Preface

When I finished my studies in Urban and Regional Economics at Erasmus University Rotterdam, Leo van den Berg, who had been one of my teachers there, asked me whether I was interested in conducting a research programme that would allow me to combine my passion for tourism research with his interest in urban development. He asked me to look into the role tourism might be playing in urban development processes and find an adequate case study. When I proposed taking Venice as a case for my research, a city where in 1986 tourism already appeared to be so overwhelmingly present that I guessed measuring the effects of it on the urban economy and Venetian society would probably be easy, Leo van den Berg put me into contact with Paolo Costa. At that time, Paolo was teaching regional economics and tourism economics at the University Ca' Foscari of Venice and it was he who introduced me to all the peculiarities of Venice and its tourism. It was under their guidance, and I will always be grateful to them for this, that my interest in urban tourism quickly grew and thus became a fundamental ingredient of my research activities until this very day.

Working in Rotterdam and Venice at the same time helped me a lot in understanding the importance of tourism for urban development. In the second half of the 1980s Rotterdam was a city with plenty of economic and social problems. Traditional economic activities were relocating or just disappearing, unemployment levels were unacceptably high and social problems were becoming unbearable. Obviously, the city's economic base needed a boost, and, also looking at the revitalization strategies of American cities such as Baltimore and Boston, tourism development was seen as an important means of achieving that goal.

With this firmly in mind, it was impossible for me to just blame tourism for everything bad that happened and still happens to Venice. It is rather easy to prove that tourism and its explosive growth until 2020 has had a devastating effect on the city of Venice. And indeed, many colleagues were so struck by

what mass tourism had been doing to Venice that they unanimously condemned it and made Venice the icon of what is now called overtourism.

International, comparative research projects on tourism in heritage cities similar to Venice (see for example Costa et al., 1996) and tourism in cities very similar to Rotterdam (see for instance Van den Berg et al., 1995) led me to a different research objective: the study of the conditions under which tourism shapes urban development in a positive way and those that turn tourism into something destructive. Obviously, an adequate tourism policy is a fundamental precondition in this respect. The search for the set of conditions that guarantees *sustainable* and – a condition linked to the COVID-19 pandemic in which the world currently finds itself – *safe* development of urban tourism forms the backbone of this *Research Agenda for Urban Tourism*.

Since I started looking into the nature of urban tourism, I have had the opportunity to exchange ideas with many colleagues.

Some of them are the authors with whom I wrote the articles, book chapters and books on urban tourism that have been published over the past 30 years. Leo van den Berg and Paolo Costa have already been mentioned, but I also learned a lot from many other co-authors. Then there were the many colleagues who were themselves working on urban development issues and became sparring partners at the international meetings where I was invited to present my work. I owe a lot to the lively discussions I had on these occasions with, to mention just a few of them, Jan van der Straaten, Harry Coccosis, Paul Cheshire, Charles Leven, John Glasson, Martin Robinson, Greg Ashworth, Lidija Petric, Arrigo Cipriano and Chris Law. Moreover, I am very grateful to all the people, too many to mention, who have worked with me in Rotterdam, Venice and more recently at the KU Leuven.

A Research Agenda for Urban Tourism has therefore become a perfect occasion for bringing together a number of “pivots” of urban tourism research, such as Greg Richards, Karl Wöber and Antonio Paolo Russo, and a lot of the young, brilliant researchers I have met over the years and who share this passion for urban tourism with me and have found their place in the list of authors that can be found elsewhere. An overview of their names and short curricula can be found below. Eventually, David Graham proofread the chapters and put everything intelligently together.

I would like to use this occasion to thank all the authors who actually not only prepared the chapters I asked them for on time, but also agreed to have these papers peer reviewed by their fellow authors. The kind invitation to edit

A Research Agenda for Urban Tourism by Edward Elgar Publishers made this all possible and I am truly grateful for this. Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife Vesna and my kids Suzanne, Mia and Leo for providing me with their essential and unconditional support.

Jan van der Borg
Venice, May 2021

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