Preface

In September 2013, a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Chair was established at USI – Università della Svizzera italiana, in Lugano (Switzerland), with the commitment to perform research and provide teaching on how information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital media in general, can be effectively exploited to develop and promote sustainable tourism in World Heritage Sites (WHs), with a focus on the Southern hemisphere. The USI UNESCO Chair is currently completing its second mandate, and we hope that its journey will continue in the future.

UNESCO Chairs are established within universities in the framework of the UNESCO UNITWIN (University Twinning and Networking) Programme, launched in 1992. They aim at advancing research, training and programme development in all of UNESCO's fields of competence, while specifically strengthening North–South and South–South cooperation. The UNESCO Chair at USI is part of the UNITWIN-UNESCO Network 'Culture, Tourism, Development', led by Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris, France).

During its two mandates, USI UNESCO Chair has realized several activities to fulfil its commitment: organization of Summer and Winter Schools for researchers and practitioners, massive open online courses (MOOCs), local and international research projects, social media awareness campaigns, studies on the online presence of WHs, mobile applications development, and many others. All these activities were made possible thanks to the collaboration of colleagues and friends around the world, who joined the Chair during visiting periods or contributed to specific projects and studies. These many collaborations allowed everyone involved to widen their horizons, create knowledge networks, share worldviews and cultural values and reinforce reciprocal trust, working together to promote heritage as a value asset for the international community as well as to preserve it for future generations. A major role has been also played by the Master in International Tourism taught at USI: through full courses, individual classes, group projects, internships and Master theses, its students have contributed extensively to the Chair, with their enthusiasm, smart questions and brilliant ideas.

This *Handbook* is a fruit of such encounters and collaborations, as well as a heartfelt thank-you to all the colleagues and friends we met along the way. It was a fantastic journey for us, and we hope that going through the following pages you will be able to take part in it and meet some of the wonderful colleagues we had the honour to work with.

Lorenzo Cantoni, Chair-holder
Silvia De Ascaniis, Chair-coordinator