Undertourism and Physical, Social and Economic Sustainability. The *ECHE Lab Approach* to Evaluate the Cultural Tourism Sustainability in the Inner Areas

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Abstract. This article addresses the sustainability of tourism development projects in contexts characterized by weak demand, such as Inner Areas. The primary purpose of this paper is to outline the key aspects to consider in project sustainability assessment procedures within strategic planning tools for cultural tourism destinations currently experiencing undertourism. Specifically, the article focuses on the maximum and minimum tourist attendance limits that can simultaneously guarantee the physical integrity of cultural heritage, the socio-cultural integrity of communities, and the economic sustainability of services. To this end, two fundamental tools are identified: carrying capacity assessment, in its various forms—of sites, territories, and communities—and break-even analysis, for identifying the break-even point of project budgets. The conceptual framework is the 2022 ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Tourism.

Keywords: Undertourism · Economic Sustainability · Carrying Capacity · Inner Areas

1 Introduction

1.1 The Reference Context

In the field of Tourism, the scientific, cultural and political debate of recent years has mainly focused on the effects produced by the phenomenon of so-called overtourism. The 2022 ICOMOS Charter for Cultural Tourism itself, as we will see better later, essentially has the aim of providing useful information to counteract the effects produced by overtourism on Cultural Heritage and Local Communities [1].

For these reasons, the sustainability of policies, programs and projects in the field of Tourism, since the first studies (among others Cifuentes 1992, for example) has been treated mainly by looking at the excess pressure produced by *Overtourism* [2].

Only recently did the Italian Ministry of Tourism, on the occasion of the International Tourism Forum organized in Milan in January 2026, also begin to place emphasis on the risks and opportunities connected with the opposite phenomenon, that of *Undertourism*,

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essentially unexplored until now, a phenomenon which particularly characterizes the Inner Areas.

However, *Undertourism* must also be considered from a sustainability perspective: if in the first case the conservation of the heritage is jeopardized by excessive pressure, in the second one the risks instead derive precisely from the scarcity of presences, which often does not allow to intercept the minimum quantity of economic resources, public and private, necessary for the management of the sites.

On the other hand, a greater enhancement of currently less visited sites, some extent, could to also help to counteract the phenomena of overtourism.

It is evident, therefore, that to speak correctly about the sustainability of Tourism, it is necessary to treat the topic in its entirety and multidimensionality, looking simultaneously at the upper limit of pressures but also at the lower limit, as well as at the aspects of physical sustainability but also of social and economic sustainability.

This contribution fits precisely into this context, illustrating an approach, developed by the ECHE Lab laboratory of the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria, which tries to integrate into the same procedure a sustainability assessment of policies, programs and projects that allows all these dimensions to be verified simultaneously.

The contribution is configured as a conceptual/methodological framework paper, the first experimental applications have just been started in some areas of Calabria..

1.2 Structure of the Paper

This article aims to present the ECHE Lab's approach to assessing the physical, social, and economic sustainability of Cultural Tourism in Inner Areas, especially where undertourism exists.

The article is essentially divided into two parts:

- The first part provides the framework within which the approach is developed, which stems from an examination of the 2022 ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Tourism. It then briefly reviews the concepts of cultural tourism destinations and the trend in demand for services in Inner Areas; the article then proceeds to outline the strategic planning of cultural tourism in Inner Areas.
- The second part of the article is specifically dedicated to the evaluation aspects of the ECHE Lab Approach, aimed at evaluating projects for the enhancement of Cultural Heritage for tourism purposes. The procedure developed is based on well-known concepts and tools, such as the assessment of carrying capacity, for the physical and social dimensions of sustainability, and the concept of budget equilibrium, verified through Break-Even Analysis, for the economic dimension: the specific aspect of the approach consists in their combined use, which allows for verifying the simultaneous existence of both equilibrium conditions mentioned above.

2 Undertourism and the ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism

2.1 A Charter for the Protection of Cultural Heritage

The ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism has been adopted by the ICOMOS Annual General Assembly (Bangkok, Thailand) in November 2022. The title of the Charter is: *"Reinforcing cultural heritage protection and community resilience through responsible and sustainable tourism management"*.

The title itself makes it clear that the Charter, similarly to those of the previous year (1976, 1999) [3, 4], was created with the aim of protecting heritage and communities from the risks associated with the phenomenon of so-called *Overtourism.*

The first two declared objectives of the Charter, in fact, are:

- *Objective 1 - To place the protection of cultural heritage and community rights at the heart of cultural heritage tourism policy and projects, by providing principles that will inform responsible tourism planning and management for cultural heritage protection, community resilience and adaptation;*
- *Objective 2 - To promote stakeholder collaboration and participatory governance in the stewardship of cultural heritage and management of tourism, applying a people-centered and rights-based approach, emphasizing access, education and enjoyment*.

The almost exclusive focus on the effects of overtourism, however, inevitably leads to ignoring the risks associated with the opposite phenomenon, so-called undertourism, which actually affects the vast majority of the territory.

The risks to the survival of cultural heritage in undertouristed areas are linked to its progressive abandonment and the insufficiency of public resources available for its conservation.

Therefore, a strategy for this heritage is urgently needed that balances the needs of conservation with those of enhancement. It is a difficult but essential balance.

3 Cultural Tourism Destinations

3.1 Some Definitions

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of United Nations, Statistics Division, in the *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics* (2008) defines the concept of **Destination** as *"…the place visited that is central to the decision to take the trip. See also purpose of a tourism trip."* (IRTS 2008, 2.31) [5].

The same Recommendations defines the concept of **Tourism Destination** as *"…a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. A destination incorporates various stakeholders and can network to form larger destinations. It is also intangible with its image and identity which may influence its market competitiveness.*"

United Nations World Tourism Organization - UNWTO has defined **Destination management** as: "*the coordinated management of all the elements that make up a destination (attractions, amenities, accessibility, human resources, image and price).* [...] *Its role is to lead and coordinate activities under a coherent strategy or plan, serving the interests of all stakeholders*" [6].

The organization of tourist destination services can take various forms, among which are particularly noteworthy:

- Local Tourism Systems;
- Tourism Districts;
- Destination Management Organizations (DMOs).

Let us focus in particular on this last form, which the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, Statistics Division, and the UNWTO define as "*…the leading organizational entity which may encompass the various authorities, stakeholders and professionals and facilitates tourism sector partnerships towards a collective destination vision. The governance structures of DMOs vary from a single public authority to a public/ private partnership model with the key role of initiating, coordinating and managing certain activities such as implementation of tourism policies, strategic planning, product development, promotion and marketing and convention bureau activities. The functions of the DMOs may vary from national to regional and local levels depending on the current and potential needs as well as on the decentralization level of public administration. Not every tourism destination has a DMO.*

Destination Management has two main purposes:

- To maximize the benefits of tourism to the destination, making tourism 'work for everyone';
- To ensure that tourism is genuinely sustainable for the long term.

Sustainability, therefore, is and must be one of the guiding principles of any form of tourism organization.

The same UNWTO Glossary provides a definition of Cultural Tourism: "*Cultural tourism: Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions.*"

This definition highlights the relevance of preserving Cultural Heritage, both in its tangible and intangible manifestations: the disappearance of such Heritage automatically entails the disappearance of the reasons why visitors travel to a destination, thus marking the end of related activities [7].

4 Supply and Demand of Cultural Services in Inner Areas

4.1 The Place-Based Approach to Enhance Inner Areas: the Italian SNAI

"*…These 'Inner Areas' are defined as areas being at some considerable distance from centres offering such services, and where there has been a fall in population and a rise in degradation.*": thus the UVAL – the Public Investment Evaluation Unit, active at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, defines the Inner Areas [8].

While this definition emphasizes the lack of services (essential and otherwise), it is clear that the low population density that characterizes these territories leads to a demand for services that is insufficient to ensure their economic sustainability, especially when it comes to services provided by the free market.

Weak demand, in fact, often prevents companies from achieving a balanced budget, much less generating sufficient profits, as will be discussed in more detail later.

To make unused territorial capital productive and to limit or eliminate the social costs of hydrogeological instability, landscape deterioration and biological diversity lost the Italian National Agency for Territorial Cohesion has developed a place-based approach, the so-called "National Strategy for Inner Areas" (SNAI).

Among the various resources present in the Inner Areas, considered useful for promoting their relaunch, SNAI attributes a leading role to Culture, in its broadest sense: "*…not only as artistic and landscape heritage, but also in terms of traditions and creativity, material and immaterial factors that contribute to building the image of places and strengthening their identity. Culture - museums, archaeological areas and sites, historical settlements, accompanied by the presence of libraries that contribute to the dissemination of local identities and traditions - can make places more attractive, stimulate tourism and, in this way, counteract depopulation and the closing of territorial gaps.*" [9]

4.2 Cultural Heritage of Inner Areas and Public-Private Partnership

It is also in contexts characterized by weak demand, such as the Inner Areas, that it is necessary to verify the sustainability of tourist-cultural development projects.

The previous considerations regarding the weakness of demand for services also apply to the conservation and accessibility of cultural heritage: the extremely low influx of visitors does not justify the use of public resources to ensure the opening to the public of a significant number of sites, which, therefore, cannot fulfill their potential and contribute, more generally, to increasing the attractiveness of the territories.

This process, in turn, also affects the allocation of resources intended for heritage conservation, which, in the long term, can hardly be consistently allocated to sites for which there is no adequate demand.

A possible solution is sometimes represented by the involvement of non-profit organizations in the management [10]: this solution certainly allows for a drastic reduction in management costs, but, beyond the considerations of expediency associated with forms of job insecurity, it is essential that at least two conditions are met simultaneously:

– The presence in the territory of non-profit organizations interested and equipped with the necessary expertise;

– Demand that is still sufficient to cover fixed costs in the long run.

A site of cultural and tourist interest, however, unless it is a highly renowned site such as a UNESCO World Heritage site, is unlikely to be able to generate significant tourist flows on its own. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a supra-municipal supply system that encompasses and integrates not only the attractions but also the other services necessary for hosting visitors.

5 Strategic Planning of Cultural Tourism in the Inner Areas

We have seen so far that DMOs can be a particularly effective tool for organizing a territory's tourism offerings and that Inner Areas have a wealth of cultural heritage that can help trigger development processes through the use of a place-based approach.

The question at this point is: how should we proceed methodologically to structure DMOs so that they enhance the cultural heritage of Inner Areas in terms of tourism?

"*DMOs today should not only lead on marketing, but must also be strategic leaders in destination development. This role requires them to drive and coordinate destination management activities within the framework of a coherent strategy.*" (UNWTO, 2007)

What are the elements that make up a development strategy for a tourist destination? In this case too, we can refer to the UNWTO's outline:

1. **Situation assessment (Where are we now?)** regarding the tourism competitiveness of the destination;
2. **A strategic framework (Where would we like to be?)** for future tourism growth based on the findings of the situation analysis;
3. **An integrated, multi-year Implementation Plan (How do we get there?)** with specific programmes and projects, budget indicators and monitoring mechanisms to implement the strategic framework;
4. Institutional and performance management arrangements (How do we organise ourselves to get there and measure success?).

During this stage the impact of the strategy would have to be evaluated. This would be likely to cover a number of differing factors (e.g. growing the economic benefits, spreading seasonality or levelling demand, securing investment, raising quality, etc.) depending on the priorities of the strategy. Different research methods will be required to assess different types of impact but they can be broadly divided into two categories:

– Assessment of macro impacts through destination wide research such as national surveys, occupancy surveys etc.
– Assessments of the impacts of individual programme – e.g. campaign evaluations.

6 Outlines for Assessing the Sustainability of Cultural Tourism in the Inner Areas: The ECHE Lab Approach

6.1 Evaluating the Cultural Tourism Sustainability in the Inner Areas

A model that allows you to easily understand the interactions to be considered in sustainability assessments is the so-called "*Visitors, Industry, Community, Environment - VICE model*", developed by the English Tourist Board, which considers a tourist destination "*…as the interactions between the **Visitors,** the **Industry** that serves them, the*

Community *that hosts them and the* ***Environment*** *where this interaction takes place*." [11].

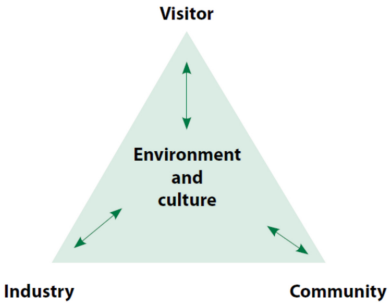


Fig. 1. The VICE Model

Culture's potential contribution to economic development has long been recognized: *"… culture has also been recognized as a driver of economic development, with community-wide social and environmental impacts."* [12], but to avoid the risks associated with the implementation of inappropriate actions, it is necessary to promote a sustainable approach to tourism, particularly in relation to cultural tourism destinations: *"… sustainable tourism approaches to generate positive economic and social benefits in cultural destinations are recommended by both European and international stakeholders."* [13]

The scientific debate on the different approaches to assessing tourism sustainability is extremely broad, but universally accepted methods have not yet been reached: *"Existing indicators cover the most important aspects of the sustainability of tourism at cultural destinations, including both tangible and intangible heritage. Nevertheless, there is not a universally accepted approach to measuring cultural tourism's impacts, and the available indicator systems lean toward the broader concept of sustainable tourism.*" [14, 15], although there is a significant amount of research and publications that have addressed the topic, including Bosone and Rolando [16, 17], among others.

6.2 Physical and Social Sustainability: The Dimensions of Carrying Capacity

The concept of carrying capacity has been defined in various ways by different scholars, (Bencardino, among many others, for example) [18]; many of these definitions deal with the topic by looking exclusively at the physical capacity of the containers, without paying attention to the consequences of the presence: "*the maximum number of visitors that could physically fit into a defined space over a particular time* [19].

Other definitions also look in the direction of the impacts determined by the presence of visitors, defining the carrying capacity as:

– "*the level of use of an area offering a high level of satisfaction with a small impact on resources*" [20];

– "*the maximum number of people that could visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic or socio-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction*" [21].

Carrying capacity assessment can be performed at different scales: at the scale of individual sites or at the scale of the territories in which they are located [22]; different limits correspond to each scale. Similarly, even for the same scale and the same type of site, there is no universally valid carrying capacity but it must be calculated from time to time for each specific situation [23].

The two main dimensions of carrying capacity that, according to some authors, must be taken into consideration are: [24]:

– the physical carrying capacity;
– the real carrying capacity.

They describe the physical carrying capacity "*as the maximum number of people who can use a site without an unacceptable alteration in the physical environment and without an unacceptable decline inexperience quality*." and the real carrying capacity "*as the maximum permissible number of visits of a given site, which is calculated by taking into account the limiting factors (translated into quantitative values) resulting from specific conditions of a given place*.".

Keeping the VICE model in mind, however, this definition only considers the binary relationships between environment and visitors, but does not explore the three-dimensional relationships between environment, visitors, and the community.

This dimension, however, is extremely relevant for preserving the authenticity of sites, which often consists not only of their material component but also of their immaterial one [25–28]. Indeed, the relationship between the material and immaterial dimensions is becoming increasingly important, as emphasized by the ICOMOS Charter for Cultural Tourism.

6.3 Economic Sustainability: the Break-Even Point in Budgets

The difficulties of reconciling the three dimensions of sustainability, even from a methodological perspective, are well-known. In particular, when discussing the economic dimension of sustainability, solutions are often confined to public policies, with no regard for balanced budgets.

There is no doubt that the preservation of Cultural Heritage has a strong public dimension, arising as a collective issue; on the other hand, however, it must also be taken into account that budgetary constraints for public policies are increasingly increasing, despite the brief interlude immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic.

If we truly want to work effectively to pass on Cultural Heritage to future generations, due attention must be paid to the economic dimension of sustainability, otherwise the risk of the permanent disappearance of a significant portion of this Heritage is absolutely real.

Fortunately, in recent years, a growing number of scholars have been paying attention to this dimension, lifting the taboo on private intervention even in policies promoting Cultural Heritage, as is now the case in many other sectors [29–32].

It is clear that this is a highly sensitive area, requiring careful attention to ensure the absolute protection of the public interest, which must nevertheless remain paramount. However, overcoming clearly ideological resistance in this field, synergies between public and private entities must be encouraged wherever possible, in order to significantly increase the amount of resources available for the conservation and enhancement of Heritage.

It should also be considered that in the various forms of public-private partnerships, it is advisable to use private social entities, which, being non-profit, allow two objectives to be effectively pursued:

- ensuring that the actions undertaken truly respond to public interests;
- asset management costs can be reduced by eliminating the profit component, which, however, must legitimately be considered when the entities involved are profit-making.

A point of reference in this regard is Throsby, who, regarding economic sustainability, states: "***Economic sustainability*** *The project should produce a stable and predictable flow of net economic benefits into the future, where both market and nonmarket effects are included in the assessment. Market effects include revenues from tourist admission charges and, in certain types of analysis and under certain assumptions, the net incremental value ('impact') of tourist expenditures (see further under Rule 3 below). If externality or public-good benefits or costs are significant relative to direct market revenues, the project may need to incorporate some means for revenue capture in order to ensure continued financial viability of the project, for example, via taxes levied on those enjoying the external benefits or imposing the external costs. For tourists, such revenue capture is typically achieved through arrival/departure levies at airports, hotel occupancy taxes, and so on. Application of the third sustainability principle above (intragenerational equity) would also ensure that, for example, local residents in an area affected by the tourist project would have equitable access to the project's economic benefits.*" [33]

6.4 Economic Sustainability: The Public-Private Partnership to Enhance the Cultural Heritage

Private entities that may be involved in initiatives aimed at enhancing cultural heritage can be of a different nature, profit-making or not-for-profit, depending on their social goals [34].

In the case of profit-making entities (businesses), their survival is only possible through the generation of revenues from entrepreneurial activity; these revenues must cover all costs and generate a profit share that is greater than the sum of the return on invested capital and the risk associated with the entrepreneurial activity [35].

In the case of not-for-profit entities (associations, foundations, etc.), revenues may come from the activities carried out or from donations and contributions from members and other public and/or private entities. In this case, for the purposes of budget balance, revenues may be lower than those of businesses, as these entities do not aim to generate profits, so a return on invested capital is not essential. The management costs of these entities are also usually lower, especially when it comes to limited-scale activities that do not require a full-time commitment. In such cases, in fact, due to the nature and purposes

of the entity, part or all of the human resource costs are replaced by the voluntary work of the members, particularly with regard to the fixed costs of any employees [36]. For the purposes of the economic sustainability of the activities of these entities, therefore, revenues can be limited to covering management costs and replenishing the initial capital, without any remuneration.

In reality, the cost structure for both entities is not constant as the quantities produced vary: as the quantities increase, the costs, especially management costs, of not-for-profit entities increase more quickly than those of for-profit entities, due to the inevitable inefficiencies of entities that do not have the carrying out of entrepreneurial activities among their founding reasons.

One of the purposes of the economic and financial checks prior to awarding the management of services is therefore to verify the nature of the private entity to be involved in the partnership in relation to the expected revenues.

In the case of public-private partnerships, therefore, the role of the public entity must first and foremost be to ensure the pursuit of collective interests in the provision of services.

In some cases, when the necessary preliminary economic and financial checks indicate this need, the public entity may be required to contribute to the investment and/or management costs through appropriate forms of co-financing [37].

6.5 Economic Sustainability: The Break-Even Analysis

There are several tools for assessing a project's financial balance, the most well-known of which is Cash Flow Analysis (CFA), which allows you to verify in a summary table whether the revenue generated by a given activity exceeds its operating costs. When you want to verify whether the revenue generated over a certain number of years is capable of remunerating the initial invested capital, the time horizon considered changes and the need arises to discount costs and revenues at the time of evaluation: in this case, the CFA takes the form of Discounted Cash Flow Analysis (DCFA) [38].

A technique that also uses the revenue and expenditure data generated by a given project, but with a different logic, is Break-Even Analysis (BEA): this technique allows you to identify the break-even point of project budgets [39].

In other words, the BEA allows you to identify the minimum amount of revenue capable of achieving the managing entity's objectives. Depending on the managing entity and the form taken by the PPP, four different situations may arise [40]:

- Revenues must fully cover management costs and adequately remunerate the invested capital: the managing entity should be of the "profit" type and must also fully cover the investment costs, assuming the related risks;
- Revenues must fully cover management costs and adequately remunerate a portion of the invested capital (a profit-making managing entity also covers a portion of the investment costs; the remainder is covered by public co-financing);
- Revenues must fully cover only management costs; the managing entity can be for-profit or not-for-profit depending on the size of the cash flows generated by the project; in this case, the investment costs are borne entirely by the public entity, which merely entrusts the management of the services. In this form of partnership, to assess the

long-term sustainability of the services provided, it is essential to determine whether revenues are sufficient to cover extraordinary maintenance costs. This is especially crucial when managing historic buildings, which typically have high maintenance costs.
– Revenues partially cover management costs: in this case, the managing entity should be a non-profit organization that receives public co-financing for management. This co-financing can also be in kind, with the public entity responsible for certain types of costs, such as utilities or ordinary maintenance.

6.6 The *ECHE Lab Approach*

The specific purpose of sustainability assessments must be to identify the limits of tourist flows.

The plural is mandatory because, as already introduced in the first paragraph, based on the pressures triggered by overtourism, evaluators usually focus on the upper limit: in other words, assessments are often aimed at identifying the maximum limit of tourist flow, beyond which the very survival of the Heritage Site and/or its community is jeopardized, more or less quickly.

In reality, there is also a lower limit of sustainability, represented by the minimum threshold of tourist flow capable of generating sufficient revenue to guarantee the survival of the management entities.

The relevance of calculating the lower limit is obviously less, indeed almost always nonexistent, in sites characterized by *Overtourism*, while it becomes absolutely crucial in situations of *Undertourism*. This is why the ECHE Lab approach is particularly suitable for assessing the sustainability of Cultural Tourism in Inner Areas.

The ECHE Lab approach uses existing evaluation techniques and approaches, combining them in an innovative way, calibrated for the specific evaluation purposes.

In other words, the ECHE Lab approach aims to identify, within the same evaluation procedure, both a maximum and a minimum limit for tourist presence, in order to simultaneously guarantee the physical integrity of the Cultural Heritage, the socio-cultural integrity of the Communities, and the economic sustainability of the services.

The ECHE Lab approach is particularly suitable for use within strategic planning tools to select effective and sustainable actions.

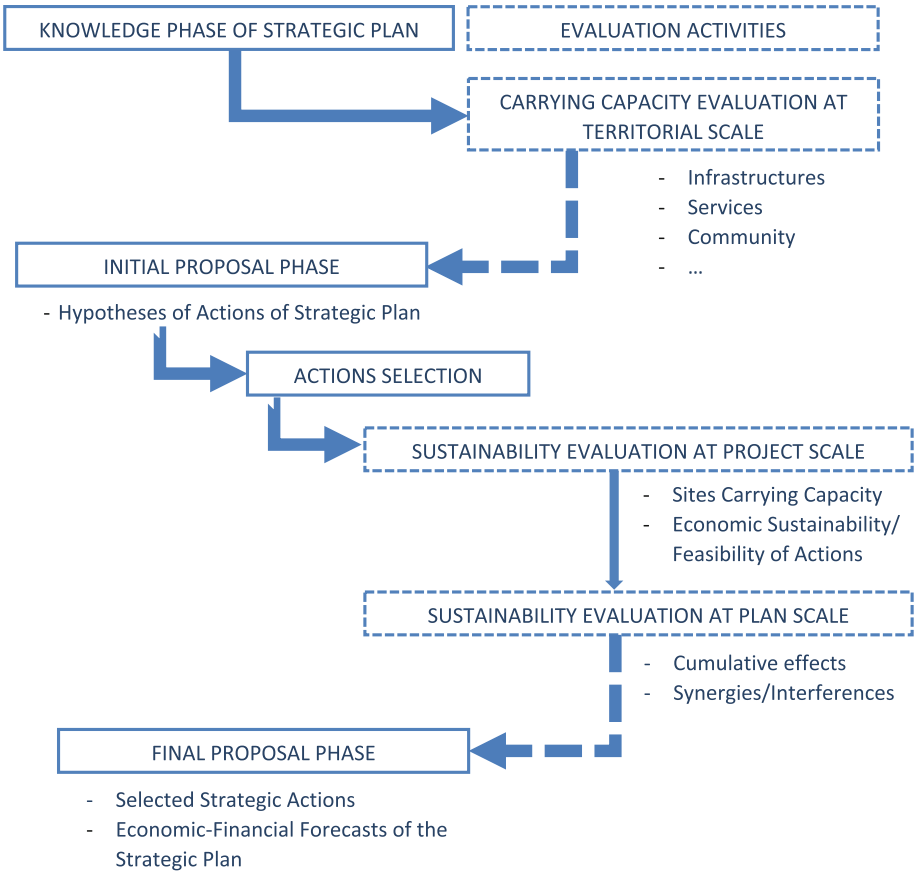
6.7 Strategic Planning and ECHE Lab Approach: Stages and Methodological Aspects

The ECHE Lab approach is particularly suitable for evaluating the sustainability of Strategic Plans for the development of Cultural Tourism at the DMO scale.

In fact, it introduces the evaluation process in a structured way as an integral part of the strategic planning process, with particular attention to aspects of its sustainability and does so differently in the various phases of the process, as can be seen from Fig. 2.

In summary, the ECHE Lab approach combines monetary and non-monetary techniques to calculate two key factors for the sustainability of Cultural Tourism:

– Carrying capacity (of sites; territories; Communities), to calculate the upper limit;
– Balanced budget, to calculate the lower limit.



7 Conclusions and Perspectives

In light of the above, it can be stated that assessing the sustainability of Cultural Heritage enhancement projects must follow different procedures and use different techniques depending on the contexts for which they are developed.

The approach developed by the ECHE Lab involves different procedures and techniques depending on whether the contexts are characterized by overtourism or undertourism, especially in Inner Areas, but also depending on whether the focus is on physical and social sustainability or whether the objective is to assess economic sustainability [41].

In the latter case, Break-Even Analysis allows for a relatively simple, quick, and effective assessment of whether balanced budget conditions exist.

Research activities continue, particularly in the direction of testing the ECHE Lab approach, currently being applied in several case studies in Calabria.

In particular, there are two areas in the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria, characterized by very different dynamics, in which ECHE Lab is developing some experiments: the Costa Viola and the Valle degli Armeni.

The Costa Viola, on the Tyrrhenian coast, includes the municipalities of Villa S. Giovanni, Scilla, Bagnara, Palmi, and Seminara. Scilla, in particular, is the area's most popular destination, especially for beach tourism, and during the summer months experiences typical overtourism trends. The neighboring municipalities, while experiencing a clear increase in summer visitors, do not experience the same situation.

The Valle degli Armeni, on the other hand, is located on the Ionian coast and includes the municipalities of Brancaleone, Staiti, and Bruzzano Zeffirio. The area studied for the pilot project is slightly larger, as it also includes the municipalities of Palizzi, Ferruzzano, and Bianco. This area also experiences a significant increase in summer visitors, although this has not yet resulted in significant negative impacts.

Both areas are characterized by highly valuable environmental resources and, at the same time, aim to increase tourist numbers, especially to create new job opportunities for young people, thus countering the depopulation of these areas [42].

Despite their diversity, the challenge in both areas is to build a comprehensive tourism development strategy that can prevent overtourism or effectively combat it where it already exists [43].

These first two applications, which constitute the immediate future developments of the research, have just been started and constitute the experimentation necessary to confirm the theoretical hypotheses formulated through the model illustrated previously or to provide indications for any necessary corrective measures.

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