planning is one of the keys to achieve sustainability and competitiveness for tourism destinations.

The limitations of this article were the restricted number of references that could be employed associated to the use of only one research database, the SCOPUS, which returned few articles, being the majority not concerned to network-based planning towards tourism destination sustainability.

This paper confirmed the importance and benefits of network-based planning for the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations. However the literature review showed that there

is a lack of empirical studies that prove the outcomes and benefits of networked planning. Some topics of network-based planning for tourism destinations sustainability to be developed are: comparative analysis that helps to understand the results on sustainability of different types and levels of networking, and the knowledge transfer between the network members. It is also very important to develop and divulge best practices that show the benefits of network-based planning for sustainable tourism destinations development.

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