

Cross-border and cross-sector Collaborations: Networking for Mutual Growth

Sophie Elias-Varotsis

<http://trc.aiest.org/members/sophie-elias-varotsis>

Emerita Professor Université Paris-Est Créteil (UPEC)

Co-founder & Managing Director of MixManagementTourismConsulting (MMTC)

Abstract

The growing shift in interest from competitive advantage to collaborative advantage in tourism research is placing the focus on the changing face of destination management. Lean times, unruly demand and multiple travel choices are pressuring destinations to collaborate within and outside their borders as well as across different sectors of business and industry. Collaboration, however, infers reconciling multiform and multipurpose visions into a set of coherent, common and complementary goals. Research literature and practical evidence indicate that networks can be and are being largely implemented by DMO's to this end.

However, the use of networking to enable cross-border and cross-sector collaborations may also induce biases and imbalances among the different players. Such is the case in the urban context where the emphasis on economic diversity results in tourism being perceived at best as an added value for destination image at worst as a major brake in attracting new forms of business or industrial investments.

Drawing largely on theories of international relations and interdependence as well as intercultural management on bridging cultural discourses, images and visions, we shall illustrate through a case study approach that these inconveniences may be avoided or reduced using culturally specific networks to mediate change.

The cultural focus has been placed on the business and social networks led by the English speaking communities in Lyon because of their cultural predominance and potential for creating bridges within and outside of the destination. The contents of this paper have been developed over 12 months by combining simultaneously an investigation phase aggregating the data of an increasing number of networks with a practical phase implementing a set of dedicated and differentiated collaborative initiatives.

Cross-border and cross-sector collaborations require flexible and culturally adaptable mindsets to succeed. The practical implications of the evidence drawn from this investigation point to the potential use of adjoining independent and culturally specific networks in support of official DMOs to expand their understanding of collaborative systems, extend their reach and diversify their opportunities for mutual growth.

Keywords: cross-border collaborations; cross-sector collaborations; networks