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Kristina Henriksson & Päivi Mantere (eds.)

VISIT Handbook

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Every island to a child is a treasure island.” P.D. James, *The Lighthouse*

MANY READERS OF this handbook will admit having visited a European island during their life, sometimes forever returning in summers, looking for the treasures like a child. This is the background that inspired this project. Partners have spent their holidays on islands, some even several times. Some have lived by the sea and on the sea. Many Europeans, thus, share an experience on island life, for a short or long period of time.

But how many of you have thought – while on the island spending warm sunny days of leisure – where the water you shower in comes from, and who gets to use the water? You might be surprised that not all locals get the water in the same amounts as a tourist. Have you thought of what islanders do in the wintertime? Have you noticed that many islanders work, during the summer months, up to sixteen hours a day to make your holiday unique and wonderful? Do you know that on some islands they need to send the laundry elsewhere from the island to get it washed?

Climate change causes drought, wildfires, lack of water for farming, and creates an unbalance in ecosystems. When it is almost 50 degrees Celsius, is it really a unique, wonderful holiday spent in the shade or inside with the air-conditioning on? How sustainable is this?

Many islanders work very hard to survive the winter. Some need to move to the mainland because there might not be schools any longer for children, or other infrastructure that supports daily life without tourists. In some countries and on their islands, many business owners live elsewhere in the world, and they arrive for the summers to do business with the tourists, and they leave again, taking their money elsewhere.

How can we, the tourists, make a difference and help the islanders to create a strong environment and sustainable lifestyle? VISIT is a project focused on planting seeds of innovation on the islands. VISIT toured three islands in Europe, Paxos, Öland, and Nauvo, before the pandemic arrived. After that, the project made



virtual projects on the remaining target islands, Fehmarn and Vis. This handbook will introduce what the project has produced and done.

Would it be better for people to work throughout the year, working normal hours, and having all services nearby, such as schools, shops, leisure services, hospitals, etc. than to work 16 hours a day during the summer and then not working during the winter at all or very little? One way of supporting a development like this is to spread tourism activities throughout the year. Of course, you cannot expect to have +40 degrees Celsius in November on a European island. But maybe you can find something else worthwhile there instead! If tourism is spread out more evenly, the groundwater might not dry out. Islanders would have jobs throughout the year, travel to and from the islands would be available, while nowadays many boats stop traffic after the season is over.

The project VISIT (Versatile Islands Cooperating for New Services and Innovation in Tourism) was launched in September 2018, an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project, with the aim of touring five European islands, and working with local businesses on the islands. The aim was to develop new services for the businesses and let them see, how it is possible to make small changes in their offerings and perhaps generate new ideas for them to continue developing. Also, the project aimed at creating innovative business plans for the SMEs—plans that implemented the new idea the business had received from VISIT. Furthermore, the plan was to have interns from partner universities to help the businesses to put the new ideas into practice.

Many of these aims were, in fact, realized. This handbook offers information about the processes and results. The internships were about to start when the pandemic struck the world. Therefore, the aim of internships is still alive, but it will happen after the project is over, if interns and businesses find each other. One place, where this can happen, is the VISIT Online Community. The handbook also tells the reader about the Online Community and what and how it was created.

In the process of developing new services on the islands, the partners involved their students. VISIT organized three intensive study programs (ISPs) on the islands of Paxos, Öland, and Nauvo. The remaining two, Fehmarn and Vis, were organized only online since the pandemic halted the possibility of safe traveling in the time for the events. In addition, in spring 2020, VISIT organized an extra online ISP, or sprint as they are called, to help businesses face their first season with the pandemic. Another extra online ISP was organized in November 2021, to provide new ideas to the geographical areas around and on the islands of Vis and Fehmarn.

Students participated in the ISPs and sprints. Each partner was teaching in the learning events and their students worked together in intercultural and interdisciplinary teams. The work they put into the intensive innovation weeks is amazing. Students are beacons of a bright European future, with their enthusiasm, brilliant visions, and fresh ideas. Truly their footprints are spread around the European islands during VISIT. We hope that their footprints will gain a foothold! VISIT wishes to thank each student who participated in the project, very much so!

The project established networks between islanders, businesspeople, municipal employees such as mayors, tourism officials, students, universities, teachers, and locals. Official cooperation was in advance agreed with the following actors:

Business Development, City of Pargas, Finland for the islands of Nauvo and Korppoo;
Mayor Beate Burow, Fehmarn, Germany for the island of Fehmarn;
Hajdi Klarić, Head of VERN' Island School, Vis, Croatia for the island of Vis;
Mayor of the island of Paxos, Greece and the Chamber of Corfu, Greece for the island of Paxos;
Öland Tourism, Öland for the island of Öland.

We wish to thank the associate partners for their cordial, valuable, and strong support during the project.

The Case Studies publication will thank all the businesses VISIT worked with during the project:

Paxos island

Akis Fish Bar Restaurant
Anthia Apergi
Hotel Bastas
Planos Holidays

Öland island

Byxelkrok Cykeluthyrning
Böda Sand Beach Resort
Kaffestugan I Böda
Naturum Trollskogen

Nauvo, Korppoo, Seili islands

Hotel Stallbacken
Korpoström Archipelago Centre
Majatalo Martta Guesthouse
VisitSeili
Tackork Gärd & Marina

Fehmarn island

Bürgerbus Fehmarn e.V.
Kirchner Verein
Kitebro
Ostseecard

Vis and Korčula islands

Alternatura
Cliff
Karika Vis
Lešić Dimitri Palace

We thank all the businesses for a wonderful, fruitful cooperation and wish you all the best in the future!

VISIT began with the following partners in September 2018:

Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland
Linnaeus University, School of Business and Economics, Kalmar, Sweden
Kiel University of Applied Sciences, Kiel, Germany
Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Epirus, Igoumenitsa, Greece
VELEUCILISTE VERN, or VERN' University of Applied Sciences, Croatia



During the past three years and four months, many changes have taken place. The partner in Greece merged with another university and left the project. A new partner joined, Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland. Then arrived Brexit and the pandemic. This partner left the project. Another change was that recently VERN' became a university. VISIT wishes to thank all the partners, and especially those who visited the project and left early. Their support and work are invaluable for the total results of the project.

Nevertheless, the work carried out during the project has brought the partners into a tight network with each other. The partners have been working as a team, and learning from each other and from the islands, each one has played an important role in the results of VISIT. Although the partners have not been able to meet for 19 months in between due to the pandemic, a partner meeting was set up to finalize the work for November 2021. Naturally, safe travel procedures were taken, and careful planning was carried out.

When the pandemic started, there were plans to organize a multiplier event at the great tourism fair in Europe, the ITB in Berlin. This was to take place in spring 2021. Naturally, the plan needed to be changed into an online event. Instead of joining the virtual ITB, Kiel University of Applied Sciences organized, with the help of some students, a very successful VISIT Conference with guests from some islands, experts who discussed the pandemic and its influence on island tourism. Partners gave interesting speeches or presentations about topical issues and work that was created in the project. Approximately 179 persons joined the online Conference.



A challenge worldwide was how to adapt and transfer work from physical activities to online activities. VISIT partners were very quick in adapting, and, for example, the online sprints that replaced Intensive Study Programs were successful and delivered nicely. Students worked very well in the circumstances and produced results of excellent quality.

The main results of the project can be found in this handbook, in the workbook that accompanies the handbook, and in the VISIT Case Studies publication. In addition, the VISIT Online Community is available for anyone who is interested in learning the Design Thinking process, collaborating with the universities and islanders or offering internships for university students.

Before we let you, the reader, to go on and explore the contents of the handbook, we still wish to thank all our partners for the wonderful work they have carried out during the years and months.

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Chapter 2 discusses island tourism what it is today, and what kind of challenges there are in developing the environments and work opportunities in general. Chapter 3 explains the Design Thinking process and how VISIT implemented it on the islands. You can read about the VISIT Online Community in Chapter 4.

Also, the chapter discusses the VISIT Toolkit. The project assistants, our students, have written about their experiences in Chapter 5. They ponder what they have learned during the project. The innovations that have been developed during the project have been analyzed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 deliberates the transferability of the project activities and results. Chapter 8 analyzes the future of sustainability of the results.

The Conclusion in Chapter 9 sums it all up.

Wishing you, dear reader, exciting moments when exploring the VISIT Handbook!

Kristina Henriksson and Päivi Mantere

Editors

Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland

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CHAPTER 2: TOURIST ISLANDS, SMALL ENTERPRISES, AND SERVICE INNOVATION

By Per Pettersson Löfquist, Linnaeus University, Kalmar, Sweden and Kristina Henriksson, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland

THIS CHAPTER EXPLAINS the working context for the methods and appraisal that the project VISIT founded its initiative on and on which it developed the learning processes and results this book presents. Such contexts were found on small islands with small tourist enterprises that make up the main part of the tourist business ecosystem.

Islands are often characterized by a type of remoteness and rurality that is different from other peripheral places. Their lack of resources and assets other than their attractive appeal to travel-prone individuals, make them vulnerable to changes in the tourist markets. Boosting the islands' resilience to sudden change provides an important impetus to the project. One could say that during VISIT, the tourist islands were laboratories for applying Design Thinking and innovative practices.

TOURIST ISLANDS AND ISLAND TOURISM

Islands are often known for their distinct cultural heritage, unique natural environments, and pleasant climates. Their separation from mainland territories and mainstream influences set them apart and represent some of the comparative advantages for them to develop tourism. Islands have had a strong connection to tourism for a long time and some of them are among the most famous and popular tourist destinations. In the Mediterranean Sea, islands such as Cyprus, Crete, Corfu, the Balearic Islands, and in Northern Europe the archipelagos of Finland and Sweden, North Sea Islands, and so on, are visited by millions every year. Their history as sites to visit is long and their integration in the tourism economy is fundamental.

With the growth of tourism, both international and domestic, tourism has come to dominate the economies of many islands. Islands often have scarce resources. The obvious limited insular space is linked

to their possibilities to generate local supply chains of necessary products such as foodstuffs and consumer goods. To supply the tourist markets with what they need, imports are required, which in turn makes it difficult for island economies to grow. The leakage of revenue is also substantial due to dependence on internationally owned hotel chains, on tour operators located overseas, and on a migrating seasonal workforce.

The bustling and often frantic tourist season with large crowds and congested restaurants and streets turns to its opposite when the season is over. Shutters and lattice on windows and doors mark their absence and a sharp shift to another quality of life. Off-season tourist islands are desolate and almost abandoned places. The urbane quality of the tourist season turns to rurality that to a large extent is deprived of its traditional livelihood of fishing and farming. Added to this is also the fact that islands often are peripherally and remotely located from economic centers and suffer from depopulation, have older populations, and dwindling economic opportunities outside tourism.

Thus, there are numerous challenges to develop sustainable island tourism under these circumstances. On the other hand, islands have several advantages that other rural regions often do not have. First, it is a matter of scale. The smallness of islands, and their insular characteristics, shape the need to have all “pillars” of tourism present in the same space, i.e., activities, attractions, food outlets, accommodation, and transportation. Tourism facilities on islands are often clustered in manageable scales, where distances often are walkable. This creates naturally evolved resort-styled destinations.

Second, islands usually are not pass-through destinations. They are more likely to be an end destination for a vacation. Islands often possess the attractions sometimes called the three “Ss” of sea, sand, and sun, but to them more “Ss” can be added. Islands have an advantageous service environment based on their manageable scale, and they have insular qualities of seclusion. The values of remoteness and scale were already discussed by Wilson (1979) in an island context and by Mathieson and Wall (1982) about the peculiarities in tourist consumption.

Third, this relates further to the small-scale entrepreneurship that island inhabitants perform in the tourism sector. Beneath and beyond the larger operations, there is often a plethora of tourism micro and small-scale enterprises that are active in all parts of the local tourism system. These micro and small-scale enterprises are often working under conditions determined by the tourism high season and retract in the low season to work in a second job or to alternative operations. This means that there is often limited scope for an emergent second season or prolonging the main season, and it also means that a functional tourism system may be disrupted; hence, the large turnover of tourism entrepreneurs from year to year.

Even so, there are generic resources and assets in island tourism that are favorable for sustainable solutions. They can be found in the three island characteristic advantages outlined above, and to which we now turn in more detail illustrated with the islands that the project VISIT has been working with.

ISLANDS IN THE PROJECT VISIT

VISIT worked with five islands, two of which remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Three have been visited onsite, and interviews, observations, and case studies of small enterprises have been done in person, by students and instructors. The islands are Paxos, in Greece, Öland, in Sweden, and the Nauvo archipelago, in Finland. Entrepreneurs from two other islands were engaged in online workshops, sprints, and interviews. These are Vis, in Croatia, and Fehmarn, in Germany.

Even if the geographies and climates, type of tourism, and scale of the islands are different, they share fundamental conditions such as highly seasonal tourism and a strong dependence on their visitor economies, resulting in a migrating workforce and depopulation. Öland is a showcase example as the following excerpts illustrate.

There are, however, impediments to the continued welfare of this [tourism] sector. The most important hurdle is the lack of manpower, hampering growth and willingness to invest. The population of Öland is the oldest in Sweden, 35.7 percent is over 65 years of age, the mean age is 49.8 years and less than 20 percent are under the age of 20 (Statistics Sweden 2019). The population changes 2000–2018 in Borgholm municipality show a pyramid with an inverted kurtosis. The influx of people in older age groups, i.e., of people born in the 1940s and 50s, move to Öland when they retire or are at the end of their productive years, while the young adult age group born in the 1990s to a high degree have left the island for opportunities elsewhere.

Companies as well as the local government and the regional level attest to this problematic situation and testify that this is an urgent challenge for retaining and developing tourism on Öland. As it also gets increasingly harder to find seasonal workers, business developers and the Öland DMO fear that this may have a detrimental impact on initiatives to invest in tourism (VISIT business plans for Öland).

Other islands, for example Paxos, disclose severe problems in the same area. When the scheduled ferry to Corfu and mainland Greece ends operation in the second week of October, it means not only a terminal stop to tourism but also that families with children of school age move out because it makes it impossible to commute efficiently.

Rough seas and other challenging weather conditions in part of the year make it difficult to earn a living on islands in low seasons, but for the islands of Fehmarn, Nauvo, and Öland, which are connected to the mainland by road on bridges or by cable ferry, it is more a matter of rural remoteness and the life chances offered by the countryside. Vis and Paxos are small islands far from the coast and it takes more than an hour to get to them by boat from the mainland.

Nauvo, which is located less than 60 kilometers from Finland's third-biggest city, and Fehmarn, which is crossed by one of the main highways (E47) from Scandinavia to central Europe, display greater proximity to day-visitors and excursionists, compared to Vis, Paxos or Öland. Öland, on the other hand, has an asset in the high number of second homes. There are more than 8,500 second homes on the northern part of the island (Statistics Sweden 2019). Research by Müller, Nordin, and Marjavaara (2010) shows that second-home owners in Sweden on average spend more than 71 nights and make 22 day trips to their cottages per year. Second-home owners make up an often-forgotten part of tourism but create a highly important demand for tourist services out of the season which, to some extent, compensate for a remote location.

Rurality is a continuum that varies from proximity to remoteness depending on the distance to population centers, and thus the market potential for tourist services outside the regular tourist season. The five islands explored for the project VISIT both share certain elements and diverge on others. Connectivity to population

centers and markets is crucial for developing tourist products out of season, while at the same time all five islands share the limitations that depopulation and limited resources have for the possibility to develop new products.

SECLUSION—THE POWER OF ATTRACTION OF THE VISIT ISLANDS

The islands in the project VISIT are popular destinations for sailing and water activities. The sea as well as the beauty of the landscape are the main assets for island tourism. The sense of seclusion ensued by the physical separation from mainland territories is a prolific context for recreation (Baldacchino, 2013). This quality of insularity and connection (and affection) to the element of water is what separates island destinations from other rural destinations.



Left: the marina at Korpoström, small boats with outboard engines for short distances and fishing. **Right:** Paxos, the natural harbor at Lakka, sailing boats for longer distances on the open sea. Pictures by VISIT.

Tourist services on islands are provided to visitors that have traveled over water to reach their destinations. They have come to the end of the road, the last stop, where water becomes an effective barrier, or land becomes a safe harbor. Tourist services on islands are typically localized, developed, and executed where the resources for tourism can be turned into assets, such as by a popular beach, a marina/harbor, or in a landscape that attracts visitors because of its dramatic or unique scenery.

Storytelling (Korsgaard, Müller & Welter 2021) based on islands' unique natures and cultural traits, stemming from their secluded and separated characteristics, may also add to new emergent innovative tourism products, and enhance attraction values. This can be illustrated with the island of Vis, which has a long history of being an outpost for different powers around the Adriatic Sea, not the least for the post second world war Yugoslav era in the cold war. The island was then a closed military area, and the remains from that time are now used as visitor points in guided round trips around the island. Stories from another time become a heritage not to forget, but to use, dramatize and narrate (VISIT business plans for Vis).

Another example is the former hospital for the mentally ill in Nauvo, on the island of Seili, where stories are told and dramatized, while the premises have become a hotel and a place to stay overnight (VISIT business plans for Nauvo). Also, Öland has its storytelling, e.g., about the legendary islet Blue Maiden which VISIT suggested could be included in innovative service development (VISIT Business plans for Öland).

These examples illustrate how stories from the past, derived from the islands' seclusion and separation from the mainland, in another context can add value to emergent tourism products. A benefit from storytelling is how it potentially enhances the island tourist products, creates a texture that invites and activates the visitor as a co-creator, and allows for an immersive experience (VISIT Business plans for Öland). Another format is how storytelling may work in the background for the provided tourist services, such as for the suggested team-building "packages" for Seili:

The purpose is for VisitSeili to provide comprehensive information about its activities and services, which includes these packages. VisitSeili promotes and markets its business and these service packages through a bulletin, for example, via email/other advertising to potential businesses. The unique nature and history of Seili are its trump cards, which are used in marketing.

In connection to island storytelling, how it works with and around activities and attractions and highlights specific traits of islands, it is, nevertheless, water sports, beach holidays, and the recreational leisure landscape that is the mainstay of what the VISIT islands offer.

THE SCALE OF ISLAND TOURISM BUSINESS ECOSYSTEMS

The basis for the VISIT islands' visitor economies is to be found in their tourism micro and small enterprises, that are concentrated in certain areas within the physical boundedness of the islands (Fernandes & Pinho 2017, Booth et al. 2020). The scale of the islands is one of their favorable characteristics, compared to other rural destinations that often cross administrative borders and defy geographically limited definitions. On VISIT islands, tourism enterprises center on certain stretches or limited places, where they usually cluster in easily visited and managed service hubs. Such hubs become epitomes of the foundational pillars of tourism, as they typically provide meals, attractions, activities, transport, and accommodation. Furthermore, they are dense interlinked services capes (Hall 2008; Line, Hanks & McGinley 2018) creating business environments for tourism that are activated within confined geographies and often accessible to tourists within walking distance. This concentration is vital for a successful entrepreneurial business ecosystem (Cunha, Kastenholz & Carneiro, 2020), as the provision of different service products enables different companies to meet alternating and successive needs with the visitors. Hence, the varied consumption opportunities that a tourist faces become a complete tourism product when all the current and forthcoming needs of the visit can be satisfied.

The project VISIT studies enterprises that are operating in such concentrated locations. Lakka, one of the small towns on Paxos, Greece, or Vis on the island of Vis, Croatia, are old settlements on the islands, which are turned into tourism hubs based on their picturesque and scenic environments around natural deep-water harbors. There are several outlets for services for boating, as well as restaurants, cafés, small hotels, and shops. This pattern is similar to the studied locations on the other VISIT islands, even if they are not as marked as Lakka or Vis. The settlement patterns of northern islands, Öland, Sweden, and Nauvo, Finland, are

more distributed and do not carry the same dense characteristics, while Fehmarn is characterized by country towns in a rural setting. The less concentrated, and relatively bigger size of Öland and the Nauvo archipelago, compared to the other islands, make the distances to cover longer. This is nevertheless still grounded in the boundedness of island tourism. The pictures, below, show how information signs refer to the whereabouts of tourist services and how the display visualizes how they are clustered on the islands.



Left: "Paxos on a page", hand-drawn tourist map of Paxos. Right: Information sign for Nauvo. Tourist services and attractions are marked and listed. Notice how the display visualizes the boundedness of the islands and the clustering of services. Picture by VISIT.

MICRO AND SMALL-SCALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON VISIT ISLANDS

The VISIT islands lack large-scale companies driving their visit economies, e.g., major international hotel chains or tour operators, which is common for many tourist islands. Instead, local micro and small-scale enterprises dominate and make up tourism business ecosystems that are dynamic and flexible, and that can withstand abrupt changes and be resilient to crises. This is not to say that individual companies do not face hardships in an economic downturn, they certainly will as turnover and profitability generally is comparably low in small tourism enterprises, but tourism in an entrepreneurial ecosystem will likely prevail and adapt (Cunha et al. 2020). The individual companies are interlinked with other destination companies and earn their customers through both the local business ecosystem and their own marketing efforts, hence, sourcing their client base through means of competition (Crick & Crick 2020) as well as through targeted customer segments.

The companies VISIT cooperated with are a cross-section of local tourist island micro and small-scale enterprises. Many of the small companies are run by families, sometimes for generations (Cliff, Vis; Böda Beach Resort, Öland or Bastas Hotel, Paxos), and there is often a particular pride over their operations that goes beyond immediate profitability (Bürgerbus, Fehmarn), connected to islandness and lifestyle choices (Korpoström, Nauvo; Alternatura, Vis; Kitebro neu, Fehmarn), as well as artisanal or craft skills (Kaffestugan i Böda, Öland, Lešić Dimitri Palace, Vis).

With tourism, the entrepreneurs on VISIT islands get markets with demands that are different from the demand produced by the local limited island markets. They respond to pressure evolving on the visitor economy to produce goods and services that entertain other tastes and judgments. This can be an appreciation of the authentic, illustrated in the picture below by the sign telling a potential restaurant guest what fresh fish there is on the menu. For a local, who may be fishing on his or her own, today's catch is an everyday experience, while for the urban international tourist it is something out of the ordinary. This restaurant has read the market, understood it, and therefore turned something ordinary into something extraordinary, targeting the temporary visitor.

Tastes and fashions of the visitors are also connected to a spending power outmatching local economic capability, which is highly visible on property markets in many island communities (Müller, Nordin and Marjavaara 2010), and in consumption. If the restaurant marketing today's catch is a matter of messaging the tourist market and making meals that are based on genuine local cuisine, there is also a transformative aspect that changes the level of services and product lines provided for this market.



Left: Plaquettes displaying the national recognition for Kaffestugan's artisanal quality produce. **Right:** The freshness of local supply to Akis Fish Restaurant. Pictures by VISIT.

The photo to the left captures how this café and artisanal bakery and gelato maker has been nationally recognized for its high level of craftsmanship and quality by the Swedish quality rating organization White Guide for five consecutive years.

This appreciation of quality and niche products with elements of authenticity and craftsmanship, i.e., where there is a level of skills and experience beyond the service or good that often becomes as important to the customer as the product itself, shows that crafted products have unique qualities and excel in the incoming market. This aspect is highlighted by Cortez and Discua Cruz (2019) in their study of artisanal lifestyles and entrepreneurial practices on a small tourist island. They conclude that the context and the inherent limited and scarce resources often associated with small islands are included in the offer to the visitors, even if the product itself, in their case artisanal chocolate making, is not immediately anchored in islandness. Islandness (Baldacchino 2015, Fernandes & Pinho 2017) is connected to island boundedness and becomes a part of the identity formation for the artisanal lifestyle of making and selling the products. Hence, island locations matter for the perceived quality and sale of the products, and as Cortez Arias et al. (2019) underscore, this is a result of how the entrepreneurial use of islands' contextual limitations turn these impediments to positive outcomes.

Cortez Arias et al. (2019) refer to the term *bricolage* to call attention to how tourist entrepreneurship on small islands in micro and small-scale enterprises make use of limited and scant resources, reinterpret and collect them in novel formats and present them as products for the tourist market. Yachin and Ioannides (2020) go as far as to say that entrepreneurial and spatial bricolage hold emblematic potential for rural micro and small-scale tourist entrepreneurs. It is this particular quality in their entrepreneurship that makes them see opportunities in constraints and enact the trivial and mundane in enchanting and captivating experiential products.

It is in this perspective the project VISIT has had its potential to make a difference in seeking out alternative opportunities for new service products and value-creating possibilities for the participating companies, in relation to limited resources.

CONCLUSION AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

The chapter outlined three advantageous qualities that are distinctive for small-island tourism about the VISIT islands. First, the boundedness to limited insular space, shaping physical separation from a mainland, followed by a notion of seclusion. The sense of seclusion on islands is a prolific resource for tourist products in itself but is also connected to a historically derived idea of separation and seclusion connected to prison islands, military outposts, or as a source for legends and myths. This understanding of seclusion is a resource for storytelling that can be used to enhance the tourist experience. Second, the scale of clustered tourist entrepreneurial ecosystems entails comprehensive services capes where the pillars of tourism are readily available in manageable and limited spaces.

Three, small-scale entrepreneurship, is based on authenticity, artisanal lifestyles, and entrepreneurial practices in the context of scarce and limited resources. Drawing on these three particular qualities of island tourism, entrepreneurship on the VISIT islands is identified as *bricolage*. Korsgaard, Müller and Welter (2021, 5) write that “. . . bricolage has highlighted how entrepreneurs can overcome resource constraints by making do with the resources at hand to create new ventures... focusing on how some entrepreneurs creatively reinterpret resources that would otherwise be considered substandard or inappropriate.” It is exactly at this point the project VISIT intervenes and with intensive and rapid appraisal methods, creates and suggests new service products. The next chapter will turn to these methods and explain in detail the approach from VISIT.

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CHAPTER 3: DESIGN THINKING IN VISIT

By Marco Hardiman, Kiel University of Applied Sciences, Kiel, Germany; Päivi Mantere, Kristina Henriksson, and Jami Riihihulta, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland

THIS CHAPTER DISCUSSES how Design Thinking has been implemented in the project VISIT. First, it presents Design Thinking in the project VISIT, how it has been conducted when collaborating with businesses, students, staff, and other stakeholders. Secondly, it presents Design Thinking as a process using a Double Diamond model with four phases, from understanding and defining the problem, to developing the solutions, and finally to delivering the solution to fulfill the needs of the tourists. Thirdly, this chapter discusses how the created ideas and solutions could be utilized and implemented in the real-world context. Finally, it summarizes the design process and how to utilize that knowledge in practice.

DESIGNING WITH STUDENTS, BUSINESSES, STAFF ON THE ISLANDS

Even though designing services is inherently an iterative process, demonstrating the process with an illustrative method will help to understand the entity and how different steps and actions are connected to each other. The process in VISIT Sprints has followed the same main logic each time, despite the time and context. It has supported the learning and innovation process which has gathered students from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), company representatives, local stakeholders of each island, staff, and naturally the customers.

VISIT aims to improve business possibilities for small and medium-sized tourism companies on small islands. Tourism is often very hectic during a short summertime and, on the other hand, for many months every year, the services are totally closed or at least the business is not profitable. The VISIT ISPs (Intensive Study Programs) and Design Sprints (Online Intensive Study Programs) have been created to support the local entrepreneurs to develop their services further with the help of the students. When students have been

working together using different Service Design tools, also company representatives have learned new fresh ways to step in the shoes of the customers.

Design Thinking is grounded in co-creation, and it supports the modern way to collaborate with customers and other stakeholders. Co-creation has lots of benefits for participants but also for society and the community. For example, for tourism companies on small islands, it provides novel ideas, real insight for customer understanding, a competitive advantage compared to other companies, and, on the other hand, inspiration for partner organizations and companies. For customers it offers possibilities to have an impact on future services, it builds a relationship and trust between the customer and company; the services are more attractive since the customers are already familiar with those. For students, it opens doors for direct communication with real-world companies, and it gives the latest overview of service offerings in the tourism business. It is a huge possibility to show what students know about designing services and, in that way, to convince the businesses about their competencies and capability. For society and the community, it provides a collective platform to strengthen the local business and viability.

Designing tourism services together makes it possible to create networks and consolidate the existing collaboration among local businesses. New service ideas open eyes for new collaborations. For example, a hotel could begin a joint service model by suggesting to neighboring businesses this: "We have attractive accommodation, maybe you could offer experiential guided tours and someone else could provide meals based on local food. If we offer tourists a full package of island experience in one reservation system, maybe they rather come to our island instead of going to some other tourism destination." When combining the resources, there are much more possibilities and fascination of the area.

In the project VISIT service innovation has been conducted during several ISPs (Intensive Study Programs) which were held on Paxos in Greece, Öland in Sweden, and Nauvo in Finland. During the pandemic, the design process was implemented online, in the form of Design Sprints. In these online Design Sprints, the development was done together with companies from the islands of Fehmarn in Germany and Vis in Croatia.

All these development processes followed the same logic of designing services in a co-creative manner. The project team modified the process by using diverse models and interpretations of the design process by combining features and phases of Double Diamond, Design Thinking and Service Innovation Process (Design Council, Moritz 2005; Ojasalo et al. 2015, Stickdorn et al. 2018., Stickdorn & Schneider 2010). These frameworks will be presented as background information later in this chapter.

ISPs and Design Sprints have gathered people with diverse backgrounds: there have been students and staff from all the partner HEIs. They have represented versatile study programs, such as hospitality management, tourism, business, information technology, and even health and social care. In addition to diverse educational backgrounds, these people bring different kinds of cultural perspectives to the collaboration. When developing new or improving existing services for island tourism companies, it is also important that working life, entrepreneurs, and their employees are involved in many ways.

Before starting the actual design process cultural knowledge is shared. It might vary how it is done in practice. Sometimes students first study cultural theories, they might do cultural investigations and ponder in their own working teams and with the big group of students. Even a joint dinner can work as a cultural bridge to build team spirit in an intercultural team. Understanding cultural differences and similarities gives a background to productive co-creation among all the participants (Samovar et al. 2013).

For the local tourism businesses, it is important that the participation is easy, as well as the benefits of the involvement need to be clearly visible and easily realized, and experienced. Their time is valuable, and



their challenges are practical, so the gains need to be evident. In the project VISIT, the engagement of the companies has been approachable.

The Design Thinking process differs from traditional service development in many ways (Stickdorn et al. 2018). It is, for example, co-creative; customers and other stakeholders are involved during the whole lifecycle of development. It is not enough if customers are asked to give feedback afterward; on the contrary, they need to be in the center and focus on the development constantly. This is connected to another feature of Design Thinking, which is user-centricity.

It is important that in the design process, service is understood in a holistic way. When tourists arrive on the island, they experience the whole trip as one entity. They could say that “service on some island was just terrible”, even though it would only be some individual moment which was not satisfying. Tourists might experience the service as one package, even though in reality these services usually are delivered by several service providers. For that reason, it is crucial that companies create a network with each other to ensure that the service experience will be smooth for tourists.

During the ISPs, it was possible to visit the actual places and for student designer teams to meet customers in the authentic environment, for example physically talking with tourists in other harbors in the other villages. They could then ask: “What would make you buy this tour?” or “How much would you be willing to spend on the accommodation in our hotel?” or “What would attract you to visit our restaurant?” etc.

It is also typical for Design Thinking that evidencing makes the intangible services tangible and, in that way, easier to test and sell. Service design tools provide excellent ways to visualize both the design process and the outcomes. Students have used these tools to visualize and concretize their project work and results to the clients and their customers (Koponen et al. 2019).

The design work starts with presenting the Design Thinking process, which helps the students to understand the big picture, how collaboration will happen, and how the process will be based on cumulative steps which lead to the next steps. This design process has been discussed with the representatives of the case companies, too. It is important that all the actors have a shared understanding of the process, the aims, how the process will happen and what kind of results and outcomes might be expected.

In VISIT, developers are a combination of students, entrepreneurs, other representatives from the tourism companies, other stakeholders, officials, even mayors, etc., and staff from universities. It has been beneficial that the combination is a varying set of people sharing diverse backgrounds. Even staff has represented versatile competencies, from business management to service design, hospitality management, and ICT skills.

As a part of the design process, it is important to understand the business environment and to have an insight into the customers of the island tourism services. Students investigate the services in the area, but they benchmark services in other regions, too. Maybe even services in some other industry would increase understanding of the tourism services. The kind of methods vary which are to be used to create understanding. The most used ones are different kinds of ethnographic methods, such as interviews, observation, benchmarking, and net scouting (Moritz 2005). This chapter presents the main methods on a general level, and the VISIT workbook provides practical instructions and tools on how to use these methods.

During the design process, several service design tools and methods are utilized. Despite the differences in each ISP or Design Sprint, personas and customer journeys have always been created. Personas represent the user of the services; it is a combination of collected data. Personas are tools for students to communicate with the client to better understand the needs, wants, and desires of the customers. Customer journeys demonstrate how the customer experiences the service, with its ups and downs.

The Design Thinking process differs from traditional service development, also based on the phases and steps which are taken. Despite the model (double diamond, Design Thinking, service innovation process, etc.), these modern models emphasize the significance of understanding the phenomenon deeply before starting the ideation. Normally, people would start the development by ideation, for example setting the brainstorming session and starting to generate solutions to the problem. In this design process, it is essential to first deep dive into the world of the customer, to investigate their inner needs, or even unconscious wants before creating ideas. This ensures that the new idea will really be something that gives added value to the customer, it is created to and together with the user, not based on assumptions and stereotypes.

During the pandemic, designing services in the Project VISIT took place online. Luckily educational institutions were ready for a very quick change in the working process and tourism companies and entrepreneurs were not left alone, quite the opposite. Designing services online compared to the physical development process has a lot of similarities, but also some differences can be noted.

Table 1. Comparison of delivery type, online or physical.

TYPE OF DESIGN PROCESS	PROS	CONS	HOW TO DO THIS WITHOUT STUDENTS? FOR EXAMPLE, WITH CUSTOMERS, DURING OFF-SEASON
Physical	<p>Communality. Material is easy to be shared. All senses are available. Easier to communicate in an international team.</p>	<p>Scheduling meetings. Consequences of traveling (sustainability, time). More challenging to find participants who want to commit.</p>	<p>Together with a team from the company. Asking for loyal customers to participate (for example during off-season with a cheaper price which includes an invitation to collaborative workshop).</p>
Online	<p>Always available. Possible to involve lots of people. Equal. The more information you give, the more you get. Important that everyone shares all necessary information.</p>	<p>Requires ICT skills. More challenging to create a good team spirit. Not easy to find people to be interviewed etc. Difficult to create concrete solutions if you have not visited the environment in real life.</p>	<p>Active customers could be invited to participate using some online collaboration tool. Social media could be used as a channel to contact participants.</p>

Designing services for island tourism companies have followed the logic and principles of Design Thinking. The results gained are presented in Chapter 6 in the analysis of the outcomes.

OVERVIEW OF THE DOUBLE DIAMOND PROCESS IN VISIT

The design process in ISPs and Design Sprints has roughly followed the Double Diamond process model, which is presented next. First, an overview of the process model is viewed, and later a discussion on each phase of how to implement it into practice follows.

What, Why, and How

As a part of how to survive and succeed in business life, creativity is becoming more and more important. Also, in the tourism sector, companies must rethink to retain or attract visitors. The good news is that creativity can be learned, and a group of students and other actors can give an impulse to it. This overview about the Double Diamond should help tourism business companies to design new service ideas in an easy way.

The Double Diamond is a visualization of a creative process. It consists of four phases, represented in two diamonds. It is about asking, listening, sorting, creating, testing, and designing. It helps to explain a creative process to the designer team in a short and concise way.

Services and products are often developed for narrow target groups of customers. In these kinds of situations, many customers are forgotten or neglected. This is reflected, for example, in unfulfilled expectations or in declining visitor numbers. The Design Thinking process can help to ensure that needs of all target groups are considered in the future and included in the innovation process. New service ideas need no longer wait for their breakthrough but will hopefully be accepted directly.

Mostly the process starts with a trigger. The problem definition is located between the two diamonds. It is useful to keep in mind the iterative nature of the design process and that it is often necessary to jump between the phases. Also, the solution that comes at the end of the second diamond is not necessarily the answer to the trigger, as feedback received throughout the process keeps changing the problem. The iterative nature of the design process is worthwhile remembering, even though the process is presented as a progressive process (Stickdorn et al. 2018).

Previously in this chapter, the Double Diamond model was presented as a guiding approach to describe the design process. In addition to the Double Diamond, there are other models too, and many of these process descriptions have lots of similarities. In addition to the Double Diamond model, the Design Thinking process by Tim Brown is widely in use, and it has been referred to in VISIT, too. Design Thinking proceeds with the phases of Emphasize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test (Figure 1). Despite their different definitions and descriptions, these diverse models guide the designers, who are, in this case, people from companies, students, as well as staff from educational institutes. Regardless of the process model followed at this stage of the process, there will be a need for research and a deep understanding of the customers, service, business, and environment.

In the Double Diamond (Design Council) figure model, the process is divided into two parts. The Design Thinking process has started as a collaboration of companies, students, and educational institutes. One can assess the development process every now and then even during the short-term development process. When customer insight and service and environment understanding are created these become a great background to proceed to ideation and to finally make the ideation and innovation concrete and real. Only after empathizing and understanding the content and context, it is possible to generate innovative ideas for real tourists. In this Design Thinking process, it is essential to concretize the idea and transfer it to the empirical environment, to bring it alive. The process is cumulative, and lessons learned should be considered.

Phases of the Double Diamond

The Double Diamond model presents both the divergent and convergent nature of the design process. To be able to gather lots of data and, on the other hand, in-depth understanding, one needs different approaches to information and process. Next, four phases of the Double Diamond are discussed and presented from the viewpoint of the aim, methods, and outcomes of each phase.

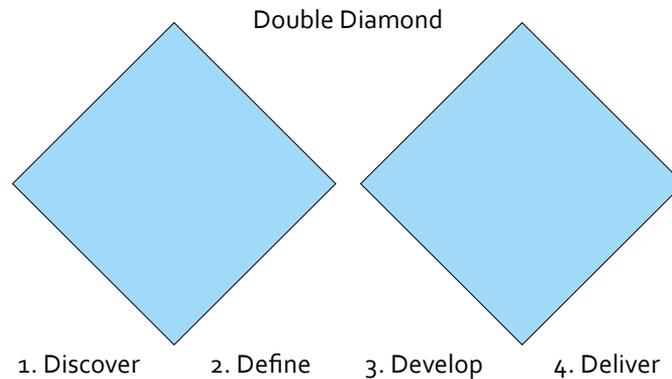


Figure 1 . Double Diamond (Design Council).

Phase 1: Understanding the problem

The process starts with a trigger. For example, triggers could be these: “Fewer tourists than last season, more complaints than usual, new services that are not accepted and much more.” In this phase, the focus is on the customer and their needs. The process supports one to step into the shoes of the customers. It is crucial to understand the customers’ way of thinking, their motivation, and problems. It is challenging to experience the service and the experience through the eyes of others, but it is not impossible. Design Thinking methods provide tools for practicing this.

At the beginning of the process, it is important to gather as much information as possible from different target groups. For designers, whether they are students or entrepreneurs and other experts of their own services, it might also demand new attitudes to put one’s own assumptions aside. One of the biggest mistakes is to think at the first phase that you already know the solution to the problem. The core of this initial phase is to research in all directions and identify new areas that are not apparent at first glance. It is useful to set a deadline for each phase not to get lost in the task. Since the process is not linear, there might, at any point, be a need to investigate more.

A list for methods that might be helpful at this phase is long: for example, benchmarking, analyzing megatrends, stakeholder mapping, service safari, field study with different approaches, like interviews, empathy mapping, surveys, observation, cultural probes, and other ethnographic tools, and finally research wall as a collection of outcomes.

Phase 2: Defining the problem

In the second phase, all the information needs to be structured and sorted. This will help to quickly identify commonalities between the different target groups, and to discover many more problems than was thought at the beginning. In this phase, it is good to question whether the initial problem is still relevant or whether a modified problem is now much more important to satisfy the needs of customers or tourists. The aim of this phase is to work out a clear problem definition. It is important to focus on the main problem and not try to include as many problems as possible in the definition. This would only lead to an unclear starting position.

To successfully define the problem, there are lots of design methods that could be utilized: for example, persona, customer journey mapping, and ideation. Once again, one could remember that ideation is based on background research, and the voice of the customer should be evident there.

Phase 3: Developing different approaches to solutions

At the end of the second phase, the information and knowledge have been compressed and the most interesting approaches will be further developed. After the clear definition of the problem, possible solutions can now be developed. It is important to generate as many ideas as possible and not judge any ideas during the process. Thinking outside the box will really be beneficial, working in a project team of students, entrepreneurs, coaches, and even external stakeholders open the eyes to see the problem widely. It is worthwhile to remember that every idea, no matter how strange, can provide a new impulse. This phase also bears the danger of thinking hastily that the solution is already ready. Instead, one must keep an open mind.

After ideation is completed, the ideas should be prioritized. The best way to do this is to determine criteria based on the problem definition. Developing a prototype for the best 1–3 ideas validates the real value for the user. In the testing phase, it needs to be noted that an answer such as “It is good, I like it, the service is nice” does not tell much to the service designers. The best kind of feedback provides information and opinions on how to improve the idea further, or what kind of elements and features should be included so that the customer would certainly be willing to pay for it.

This third phase makes the idea more concrete, and once again there are many design tools that can be helpful at this point. A future service idea can be presented using Customer Journey Mapping, or with Service Blueprint, which also includes the point of view of the service provider, storyboards, scenarios, and prototyping to visualize the service idea for testing.

Phase 4: Decision and developing a solution

In the final phase, it is time to evaluate opinions on the prototypes and finalize the perfect idea. As the process is inherently iterative, one might need to find new ideas to adapt and improve the prototype. Depending on the extent of the adaptation, new research may also be necessary. It is necessary to listen to customer feedback instead of one’s own assumptions and own preferences. If the product, service, or solution, no matter how innovative, does not satisfy the needs of the target audience, all development was for nothing. That is why it is so important not to push own interests further but to remain neutral and objective. Finally, after several iterative steps to find the perfect solution for customers, the implementation can be started.

At the end of this design process, the focus is put on visualization and concretizing the idea. For example, different Business Model Canvases are viable ways to summarize the service idea from diverse points of view. In addition to a traditional version, the Service Logic Business Model Canvas emphasizes the role and value of the user (Ojasalo & Ojasalo 2018). Later in this handbook, in Chapter 4, the tools are demonstrated, and they will be available electronically in the VISIT Workbook.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW SERVICE IDEAS

Creating innovative service ideas is just a start, a new idea is an innovation only when it has been implemented. Tourism companies with the design team, which has consisted of students, staff from HEIs (Higher Education Institutes), and other experts, have invested their time and other resources in the design project. New service ideas should be feasible, user-centered, sustainable, and naturally also profitable. Only ideas which put into practice and create profit for the business can be called an innovation (Lusch & Nambisan 2015, Snyder et al. 2016).

The Design Thinking process has already provided information about how tourists and other users of island tourism services have experienced the service idea. Agile development has given concrete tips on how to improve the service idea even further, how to better fulfill the needs of the users. The entrepreneur or service provider has the possibility to test these service ideas in practice.

It is useful to consider in practice what kind of improvements and development it is needed. As an example, for Hotel Bastas in Paxos, the idea to improve sales and competitiveness is to upgrade the rooms and modernize them with traditional Greek influences. More luxurious rooms can be aimed at a higher price than moderate rooms. Or for another hotel on a Finnish island, low visibility and accessibility and underutilization of the restaurant capacity lead to the value proposition of building a guest harbor to facilitate boaters the access for accommodation and food.

Very concrete ideas for services have been presented in the project. For example, in Nauvo, for VisitSeili, three kinds of packages were created: Half-Day Teambuilding Package, Full-Day Teambuilding Package, and a Customizable Teambuilding Package. Their content for them was described, for example, as consisting of the following possibilities: quiz night, tug-of-war, team painting, team photo challenge, odd couples, guided tour, walk/jog, jigsaw puzzle pieces, truth and lies, and sauna.

Kaffestugan in Böda is a bakery and café established 25 years ago and is in Löttorp, Öland, Sweden. For their new location in the harbor, the student team developed a solution to this challenge in exclusive evening events for small groups invited to test premium ice creams of unique tastes and flavors. The new café, with its beautiful location, is perfect for these events to take place. The tasting events will be exclusive and luxurious, in line with the aura of the high-quality products that Kaffestugan in Böda offers, and the setting will add value to the experience. The events would take place at irregular times during the season, and the infrequency would add a feeling of rarity and exclusivity.

The project VISIT has created the VISIT Workbook, which is a helpful, hands-on aid in book format for practicing the design process. It offers templates and practical instructions on how to continue with improvements even without the student team around.

In addition, VISIT provides an Online Community, which is a place for developing services, but equally, it is a collaboration platform for sharing ideas, experiences, and challenges for anyone interested in working for developing island tourism and European tourism. The Online Community will be discussed in Chapter 4 with detailed information.

RESULTS OF THE DESIGN PROCESS INTO PRACTICE

As a summary of the Design Thinking process, it is evident that all participants have gained a lot. Students have, in their intercultural teams, been able to solve real-world problems, companies have received lots of new service ideas and testing results, and staff from Higher Education Institutions have had the chance to collaborate in real-time co-designing practices.

Collaborative co-creation is the key to successful designing of services. VISIT has involved different actors in working together, which has obviously been beneficial for them in a co-creation process compared to working alone, with their own thoughts and ideas only. Co-creation opens new perspectives since it brings people with diverse backgrounds together. Students from different fields of education brought with them different kinds of approaches, digital competence, business understanding, even some emphasized security aspects, of course, while the basis has been the insight of tourism behavior and business. Representatives from diverse fields have expanded thinking: local marketing people know the possibilities of the region, and entrepreneurs have had the knowledge of their own business and customers. Discussions with other actors from the same island have been helpful to see the business from a wider perspective, and co-creation with people from other islands expanded the understanding even further.

As a mode of operation, co-creation forces everyone to bring the best out of themselves; it is easy to stick to old habits and ideas when only shared within one's own company and with people who are familiar. Working together in VISIT has certainly generated power! Creativity has produced new possibilities for tourism companies on small islands. Designing new ideas (or improving existing ones) has been productive and even fun to do in an intercultural team.

However, even the most innovative ideas and new solutions need to be defined, clarified, explained, and tested with real users, in this case with tourists on small islands. Concretizing and testing provided the guidelines to how to really make the idea into an innovation.

The design process continued with ideation and selecting the best idea or ideas. The chosen ideas were then concretized by prototyping which is intertwined with testing. The iterative process led to the launching of the improved and tested service. The lesson learned was to understand how important it is to involve different kinds of actors to get authentic feedback for new ideas. One lesson was that it is crucial to be at the same time determined for renewal, however, an open-minded approach enables further development. One should have a good combination of the spirit of reform and commitment.

This final step is always the highlight of the process. All the previous stages and phases have created the background, understanding, and insight into this current situation. The process of Design Thinking is not important itself; rather, it is an approach to understand the user, the service, environment, and most importantly how to see the development as a design process. All these tasks have led to this point with a tested idea, which should be launched as part of the service portfolio of the tourism company on a small island.

One can note that Design Thinking processes should not stop at testing! A template for how to put the design process into practice would help the entrepreneurs with simple topics. How about asking some helpful questions? Sometimes simple questions would be key to what is needed for the action.

The template Do It Simply provides (Template 1) questions for putting the idea into practice. "I have a dream" refers to the final goal, "How will I" states what kind of tools, resources are needed. Other questions, like "First I need", "Then I also need" and "Who are needed" guide the company to realize which the concrete steps to be taken, how much time it would take, who to be involved, and when everything will take place and

so on. "Finally, I will" is a starting point for an entrepreneur or service provider to define when, where, and how this service will be realized. An extra column encourages one to ask for comments and feedback, and document them in a systematic way from the closest ones, whether they represent the same family, company, or business area.

DO IT SIMPLY – HOW TO PUT IDEAS INTO PRACTICE?

 I HAVE A DREAM...	 HOW WILL I DO THIS...	 FIRST, I NEED...	 THEN, I NEED ALSO...	 WHO ARE NEEDED TO THIS...	 FINALLY, I WILL...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a sample text. Add your text here. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a sample text. Add your text here. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a sample text. Add your text here. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a sample text. Add your text here. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a sample text. Add your text here. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a sample text. Add your text here.
Thoughts from your spouse, Colleague etc.	Thoughts from your spouse, Colleague etc.	Thoughts from your spouse, Colleague etc.	Thoughts from your spouse, Colleague etc.	Thoughts from your spouse, Colleague etc.	Thoughts from your spouse, Colleague etc.
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DO IT SIMPLY – HOW TO PUT IDEAS INTO PRACTICE?

 I HAVE A DREAM...	 HOW WILL I DO THIS...	 FIRST, I NEED...	 THEN, I NEED ALSO...	 WHO ARE NEEDED TO THIS...	 FINALLY, I WILL...
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Template 1. Template for Do It Simply



This chapter has investigated the phases of service development, and finally concentrating on the implementation and the transition from ideation to an operationalized service. In addition to the new service idea, after completing the design process, the participants have developed their competencies and skills. Furthermore, in the best case, different actors have created new networks and even service ecosystems to create better services for island tourists.

VISIT has provided possibilities and tools for companies on small islands to improve their services to be more profitable, to better fulfill the expectations of the users, and to respond to the value proposition given to the tourists. The Online Community is a place for multi-stakeholder collaboration, where businesses from the island tourism industry meet students and staff from Higher Education Institutions. When one shares the problem with others and takes the steps of Design Thinking, the future of tourism services on small islands can and will be a success.

Good luck with your new service!

These key takeaways are worth remembering:

The nature of the process, while putting the ideas into practice, is:

- collaborative: it is important to involve multiple stakeholders
- visualizing: visualization makes intangible services tangible; it helps to communicate among different actors
- concretizing: ideas on a general level become concretized, details are presented and crystallized
- iterative: the process includes testing and improving

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CHAPTER 4: ONLINE COMMUNITY AND VISIT TOOLKIT

by Kristina Henriksson, Päivi Mantere and Irma Mänty, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland

VISIT IS A project that focuses on developing services on European islands in cooperation with local actors, SMEs, and students at the universities involved in the project. One of the aims of the project is to provide an Online Community for these stakeholders to generate sustainability of the project itself and to join people for similar aims in the future. The Community offers something for most people who wish to develop services, create new service ideas, learn about Design Thinking and tourism, develop island tourism, and work together with students and teachers from universities. All these activities can be carried out in the Online Community.

The Online Community is an online space that is available to anyone interested in cooperating with other people to develop new ideas for tourism, to learn about Design Thinking and Sustainable Entrepreneurship, and to find interns to work with SMEs in tourism. To register, one can find the link on the project website (www.visit-islands.eu). The Online Community is a sustainable result of the project, as it continues operating after the project is over. It is also sustainable as it makes international learning and collaboration easy to carry out online, instead of any requirements for travel.

This chapter introduces the Online Community, how it was created and why. Thereafter there are some suggestions for entrepreneurs on how to operate and work in the Online Community. The chapter finishes with an introduction to the VISIT Toolkit.

THE ONLINE COMMUNITY

Among the objectives of the project was, for example, to offer support for SMEs to find solutions to extend the season on islands. This is possible, for example, by providing training in innovation processes and in sustainable entrepreneurship. Furthermore, students working as interns can assist in transforming innovative ideas into practice, thus launching the new services. The solution to these aims was to create the Online Community.

To examine more deeply the Online Community, one can first look at the several reasons why it was created. The main aims of the Online Community are as follows. First, it allows one to learn how to design new service ideas to improve one's business. This objective includes presenting the Design Thinking process, and most used Design Thinking methods and tools. It has been important to ensure that this section needs to be very practical, hands-on, but at the same time inspirational and interesting. Secondly, it supports cooperation with other entrepreneurs around Europe. This should give a place and possibilities to collaborate and be inspired. Thirdly, it offers a place to learn from others practical things, new ideas, etc. The online community is not only a platform, but the most important characteristic is learning together. Approaches in VISIT ground the implementation on the Learning by Developing model, where all the actors are learners, and all participants are on the same lane. This ensures that everyone will learn, since no one knows in advance what will happen in the design process, and especially what the result and findings will be. Fourth, it is a place to help get interns, students to work at one's business. The Online Community provides instructions for internships where students can work with entrepreneurs to create new services. How it has been implemented will be discussed later in this chapter. And finally, the fifth objective is to work with educational institutions. In VISIT, the collaboration of students, companies, and educational institutions is one of the most important targets.

Antikainen et al. (2010, 104) discuss how creativity and innovativeness might function in social networks, for example by presenting Taatila's idea on how the knowledge of a network focuses through an innovator or several. If an entrepreneur works alone in learning the Design Thinking process, it is apt and as intended. But if one collaborates with others in the process online in the Community, the knowledge and creativity of several people are channeled through one innovator or several. The definition of creativity includes the skill to generate something that is new and suitable (Antikainen et al. 2010, 104).

While the Online Community is available to anyone interested and registered as a user, users can utilize the Community by inviting one's customers there as well. Just like Design Thinking is most productive when carrying out the process together with customers, one can thus carry out the process with one's customers in the Online Community. According to Antikainen et al. (2010, 103), it might not be financially useful to meet the needs of one customer; therefore, it is better to try to get different customers to generate new ideas together. In addition, entrepreneurs can collaborate with education institutes, such as the partners in VISIT, or others and design together with students.

VISIT provides tools for SMEs and students to develop and innovate new service ideas. The tools, which are suitable for the innovation work, have been gathered to the Online Community as well as included in the publications of the project. The publications include this handbook as well as a workbook where the templates can be filled in or printed and filled in.



CREATING THE ONLINE COMMUNITY

To be able to create the Online Community, there were several steps that the project team needed to take. The process included the selection of the platform that required testing of a few available platforms for these kinds of purposes. Furthermore, the planning of the content was an important phase that took several rounds to improve the Community existing today. The partners will continue updating the Online Community even after the project ends. The content needed to be tested several times with various users from different countries to make sure that it suited users with different kinds of backgrounds and interests.

The Platform

To find the suitable platform, VISIT tested several ones, which included Buddy Press, Google Classroom, Peda.net, and Canvas from Instructure. The testing looked at, for example, how the platform's site can be scaled on various devices. Also, it was key to have different ways of communicating on the platform. Other necessary features were to have access to different statistics such as activity, to be able to upload and download material, and, since the platform provides a Design Thinking course, to offer possibilities for designing. Also, the platform's features should support learning. Furthermore, security needed to be considered, such as the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) so that the platform could meet the requirements for information security.

After having tested the various platforms, Canvas was chosen as the most suitable one for the purposes of the Online Community. What is very good about it is that it also provides a mobile application. It is easy to use and one can, for example, be part of the activities in the Online Community on one's phone or tablet. In addition, Canvas is user-friendly and has security updates carried out regularly.

Planning and Creating Content

The place to design the content for the Online Community was a blank canvas in the beginning, waiting for work to be done to create it into a workspace, an Online Community for VISIT. Most project experts were new to the platform which is why staff needed to learn how to use the features of the Canvas platform. After training on how Canvas functions, the contents were planned. The study module was constructed with the ABC Learning Design methodology. This method is quick to execute with a user-centered way to create a visual blueprint of courses.

Communication is vital for all activities both online and in real life. Not only is a lingua franca necessary, but also one needs to consider the cultural backgrounds of the users. Bozkurt and Aydin have researched cultural issues especially in MOOCs, which are not the case with the VISIT Online Community, but nevertheless their conclusions are interesting and valuable. According to Bozkurt and Aydin (2021, 1842), "online networked learning spaces are an opportunity to facilitate lifelong learning, and learning for all" and they point out that when one designs learning online, one would need to consider the perspective of cultural matters.

VISIT experts represent different cultural and lingual backgrounds which have played a part when developing and designing the Community. Cultural contexts and backgrounds need to take into consideration also how closely people can work together online in a community because this collaboration between strangers online also needs a level of trust to be present (Baek & Kim 2015, 661). Cultural skills include skills in interpersonal communication, even when communicating online. Trust, thus, makes collaboration more effective and supports actors online in becoming more active with others (Tsai & Hung 2019, 553).

The contents of the Community needed to be simple to use and understand, especially making it easy to log in and navigate in the space, which are also some main issues to consider in online spaces, according to Willard et al. (2018, 96). The European accessibility act requires that all services online and Internet websites are accessed by all people, even disabled citizens. This makes it important to pay attention to the colors, their brightness, the readability of letters and text. Also, sounds and videos must be available and understandable to all.

The learning design and design of the Community takes the different user types into account. Both businesspeople, entrepreneurs, students, and teachers are among the target groups. When people are increasingly busy at work, it is crucial that the use of the Online Community is easy, with as few requisites as possible regarding technology. Many SMEs might have a small infrastructure regarding ICT, which is taken into consideration in the Community. The tourism field, thus, will have an Online Community that should be easy to use and network on.

The tourism field, businesses, and other actors are very busy. This is naturally considered in the Online Community. The Community offers added value for people joining and acting online in its activities. Networking and online collaboration options create possibilities for potential professional relations. According to Farisi, if one feels close to others it also makes it easier to exchange information (2012, 53–55). This again brings one back to the issue of trust, which seems very central to networking online.

Not only is trust essential but motivation is, as well, to get people engaged in what they are doing in the Online Community. Students are one target group, and the students are motivated and gain rewards related to their studies and future careers. According to Galehbakhtiari & Hasangholi Pouryasouri, actions in an online space could lead to compensations or rewards with a kind of significance (2015, 641). This could be a way to motivate users from the tourism business world to join the VISIT Online Community, where the prizes are learning results, new networks, collaboration possibilities with universities, and new service ideas created alone or with others online. Understanding the usefulness itself makes the joining of the Online Community a reason (Hashim & Tan 2018, 152).

As the ABC Learning Design methodology was used for the structuring of the contents, still the pedagogy needed to be focused on. Partners have utilized COIL, or Collaborative Online International Learning, in online training before. Henriksson et al. note that a COIL learning event or course succeeds best with people from various cultural backgrounds and fields of study (Henriksson, Mantere, Mänty & Hardiman 2020). Thus, it is a useful way of learning together with people from different countries and even share cultural experiences together when being at home (Coventry University).

With COIL in the thoughts, VISIT experts realized that the VISIT Online Community provides an ideal environment for people in different countries and with different backgrounds to collaborate and even learn together. This kind of learning that is provided with information technology tools and in an international setting is also called virtual mobility (Villar-Onrubia und Rajpal 2016, 77). Learning in COIL produces international results when participants are in different countries. Cultural skills improve during the cooperation online. In addition, people learn new skills during the collaboration, which can include those in professional areas and digital tools, as well as interpersonal skills.

COLLABORATING WITH INTERNS

One aim of VISIT has been to offer possibilities for students to conduct their internships in island tourism companies. At the same time, the project has given the companies opportunities to have new energy and professional help from the students, with the latest knowledge and competencies for innovation.

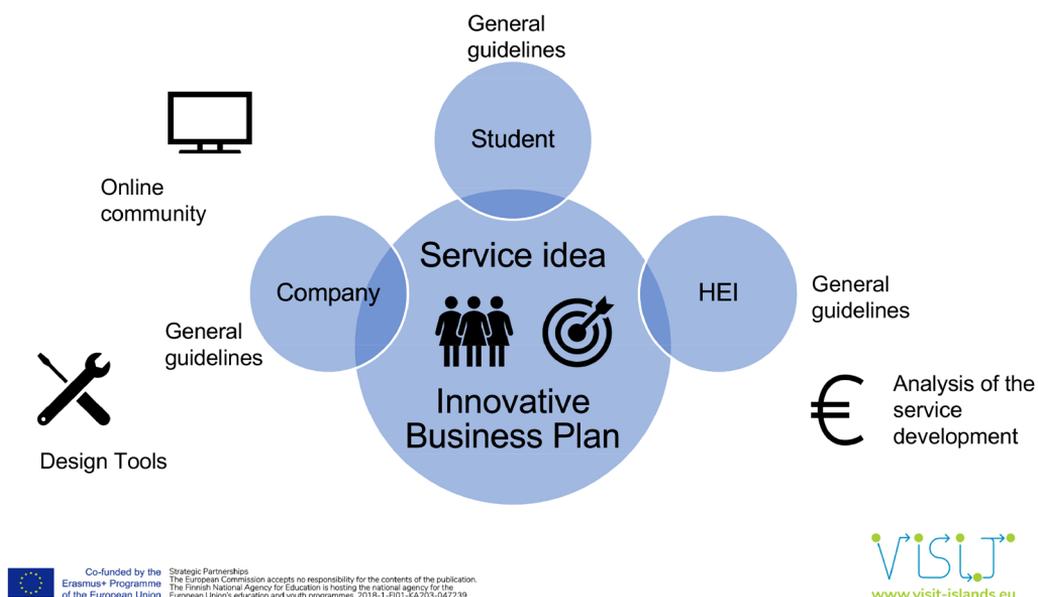


Figure 2. Process on collaborating with interns.

In order to complete the internship successfully, there is a need for shared rules and instructions. HEIs have their basic guidelines for internships. Naturally, the guidelines need to be followed by the university, trainee, and business. Typically, there can be some other agreements which need to be signed, etc.

VISIT emphasizes service development and innovation, and how new ideas are put into practice. Therefore, extra guidelines have been created to support the collaboration. For example, it is advised that a trainee needs to study the innovative business plan (which has been created in this project) carefully. The trainee needs to take responsibility to present the service idea and test it with some test users. That will help the entrepreneur to conduct agile development.

There are also some instructions on how a trainee can help the people from the business to utilize the online community. This can happen, for example, by presenting the tasks in the Online Community and involving the representatives of the company in the Design Thinking process. A trainee may also teach them how to utilize these Design Thinking tools, as well as the digital tools which are included in the Online Community, for example, Padlet for sharing ideas or versions of the prototype.

THE PANDEMIC CHANGING WORK

Naturally, also VISIT faced an exceptional situation due to the pandemic. Therefore, the project needed to adjust the activities and actions. To be well prepared the project team arranged a couple of Futures Thinking workshops during spring 2020. The project team worked together considering what kind of primary and secondary changes there might be, as well as discussed what kind of influences and changes there would be from the point of view of economic, social, technological, environmental, and political factors.

Many of the findings were linked to the Online community, for example, the significance and possibilities of technological solutions, or ecological factors which support online communication. Naturally, the project team had to reconsider the whole project, but as the Online Community is one of the main results of the project, it was one of the key topics to be discussed. For example, when timing and methods changed, and the project VISIT, for example, arranged an extra Design Thinking Online Sprint in spring 2020, it was implemented in the Online Community.

Scenario work: from the point of view of project VISIT

- **Aim of the scenario work:**
- → to increase preparedness for changes, challenges and expectations during COVID-19 pandemic
- → to create alternative plans for actions and activities
- **Working process:**
- → pre-material provided concerning mega trends in the field of tourism
- → co-creative workshop1 in mixed teams: Defining primary and secondary effects of COVID-19 pandemic. Method used: futures wheel combined with PESTE-analysis.
- → co-creative workshop2 in mixed teams: Defining desirable and undesirable futures, and effects on the project. Method used: futures table.
- → next steps: how to utilize the results in project VISIT



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www.visit-islands.eu

Figure 3. Visit scenario work.

CONTENTS OF THE VISIT ONLINE COMMUNITY

The Online Community can be found on Canvas, a platform provided by Instructure. On the platform, one can find different sections. One section is an area for communication, messages, and collaboration on, for example, offering internships for students to work at SMEs in the tourism field. Other topics that can be covered in the discussion areas contain, among others, any cooperation on tourism services, tourism development, the learning course or module, or others.



The Online Community provides a Self-study Module, that consists of a course on Design Thinking. This course can be completed alone or with colleagues or even with other people who are online in the Community. The course is based on the logic of the Service Design Thinking process and consists of various steps that need to be followed (Ojasalo, Koskelo, & Nousiainen 2015, 202). The Module offers learning material in the form of presentations, videos, links to other sources, etc.

The section on the Self-study Module is structured so that the user can follow step-by-step the Design Thinking process and create new service ideas or revamp present services. One can engage others to give feedback if so wanted or one can just work alone. The best results usually come from collaborating with different kinds of people, which makes it more rewarding to using experiences and knowledge from them in the design process. An entrepreneur can visit the Online Community more than once to go through the Design process; bringing people along will generate usually different results than when working alone. Design Thinking is—as we now know—stepping into the shoes of the customer.

The structure of the self-study course is organized by numbers on the pages, so it is recommended to follow the process by going through the pages in numerical order. Users can also use the discussion forums to discuss these activities with others. Participants can submit the assignments by writing text or upload a file/image or record a video. Any work that is returned in the Assignments is confidentially treated. If the user wishes to have help from universities, they can also give permission to use their material, in case this material can be further developed for the user.

The Online Community also includes in the Self-study Module a section on how to be a sustainable entrepreneur. After having carried out both parts, the participant can receive a certificate by requesting for it in the system.

Other materials to be found in the Community are a glossary on some main concepts in the languages of the partners and a section on how to make innovative business plans. There will be a link to the publication of case studies as well when the publication is ready. Other useful material consists of travel safety, and how to estimate how safe it is to travel to a location.

Furthermore, the Online Community offers online help. This is, at present, offered as monthly support in Zoom, in sessions that are called "Ask anything." People can send in their questions in advance or post them in the discussion areas or wait until there is the next Zoom session. One will find a link to the Zoom session in the Online Community. If one's question requires more research, then the question will be answered later.

As part of the Online Community, there are basic discussion areas for diverse use. The first one is called "Find a partner to cooperate with". Actors may belong to any of the groups of the users (student, company, university). In the discussion area, people can learn from each other and give ideas and feedback.

The second discussion area is created for job and internship offers, where company representatives can announce their needs for more staff to work or students for internships. In addition, a student may introduce themselves, their competencies and skills, and interests in this discussion area. This is a good place for personal branding!

The third discussion area is created for questions about course contents. In case anyone has any questions about the self-study module, the questions can be asked and discussed there.

CONTENTS AND USABILITY TESTS

The process from a plan to an Online Community with contents required the project partners to also organize extensive testing of the Community. Robert Gordon University (RGU) led the testing procedures and documented them. These were carried out in 2020. The aim of the tests was to ensure that any faults, bugs, problems with the usability, or contents were discovered and remedied.

The methods implemented in the testing were: black-box and white-box testing, usability testing, accessibility testing, and feedback from students. The results from the testing processes illustrated that Canvas is well suited for the purposes of the Online Community and its usability is user-friendly. All changes needed based on the testing procedures have already been carried out. Further testing will be done, when necessary, in the future as well to develop the Community. By the end of May 2020, there had been already more than 15,000 views.

To conclude the introduction of creating the VISIT Online Community, we invite you to become part of the future of European island tourism. For, by the end of the project, VISIT has developed new services for businesses and communities on the islands of Paxos, Greece; Öland, Sweden; Nauvo and Korppoo, Finland; Fehmarn, Germany; and Vis, Croatia. These locations are wonderful places in Europe, islands to visit and visit again. While the pandemic of COVID-19 has made tourism suffer worldwide, it has also been a time for businesses to think about their future and maybe reinvent themselves. Design Thinking is a way to do that! You can also join VISIT Online Community to be part of developing European tourism.

SNEAK PEEK INTO THE ONLINE COMMUNITY

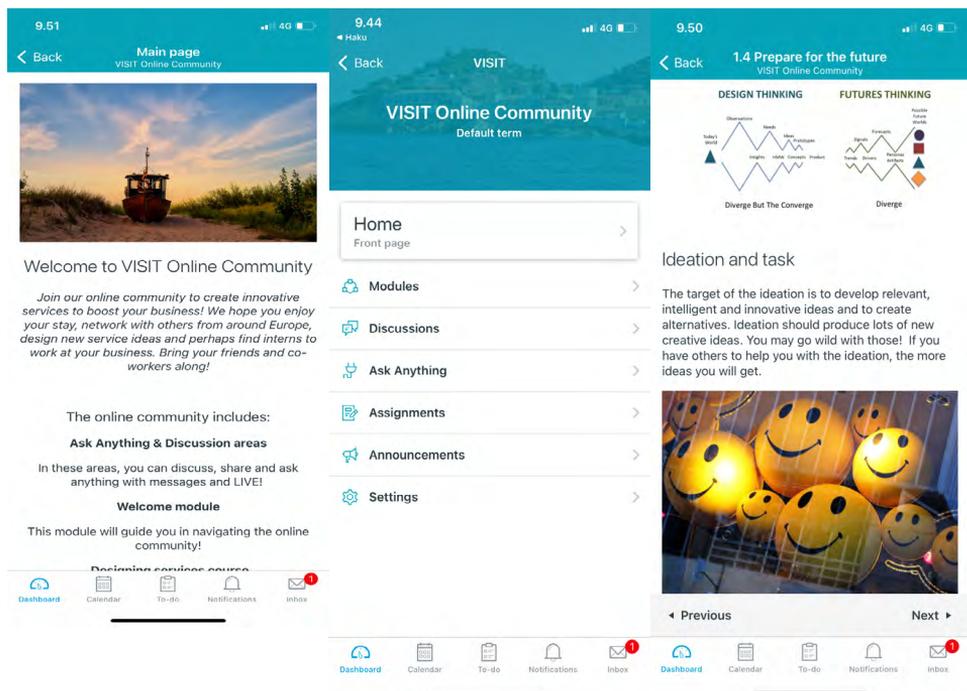


Image 1. Screenshot of the welcome page on the VISIT Online Community using a mobile device.

Image 2. Screenshot of the navigation page on the Online Community using a mobile device.

Image 3. Screenshot of the Ideation and task page in the Online Community using a mobile device.

THE VISIT TOOLKIT

The Online Community provides, alongside the Self-study Module, different added elements, and contents, for example the VISIT Toolkit (available in the VISIT Workbook). With the tools, one can go through the Design Thinking process. Toolkits stimulate and save time in the design process and help to create effective outcomes (Conole & Fill 2005, 1). One will find the instructions and the template or tool next to the instructions in the VISIT Workbook. The workbook is created for users to be used side-by-side to the self-study module, or later it can be used whenever there is a need to develop new service ideas or improve existing ones. The workbook presents the tools which can be downloaded to be filled in on a computer or tablet, or they can be printed and filled in by hand, whichever is suitable.

The tools explained in this chapter are Net scouting, Persona, Customer Journey Map, Brainwriting. There are more tools in the Online Community and in the VISIT Workbook. These tools that bring the Design Thinking process into action are helpful, quick to understand, and easy to use. One can try them out while reading about them, or one can use them when going through the Design Thinking process in the Online Self-study Module in the Online Community, or both! Designing new services or improving the existing ones for tourism companies on small islands can be supported with diverse tools and instruments. The Design Thinking process has been presented in Chapter 3.

These tools are extremely useful also when creating an innovative business plan. This handbook demonstrates how the collaboration between tourist companies and entrepreneurs together with students and staff from HEIs has been a successful way to be innovative and creative.

The tools discussed in this handbook follow the same logic which has been in use while designing services in the project VISIT. Entrepreneurs on small islands certainly know their customers and tourists but by using these tools one can understand the experiences and expectations of the users. At the same time, these tools also enable the systematic approach to evaluate service environments. In the project VISIT, tourism companies on small islands have learned how intercultural student teams have been able to collect a lot of information and data in systematic and analytic ways, for example, by using the net scouting tool.

These tools enable us to utilize all the senses as a source of data collection and information. Do you remember the last time when you visited a new place? When you stepped out of an airplane to feel the humidity of the air, or when you were listening to the silence at a quiet seashore? Can you still recall the taste of the freshly picked locally produced strawberries? All these memories together are important signs of experiences. A multisensory approach enables us to utilize all that information that users share. Understanding the user's experience in-depth and widely gives tourism professionals a competitive advantage.

To use tools such as these in the Toolkit makes us see things concretely. Thus, visual elements are core principles of Design Thinking. Visuality refers to using images, pictures, figures, and other illustrations instead of text (Rodges et al. 2017, 13). Visualization also enables us to make intangible services to be tangible (Stickdorn et al. 2011, 42). There are several ways to make information visual. The possibilities of using colors, icons, graphics are almost unlimited. Visual tools are useful as a part of the design process, but also when presenting the outcomes of the innovation. For example, while testing the new or improved service idea, visual tools are worth utilizing.

Design Thinking itself as a concept might sound abstract and refined, but, in reality, it is very practical and hands-on action. Using these tools lets one use them as instruments to dig inside into the world of the customer and share findings with others. Working with innovative tools stimulates the brain. The sense

of feeling is the most powerful sense of humans and there is a relation between brain activity and design capabilities (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen et al. 2014, 8). Therefore, creativity is valued to be increasingly important in designing tourism services, especially when cultural aspects are approved (Richards 2020, 2).

INTRODUCING SOME TOOLS

Netscouting

Netscouting has its roots in benchmarking, which gives the possibility to compare services to best practices cases. Both these methods should be conducted in a systematic manner. If one just randomly googles some companies or observes some practices, one may lose important information. Of course, it is natural to start an information search with googling, but how should one do it in an effective and productive way?

NETSCOUTING

TARGET	TOPIC	TOPIC	TOPIC	TOPIC	TOPIC	TOPIC	SOURCE (HYPERLINK)
What is the target which has been researched?	Decide what the search words and topics are and fill them in in the columns.	Carry out the research and fill the cells in the tool.	Include also qualitative information, that gives you more insight.				Remember to mark the hyperlink to the website where you found the information.

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Template 2. Netscouting.

Netscouting saves time and effort if some basic rules are followed. Systematic information collection, observation, and documentation are the keys to successful net scouting. Netscouting is a handy tool if one, for example, is interested in knowing how other tourism companies are doing with their services, how their customers have experienced their visit, what kind of services they offer for which price, etc.

Persona

Here is the persona tool. The persona can also be called a customer profile. Marketing management has used the idea of segmentation for a long time. It is a very good way to describe some basic elements of customers. But if we only divide the customers into groups based on their age, gender, or other socio-demographic factors, we do not have enough in-depth information of their needs, wants, values, experiences, and expectations. Think about a typical segmentation group: single women. That group might include a 19-year-old schoolgirl or a retired widow. Or if one narrows the group still into an age group, does it still provide enough information? If we have a bus full of seniors, do they share the same desires? Maybe there is someone who has lived her life mostly abroad or someone who has never been abroad, etc. With these examples, we can understand that segmentation is a very good basic tool but it does not provide enough in-depth understanding of how and why people behave in certain ways. One of the Design Thinking tools is the persona, which has similar features as segmentation has, but also some other advantages.

Persona Name
CUSTOMER PERSONA

👤

Demographics

Add some demographic information about the persona. Such as age, gender, status, occupation, location, income, family etc. or some other statistics.
Delete the instructions.

📖

Biography

Write a short description of the persona. Try to condense the essential information which describes the persona, personality, life, values, expectations, experiences etc.
Delete the instructions and write your own text here.

📍

Goals

🔗 What kind of goals does this persona have?
🔗 Are there some personal or professional aims he/she is targeting? How does this affect their life?
🔗 **Delete the instructions and write your own texts here**

🧳

Traveling

How often does the persona travel? When do they travel? Why do they travel? (business or leisure)
Do they travel alone, with family or partner?
What kind of experiences are they looking for? (culture, food, relaxing, shopping)
Anything else related to the personas travel habits?
Delete this text and write your own.

😞

Challenges

🔗 What kind of challenges does this persona face?
🔗 Which are the main pain points and frustrations which might affect the behavior, attitudes and actions?
🔗 **Delete the instructions and write your own texts here**

☀️

Day In A Life

What does a typical day look like for the persona while they are traveling? You can use text and/or images. **Delete the instructions.**



Template 3. Persona.

Customer Journey Map

Here is the Customer Journey Map template, which can also be called Consumer Journey Map. Traditionally marketing management has presented the diverse phases which customers go through while consuming services. The phases include the realizing of the need, information search, evaluation of the alternatives, and finally the decision, consumption, and feedback afterward. It is a very good basic structure for consumer behavior also in tourism. In addition, Design Thinking tools offer possibilities to dig deeply into the behavior. For example, the Customer Journey Map is a tool that helps us understand that there are diverse paths according to customers. Even the same person may vary his or her actions, so there are many issues that might influence that. What kind of information is available, how has the day been so far in other ways, what has happened at home, etc. In a tourism business, it is important to have real insight into people's behavior. Only understanding the steps is not enough. Information on the feelings and emotions, pains, and gains might be useful when one intends to create a unique experience for the customers.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP

	STAGE	STAGE	STAGE	STAGE	STAGE	STAGE
KEY ACTIVITIES	Present the main steps and touchpoints that the tourist faces with the company.					
CHANNELS	Name the channels where the interaction happens					
THINKING / FEELING	Present the feelings, emotions, reactions. Show the ups and downs, you can utilize visualization when presenting the emotions.					
PAIN POINTS / CHALLENGES	Pinpoint the moments which are most challenging in the tourist's path.					
OPPORTUNITIES	How could the service company help tourist in that moment?					
OFF-SEASON	Make sure that you have paid special interest on how this service will be experienced during the off-season.					

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Template 4. Customer Journey Map.

Brainwriting

This is one ideation tool called Brainwriting. There are many different kinds that can be used for ideation. Creativity is needed when we intend to succeed in the tourism business. This handbook has presented practices and principles of Design Thinking in the island tourism environment. Innovativeness and creativity are present during the whole design process. In addition to creativeness and open-minded innovativeness, ideation is a crucial part of designing new or improving existing tourism services. You can find the instructions on how to use the template in the workbook together with the template.

BRAINWRITING

Problem statement: What is the problem you are trying to solve?

ROUND	IDEA 1	IDEA 2	IDEA 3
ROUND 1	Each participant writes down 3 ideas then you switch the sheets and write in 3 ideas again, but different ones. Keep on going until you have about one hundred ideas.		
ROUND 2			
ROUND 3			
ROUND 4			
ROUND 5			
ROUND 6			

Template 5. Brainwriting.

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CHAPTER 5: LEARNING BY PARTICIPATING IN AN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT – ASSISTANTS’ PERSPECTIVE

by Emma Lavikainen, Miia Pajala, Petra Sivonen, Miia Torvinen, Kristina Henriksson, Päivi Mantere, Jami Riihihulta, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland; Marco Hardiman and Melanie Carneiro Lucas, Kiel University of Applied Sciences, Kiel, Germany

DURING THE PROJECT VISIT, the partners invited several students to work in the project on different project activities. Student participation has been an exceptional possibility for students to participate in an international EU funded project, which is impossible for students when their university’s curriculum is implemented in traditional ways. This chapter presents how students from Universities of Applied Sciences have worked as assistants and part of the project VISIT team. In addition to assistant work, this project has been integrated into study units on diverse occasions, which has extended the participation of a large number of students in the activities.

The project VISIT has aimed to increase collaboration and co-creation in the field of island tourism. Since this co-creative manner and philosophy is foundational for the project, it has also been natural to engage students in the project team. Co-creation enables diverse actors to share their resources to gain a collective aim. Sharing multiple resources enhances the possibility of having access to new emerging resources (Beirão et al. 2017, Trischler & Charles 2019). With the collaboration of staff from HEIs, students, and locals in the islands, it has been possible to gain such benefits which would not have been alone accessible. This chapter discusses the role of students as a part of the project team from the project’s point of view; however, even more, important is to describe the students’ learning experience, and their voices are heard later in the text.

Involving students to be part of the project team has been rewarding. Nevertheless, it has demanded collective commitment from the staff members. When students have been engaged in a funded project, it requires supervision and continuous support to their working and learning process. Participating HEIs have diverse experiences of involving students in individual implementations. For some of the partners, it has been a learning process from the organization’s point of view, and it has resulted in a transformation of practices.



Next, this chapter discusses assistant work and students in the project VISIT. It explores the professional development, learning of the student, and international competencies. It will demonstrate the students' experience via dialogue, which lets the students' voices be heard.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When students are recruited to participate as assistants, there has been a procedure to ensure that the needs of the project and the expectations of the students have been met. During these project years, there have been diverse participation prerequisites, such as language, ICT, marketing skills, etc. On the other hand, the project VISIT has supported different kinds of learning processes. It has enabled versatile students with various competencies to be involved and gain learning.

The most crucial reason for student participation is to support their learning process. Being an assistant has enhanced the learning, and many times individual professional development has been significant. Participating in an EU funded project demands a long-term commitment from both sides, from staff and students. The learning curve has been evident with many of the students since they have gained new or improved skills and learned utterly new skills, as well as their capability to take responsibilities, has grown.

One of the main objectives of the project VISIT is to improve the services on the small islands. While being part of the project, students have learned valuable skills to design better services for the needs of tourists. It has given them an internal perspective on the development process since they have been able to experience the whole process. As a part of the project team, they have been in close contact with local company representatives and other local stakeholders, which has provided a network from working life to be utilized. These kinds of skills and competencies will be a tremendous competitive advantage for them in working life, and they certainly are future's competencies for these future professionals.

Assistants' roles and duties have been diverse. They have participated in administrative tasks; for instance, they have practiced how to write formal memos and agendas. They have conducted marketing tasks; for example, they have been involved in creating marketing material for ISPs, Design Sprints, multiplier events, or other outcomes of the project. Assistants have practiced how to be active in professional social media channels.



"An important part in projects is teamwork, but we also have been working very independently as well as remotely. Each of us has learned to do work planning and schedules which are the most important areas of expertise for future work. We have used and learned to use a variety of digital tools during the project and helped each other out with new tools. Knowing and using different digital tools are increasingly needed in future work. "

"We have been participating in students' intensive study weeks (or short ISPs) on the islands and in online sprints. Before the ISPs, there is a lot of work to prepare and to be done, such as planning and organizing travel matters and contacting partners, students and giving them general guidance. Our duties have also been to prepare practical matters, study materials, send official electronic forms to the participants, and taking care that everything is organized and ready. "



LEARNING WHEN WORKING AS AN ASSISTANT

When students have been working as project assistants, they have experienced how an EU funded project is implemented. They can see how the objectives of the high-quality, real-life project are realized in practice. From the students' point of view, the project applications might be abstract and difficult to understand, such as the division of different intellectual outputs. Being part of the project team has allowed them to see how a team of professionals have implemented these together with working life and transferred those to practical tasks.

Assistants have experienced how different tasks are cumulating with each other. For example, in the ISPs, student teams have created new service ideas for companies, and later HEI staff have developed innovative business plans based on these ideas. This evolution is a novel experience for a student, and many other students have never had the chance to participate in a process like this during their studies.

Especially planning, conducting, and evaluating the process of ISPs and Design Sprints are rare learning experiences for students. In the project VISIT, assistants have been able to be involved in these processes. Naturally, staff from HEIs have primary responsibilities and roles. However, student assistants have been engaged in each step. They have, for example, learned how to define criteria for the selection of collaborative companies, how to negotiate about practicalities, and how to communicate with local, very hands-on, and often busy, actors in the tourism field, etc.



“The days during the ISPs are long and intense but definitely worth it – we do have enjoyed being a part of the study programs a lot.”

“As we assistants are students ourselves, we have another perspective on the students and their feelings during the week, which we consider as very valuable so that we can support the students. If we notice struggling students, we can try to back them up with strength, faith and provide food for thought to get them through the intensive week positively. It is one of the most important things for us in the intensive weeks to make sure that every team works well together. To help with the bonding and raising a team spirit, we aim to plan fun activities for the teams during the week. Examples are Kahoot quizzes for the students to participate and team roleplays.”

“Working in online sprints has given us different tasks and perspectives – planning needs to be done differently than for study programs held physically. For example, technical issues and questions need to be taken into consideration and have to be resolved.”

Learning to take responsibility for a specific set of tasks or wholeness may be a critical outcome for students. Being a responsible member as “a junior colleague” of the project team with professionals from HEIs can show their competencies and abilities. At best, assistants have been able to brand themselves as experts in some areas, for instance, event management or social media marketing. Since project work is sometimes complex, it requires willingness and capabilities to understand the big picture and sustained working manners.



“Working for a project like this demands a certain set of skills that has to be brought to the working place. You have to be team-oriented and reliable, as this is mainly teamwork. The team counts on you to present your work in time, fulfilling certain standards. It may take you time to adjust, but like at every workplace, you get better as you unfold in the project and learn how to achieve the standards and requirements. As time passed, we understood that the project partners always were on our side and trusted us with tasks they knew we could fulfill, even if they at first seemed hard to complete.”

INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCES

Like a good design and development process generally, collaboration in VISIT has required competences from diverse disciplines. Assisting students have represented various study programs. Most students have represented Hospitality Management and Tourism fields, but in addition to that, there have been students from Information Technology and from the Business sector. A collaborative way of working is founded on different kinds of skills and competencies. Working together with other members who have diverse educational

backgrounds can be a great learning experience for students also. Working together with people with different backgrounds requires negotiation skills, new ways to discuss the topic, and even further learning, for example, new ICT skills, novel business approaches, etc. The same challenge may have different solutions based on the point of view, and the variety of participants is key to finding these new solutions.

Naturally, being part of an international team that works to accomplish an international project improves intercultural competencies. During the ISPs and Design Sprints, the assistants have learned how to support intercultural communication in the student teams. Even further, during the whole project, they have experienced being part of an international project team. This naturally has meant diverse cultural values, communication styles, and ways of working. Learning intercultural communication enables one to survive and even succeed in the current, especially in the future working life.



“Probably the biggest learning we take from the project VISIT is working in an international team. Not only did we get to practice our knowledge in written as well as in spoken English by attending meetings, translating texts into English, and back, and writing blog posts on our website, but we could put our learnings from classes at our university directly into practice.”

“With the help of tools like Zoom, Biteable, Asana, Canvas, H5P, WordPress and several Microsoft tools like Teams, Word, and Excel, we handled our tasks and in-group meetings to prepare sessions. Borders and thousands of kilometers of distance or language were never a problem but a gaining of new skills, values, and even friends.”

SUMMING IT UP

During the years, many students have had the opportunity to participate as assistants and a part of an international project team. It has been a pleasure for staff to notice how the junior colleagues have grown to be professionals.



“Working in a multicultural project and teams gives us a lot of international opportunities and after working in such, we will be able to use learned language and communication skills in our work abroad in the business industry or with foreign partners and customers in our home country. Connections with international companies, partners, universities, and students open us chances for projects and job opportunities.

During the project, we have got to know many companies and worked together with them gathering information and knowledge about business plans and then helped to create new business models. A comprehensive understanding of business planning will help us in our potential career as an entrepreneur or consultant in developing services and new business models.”



The partners have appreciated all the work of the assistants during the project. The Introduction to this Handbook has listed all the assistants who worked in VISIT.

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CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS IN VISIT

by Marco Hardiman, Kiel University of Applied Sciences, Kiel, Germany; Kristina Henriksson and Jami Riihihulta, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland

IN ORDER TO evaluate the ideas, which were developed during the intensive weeks and transferred into innovative business plans, three parameters were defined. Next, the parameters used for the analysis are explained.

PARAMETERS EXPLAINED

1. Type of Innovation

The first parameter explains what kind of innovation the business plan is dealing with. Each idea is categorized into one of the four following types of innovation:

Product Innovation describes the development of new products or the change of already established products in the organization.

Service Innovation describes the development of new services or the changing of implemented services.

Different from both previously named innovation types, the **Business Model Innovation** defines the change of an already existing business model or the creation and implementation of a new one to satisfy the needs of the customers and/or those of the workforce even better.

However, if applying or introducing a new method or technology to enhance productivity and meet demands, it was categorized as **Process Innovation**.



2. Feasibility

The second parameter shows the feasibility of the idea. According to the data of each business plan, the feasibility of recommended innovations was rated "high", "medium" or "low".

High feasibility marks innovations, which are easy to develop and implement. They do not need any special or new skills and are affordable. The innovation also adds a significant value to business and customers and is not (yet) found by competitors.

Medium feasibility marks an innovation that requires the learning of new skills but is flanked with already existing skills. The implementation requires some effort and is somewhat costly but still affordable to the owners. The innovation can be found in competitors.

Low feasibility characterizes innovations that require new knowledge and training for developing and implementing. Although the innovation can add value to the business, it is very costly and hard to execute. It can already be found in competitors.

3. Level of Innovation

Lastly, the level of innovation was defined according to Hauschildt's framework (Hauschildt & Salomo 2011). Innovations can be leveled into one of four levels:

The first one is **Incremental Innovation**, which uses existing methods to improve existing processes, business models, products, or services. As only minor changes are made, the degree of innovation is low.

A **Medium-Innovated Innovation** uses existing or new processes, business models, products, or services, and new values are added. The degree of innovation is medium to low.

Purpose-induced innovations are triggered by demand and customer's needs. New purposes appear. This innovative level is also located in the middle area.

Unlike the three previous levels, a **Breakthrough Innovation** is defined by completely new processes, business models, products or services, which add a new value to both customers and the workforce. The degree of innovation is very high.

Next, the various innovations designed during VISIT are analyzed and briefly presented.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS ON PAXOS, GREECE

Each of the developed ideas was analyzed carefully according to the described parameters.

Anthia Apergi

The idea to improve the business model is to offer events and workshops connected to the store, such as book clubs or creative workshops for adults and children. Also, the idea includes the store to promote the shop as an info point for tourists to enhance exchange of information (owners get to know what tourists prefer and can adjust offerings).

Planos Holidays

The suggested idea is to create a new service purchasable as a package. This service is meant to be a wellness escape with activities such as fishing, bird watching, agritourism, etc. The main goal is to extend the tourist season.

Table 2. Analysis of innovations on Paxos, Greece.

	SECTION	TYPE OF INNOVATION	FEASIBILITY	INNOVATIVE LEVEL
Anthia Apergi	Shop	Business Model Innovation	medium	Breakthrough Innovation
Planos Holidays	Travel agency	Service Innovation	high	Medium-Innovated Innovation
Hotel Bastas	Hotel	Business Model Innovation	high	Incremental Innovation
Akis Fish Bar Restaurant	Gastronomy	Service Innovation	low	Breakthrough Innovation

Hotel Bastas

As the hotel rooms were described as old-fashioned, the idea to improve sales and competitiveness is to upgrade the rooms and modernize them with traditional Greek influences. More luxurious rooms can lead to a higher price than before.

Akis Fish Bar Restaurant

The idea to make the fish restaurant more attractive is to use a QR code on the menu for the customers to learn more about the origin and quality of the fish and the wine. Also adding a virtual tour for the guests to be part of the process and an included guestbook.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS ON ÖLAND, SWEDEN

Each of the developed ideas was analyzed carefully according to the described parameters.

Byxelkrok Cykeluthyrning

The proposal for the bicycle rental is offering guided tours to reduce the workforce's burden by having to pick up bicycles around the island and to extend the tourist season.

Kaffestugan I Böda

The idea to attract more customers to the bakery and café is to host events for small, invited groups. At those events, special ice creams of unique tastes will be tasted.

Table 3. Analysis of innovations on Öland, Sweden.

	SECTION	TYPE OF INNOVATION	FEASIBILITY	INNOVATIVE LEVEL
Byxelkrok Cykeluthyrning	Rental	Process Innovation	high	Medium- Innovated Innovation
Kaffestugan I Böda	Gastronomy	Business Model Innovation	medium	Breakthrough Innovation
Naturum Trollskogen	Knowledge Center	Service Innovation	medium – high	Purpose- Induced Innovation
Böda Beach Resort	Accommodation	Service Innovation	High	Medium- Innovated Innovation

Naturum Trollskogen

The proposed idea is to offer an interactive obstacle course for children aged 9–14 years. This aims to get children on the island to interact more with nature and enhance their knowledge. The course should offer quizzes, contests, and games related to the nature reserve.

Böda Beach Resort

The new product that is proposed is to have groups come to Böda Beach Resort during the preseason for different kinds of sports activities. "Active Spring in Böda Sand" will be offering activities for groups and specific programs for individuals since the resort already has amazing facilities to utilize.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS ON NAUVO, FINLAND

Each of the developed ideas was analyzed carefully according to the described parameters.

Korpoström Archipelago Centre

The value proposition is to create spaces for meetings and conferences, dining rooms, accommodation, and saunas by using already existing facilities.

Table 4. Analysis of innovations on Nauvo, Finland.

	SECTION	TYPE OF INNOVATION	FEASIBILITY	INNOVATIVE LEVEL
Korpoström Archipelago Centre	Visitor Center	Service Innovation	high	Incremental Innovation
Majatalo Martta Guesthouse	Hotel	Product Innovation	high	Incremental Innovation
Hotel Stallbacken	Hotel	Process Innovation	low – medium	Purpose-Induced Innovation
VisitSeili	Services	Service Innovation	high	Incremental Innovation

Majatalo Martta Guesthouse

To enhance tourism also off-season, holiday packages were developed. These include tourist maps, lunchboxes with homemade meals from the owner's restaurant, and treasure maps for children.



Hotel Stallbacken

Low visibility and accessibility and underutilization of the restaurant capacity led to the value proposition of building a guest harbor to facilitate boaters access to accommodation and food.

VisitSeili

The idea to extend the tourist season is to provide teambuilding packages for companies. The packages provide accommodation, spaces for meetings, and working and activities.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS ON FEHMARN, GERMANY

Each of the developed ideas was analyzed carefully according to the described parameters.

Bürgerbus

To extend the season and enhance the usage of the Bürgerbus in the months November—March, the idea proposed is to implement the service of a bus running in the night providing additional services such as karaoke singing and (non-) alcoholic beverages, as well as a safe return to the passenger's accommodation.

Kirchner Verein

The new services proposed here make Fehmarn's history and culture more attractive and engaging by offering an Adventure Pass including an info book with riddles and background information to go on an imaginary journey and practice problem solving through playfulness and games.

Table 5. Analysis of innovations on Fehmarn, Germany.

	SECTION	TYPE OF INNOVATION	FEASIBILITY	INNOVATIVE LEVEL
Bürgerbus	Public Transportation	Service Innovation	medium -high	Purpose-Induced Innovation
Kirchner Verein	Association	Business Model Innovation	medium – high	Purpose-Induced Innovation
Ostseecard	Visitor's Card	Service Innovation	medium	Breakthrough Innovation
Kitebro	Kiting School	Service Innovation	high	Incremental Innovation

Ostseecard

The new service implemented are four buses that circle the northern and southern routes of the island, and which can be used by owners of the Ostseecard completely free of cost. It is a shuttle service that connects the tourist's accommodation, beaches, and the main cities.

Kitebro

Four different adventure packages add new value to the company, including a kitesurfing and camping package, a sea adventure camping package, a photography package, and a Family package. The booking procedure is easier for the customers to enjoy their stay and hinders them to feel boredom during their holidays.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS ON VIS, CROATIA

Each of the developed ideas was analyzed carefully according to the described parameters.

Karika

The idea was to develop a new tourist service called CannaVis Tour, based on the island's attractiveness which lies in its unique nature and possibilities for agriculture. The new activity that is proposed to the



Karika company is a visitors' tour around the industrial hemp farm. The idea is to combine the experience of being part of local agriculture with a tourist fun trip to create a unique and unforgettable experience for the customers.

Alternatura

The idea was to develop a new service package named Treasure Hunting on Island Vis, based on the island's attractiveness which lies in its unique history and nature. The new activity should be part of the Gajeta Falkuša service on the island of VIS. The idea is to combine history and treasure hunting with technology as a fun learning tool and to create a unique and unforgettable experience for the customers.

Table 6. Analysis of innovations on Vis, Croatia

	SECTION	TYPE OF INNOVATION	FEASIBILITY	INNOVATIVE LEVEL
Karika	Farming	Service Innovation	medium	Breakthrough Innovation
Alternatura	Travel agency	Service Innovation	high	Medium-Innovated Innovation
Cliff	Travel agency	Service Innovation	medium	Medium-Innovated Innovation
Palace Lešić Dimitri	Accommodation	Service Innovation	medium	Medium-Innovated Innovation

Cliff

A new three-day service package named "The best of Vis in 3 Days" was developed. The value created for the visitor by implementing this product is teaching people about history and nature in a real location. The outcome of the new service idea is that the visitors can combine puzzling nature experiences for all senses and spiritual storytelling about cultural history with a substantial physical activity.

Palace Lešić Dimitri

The idea is to create a unique and unforgettable experience for the customers. With that in mind it was decided to offer three different activities to the Palace's guests which would include the experience of the wine making process, horseback riding and an organic beauty spa.

CHAPTER 7: TRANSFERABILITY OF PROJECT RESULTS

By Dijana Pletikosa, PhD, University of Zagreb; Kristina Henriksson and Päivi Mantere, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland

THIS CHAPTER DISCUSSES the transferability of the results from the project VISIT to other territories. First, dissemination and exploitation concerning project results are discussed.

ON DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION

The newest economic concepts of sharing economy include knowledge sharing as well. The project VISIT enables participants to make the results and outcomes available to a much broader community through different ways of dissemination and exploitation.

Dissemination is a planned process of providing information on the results of programs and initiatives to key actors and stakeholders as well as interest groups. It occurs as and when the results of programs and initiatives become available. In terms of the Erasmus+ Program, this involves spreading the word about the project successes and outcomes as far as possible. Making others aware of the project will impact other organizations in the future and will contribute to raising the profile of the organization carrying out the project. To effectively disseminate results, an appropriate process at the beginning of the project needs to be designed. This should cover why, what, how, when, to whom, and where disseminating results will take place, both during and after the funding period.

Exploitation is (a) a planned process of transferring the successful results of the programs and initiatives to appropriate decision-makers in regulated local, regional, national, or European systems, on the one hand, and (b) a planned process of convincing individual end-users to adopt and/or apply the results of programs and

initiatives, on the other hand. For Erasmus+ this means maximizing the potential of the funded activities so that the results are used beyond the lifetime of the project. It should be noted that the project is being carried out as part of an international program working towards lifelong learning and supporting European policies in the field of education, training, youth, and sport. Results should be developed in such a way that they can be tailored to the needs of others; transferred to new areas; sustained after the funding period has finished; or used to influence future policy and practice. Dissemination and exploitation are therefore distinct but closely related (European Commission, 2020).

This handbook summarizes the whole process and main results of the project VISIT that aimed at developing existing and creating new innovative services in tourism. Targets were small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) on European islands striving to improve entrepreneurial behavior and boost local regions. Outputs of the project are highly transferable to other islands and businesses not only in Europe. Most of such businesses are facing common problems caused by short seasons and depopulation. Similarly, students and teachers from various Higher Education Institutions (HEI) can easily apply knowledge of creating and developing ideas presented here. An Intensive Study Program (ISP) taking place either on islands or at universities is proven to be an excellent way of forming a sustainable network with SMEs to develop services and encourage entrepreneurship.

Many advanced learning methods and techniques were explored, e.g., Online International Learning (OIL), Learning by Developing (LbD), Problem Based Learning (PBL), Participatory Development (PD), and a combination of them applied during Intensive Study Programs organized either on selected islands or online events or in other project activities. Those approaches could be used for further problem-solving projects at HEIs as well as in an entrepreneurial environment.

One of the main project deliverables is the Online Community for insular entrepreneurs, HEI staff, and students which could be used in future training, studies, projects, and internships. Other valuable products of the project are as follows: Service Logic Business Model Canvas Case Study Guidelines used for integration of innovative tourism services at local companies; Case studies based on Business Plans and Service Logic Business Model Canvases created during the project; learning and training material; Online Self-study Module including relevant terminology for providing innovative services and course material, and this Handbook referring to the results of the project and how these results can be transferred to other territories and HEIs. In addition, the project also created a VISIT Workbook to go with the Handbook.

Students from all over the world can learn from actual business cases and, in that way, acquire new knowledge and skills and gain valuable work experience and expertise. By participating in this kind of education, students can further develop their competencies, knowledge, and skills in an international environment. While working on the project they met new people from different countries and worked in international surroundings. A Higher Education Institution can easily link academic knowledge to real business cases and markets. When collaborating with a business company, they get insight into the business company's situation and eventual business challenges. On the other side, entrepreneurs can gain creative insight from students and HEIs which could help them to operate from a new perspective, solve issues and create a new product.

TRANSFERABILITY OF RESULTS TO OTHER ISLANDS AND TERRITORIES

There are significant challenges to be considered for the future use of the knowledge applied to businesses on islands which differ in many ways from the mainland and from each other as well.

Island regions have common and specific permanent characteristics and features that clearly distinguish them from mainland regions. Article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty (European Union, 2008) recognizes that island regions as a whole face practical handicaps that require special attention.

The development of tourism has positive and negative economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts. Each island is unique but, at the same time, islands all over the world face similar challenges to sustainability, even when they differ in lifestyles, cultures, unique land formations, flora and fauna, ocean, and coastal resources. To make good decisions it is important to understand that islands vary in many ways, like climate, proximity to the related mainland and its size.

According to Sheldon (2005), one classification is the island's climate (which can be cold, temperate, or tropical), another one is the proximity to the related mainland, and its size. Islands that are more remote and distant face more challenging accessibility and transportation issues due to their isolation. A third classification is whether an island is a single (good for peace and "sun, sand and sea" vacation) or part of an archipelago (using cooperative marketing and complementary product development). Another difference is the governance of the island destination, which can be autonomous or a part of the mainland government system. Some island destinations have growing resident populations and others are experiencing declining populations, especially due to young people emigrating. The last classification relates to the homogeneity of the population where those with more heterogeneous populations may be more resilient to socio-cultural impacts. Bearing all those classifications in mind, entrepreneurs from different islands would have to adapt the knowledge offered by this project to their specific situation.

For example, islands Nauvo in Finland and Vis in Croatia share some common issues such as depopulation and seasonality. However, Nauvo has a colder climate and belongs to the archipelago. They also differ in culture, lifestyle, flora and fauna, and coastal resources.



Small cabin in Nauvo. Photo by VISIT.

All islands address issues of economic impact, environmental consequences, and those relating to the social, cultural, and political fabric of the island all of which are affected by the density of tourism on the island. Tourism also increases competition, encourages new start-up businesses, democratizes market structure, and deters rent-seeking behaviors and corruption.

Seasonality in island tourism is another challenge to the economic sustainability of the island and the wellbeing of the islanders. Fluctuations in visitor arrivals must be understood and mitigated through product and market diversification so that employment stabilizes, and tourism infrastructures and superstructures are well utilized.



Island of Vis during low season. Photo by VISIT.

Tourism often contributes to environmental degradation (pollution, erosion, etc.) in small, island states which are host to fragile ecosystems rich in biodiversity. The isolation of the island environment created biodiversity, and by opening to tourism, some of that sheltered biodiversity is endangered. Islands' prime tourist environmental resource is often the coastal regions (beaches, sand dunes, coral reefs) that are easily damaged, heavily used, and require careful visitor management. The large amount of waste (solid and liquid) created by tourism is a problem since space for its disposal on islands is limited.

Islands face complex socio-cultural issues, particularly those with indigenous populations. Tourism on islands, particularly small ones, brings hosts and guests into closer contact than on mainland destinations, creating a more vulnerable situation for social disruption. Crime, commoditization of culture, and loss of traditional lifestyles, moral standards, and family life impact islands more than mainland destinations.

To empower the resident's education, training programs are needed for meaningful careers in the industry. This may involve distance education since islands do not always have comprehensive tertiary education programs in tourism. Residents also need to learn about the impact tourism has on their community, through the sharing of statistics and facts. The receptivity and openness to change and innovation are also needed.

Given the challenges to the islands' ecosystems, environmental management is crucial for island sustainability. Policies to keep the land and ocean unpolluted are also necessary. Waste management and recycling programs are essential, particularly on small islands. Also, the use, through incentive programs, if necessary, for alternative fuel sources (wind, solar, geothermal, etc.) will make the destination more sustainable. Recycling programs for all types of waste are essential, and the use of alternative energy sources is an important consideration since tourists use much higher per capita use of energy than locals, and rarely do islands survive on fossil fuels.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) initiative opinion on the Specific problems facing islands was adopted on 7 March 2012. The key points are that island regions have common and specific permanent characteristics and features that clearly distinguish them from mainland regions. The EESC considers that accessibility to islands and the connections between them must absolutely be improved. Since accessibility is a vital element in enhancing the attractiveness of island regions, goods and passenger transport costs should be reduced by applying the principle of territorial continuity and improving Regulation 3577/92.

According to EESC, many European islands have found tourism to be an essential factor for the survival of the local population, their identity, cultural traditions and values, and landscapes. It has generated economic growth, created more jobs, and brought considerable diversification to their economic foundations through tourism-related services. Island economies have, however, become too dependent on tourism: diversification towards non-tourism activities is needed, facilitating the economic development of islands in the face of crises such as the present one which has a powerful impact on tourism.

Some islands are faced with the emigration of their populations to more prosperous regions; others receive immigrants who contribute to local economic development; yet other islands, on account of their geographical location, receive more immigrants than their reception capacity.

This chapter has identified some of the challenges facing islands in sustaining their tourism industry. The challenge to sustainable management is to keep those unique elements that are part of the mystique that attracts tourists. Shifts toward homogeneity of tourism experiences without giving the visitor an experience of a sense of place will not be sustainable in the long run either for the host community or for the tourism markets. Next, the transferability of the project results will be deliberated.

TRANSFERABILITY OF RESULTS TO OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEI)

Education, training, and research are recognized by the World Tourism Organization as one of the most important factors to ensure the sustainability and competitiveness of Tourism Destinations (UNWTO, 2021).

For this purpose, Partnerships in Education is aimed at institutions that express their intention to develop education and training initiatives. The fundamental quest is to widen and strengthen education and training capabilities in tourism around the world. UNWTO has established Partnerships in Education Conditions that define the requirements and procedures that Institutions wishing to launch education or training initiatives must comply with.

The project VISIT follows the UNWTO conditions to the highest extent. For example – the program is new and has never been delivered previously. Most of the benefits of the project VISIT are also in accordance with the Conditions producing deliverables which include the following:

- Curriculum development.
- Delivery of specific courses on a topic related to the main areas of knowledge of the Program by international visiting lecturers.
- Issuance of a separate certificate for these courses.
- Online Literature access for the participants of the project as well as training, learning, and internship blended material.
- International Promotion of the Project VISIT.
- Possibility of access to additional content based on the program topic and the different modules' requirements – Online Community for insular entrepreneurs, HEI staff, and students: to be used in training, studies, projects, and internships.
- Possibility of facilitation of internship/career development agreements with international tourism SME companies.
- VISIT Model for the integration of innovative tourism services at local companies – Service Logic Business Model Canvas Case Study Guidelines.
- Collection of Case studies/Business Plans/Service Logic Business Model Canvases.
- Workplan of Service Innovation and Design Implementation process for internships
- Online Self-study Module including relevant terminology for providing innovative services, course material.
- Handbook that refers to the results of the project and how these results can be transferred to other territories and HEIs.

The first important goal of dissemination and exploitation is to spread project results (European Commission, 2020). Involving other HEIs in activities helps to maximize the use of the project results. HEIs included in this project are invited to communicate the learning outcomes reached by participants in such activities. Participants are encouraged to share with others what they have gained from taking part in project activities. Finally, the dissemination is supposed to raise the quality of the Program by stimulating innovative projects and sharing good practices.

The concept of communication includes information and promotion activities to raise awareness and enhance the visibility of the project activities, in addition to the dissemination and exploitation of the project results. It is a crucial part of any communication activities taking place during the project's lifetime.

Sharing a project's results is advantageous for both the beneficiary and its partners. As well as raising the profile of the organization, dissemination and exploitation activities can often create new opportunities to extend the project and its results or develop new partnerships for the future. It leads to external recognition of the work carried out by adding further credit to it. Sharing the results will enable others to benefit from the activities and experiences of the project, while most of the results can serve as examples and inspire others by showing what is possible to achieve in this field.

The impact of the project is measured not only by the quality of results but also by the extent to which these results are known and used outside the project partnership. By reaching out to as many potential users as possible through effective dissemination will help to achieve a return on investment.

The methods and approaches used in this project are appropriate for the other HEIs in and outside Europe. The main goals of sharing results are to raise awareness of a specific island's issues, to engage specific target groups, share solutions and knowledge, as well as to develop new partnerships.

The results of the project are of diverse nature and consist of both concrete (tangible) results as well as of skills and personal experiences that both project organizers and participants to the activities have acquired (intangible results). Tangible results include an approach or a model to solve a problem, practical tools such as teaching materials, handbooks, e-learning tools, business plans, and case studies. Intangible results, which are more difficult to measure, include knowledge and experience gained by participants, learners, or staff, increased skills, or achievements, improved cultural awareness, better language skills.

Target HEIs are at different geographical levels (local, regional, national, European) and in the own field of the beneficiaries. The project plans are flexible enough to allow target groups and other stakeholders to become involved during the different stages of the project. Their participation will also highlight the potential value of the project as well as help to spread the news to other interested parties throughout Europe. To reach as many HEIs as possible, communication materials and project outputs are written in English but also translated into partners' languages.

Some of the ways to disseminate results are project websites, conferences, workshops, (online) seminars, training courses, targeted written material, audio-visual media, social media, existing contacts, and networks. Exploitation mechanisms include positive reputational effects for the participating organizations and increased awareness on a theme of tourism on islands.

Dissemination and exploitation of results are an integral part of the project VISIT throughout its lifetime: from the initial idea, during the project, and even after European funding has ended.

TRANSFER OF RESULTS TO OTHER STUDENTS

The knowledge and skills gained by the project VISIT are highly applicable to all kinds of students – full-time ones preparing for future jobs as well as those already employed in tourism, looking for better work performance or opportunities. The potential jobs of the future are to be anticipated and included in today's education and reskilling process.

According to the World Economic Forum, developing and enhancing human skills and capabilities through education, learning, and meaningful work are key drivers of economic success, individual well-being, and societal cohesion. The global shift to a future of work is defined by an ever-expanding cohort of new technologies, by new sectors and markets, by global economic systems that are more interconnected than in any other point in history, and by information that travels fast and spreads wide. Yet the past decade of technological advancement has also brought about the looming possibility of mass job displacement, untenable skills shortages, and a competing claim to the unique nature of human intelligence now challenged by artificial intelligence. The coming decade will require purposeful leadership to arrive at a future of work that fulfills human potential and creates broadly shared prosperity (WEF, 2020).

The WEF Future of Jobs Report states that the pace of technology adoption is expected to remain unabated and may accelerate in some areas in the future. The adoption of cloud computing, big data, and e-commerce remain high priorities for business leaders, following a trend established in previous years. However, there has also been a significant rise in interest in encryption, non-humanoid robots, and artificial intelligence, which will transform tasks, jobs, and skills by 2025, when the time spent on current tasks at work by humans and machines will be equal.

Although the number of jobs destroyed will be surpassed by the number of jobs of tomorrow created, in contrast to previous years, job creation is slowing while job destruction accelerates. It is estimated that 85 million jobs may be displaced by a shift in the division of labor between humans and machines, while 97 million new roles may emerge that are more adapted to the new division of labor between humans, machines, and algorithms. The top skills and skill groups, which employers see as rising in prominence in the lead up to 2025, include groups such as critical thinking and analysis as well as problem-solving, and skills in self-management such as active learning, resilience, stress tolerance, and flexibility (WEF, 2020).

The Report also states that the future of work has already arrived for a large majority of the online white-collar workforce. A share amounting to 84% of employers are set to rapidly digitalize working processes, including a significant expansion of remote work—with the potential to move 44% of their workforce to operate remotely. To address concerns about productivity and wellbeing, about one-third of all employers expect to also take steps to create a sense of community, connection, and belonging among employees through digital tools, and to tackle the wellbeing challenges posed by the shift to remote work.

Jobs held by lower-wage workers, women, and younger workers were more deeply impacted in the first phase of the economic contraction. Comparing the impact of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 on individuals with lower education levels to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the latter is far more significant and more likely to deepen existing inequalities. Online learning and training are on the rise but look different for those in employment and those who are unemployed. There has been a four-fold increase in the numbers of individuals seeking out opportunities for learning online through their own initiative, a five-fold increase in employer provision of online learning opportunities to their workers, and a nine-fold enrolment increase for learners accessing online learning through government programs. Those in employment are placing a larger emphasis on personal development courses, which have seen an 88% growth among that population. Those who are unemployed have placed greater emphasis on learning digital skills such as data analysis, computer science, and information technology. The project VISIT opens the window of opportunity offering possibilities to reskill and upskill knowledge through online education and lifelong learning for all those groups of students and employees.

As Figure 4 shows, employees in the sector of Accommodation and Food Services are at the highest risk of unemployment among the others in the Consumer Industry.

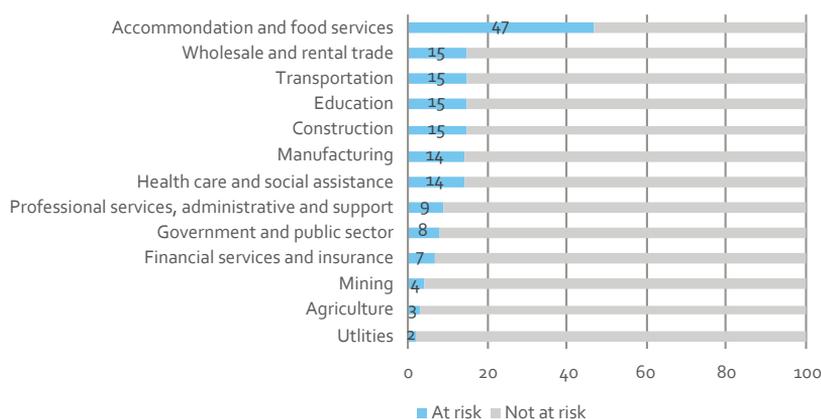


Figure 4. Estimated share of workers at risk of unemployment, by sub-industry. Source: Brussevich et al. (2020).

Research on emerging skills included in the Report provides the list of skills the consumer industry respondents have selected as being increasingly important within their organization. It is based on the responses to the following question: “Keeping in mind the tasks that will be performed by the key roles in your organization, in the next four years would you expect an increase or decrease in the use of the following skills by individuals?” from the Future of Jobs Survey. The skills are ranked by frequency and ranked from 1 to 15 (WEF, 2020).

VISIT enhances most of the skills which are identified as being in high demand within business organizations, for example reasoning, complex problem solving, ideation, critical and analytical thinking, innovation, active learning, creativity, originality, and initiative, troubleshooting and user experience, service orientation, etc.

Table 6. Emerging skills identified as being in high demand within their organization, ordered by frequency. Source: WEF Report (2020).

1	Complex problem-solving
2	Analytic thinking and innovation
3	Active learning and learning strategies
4	Creativity, originality and initiative
5	Technology use, monitoring and control
6	Leadership and social influence
7	Critical thinking and analysis
8	Troubleshooting and user experience
9	Service orientation
10	Systems analysis and evaluation
11	Management of financial, material resources
12	Attention to detail, trustworthiness
13	Coordination and time management
14	Quality control and safety awareness
15	Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation

The conclusion of the Report is that the ongoing disruption to labor markets from the Fourth Industrial Revolution has been further complicated—and in some cases accelerated—by the onset of the pandemic-related recession of 2020. The most relevant question to businesses, governments, and individuals is not to what extent automation and augmentation of human labor will affect current employment numbers, but under what conditions the global labor market can be supported towards a new equilibrium in the division of labor between human workers, robots, and algorithms. The technological disruptions which were in their infancy in previous editions of the Future of Jobs Report are currently accelerated and amplified alongside the COVID-19 recession as evidenced by findings from the 2020 Future of Jobs Survey.

Addressing the current challenges posed by COVID-19, in tandem with the disruption posed by technological change, requires renewed public service innovation for the benefit of affected workers everywhere. It also demands that leaders embrace stakeholder capitalism and pay closer attention to the long dividends of investing in human and social capital. The current moment provides an opportunity for leaders in business, government, and public policy to focus common efforts on improving the access and delivery of reskilling and upskilling, motivating redeployment and reemployment, as well as signaling the market value of learning that can be delivered through education technology at scale.

TRANSFER OF RESULTS TO ENTREPRENEURS

According to WTTC, the Travel & Tourism sector accounts for 330 million jobs or one in ten jobs on the planet, a figure which is only forecasted to continue increasing. What is more, in the last five years, the Travel & Tourism sector has accounted for the creation of one in four new jobs globally. For this sector to support 421 million jobs by 2029, the sector must be able to successfully attract, upskill and retain qualified talent. The evolution in the Travel & Tourism space, along with shifts taking place across the global workforce, will require businesses and governments alike to pay special attention to talent models (WTTC, 2019).

The effects of the increasing globalization of the international travel and tourism industry on SMEs are important. The OECD Report on Globalization, SMEs and Tourism Development (OECD, 2008) looks first at the nature of the global value chains in which tourism SMEs are now obliged to operate and then comments on the desirability of greater cooperation between tourism SMEs in the specific context of local networks and clusters. A series of national case studies carried out on this subject demonstrates that for some SMEs at least, the effects of the globalization of the tourism industry on small businesses are not fully appreciated. In some cases, there is a lack of awareness of the importance of global value chains to their businesses. It also follows that many SMEs are unsure how best to tap into the new opportunities presented, either because of a lack of skills or because of a feeling that small businesses are powerless in the face of the power of multinational enterprises.

SMEs can in fact benefit from globalization by means such as the exploitation of networks and clusters, and by the adoption of new technologies. Strength can be drawn from local clusters and networks, while at the same time SMEs can utilize the digital revolution to their advantage, notably by maximizing their use of the Internet for marketing purposes and as a means of getting in touch directly with their client base.

Access to the Internet is now indispensable for all tourism enterprises, not least because it has empowered the consumer as never before to do business directly with tourism service suppliers. Case studies reveal that SMEs in many tourism destinations are finding it hard to take full advantage of the power that the Internet gives them to compete on a more level playing field with the major travel companies in their sector.

There are several key areas in which SMEs can both benefit from, but also face challenges in exploiting global value chain opportunities. These include the need to boost the technical competence of SME staff, the need to ensure that the quality and standards provided by SMEs reach international best practice and the ways in which SMEs can act to overcome the inherent problems of small size.

In many countries, the tourism sector has suffered from a lack of political and popular support because its economic importance has often been underestimated. The Tourism Satellite Account is contributing to the rise in worldwide awareness of the role of tourism as a productive activity and its potential to generate



significant direct and indirect economic benefits. Tourism is a crucial (and sometimes the leading) source of foreign exchange for many developing countries. Tourism is also a complex industry. It can generate significant economic activity through linkages with other industries, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services (OECD, 2008). Results show that tourism consistently scores stronger linkages than the average services sector, suggesting that tourism may be one of the most interconnected services sectors in the economy.

Small and medium enterprises, including microenterprises with five or fewer employees, form the vast majority of businesses and the employment base in many economies. Tourism is a major source of foreign revenue and is seen as a pillar industry in many economies. The tourism sector is characterized by its global and cross-border scope, information intensiveness, lower entry and employment barriers, applicability across a range of markets, and potential for regional development. As an export and service-based set of activities, ideally suited to Internet-based transactions and other cross-border flows, tourism also provides an engine for the liberalization agenda evident in many economies making the transition to a market-oriented basis for competitiveness.

The sustainable development of the businesses constituting this sector is, therefore, vital not only to economic development, but also as a vehicle for physical and electronic infrastructure investment and popular uptake, and in providing larger frameworks for managing and maintaining prosperity from the natural resource. The issues of common national and international interest affected by tourism include environmental,

socio-cultural, and economic aspects: a triple bottom line increasingly recognized in policymaking and commercial activity. The development needs for a sustainable sector thus require cohesive attention to the natural resource, to the distinctive propositions of heritage areas, and to the economic arrangements and policies that facilitate or hinder the development of the component enterprises (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 2004).

The project VISIT can help SMEs in tourism to develop more up-to-date ideas for products and services which are in accordance with UN Sustainable Development Goals. It also gives the opportunity for business owners and employees to get new knowledge and skills, not only during The Intensive Study Weeks but thanks to Online Community, a long time after that. This can improve SMEs' competitiveness in the local and international tourism market and give them the strength to meet new trends in tourism demand.

As shown by the WEF Report, most employers recognize the value of the human capital investment. An average of 66% of employers surveyed expect to get a return on investment in upskilling and reskilling within one year. However, employee engagement in those courses is lagging, with only 42% of employees taking up employer-supported reskilling and upskilling opportunities. A significant number of business leaders understand that reskilling employees, particularly in industry coalitions and in public-private collaborations, is both cost-effective and has significant mid-to long-term dividends—not only for their enterprise but also for the benefit of society more broadly.

The public sector needs to provide stronger support for reskilling and upskilling for at-risk or displaced workers. Currently, only 21% of businesses report being able to make use of public funds to support their employees through reskilling and upskilling. The public sector will need to create incentives for investments in the markets and jobs of tomorrow; provide stronger safety nets for displaced workers during job transitions; and decisively tackle long delayed improvements to education and training systems (WEF, 2020).

TRANSFER OF RESULTS TO TOURISM AUTHORITIES

The treatment of tourism within government structures varies considerably (OECD, 2008). The growing economic and political importance of tourism is reflected by the fact that half of the OECD countries have a Ministry or a Secretariat of State in charge of tourism. Tourism budgets are not comparable due to the different approaches to the public funding of tourism support adopted by governments. The largest item in public budgetary support for tourism tends to be the marketing budgets granted to national tourist offices or their equivalents for international marketing purposes.

As an economic activity with the potential to create jobs, add value, and earn foreign exchange, tourism is increasingly seen as a sector in which public investment can be justified, in several areas. Some of them include programs supporting the small business sector which, in terms of the number of enterprises engaged, is dominated by SMEs; programs to enhance quality in tourism most commonly through the action of training; programs aimed at the quality of tourism facilities and services; licensing schemes for personnel engaged in tourism.

A notable emphasis is now being seen on maximizing the use of online technologies to enable tourism businesses to benefit from and cope with the rapid globalization of tourism marketplaces and of tourism marketing. Information and reservation systems are at the heart of many of these initiatives, as are the direct linkages via the Internet between the tourist and the tourism service suppliers. Detailed statistical profiles on OECD member countries provide up-to-date information on employment in tourism and tourism in the

economy (i.e., tourism as a percentage of GDP, as a percentage of total employment, as a percentage of services exports) (OECD, 2008).

Given the low barriers to entry, jobs in tourism can often be more readily attained than those in other sectors. In this context, the sector enables empowerment, mobility, and self-sufficiency for vulnerable groups of society including women, youth, and migrants. Each SME as well as the government should be aware of the benefits of youth employment in travel and tourism. Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors across the world, providing opportunities for skilled and unskilled labor as well as for other groups who may have difficulty in finding employment. Its flexible nature, including part-time and seasonal working opportunities, is increasingly appealing to young people who are keen to experience different cultures, travel, and use their language skills (WTTC, 2019). The sector is quite unique in that it provides opportunities for entry-level jobs that are accessible to those with a high school level of education as well as for career development opportunities to top-level roles.

These opportunities have been highlighted to promote the attractiveness of employment in the sector in recent years through many organizations and campaigns, for example the British Hospitality Association with their 'Big Conversation', and 'International Tourism's Partnership's Youth Career Initiative (The British Hospitality Association, 2021; UNWTO 2018). One of them is VISIT educating young people by using teaching methods many HEIs neglect. Tourism holds opportunities to address issues of youth unemployment globally. In developed countries, on average, the sector is more likely to recruit foreign workers.

The skills gained by young people can translate into rewarding careers in the sector and beyond. These youth jobs have proven to set workers up for higher-paying and fulfilling jobs in later careers. Tourism is one of the top ten largest employers of middle-class wage earners in the US, with more than half of all Travel & Tourism employees (53%) earning a middle-class salary or higher. Travel & Tourism companies recognize the opportunity to capitalize on the benefits of youth employment. WTTC Member companies, representing a significant proportion of the overall sector, nearly all offer some form of work experience, internship programs, or provide further education and training programs to attract and retain young people (UNWTO 2018).

Tourism has almost twice as many female employers than other sectors. The sector provides women with more opportunities for workforce participation, leadership, entrepreneurship, and empowerment than many other sectors, particularly in developing countries. Countries, which have experienced particularly strong growth in Travel & Tourism GDP over the years 2007—2017, have also witnessed a significant improvement in the share of women's employment in the sector. Women's share of T&T's employment has grown the most in emerging economies over the last ten years, demonstrating the sector's potential as a tool for empowerment in these countries.

Despite the progress made so far towards gender equality, many challenges persist. Policies best aimed at increasing women's employment generally, and in Travel & Tourism, are those that help ensure women have access to skills and talent development to enter the labor force and that sufficiently address inequalities in the workplace. Again, the project VISIT gives an equal opportunity to female students and entrepreneurs to be a part of the tourism workforce.

Increasing female employment plays a role in reducing poverty, sustaining economic growth, and supporting women's empowerment and independence. Increasing female labor force participation and hours worked by women are proven primary drivers of incremental GDP for the G7 economies. Investigations show that there could be an 11% increase in global GDP if every country achieved the fastest rate of progress in its region on closing the three key gender gaps of workforce participation, the mix of full-time and part-time employment, and productivity.

Within organizations, having more female employees at different levels contributes to diversity, innovation and could lead to improved corporate governance. The presence of women in corporate leadership positions improves the company's performance in all areas of operations including innovation, work environment and values, leadership, accountability, and external orientation. Not only do companies in the top quartile for female representation on executive committees have on average 47% higher return on equity than those with no women on the boards, but the same progressive companies have a 55% premium in their EBIT margin.

Travel & Tourism can provide women with more opportunities for workforce participation, leadership, entrepreneurship, and empowerment than many other sectors, particularly in developing countries, and as such it can have a tremendous effect on poverty reduction in rural communities. At the macro level, a stronger representation of women in Travel & Tourism relative to other areas of the economy is due to the sector's unique characteristics: often less emphasis on formal education and training, greater emphasis on personal and hospitality skills, flexible working opportunities, and increased options for entrepreneurship that do not require heavy start-up financing.



Women-owned business on Nauvo Island. Photo by VISIT.

Travel & Tourism has also opened opportunities to women through the sharing economy, particularly through online platforms such as Airbnb and Uber. Further, Travel & Tourism offers women opportunities for advancement to higher-paying and fulfilling careers.

To address the substantial challenges facing the labor market today, governments must pursue a holistic approach, creating active linkages and coordination between education providers, skills, workers, and employers, and ensuring effective collaboration between employment agencies, regional governments, and national governments. Such efforts can be strengthened by multi-stakeholder collaboration between companies looking to support their workforce; governments willing to fund reskilling and the localization of mid-career education programs; professional services firms and technology firms that can map potential job transitions or provide reskilling services; labor unions aware of the impact of those transitions on the well-being of workers; and community organizations that can give visibility to the efficacy of new legislation and provide early feedback on its design (WTTC, 2019).

Helping tourism to become more successful and sustainable is a continuous process of making optimal use of environmental resources, respecting host communities, and ensuring viable, long-term economic operations, providing fairly distributed benefits among tourism stakeholders. This is a complex activity, with several economic, environmental, social, and political challenges, which require adequate management and evidence-based public policies (WEF, 2019). The project VISIT highly contributes to all above-mentioned efforts of various stakeholders.

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CHAPTER 8: SUSTAINABILITY OF RESULTS

by Tarja Meristö and Jukka Laitinen, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MEANS a development path taking into consideration economic, social and ecological aspects of the decisions and actions (Brundtland 1987). Corporate social responsibility (see, e.g., Hopkins 2006) will force companies to pay attention not only to economic performance but also to social and ecological dimensions of sustainability. UN's principles for sustainable development summarizes these aspects into concrete actions and responsibilities to cover worldwide all our activities and businesses in a way not stealing the future from the future generations and from the planet itself. Especially climate change has been the forerunning issue in this battle (Meristö 2020). Countries worldwide have promised to improve living conditions according to UN principles. They will protect the planet and improve the lives of citizens. Sustainable development goals include 17 sub-goals. They cover different areas of life, e.g., responsible consumption, sustainable housing, and sustainable economic growth (UN 2021).

As a starting point for the futures studies are Ossip Flechtheim's thoughts about futurology and its purpose, which he formulated in the mid-1940s (Meristö 2020). This vision includes the prevention of wars, guaranteeing peace, and prevention of famine and poverty. According to Flechtheim, the best solution for this is to create a new Homo humanus with ethical principles (Flechtheim 1972). According to professor Pentti Malaska, "In futurology we have to focus on issues in the long run, having an influence on the whole universe at least for the next 1,000 years." A timeframe in futures research will cover more than 20 years to guarantee conditions for the good life of future generations. Multidisciplinary futures research (Bell 1997) relies on participatory methodology to get all voices heard but also to confirm the citizen's role as an active subject, not only as an object in society (see also Meristö et al. 2016).

In the project VISIT, the tourism industry in the island regions is in the focus. The aim of the project is to promote tourism activities in these regions and to support local entrepreneurs to develop their businesses



successfully. In this text, we will evaluate the results of the project VISIT in the eyes of sustainable development and its three dimensions, i.e., economic, social, and ecological aspects.

Aspects for the analysis are as follows:

Economic sustainability

The economic dimension in sustainable development means the economic performance of the business, but also the ideal of the going concern, i.e., the continuity of a firm, not collapsing when meeting surprises. From the local perspective, the economic dimension will ensure the economic growth of the region, e.g., by using local service providers. From the companies' perspective, this also means growth in the terms of annual turnover or success in the terms of profitability, but also the competitive market position, e.g., in the terms of market share. Indirect impact to the economic sustainability will come, e.g., through taxation concerning both entrepreneurs and individuals.

Social sustainability

The social dimension of sustainability pays attention to the societal impact of business, e.g., in the form of employment activities concerning, e.g., disabled people. Also, the tax footprint of the companies is a part of the social sustainability, although it includes, of course, an economic dimension. From the personnel's viewpoint, the social sustainability means, e.g., occupational health and safety at work. More broadly, the human rights throughout the company's value-chain including all the sub-contractors are an essential part of the social sustainability and, e.g., not using child labor in the business. Social sustainability in the society will also follow all the rules and laws without corruption and companies seriously put attention to the safety, security, and privacy issues, too.

Ecological sustainability

The ecological dimension of sustainability connects to all activities in the business having environmental impacts in the past, in the present, or in the future. The use of material and energy is one important aspect: are they renewable or not and how effectively will we exploit them? Eco-efficiency is the keyword here and it includes all the phases of the value chain from the very beginning to the end-use, re-use and recycling, also including logistics and alternative transportation forms.

The impact on biodiversity is on focus, too. Do we use the resources in a way, which will decrease the space for natural ecosystems and their individuals, or do we save nature for future generations as rich as it used to be? Water footprint and carbon footprint are important criteria for the ecological sustainability, when estimating emissions to the air, ground, and water. Ecological handprint by the definition will improve the state of the environment, and it is useful to the entrepreneurs to develop their business to keep this aspect in mind. All the solutions, products, and services should follow at least the minimum standards of sustainability.

In the project VISIT results, especially the free access to knowledge, will improve social sustainability, being an enabler to the wide participation to develop the region and its tourism opportunities further. Also involving women and young adults in the development process has been established in the project well. From the economic sustainability viewpoint, the entrepreneurs are in the project in focus to produce wellbeing and growth to the regions, which also will lead to growing tax income to the society and community.

Ecological sustainability is important for the case regions in the project because of their sensitive natural areas within the archipelago. Ecological aspects throughout the value chain of tourism are important concerning, e.g., transportation, accommodation, leisure activities. Also, food production is an essential

part of the whole sustainable development path in tourism. Local food is not only ecological by nature, but it will also bring wellbeing for the community in the form of jobs and income. We have to remember that sustainability is not managed only by regulations and restrictions, rather cooperation between all the actors in the ecosystem is necessary (Mazmanian & Kraft 2009).

The results of the project VISIT have been evaluated according to these three dimensions of sustainable development, and the summary of the analysis is in Table 7.

Table 7. The summary of the project VISIT results according to sustainability dimensions (Meristö & Laitinen).

	ECONOMIC	SOCIAL	ECOLOGICAL
1. How to get the results?	With small budgets, less is more	Participatory approach, student involvement with entrepreneurs and local authorities	Remote work, online meetings (partly because of the pandemic)
2. How to disseminate the results?	Cost savings	Open access online, multi-channels in use, opportunities to all	Less paper and ink
3. How to exploit the results?	Entrepreneurs renewing their business through innovations created in the project and getting more profitable business	Other regions outside the project can exploit the results and create more opportunities to get jobs and improve the wellbeing of the people	Local examples as the benchmark for others to develop their ecological practice and awareness
4. How to develop the skills?	Changes in working life are a part of the work and they are considered in long run, which will give a competitive advantage to develop business, but also to get educated and motivated people to the work	Students involved the project will get the skills and competencies within the real world – less lack of the skillful workforce in the branch and fewer young people without a job after finishing their studies	Future-orientation, including the sensitive natural resources in islands are an essential part of the project, which will improve the state of the environment in the long and short run by giving solutions for that
5. How to consider the minor/marginal groups?	To get all people involved actively in the tourism business and to add economic activity in these regions	To put attention to the status of, e.g., young people and women and add their share in the tourism business and as entrepreneurs in the field.	To exploit resources effectively and in an eco-efficient way to get green growth in a responsible way

6. Innovations produced in the project?	Bringing profitability, success, and growth to the entrepreneurs involved in the project	Renewing the local business structure and employing new skills to the regions involved the project	Taking into consideration the ecological aspects as re-use, re-cycling or renewable materials, but also putting attention to the water and carbon footprints and to the positive handprints improving the environmental status
7. Benefits after the project?	New regions can exploit the results and adopt best practices to improve their position in the market; universities can run business-driven courses for entrepreneurs and other practitioners worldwide and to teach participants how to exploit the results and use the methods used in the project	Students will get jobs after finishing their studies; the regions have more welfare, and people there also can see more opportunities in their life and carrier	By promoting the results widely, all the triple helix actor groups see their position and task in the ecosystem, and they can more easily to co-operate, not to compete, when moving the action towards sustainable development as a whole

Although the results are sustainable on average, it is good to check the balance between all the dimensions of sustainable development: are all the factors equal or is one dominating over the others? For example, in the case study of community scenarios (Tuohimaa et al. 2011) the sustainable scenarios led easily to unsustainable conditions, if not putting enough attention to the balance of these three aspects, e.g., the development from the average sustainability led to forced sustainability and village-specific sustainability to me first sustainability.

In the short run, the economic aspect will very often be the first and the others getting attention, if having time and other resources for that. However, in the course of time, all the dimensions must be taken into consideration equally, otherwise the final actions are not sustainable, and the results are biased (Figure 5). A recommendation to the entrepreneurs is at least to follow those forerunners among the customers, who are aware and awake in sustainability. In this way, they can get a competitive advantage from these issues before they are a must by law.

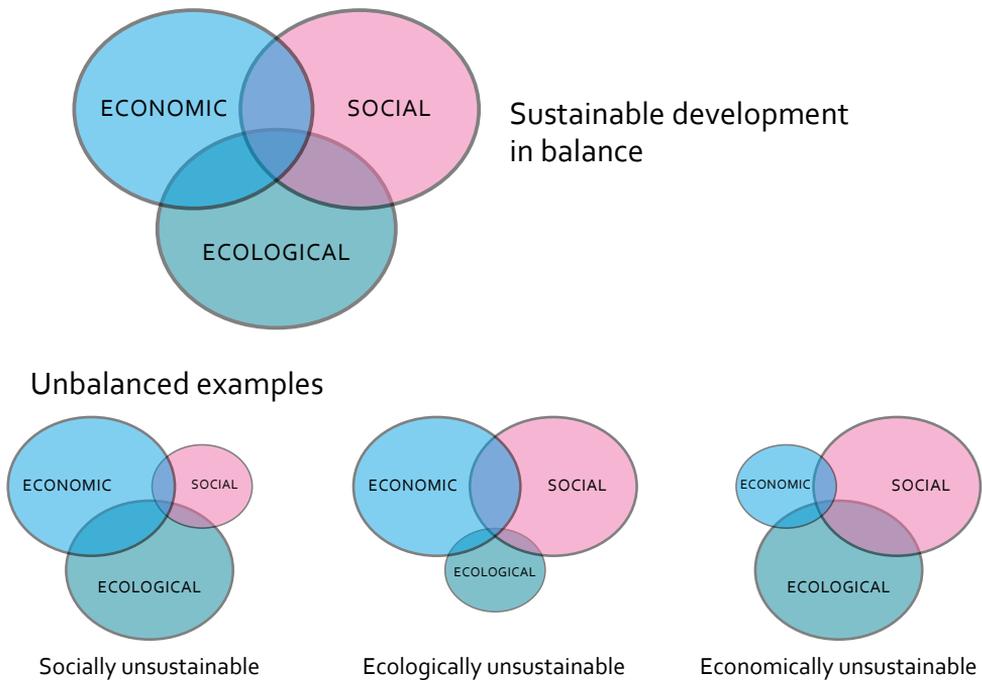


Figure 5. Dimensions of sustainable development and their balance positions/positions out of balance (Meristö & Laitinen).

When developing tourism on the islands in a sustainable way, the triple helix will provide an excellent framework (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff 2000). The project VISIT has actually followed this framework by using students and staff from universities and entrepreneurs from the tourism industry. The project itself getting finance from the EU has its roots on the governmental side, too. When developing regions in a sustainable way towards the future, the participatory methodology like LbD used in Laurea and in VISIT, too, will ensure the balance between the various elements of sustainability: Industry is taking care of the economic sustainability, the government is worried about the social sustainability and universities will bring the newest knowledge and theories concerning the ecological aspects and consequences of the development. Of course, these dimensions are related to each other, and none of the actors can leave any of them outside.

Although the focus is on developing sustainable business opportunities, the educational and societal dimensions are important as well. Universities, or more generally, the education sector takes care of skills and competence development but also brings fresh research information and novel ideas to the regional actors about the issues related to sustainable development (Meristö & Laitinen 2014).

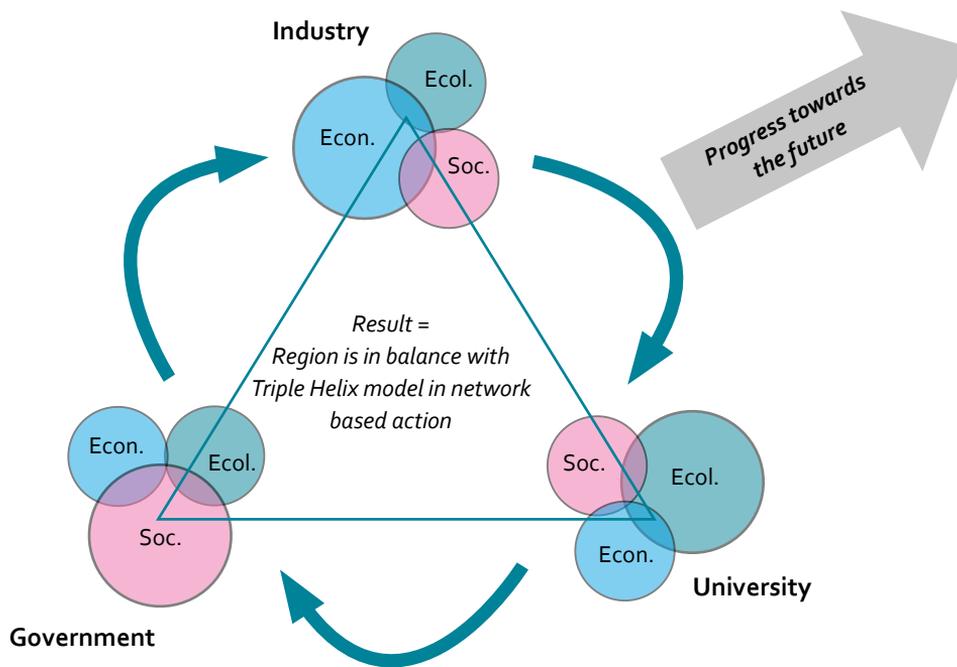


Figure 6. Sustainable development balanced with Triple Helix actors towards the future (Meristö & Laitinen 2014).

In conclusion, compared to the common megatrends like urbanization, globalization, digitalization, and EHS (Environment, Health, Safety) driven development, the project VISIT will exploit especially people's wishes to live their lives healthily and safely, connected to others. As an anti-trend to urbanization, people are looking for places close to nature, far away from the busy everyday environment. During the COVID-19 pandemic this anti-trend has strengthened, and the island regions benefitted from it. Globalization and digitalization together have opened the globe to all of us, despite the threat of climate change. To fight against this threat is an opportunity to the project VISIT's regions: when people will come to the region, they probably want to stay longer to avoid flight shame and emissions caused by themselves. When the regions develop their services and infrastructure for a staycation instead of vacation, they will get, instead of tourists dropping by, visitors staying longer. Businesspeople and entrepreneurs related to digital services also appreciate the living conditions in the environment with clean air, short distances, and perhaps with a bit lower living costs, which might be good things to attract newcomers to move to the islands.



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Chapter 9: Conclusion

By Dijana Pletikosa, PhD, University Vern', Zagreb and Päivi Mantere, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland

IN TODAY'S WORLD of individualization, digital lifestyle, climate change, economic and post-conflict migrations, globalization, physical inactivity, and the multilingual structure of the European Union, Erasmus projects are a great way to overcome those obstacles, acquire new knowledge and multiculturally connect members of the academic community. As stated by European Commission, the Erasmus + program (European Commission, 2019a) aims to help generations of Europeans to become active citizens, with the skills, knowledge, and experience to tackle the challenges facing our society, both now and in the years to come. Erasmus+ projects address many of the challenges and help participants to move towards a more circular or green economy, but also to strengthen the democratic processes, focus on inclusion of those who are socially or economically marginalized, as well as to prepare for the digital world of the future. With a EUR14.7 billion budget for the period 2014–2020 Erasmus+ provides opportunities for over four million people through formal and non-formal learning, transnational mobility, and exchange of good practices (European Commission 2019b).

The Versatile Islands Cooperating for New Services and Innovation in Tourism (VISIT) project is an Erasmus+ research project coordinated by Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Finland and involving partner institutions from Germany (Fachhochschule Kiel), Croatia (Vern' University), and Sweden (Linnaeus University).

This book explains the main aim of VISIT, which was to develop existing and create new innovative services with small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) on European islands to boost local regions. Each Higher Education Institution (HEI) involved in the project hosted an Intensive Study Program (ISP) on their home island or as an online event and all HEIs brought a set of students and teaching staff with the aim of forming a sustainable network with SMEs to develop services and encourage entrepreneurship. For that purpose, many advanced learning methods and techniques were used, e.g., Online International Learning

(OIL), Learning by Developing (LbD), Problem Based Learning (PBL), and Participatory Development (PD). All those approaches could be used for further problem-solving projects at HEIs as well as in an entrepreneurial environment.

Outputs of the project are highly transferable to other islands and businesses as most of them are facing common problems caused by short seasons and depopulation. Similarly, students and teachers from various Higher Education Institutions (HEI) can easily apply here presented knowledge of creating and developing ideas by doing. One of the main deliverables of this project is the Online Community for insular entrepreneurs, HEI staff, and students which could be used in training, studies, projects, and internships. Another one is the VISIT Model for the integration of innovative tourism services at local companies – Service Logic Business Model Canvas Case Study Guidelines. The project also resulted in Collection of Case studies and Business Plans as well as Training, Learning and Internship blended material.

The main method used to create innovative ideas during the Intensive Week Studies was Design Thinking. The approach is also used by some of the world's leading brands, such as Apple, Google, Samsung, and GE, and it is being taught at leading universities around the world, including Stanford, Harvard, and MIT. What is special about Design Thinking is that designers' work processes can help to systematically extract, teach, learn, and apply these human-centered techniques to solve problems in a creative and innovative way. There are many variants of the Design Thinking process in use today, but they are very similar and embody the same principles, which were first described by Nobel Prize laureate Herbert Simon in *The Sciences of the Artificial* in 1969. The main phases of Design Thinking described in this book include stages or steps going from: Empathize – with your users; Define – your users' needs, their problem, and your insights; Ideate – by challenging assumptions and creating ideas for innovative solutions; Prototype – to start creating solutions and finally – test the solutions (Interaction Design Foundation, 2020). This innovative problem-solving strategy helped VISIT participants to easily create numerous "thinking outside of the box" ideas.

All this consequently resulted in exceptional project deliverables, such as The Work plan of Service Innovation and Design Implementation process in studies, internships, projects. Another one is the Online Self-study Module which includes relevant terminology for providing innovative services and course material. One of the final outcomes is also this Handbook referring to the deliverables of the project and showing the way and methods how these results can be transferred to other territories, Higher Education Institutions, students, entrepreneurs, and tourism authorities.

On the local and regional level, the impact of international networking and newly developed services increase the wellbeing of the local communities, bring more tourists and jobs to the region, generating more income. Networking with HEIs and other islands brings more content and knowledge into the communities. Developed new services generate more new services in an iterative process continuously. Ultimately, the tourism seasons could start to be extended in steps. From the local level, the impacts spread to regional, national, and European level, influencing the wellbeing, and bringing more new services.

VISIT also claims to support the sustainable development of tourism which involves socially responsible behavior in accordance with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for Tourism. Tourism activities are sustainable when they are economically efficient without compromising social wellbeing and the environment. For the development of sustainable tourism, innovation is an essential engine. Although the tourism industry has been considered a traditional and mature industry, the application of innovative strategies has shown that it could be an incremental resource for sustainable tourism development (Elmo et al., 2020). The project will continue to be sustainable after the end of its funding period, regarding its Continuity and Sustainability Plan (CSP), detailing all key actions to ensure that the resource investment is sustained after the project ends.

The most beautiful part of the project VISIT is the fact that students from completely different backgrounds succeeded to cooperate in a friendly manner as well as to easily solve real problems of selected businesses from distant islands and countries. In addition, all work is done in a youthfully fresh and innovative way, with the selfless support and mentoring of teaching staff and other professionals. Summing all the above-mentioned deliverables brings us to the conclusion that the main aims and objectives of the project VISIT were completely met, which is nicely and in detail presented in this Handbook. It is a perfect guide for anyone who wants to repeat such an experience or solve a particular issue in a new and creative way.

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AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

University of Applied Sciences



THE PROJECT VISIT (Versatile Islands Cooperating for New Services and Innovation in Tourism) was launched in September 2018, an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project, with the aim of touring five European islands, and working with local businesses on the islands. The aim was to develop new services for the businesses and let them see, how it is possible to make small changes in their offerings and perhaps generate new ideas for them to continue developing.

THIS BOOK EXPLAINS the main aim of VISIT, which was to develop existing and create new innovative services with small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) on European islands to boost local regions. Outputs of the project are highly transferable to other islands and businesses as most of them are facing common problems caused by short seasons and depopulation. Similarly, students and teachers from various Higher Education Institutions (HEI) can easily apply here presented knowledge of creating and developing ideas by doing.