

Preface

The current book of proceedings is the outcome of the effort of a number of people, who participated at the *4th International Conference organized by the International Association of Cultural and Digital Tourism (IACuDiT)* in Athens, May 25–27, with the theme “Innovative Approaches to Tourism and Leisure: Culture, Places and Narratives in a Sustainability Context”. The chair of the Conference, i.e. IACuDiT, is a global network of people, who bear on a wide range of issues of concern and interest in cultural and digital tourism, in an era of major global changes. IACuDiT is a non-profit international association, which values creative, ethical, and progressive action, aimed at the improvement of global hospitality and tourism research on cultural and digital issues. IACuDiT brings together a wide range of academics and industry practitioners from cultural, heritage, communication, and innovational tourism backgrounds and interests. It mainly promotes and sponsors discussion, knowledge sharing, and close cooperation among scholars, researchers, policy makers, and tourism professionals. The Conference was co-chaired by the Kapodistrian University of Athens; the Peloponnesian University of Greece, the Aegean University of Greece, the University of Applied Sciences, Austria; and the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), Greece.

The *scope* of the Conference was to shed light on the latest developments in the tourism sector, a sector considered as a key driver for many national and regional economies, cross-cutting cultural, environmental, political, economic, social, and technological aspects of contemporary societies. In this respect, the ultimate goal was to provide a step motivating an interdisciplinary, fruitful, and challenging dialogue that could promote further understanding and interaction among a multidisciplinary academic audience, tourism industry professionals and key practitioners, as well as decision-makers. Towards this end, the Conference is touching upon a range of key themes affecting both the tourism sector per se and also sustainable tourism development, in order scientific knowledge but also practical experiences to be creatively shared and synergies to be created.

Based on the nature of the tourism sector and its interaction with many different dimensions of tourist destinations, an interdisciplinary audience of academic researchers and scholars, industry professionals, governmental officials, and other

key industry practitioners have contributed to the 4th IACuDiT Conference. Their valuable contributions have formed the content of the current book, enriching through the perspectives, the context, the approaches, and the tools that can be used for a thorough understanding, planning, and promoting local assets along the lines of sustainability in environmental, economic, and social terms.

To all these people who have helped and supported the realization of the 4th International Conference of IACuDiT and have brought to an end the current editorial effort, we would like to express our gratitude. Special thanks and sincere appreciation are due to all our keynote speakers, for providing valuable input that has enriched discussions and argumentation of the Conference: Dr. Edith M. Szivas, from the UNWTO Themis Foundation, an expert in tourism strategic planning and tourism human capital development; Dr. Kathy Velandar, Director of the Centre for Ecotourism and Wildlife Management, Edinburgh Napier University; and Mr. Peter Wilson, Director of Timber Design Initiatives, Edinburgh.

We would like to hope that our ambition to add value to such a complex and intriguing issue as the one of tourism, by emphasizing its interdisciplinary nature as well as tools and approaches to cope with it, was fraught with success. We hope that the 4th IACuDiT Conference has contributed to the creation of a fertile ground for interdisciplinary work and new ways of thinking and above all, has helped us all, by exchanging our ideas and expertise to see in what a tiny place we occupy in the world and to try to be modest.



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