

## 39. Short-term outlook for sustainable urban tourism

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### **Abstract**

The major issues and trends mentioned in the previous chapters are first summarised. The chapter then considers various macro-level projections and recommendations for the broader short-term outlook for cities from a variety of authoritative sources. Near-term projections on travel by tourism scholars and from major tourism bodies are reviewed. Chapter 39 also discusses changing consumer demand preferences as they relate to sustainable urban tourism. The roles of stakeholders are next considered. After distilling the information from all sources, the short-term outlook for sustainable urban tourism is described. It is characterised as a “work in progress” that requires greater focus and resources from governments, practitioners and academic scholars. Positive sustainable development attitudes and actions are detected for all stakeholder groups; however, these are set against the potential detrimental impact of a global recession and other crises.

**Keywords:** Climate change, mobility, recession, resilience, sustainable tourism, technology, uncertainty, urbanisation, wellbeing, “work in progress”

### **1. Introduction**

Reading this book so far, you would have to conclude that sustainable tourism in urban areas is still in an early stage of development. It is not completely and comprehensively implemented “on the ground” by urban practitioners and academic scholars have only recently been paying attention to the phenomenon. Additionally, the aftershocks of the COVID-19 pandemic are being felt by cities, with some areas still dealing with the curtailment of the virus spread (e.g., China). With the very real threat of a major global recession ahead, there is a high level of uncertainty (and anxiety) about near-term urban futures. However, it should be realised that not all cities are the same if adopting a global perspective and some will fare much better (e.g., Tokyo) than others in the next two to three years (Oxford Economics, 2022).

The focus on urban economic recovery has perhaps diverted some attention away from sustainable development, while many urban destination management organizations’ (DMO)

funding levels were decimated in 2020-2022 (City Destination Alliance, CityDNA, 2020; Destination Analysts, 2020). However, the recovery of tourism volumes began in 2022 and continued in 2023.

Any discussion on sustainable urban tourism needs not only to consider supply-side shifts and trends, but also must review changing consumer demands and preferences. Recent evidence suggests that travellers are becoming more conscious of the impacts of their actions on urban sustainability (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023a, 2023b).

In recent years, there have been some major contributions by organisations and authors on the future of urban tourism. UNWTO (2020) offered 16 recommendations on urban tourism, seven of which were related to sustainable policies and practices. Morrison and Maxim (2022) in their book, *World tourism cities*, devoted a chapter to future opportunities for world tourism cities using a PESTEL-RVS (political, economic, social, environmental, legal – resident, visitor, stakeholder) framework, and had another chapter on sustainability in world tourism cities. Morrison (2023) explained the future of destination management in a chapter of his book, *Marketing and managing tourism destinations*, highlighting the need to assign a higher priority to sustainability. He also provided a chapter on destination sustainability and social responsibility. Global and regional organisations, including the European Commission, UNESCAP, UN Habitat, World Bank, and World Economic Forum (WEF), have also prepared analyses and commentaries on the future of urban areas, some of which are reviewed later in this chapter.

Morrison and Maxim (2022) provided a set of factors that contribute to sustainable tourism implementation in cities, including designing policies, strategies and plans for sustainable tourism; strong leadership and political will and funding and other resources; stakeholder cooperation and partnerships; support of the local community; knowledge and understanding of the tourism industry; and good public transport infrastructure and accessibility.

After this brief introduction, the chapter moves on to review a set of future projections from a variety of sources, beginning with the contributing authors in this book.

## 2. Future projections

### 2.1 Future projections by contributing authors

In contemplating the next two to three years, it is useful to consider what this book's contributing authors have recommended for the future.

Part I of this book dealt with "Contemporary issues, challenges and trends in sustainable urban tourism". The authors suggest that the major issues and challenges were unsolved and ongoing and would continue into the future, as would most trends in urban tourism.

Part I chapters	Future issues and trends
Sustainable tourism implementation in urban areas: challenges and opportunities, <i>Cristina Maxim</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Urbanisation</li><li>• Overcrowding</li><li>• Digitalisation and smart cities</li><li>• Climate change</li></ul>
Overtourism in urban environments, <i>Rachel Dodds and Richard Butler</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coordinated and systems thinking approach involving all stakeholders is needed</li></ul>
Social and cultural sustainability in urban destinations, <i>Jiawei Li, Hai Nguyen, Alastair M. Morrison, and J. Andres Coca-Stefaniak</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More attention to climate action</li><li>• Deal with SDG11</li><li>• More emphasis on social and cultural sustainability</li><li>• Recovering from the pandemic</li><li>• Preparing for what might become a global recession</li></ul>
Socially sustainable tourist behaviour – Bridging the gap between scholarly research and real-world issues, <i>Jiawei Li, Alastair M. Morrison, Hai Nguyen, and J. Andres Coca-Stefaniak</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Greater attention to the UN SDGs</li><li>• Joint knowledge exchange (KE) partnerships between industry and academia</li></ul>
Urban green spaces and resident wellbeing: Foundations of sustainable city tourism, <i>Melanie Kay Smith, Ivett Pinke-Sziva and László Puczkó</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Urban green spaces need to be prioritised by governments.</li><li>• Further research is needed to measure the wellbeing benefits for residents and the potential benefits for tourists of urban green spaces.</li><li>• Landscape planners should develop programs that promote diversity, interactive and multisensory experiences of nature that engage emotions and create more lasting memories.</li><li>• Urban green space management will be</li></ul>

	connected to smart city initiatives.
The nexus of sustainable urban tourism and quality of life, <i>Adiyukh Berbekova and Muzaffer Uysal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of life indicators should be implemented in measuring the sustainability of urban destinations.</li> <li>• Quality of life and wellbeing indicators should be formally treated as part of sustainability measures.</li> <li>• Future research should focus not only on developing appropriate indicators to measure the impact of urban tourism on quality of life, but also emphasise the implications for public policy.</li> </ul>
Technological innovations and sustainable urban tourism, <i>Ye Shen</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological innovations, including gamification, live-streaming, and VR can contribute to the sustainable development of urban destinations and help to achieve the SDGs.</li> <li>• DMOs should understand the challenges of the implementation of technological innovations so that they can better utilise them and maximise the sustainability-related outcomes.</li> </ul>
Innovative urban mobility solutions in tourist destinations, <i>Ioanna Pagoni and Andreas Papatheodorou</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bike sharing, scooter sharing, and MaaS, are regarded as the main mobility concepts promoting sustainability and encouraging a paradigm shift away from motorised private vehicles.</li> <li>• The emergence of new city models that promote a human-centric and environmentally sustainable urban future, such as the “15-minute city”, should be considered.</li> </ul>
The role of air in the sustainable development of urban destinations, <i>Mohan Li, Songshan (Sam) Huang and Ganghua Chen</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policymakers should deal with sustainability and air pollution as global issues.</li> <li>• More research is needed to particularly focus on those with respiratory difficulties.</li> </ul>
The contribution of community events to sustainable urban tourism, <i>Judith Mair and Michelle Duffy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider how festivals and events contribute broadly to the global sustainability agenda.</li> <li>• Move away from the boosterism approach towards a more nuanced approach, where the socio-cultural benefits are positioned as key.</li> </ul>
Sustainable urban tourism success factors,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable tourism success factors</li> </ul>

<i>Birgul Aydin</i>	should be applied in the future including strategic planning, stakeholders, cooperation, image, promotion, accessibility, and technology.
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Part II on “Planning and managing sustainable urban destinations” has more of a focus of the implementation of sustainability in cities.

Part II chapters	Future issues and trends
Planning and managing sustainable urban destinations, <i>Alastair M. Morrison</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More cities will prepare dedicated sustainable tourism plans and strategies.</li> <li>• Sustainable tourism departments or units will be established within city administration and DMO structures.</li> <li>• City administrators will increasingly demand greater accountability and transparency with respect to local success in achieving SDG11.</li> <li>• Urban DMOs will become increasingly professional and more will adopt the complete set of destination management roles.</li> <li>• Public scrutiny and commentary on city tourism planning and development will intensify.</li> <li>• Universities and colleges will increasingly introduce destination management and sustainable tourism curricula.</li> </ul>
Stakeholder views on sustainable urban destinations, <i>Gaurav Panse, Alan Fyall and Sergio Alvarez</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism will remain vulnerable to a range of external forces, most notably climate change.</li> </ul>
City branding and sustainable urban development, <i>Alastair M. Morrison and Andres Coca-Stefaniak</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More city destinations will feature sustainable development and sustainable tourism in their branding strategies.</li> <li>• Greater emphasis to social-cultural and economic sustainability than before in city tourism branding.</li> <li>• Co-creation with residents, visitors and other stakeholders will expand. r needs.</li> <li>• DMOs will appoint sustainability officers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMOs will craft branding and marketing communications to better fit the emerging generational cohorts to whom sustainable development is a higher priority.</li> <li>• New recognition and certification systems will be created that will reward cities with effective sustainable city tourism branding approaches.</li> </ul>
Indicators for sustainable urban tourism development, <i>Lina Zhong and Zongqi Xu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An urban sustainable tourism indicator system is needed.</li> </ul>
Big data and conventional information sources in sustainable urban tourism, <i>Lina Zhong and Yingchao Dong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional and big data sources will be used in the future.</li> </ul>

Part III about “Sustainable urban tourism cases worldwide” provides plenty of evidence that there cannot be a “one size fits all” approach to sustainable urban tourism.

Part III chapters	Future issues and trends
Reassessing transportation-related CO2 emissions of European city tourism: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the contribution of DMOs in improving the precision of CO2 estimates, <i>Ulrich Gunter and Karl Wöber</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The temporal reduction of CO2 emission levels during the pandemic may not persist.</li> <li>• The creation of a non-fragmented high-speed railway network in Europe.</li> <li>• High levels of uncertainty in 2023 and 2024.</li> </ul>
Urban tourism, social sustainability, and public policy implications for U.S. cities, <i>Costas Spirou</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local policymakers must consider ways to create environments that are socially sustainable and responsive to resident needs.</li> </ul>
Sustainable urban tourism in African cities, <i>Lisa-Mari Coughlan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting communities through tourism.</li> <li>• More marketing of urban experiences to tourists.</li> <li>• Future tourism higher education curricula should be modified.</li> <li>• More adventure tourism, differentiated African tourism products, intimate creative experiences, and festivals.</li> </ul>
Examining the link between urban green spaces and sustainable urban tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa, <i>Llewellyn Leonard and Ciná van Zyl</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban green spaces are important.</li> <li>• Proper governance is required to promote sustainability.</li> <li>• The urban poor must be considered.</li> <li>• Carbon emissions impact travel</li> </ul>

	decisions.
Sustainable urban tourism and smart destinations in South America, <i>Maximiliano E. Korstanje</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital technologies and other smart tourism initiatives will help city destinations optimise their resources and avoid or better manage the negative effects of overtourism.</li> </ul>
Bars and heritage: A conundrum for an Ancient Chinese town, <i>Chen Xiao, Chen Wanxin and Deborah Edwards</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is possible to promote sustainable development by developing bars in heritage buildings.</li> </ul>

The issues and projections made by this book's contributing authors are varied and in some cases they focus on specific urban planning and management initiatives. However, there are some common themes running through these ideas such as greater attention to achieving the SDGs including climate action, the need for more partnerships and cooperation, giving greater priority to resident quality of life and wellbeing, and more planning for sustainable urban tourism. Also, several of the chapters suggest a growing influence of technological innovations on cities in general and tourism in particular. These technologies are in transportation, information dissemination, entertainment, and many other aspects of urban life.

In the next chapter section, overall (macro-level) projections and future recommendations for urban areas are discussed.

## 2.2 Macro-level projections and recommendations

The projections for 2023 and the near-term beyond suggest more economic turbulence is ahead for urban areas as many will be experiencing recessionary conditions (Centre for Cities, 2022; Oxford Economics, 2022) (Figure 39.1).



Figure 39.1 Economic turbulence in cities expected in the short-term. Photo: Courtesy, Unsplash.com, Mark Konig.

One of the most authoritative and global projections is the report, *“Envisaging the future of cities”* (UN Habitat, 2022). It provides comprehensive coverage of various issues, including urbanisation, poverty and inequality, greener urban futures, urban planning, public health and sustainable urban futures, urban governance, technology and innovation, and economic, social, environmental, and institutional resilience. The European Commission’s 2019 report, *The future of cities*, identified the major challenges as affordable housing, mobility, provision of services, ageing, urban health, social segregation, environmental footprint, and climate action (European Commission, 2019). UNESCAP produced the report on, *The future of Asia & Pacific cities: Transformative pathways towards sustainable urban development*, in which it discussed the future of urban and territorial planning, urban resilience, smart and inclusive cities, and urban finance (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2019). The World Economic Forum (WEF) has advocated the smart city concept stating that “smart city technologies can help decrease traffic congestion, combat crime, improve resilience during natural disasters and reduce greenhouse emissions. Without proper governance, these technologies pose significant risk, notably to privacy and security” (World Economic Forum, 2019). The World Bank (2021) in its report, *“Pancakes to pyramid: City form to promote sustainable growth”* examines how cities’ physical shape and form affects sustainable development. An earlier report by the



World Bank, *Demographic trends – and urbanization*, identified the major global trends for cities as population growth, aging, and migration, while noting concerns for urbanisation and resident wellbeing (World Bank, 2020). Importantly, this report finds a heterogeneity in demographic trends across the world's regions.

Much of the information available on sustainable development in urban areas concerns the environmental and economic pillars. The social and cultural aspects are not as frequently discussed. Also, the “hard” aspects of development are most evident in cities such as waste and energy management system, low-carbon transportation systems, and smart city technological applications. The “softer” aspects of development are somewhat neglected, presumably because they are more difficult and require longer to implement. However, some academic scholars are attempting to raise the profile of social-cultural sustainability including Bozeman et al. (2022) and Li et al. (2022). The greening of cities, according to Bozeman et al. (2022, p. 4), does not guarantee an equitable distribution of benefits to all citizens, and particularly for low-wealth communities and people of colour. They call for greater social equity and justice in urban areas and for more of a research focus on these topics. Li et al. (2022) highlight the lack of adequate research on socially sustainable tourist behaviour and the role of the social dimension in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Several of the contributing authors echo this viewpoint, as do some of the reports discussed in this section.

### 2.3 Projections by tourism scholars

Academic authors have made valuable contributions to the literature on sustainable tourism and where it will be heading in the future. For example, Fennell and Cooper (2020, pp. 360-369) identified four categories of drivers of sustainable tourism futures, these being demographic and social, political, science and environmental, and technological. Morrison, Lehto, and Day (2018, pp. 179-181) considered the economic sustainability of specific tourism developments and warned against constructing “white elephants on the tourism landscape” (projects that are not economically feasible or without sufficient market demand) in future.

Several review articles have been published regarding the future of tourism and sustainable

development (Bastidas-Manzano et al., 2021; León-Gómez et al., 2021; Loureiro, Guerreiro, and Han, 2022; Mihalic et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2023; Streimikiene et al., 2020), which outline future initiatives and research directions. Bastidas-Manzano et al. (2021) analysed the past, present, and future of smart tourism destinations via a bibliometric analysis. They identified several lines for future research, including the influence of smart tourism on destination sustainability. León-Gómez et al. (2021) conducted a bibliometric analysis of sustainable tourism development and economic growth. They recommended that more future research attention needs to be given to sustainable events, sustainable tourism destinations, and sustainable maritime tourism. Loureiro, Guerreiro, and Han (2022) examined the past, present, and future of tourist pro-environmental behaviour using a text-mining approach. The authors recommended that managers, employees, and local citizens should do more in future to spread messages to raise tourists' and guests' awareness of pro-environmental behaviours. Mihalic et al. (2021) discussed a combined sustainable and responsible tourism paradigm based upon a bibliometric and citation network analysis. They identified causes of unsustainable tourism development as neoliberalism, climate change, pandemics and other crises, and suggested that sustainability values and responsibility triggers be merged by researchers in the future. Shao et al. (2023) prepared a bibliometric analysis of urban ecosystem services. The authors recommended that, in addition to giving greater research attention to urban ecosystem services, the relationship of these services to increasing urbanisation and city agglomeration must be assessed in future. Through a systematic literature review of sustainable tourism development, Streimikiene et al. (2020) proposed that destinations must become more resilient in future, having had the experience of COVID-19 and given the likelihood of future health crises.

Other scholars have investigated specific topics related to the future of tourism and sustainable development, including climate change (Scott, 2021), co-designing tourism (Liburd, Duedahl, and Heape, 2022), consumer attitudes regarding sustainable tourism (Palacios-Florencio et al., 2021), resilience (Sharma et al., 2021), and urban design (Nolasco-Cirugeda, Martí, and Ponce, 2020), while Asaf, Kock, and Tsionas (2022) polled experts on the future of tourism post-COVID. Scott (2021) concluded that the tourism sector was guilty of delayed action and overall low preparedness for climate change. He defined three immediate climate action tasks as: 1) improved communications and knowledge

mobilisation; 2) increased research capacity; and (3) strategic policy and planning engagement (Scott, 2021, p. 1). Liburd et al. (2022) recommended the “collaborative imagining of desirable tourism futures” en route to achieving SDG17 of the United Nations. Palacios-Florencio et al. (2021) suggested that sustainable tourism could be the solution to the COVID-19 crisis if supported by positive consumer attitudes, motivations, and perceived benefits of sustainable tourism concepts. Sharma et al. (2021) identified four factors that will build destination resilience in the future, namely government response, technology innovation, local belongingness, and consumer and employee confidence. Nolasco-Cirugeda et al. (2020), using Benidorm, Spain as a case example, asserted that the city’s masterplans and design have resulted in it becoming a successful sustainable tourism destination. Based on a survey of 19 experts, Asaf et al. (2022) found there was a consensus on six areas requiring attention by the tourism sector that included consumer behaviour, demand and performance modelling, forecasting, destination and facility management, information technology, and quality of life and sustainability. The last of these areas encompassed providing safe destinations that were climate-friendly and considered the wellbeing of residents.

Some scholars have made contributions on sustainable urban tourism, although the volume of publishing is still rather modest. Cristina Maxim has been one of the most prolific authors writing on this topic (Maxim, 2015, 2016, 2021, pp. 19-30; Morrison and Maxim, 2022, pp. 196-220). The consensus is that sustainable urban tourism is a nascent field of research and practice that requires much greater future attention.

Overall, the volume of academic publishing in journal articles and books about sustainable urban tourism is growing rapidly. This is a highly desirable trend; however, as highlighted in Chapter 8, there gaps to be bridged between tourism academics and practitioners to allow this accumulating knowledge bank to be transformed into practical value. A greater priority is required in future needs to be placed on knowledge exchange.

What about the tourism sector’s view of the future of tourism and sustainability? The next section considers the short-term projections by major tourism organisations.

## 2.4 Projections by major tourism bodies

Several influential global and regional tourism bodies produce short-term forecasts of demand volumes. These forecasts made in 2022 and 2023 were very positive on the rebounding of tourism after COVID. The following are some top-line projections by four of these organizations:

- UN World Tourism Organization: International tourist arrivals could reach 80% to 95% of pre-pandemic levels in 2023 (UNWTO, 2023).
- World Travel & Tourism Council: Travel and tourism GDP could reach 2019 levels by 2023 (WTTC, 2022).
- European Travel Commission: Europe will recover 70% of pre-COVID travel demand in 2022 (ETC, 2022).
- Pacific Area Travel Association: "The medium scenario predicts international visitor arrivals reaching a similar volume as that of 2019 by 2024, however, the severe scenario suggests a shortfall of almost 30% by 2024" (PATA, 2022).

Some would say that these forecasts are overly optimistic given the expected global recession. Nevertheless, together they announce a significant improvement in tourism business in 2023 and 2024. Sustainable tourism advocates might dismiss these volume projections as expressions of the quantity rather than the quality of tourists. They argue that much more focus must be given to the types of tourists – and their contributions to sustainable tourism -- rather than their numbers.

While these tourism bodies often discuss people as abstract statistics, there needs to be a more fundamental understanding of tourists' motivations, requirements, and preferences; the topic picked up in the next section of the chapter.

## 3. Changing consumer demand preferences

Some of the contributing authors signalled that people are becoming more conscious about their impacts while travelling, undoubtedly a positive trend for supporting sustainable urban tourism. Recent consumer travel surveys authenticate these assumptions (American

Express, 2022; Booking.com, 2022; WTTC, 2023a, 2023b). The American Express survey found that 78% of respondents wanted to have positive impacts on communities visited. The following quote from the WTTC and Trip.com survey also highlighted the increased emphasis on sustainable travel:

“It’s perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that 67% of the respondents in the Trip.com Group Sustainable Travel Consumer Report cited the pandemic as one of the reasons they felt compelled to explore sustainable travel. The Trip.com survey also reported a strong commitment among travellers to reduce their carbon footprint. More than half (59%) had opted for some form of sustainable travel in recent years, 69% of travellers are actively (always or occasionally) seeking sustainable travel options, and three quarters (75%) stated a desire to choose sustainable travel options in future. More than half (59%) were either already paying to offset their carbon emissions or willing to consider such products if the price was right” (WTTC, 2023a).

The *Sustainable Travel Report 2022*, conducted by Booking.com, added further support on this trend (Booking.com, 2022). Some 71% of travellers stated that they would make more effort in the next year to travel more sustainably, and 53% were more determined to make sustainable travel choices than in the year before.

Undoubtedly, tourists are a key stakeholder group; however, there are several other stakeholders and the next section discusses their involvement in sustainable urban tourism in the near term.

#### 4. Stakeholder involvement

There is a consensus that a multi-stakeholder effort is needed in the short-term to further the implementation of sustainable tourism in urban areas. For example, UNWTO (2020, p. 6) recommended that the “sustainability of urban tourism will only be successful if a comprehensive and long-term planning strategy is adopted based on a multi-action and multi-stakeholder participatory approach”. The emphasis on long-term planning corresponds to the recommendations of Chapter 21 in this book and according to some of the previously-cited academic scholars.

The previous section discussed how travellers can contribute to greater urban sustainability. The other significant stakeholders in this movement are urban governmental administrations, local residents, tourism businesses, DMOs, and NGOs and other non-profit organisations. How to coalesce the efforts of all these players in the next two to three years will be challenging and requires more thought on cooperative model-building.

The previous chapters of this book have revealed numerous examples of municipal administrations that have taken action to promote urban sustainable development. These actions are often anchored by the development of sustainable tourism policies and plans.

Local residents need to become stronger advocates and more involved participants in the sustainable development movement. The activism to counter overtourism was a topic in Chapter 3, as well as being mentioned by other contributing authors.

Tourism businesses will have to be more creative in developing innovative products and services that promote sustainability. For example, the highly successful staycationing offers could be modified into “greencationing” stays. DMOs need to adopt stronger sustainable development agendas, with 4VI in Vancouver Island, Canada becoming a social enterprise and representing a beacon case for accomplishing this transition.

The next section delivers on this chapter’s title by describing the outlook for sustainable urban tourism in the next few years.

## 5. The short-term outlook for sustainable urban tourism

What then is the short-term outlook for sustainable urban tourism? The threat of a global recession is very real in 2023 and could dampen the optimistic forecasts of tourism bodies quoted in this chapter. Not all experts agree that a global recession is ahead; however, if it does happen the short-term outlook for sustainable urban tourism will be affected. Part of this impact might be to dampen attempts to further sustainable tourism development in cities.

Despite the gloominess of a potential global recession, this chapter has uncovered a set of positive forces that will benefit sustainable urban tourism in 2023-2025. These include a steadily accumulating body of academic research literature on the topic. Also, there appears to be a growing consensus that the social-cultural sustainability pillar requires and will

receive greater attention in the near term. On a stakeholder-by-stakeholder basis, there are indications of growing support for and attention to sustainable development through tourism. First, as earlier highlighted, tourists are becoming more conscious about their impacts while travelling. Second, the tourism sector is doing more for sustainability, although much greater effort is definitely needed. City DMOs could be luminaries in this respect and some are already demonstrating great leadership in tourism sustainability and stewardship. Third, urban residents are becoming more active in supporting sustainability. Fourth, the public sector, including city governments, are steadily doing more to make urban areas sustainable and resilient. Lastly, NGOs, social and environmental groups are becoming stronger sustainability advocates. While the previous section indicated each stakeholder's required involvement in furthering sustainable urban tourism, there is a need for a collective and multi-stakeholder approach, as has been emphasised in other parts of this chapter. This cooperation is much easier to recommend than to actually achieve urban destinations. One study, for example, found that tourism stakeholder groups had different worldviews on sustainable urban tourism development (Boom et al., 2021).

The contributing authors suggested many specific initiatives to further sustainable urban tourism. These included co-creation and co-design, dedicated sustainable tourism plans, greater use of digital and smart technologies, innovative urban mobility solutions, more attention to urban green spaces, quality of life and wellbeing indicators, sustainable branding of city destinations, and others. There were also calls for greater diversity, equity, and inclusiveness in urban tourism. It is likely that all of these will be further implemented and be part of the short-term outlook for sustainable urban tourism.

Cities in the next three years will continue to experiment with overall models that could lead to greater urban sustainability. These will include, among others, the 15-minute city (Ratti and Florida, 2021), city compatible tourism (Grube, 2022), the circular economy and doughnut economics, as well as the continuing smart city and smart tourism movements.

Various declarations have been made by tourism groups and destinations that impinge on urban tourism. These include the *Porto Declaration Tourism and the Future of Cities* (UNWTO, 2021a) and *The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism* (UNWTO, 2021b). The initiatives outlined in these agreements will be implemented by their signatories over the next few years and beyond.

Throughout this book, there have been multiple mentions about achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Day, Morrison, and Coca-Stefaniak (2021, p. 881) say that "the unique challenge of urban life is the focus on one of these goals, SDG 11 "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable". The same authors also cite SDGs 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, and 15 as targets for cities. Surely then, a combination of these goals will be a focus for sustainable urban tourism in the near term with SDGs 11 and 13 (climate change) being given the greatest emphasis. Gothenburg, Sweden is one city that is successfully addressing SDG 11 (Dong, 2022):

"With a specific emphasis on inclusivity, the social project " River City" was initiated with the objectives of fostering social cohesion, reducing negative impacts on the environment, adapting to climate change, and promoting diverse economic development. The vision of the project is inextricably aligned with Sustainable Development Goal #11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. Gothenburg's vulnerability to the climate crisis can be considerably reduced over time by proactively revitalising the riverfront with housing, businesses, and public spaces".

One would be remiss in a book such as this not to mention the sceptics of sustainable development. A recent article poses the question, " Urban sustainable tourism - reality or utopia?" (Kaczmarek and Kaczmarek, 2022). Although the authors do not truly answer the question in their title, they do say that, based on three city case studies (Havana, Porto, Toronto), "planning and effective delivery of sustainable urban tourism is an exceptionally contextual process, and that sometimes it is impossible to achieve the desired situation where the wellbeing of residents and the satisfaction of tourists coexist harmoniously". Therefore, the short-term outlook for sustainable tourism will vary city by city, and there can be no "one size fits all" forecast of what is ahead. Undoubtedly, however, the tensions that already exist between urban economic growth and sustainable development will persist in most cities for many years to come. Private-sector operators will continue to favour continuing economic growth, while more residents and tourists will become increasingly disenchanted with the "growth at all costs" approach.

Several of the previous chapters have cited trail-blazing case examples of specific cities that have implemented sustainable tourism initiatives. These include Glasgow and Vancouver (Chapter 17), Sedona (Chapter 21), Copenhagen (Chapter 25), Cluj-Napoca, Ljubljana, and



Warsaw (Chapter 29), and Dubai (Chapter 35) and many others. It is expected that more cities will also follow Singapore's example (Figure 39.2) and promote its sustainability efforts, e.g., the production of the "City in nature where large experiences come with small footprints" video from the Singapore Tourism Board in 2022 (Singapore Tourism Board, 2022).



*Figure 39.2* Singapore is actively promoting its greenness. Photo: Courtesy, Unsplash.com, Sergio Sala.

## 6. Conclusions

This chapter has drawn upon content from a mixture of sources, including academic, practitioner, and governmental. Distilling the essence from such a widespread scope of opinions was challenging; yet the term "uncertainty" can be attached to many of the short-term projections and forecasts. External environmental factors may stunt the positive movements toward greater urban sustainability, including the likely economic and other crises. Travellers may not be as earnest about sustainability concerns than they indicate in surveys and it remains to be seen if actions will follow intentions. Tourism businesses may postpone or reduce plans for sustainability if customer volumes decline sharply.

Sustainable urban tourism is a "work in progress" at this time in 2023. Most observers, including this book's contributing authors, agree that it requires and will receive greater

emphasis in the short- and long-term from urban practitioners and the research community. Changing consumer preferences are aligning more closely with the goals of sustainable development, especially in the environmental context. This positive trend will be supportive of sustainable tourism initiatives.

If anything was learned about tourism from the COVID-19 pandemic, then it is that it is dangerous to predict what will happen next. This lesson makes any tourism projections precarious and that is the major limitation of this chapter. Nevertheless, by using multiple sources including the excellent work of contributing authors, it is hoped that the chapter offers a realistic portrayal of sustainable urban tourism for the next few years.

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