

## Eco-Friendly Transport And Tourism Destinations - Summary by Eugenio Yunis -

I would like to review some of the main issues concerning transport and its relationship with the sustainability of tourism destinations. First, I think it is necessary to clarify what we understand by a "destination", since this is not a precise concept and it does not always correspond to an administrative institution or a single actor behind it. I will then consider how tourism stakeholders at destinations can influence the transport system to and within destinations. Finally, and from the public sector perspective that we represent, I will analyse what kind of framework, policies and specific tools a government can set up in order to help destinations in minimising environmental impacts resulting from tourism-related transport.

According to the World Tourism Organization's Working Group on Destination Management, *"A local tourism destination is a physical space in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services and attractions, and tourism resources within one day's return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, and images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Local destinations incorporate various stakeholders often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations"*; today I will call these supra-destinations.

We could identify two principal ways through which destinations can influence mobility in order to make it more sustainable:

- Through the provision and management of access infrastructure and services;
- By means of controlling and managing tourist flows within the destination, and this at least at two levels:
  - a. at the local level, for small, physically concentrated destinations, and
  - b. among the different tourism sites of the so-called supra-destinations, via the establishment of eco-friendly transport networks.

### Access control

Destinations can control, although in a limited manner, the access to their territories and facilities. For instance, they can influence the location, type, size and



quality of different transport infrastructures, including the non-provision of some of them. Thus, for example, by limiting the development or improvement of a local airport, or of main access roads, etc., a destination can restrain tourist arrivals or can encourage the use of other modes of transport. By improving the railway lines or the station and providing immediate public transport facilities from the station to the major tourist sites and attractions at the destination, travellers will prefer to take the train for access first, and then other eco-friendly modes for internal movements.

Another way is working with tour operators; destination managers can influence the type of transport that tourists will use. Working with charter companies, for example, will optimise the number of passengers in each aircraft, reducing the CO2 emissions per tourist. Organising parking areas for buses close to the main attractions of the destination, and limiting the parking capacity for individual cars will encourage tour operators and tourists to use group transport and help diminish the number of cars and all negative impacts resulting from their use.

### **At local destination level**

At the local level, destination management organizations have to focus on how to manage tourist flows within often reduced areas, and encouraging non-polluting forms of travelling like cycling, walking, horse-riding, modern forms of rickshaws, electric cars, etc. through the provision of adequate and protected lanes, abundant rental services, suitable signposting, among others. Once again, the use of private cars can be discouraged, and a key condition for this is to provide adequate information to the tourists about the availability of such facilities and services before and during the trip.

Here, I would like to make a short but crucial comment about the fact that a tourism destination has rarely a single entity responsible for its management. Tourism is an atomised sector and the way it is developed and managed is the result of the actions of many stakeholders from the public and private sectors. Thus, the implementation of any measure aiming at controlling tourist flows and their impacts, even in a small destination, needs a process of consensus-building among all these parties, and then a coordinated action. It requires a long consultative and participative process, including not only public and private stakeholders involved in tourism and transport, but also the local civil society.

### **Within supra-destinations**

In supra-destinations, the number of stakeholders is obviously bigger and taking any coordinated decision becomes even more complex. In this context, tourism site managers, in collaboration with the main public works, transport and tourism authorities, have to focus on simple and realistic objectives. One possibility is to build networks of eco-friendly public transport infrastructure and services between the main attractions, sites and eventually towns of the supra-destination, thus facilitating the movement of large tourist flows and discouraging the use of private cars. The opposite is true: when famous tourism sites are not easily reachable by public transport, this works like an incentive for

individual tourists to use their own vehicles. This strategy can be taken over by tour operators as well, who will see an additional business opportunity in preparing packages, with eco-friendly transport included, to visit a collection of sites.

But here a problem may arise: while public transport is definitely less environmentally harmful than individual vehicles, it is generally associated with group tours, organised by tour operators; as a result, it leads to a concentration of tourism routes and visits to the most famous sites, generating congestion, limiting the tourism development of more isolated rural areas, which need, maybe more than any others, the economic benefits of tourism. This problem underlines the fact that sustainability is a complex approach, in which environmental, economic as well as social dimensions have a similar importance and the right balance has to be found in each particular case.

Another aspect that supra-destinations, and some large individual destinations too, must address to avoid the transport-associated problems is to strive for modifying the seasonality of their tourism offer. Tourist demand can be influenced much more than it is done at present to vary their seasonal patterns in order to avoid peak periods, and in addition to price stimuli, a complete information about the advantages of some low and shoulder seasons and the disadvantages of peak periods is fundamental in this respect. Negotiating suitably lower transport tariffs and maintaining the same frequencies during the low and shoulder seasons, or providing free parking facilities for buses in those seasons, as opposed to very high rates during the high and peak seasons, are some of the many measures that destinations can take in this respect.

### **The role of the governments**

The last point of my presentation concerns the role of the national authorities in stimulating and helping the many private actors at destinations to implement eco-friendly means of transport. I need first to briefly resume the situation and trends of the tourism market in Europe: international tourist arrivals to European countries reached 444 millions in 2005, according to the still provisional data of our Tourism Barometer, growing by 4% with respect to 2004. Domestic tourists are not accounted in these data and can, in some countries like France, Italy and Spain for example, represent ten or fifteen times the number of international tourists. Land transport is by far still the most common means of transport for tourists travelling within Europe, since most of them originate in other European countries, and since road and rail infrastructures are well-developed and distances are relatively short. However, land transport has lost some percentage in favour of air transport, with the creation and the success of many low cost airline companies over the last ten years.

In this context, governments have a role to play in support of more sustainable national and international public transport, mainly railways, but also other forms of low-polluting transport. In addition to those mentioned before, relating mainly to the provision of infrastructure and the provision of information, some of the actions that can be ideally developed by national authorities in order to sustain more environmentally friendly transport could be:

- support eco-friendly public transports through direct or indirect subsidies (e.g. tax reduction or exemption on vehicles using renewable and low polluting sources of energy);
- charge higher taxes to highly polluting means of transport, including large private cars;
- intensify public support and funding available for research activities leading to technological innovations in this area;
- improve the maintenance of the railway network infrastructure wherever it exists and especially in rural areas;
- develop or improve national or international high-speed railways able to compete with air transport for short and middle distances (i. e. Eurostar, Thalys, etc.)
- set up intensive and permanent national campaigns to raise awareness of travellers regarding their means of tourism transport;
- establish attractive tariffs in national, state-owned public transport companies. In France, for example, the national railway company has set up a pricing system comparable to the one used by the low cost airline companies. (If you book your ticket with a long anticipation, prices are considerably reduced.) This strategy goes along with the behaviour of many tourists who know where their holidays will be a long time before the date of departure.
- develop a set of indicators for monitoring the impacts of transports.

In implementing one or several of these actions aiming at controlling people's mobility, it has never to be forgotten that travelling is a right that contributes to the individual enrichment and to the intercultural relations between people.

However, in the general deregulation process we have been witnessing in Europe and throughout the world over the last couple of decades, what are the real possibilities and the room to manoeuvre that policy makers really have? Will societies continue relying upon the free market to regulate itself, or do we need to re-introduce a stronger role for governments and public entities? In my opinion, a radical change in the way our societies function and in the roles played by some of its actors, namely the most economically powerful, needs to be introduced; but this issue is certainly beyond the framework of this conference and outside my professional and institutional competences.

To conclude, I would like to add that Europe is a mature tourism destination, combining at the same time the major outbound and inbound markets, and as such should show the way toward sustainability in all sub-sectors of the tourism sector, including the transport one. In addition, European countries possess the means to sustainably develop their territories and the connexions between them. What has to be enhanced is the political will to do it.

Thank you