

TRANSFORMING TOURISM INITIATIVE
Working Programme 2020/2021
Draft, June 16th 2020

Context

“We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path” - with these clear words in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN member states expressed in 2015 their commitment to the objective of making the world more just and more sustainable.

We are in the midst of a number of global crises including the pandemic COVID-19 and our growing climate crisis. Disturbingly necessary shift to a sustainable and resilient path in tourism has not yet happened. At the same time, we feel that a clear orientation like the 2030 Agenda is needed now more than ever before. The pandemic and the following economic crises is an important wake-up call as well as an opportunity to make the essential transformation possible. Covid-19 has accentuated and deepened the twin challenges facing us all – firstly, our climate and environmental crisis and secondly, growing social and economic inequality, which is often linked to exclusion, within and between countries. Tourism can and must be part of responding to these challenges by contributing to climate justice and just transitions as well as just, equal and inclusive social and economic relations within and between countries.

While the most urgent measures to contain the Covid-19 virus and its impacts are the highest priority, we need to also think of and initiate long-term measures to help to respond to our climate emergency and to build resilience among the host communities and very importantly for the tourism industry as a whole. The tourism industry claims that the sector is resilient. After each and every crisis it promotes tourism more aggressively. A careful analysis shows that these post disaster promotions, often in the guise of both rehabilitation plans and recovery projects, are actually creating more unsustainable tourism and facilitating more vulnerability in future crises. They are making the situation worse not better.

Now is a moment of change and transformation!

Tourism must and will transform, the key questions are how and when. The Transforming Tourism Initiative believes that apart from its social and economic destruction, the COVID 19 pandemic offers an unparalleled opportunity to influence tourism development globally. There is a huge opportunity to engage in conversations and dialogue with tourism actors, communities, local government, academic institutions, tourism planners and policy makers to create a discourse on “new ways of looking at post Covid tourism” from the learnings and experiences of tourism options that are just, equitable and democratic. Hence, a series of engagements is proposed to develop a collective response that reiterates and reaffirms the Berlin 2017 Transforming Tourism Declaration with clear advocacy messages. We believe that this can lead to more concrete policy level interventions at various levels.

The need of the hour is to use this rare moment to transform tourism and to promote tourism that is fair, future-oriented, responsible and accountable. Tourism that distributes incomes in an equitable manner, protects children and entire communities, preserves natural resources, inspires tourists and employers and employees to act sustainably. Such a tourism must not be a niche product, but the foundation of any tourism development.

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What we want to do:

We plan to reach tourism professionals, practitioners, planners and policy makers and to actively engage with a range of stakeholders and actors for influencing public opinion. We aim to contribute to democratising tourism planning and to building a disaster resilient, sustainable industry that respects economic, social and cultural rights. We believe that this discourse and dialogue will serve as a platform for initiating the need to “Rethink Tourism” with varied tourism stakeholders. This may facilitate and encourage more individuals and organisations to be active in the Transforming Tourism Initiative.

With our activities we want to respond to and strengthen our dialogues with:

- Tourism professionals
- Tourism Practitioners
- Tourism Planners
- Tourism policy makers (UNWTO, National governments etc.)
- Travellers

We plan the following activities:

- Webinars and Online Seminars on topics that are particularly important to take into consideration for this necessary transformation. The webinars could have different target groups (some may be public, others for specific audiences or for members of the Transforming Tourism Initiative). Each webinar should lead to a paper on the suggested theme that represents the views/thoughts expressed in the webinar. All these papers will then be consolidated and feed into the final statement / call for action by the Transforming Tourism Initiative. We try to find ways to document the main thoughts of the webinar in creative art forms (*exchange of stories, painting demonstrations, photos, slogans, new home recipes developed during lockdown, which can be interpreted or presented by artists different contexts such as photo diaries, tapestry, installation art works, poetry, etc.*) that can communicate to larger audiences globally and also have a possibility of travelling virtually to different parts of the world to generate discourses on tourism.
- A writing workshop for preparing a joint statement / call for action from the Transforming Tourism Initiative on the occasion of World Tourism Day, 27th September 2020
- Development of a broader Call for Action to be presented potentially at ITB 2021 (or another occasion in first half of 2021)
- If possible: a conference of partners during ITB Berlin , March 2021

Roadmap / Timetable (to be elaborated further):

16th July 2020: Webinar: Resilience and Change in Tourism

The Covid 19 and other recent man-made disasters and catastrophes show that tourism is one of the most affected sectors. This questions the resilience of tourism and the current tourism trajectory in general. But at the same time there are many community-based, decentralised and social tourism models showing more resilient practices. But many of these traditional and innovative practices are not getting sufficient space in the tourism discourse and policy regimes in general. This 90 minutes-webinar will facilitate a

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discussion in this direction. It will showcase examples from community-based tourism initiative as well as from social-tourism networks. While global in scope, this webinar will allow for interaction and exchange. Language of the webinar will be English, with simultaneous translation to Spanish and French (tbc). Participants / Target Group: Community-based and social tourism practitioners.

Late August 2020 Webinar: Labour in Tourism

The tourism industry is known as one of the labour intensive industries. But the phrase 'labour' is often represented by the formal sector. The Covid 19 has impacted people who work in tourism significantly. Especially women and men in the informal sector like street vendors etc.

The most affected in the tourism industry are the unorganised, informal workers of the tourism industry like the guides, street vendors, small hotel and restaurant workers. With the lockdown in many countries and many travel restrictions, they have no work and no way to claim relief given by the government as most of them are internal or cross border migrants and may not have full labour rights or proper documentation or IDs. Post the lock down when the tourism industry restarts in a range of ways, the members of the unorganized sector will be the last to recover from the crises. It is more than uncertain that they will be able to transform their fragile livelihoods situations and working conditions for the better during and after the crisis. The bail out and economic stimulus packages announced by various governments generally do not address the survival interest of these people at all.

Early September 2020: Writing Workshop for a joint statement of the Transforming Tourism Initiative on occasion of the World Tourism Day

Statement on "The Tourism We Want". This statement could also reflect on perspectives on how to support a real re-starting of tourism and the role and focus of change that bailout packages and stimulus programmes must foster. It can also analyse experiences from the first months of how tourism restarts. This Writing Workshop should be an internal civil society meeting rather than a public webinar. It should be prepared with a questionnaire that is sent out in advance as well as a communication plan for distribution on occasion of World Tourism Day 27.9.2020

November 2020 Webinar: Climate Crisis, man-made Disasters and Tourism

As a result of global warming and climate change, the frequency of man-made disasters and catastrophes has increased significantly. Tourism on one hand is a significant contributor to climate change and thus man-made disasters and on the other hand it is a victim of them as they significantly affect economic activity. It is also observed that unsustainable tourism development often increases the vulnerability of communities living in the destinations. Tourism and related infrastructure development are also getting priority in the post disaster recovery and rehabilitation programme under the myth of its trickle-down effect. This webinar would discuss the aspects of vulnerability in the context of our climate crisis and man-made disasters. We would have an output by December, when the COP26 climate change negotiations are planned to take place, if virtually.

January 2021: Webinar: Gender, Equity and Tourism: Content to be discussed

March 2021: Transforming Tourism Conference (virtually or physically) – hopefully at ITB 2021 or on another occasion in the 1st half of 2021