

# INTRODUCTORY NOTE

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Managing mass tourism, urban conservation  
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Tourism in historic cities, following the trend of tourist industry, is in continuous increase and specially favoured by a particularly innovative European cultural sector. The negative impact of mass tourism on the conservation of cultural heritage and the impoverishment of central places from their traditional civic values is apparently evident and had already been noticed by European Commission's Reports. However planning and conservation policies in many historic cities continue to be fragmented and short sighted as they result mainly interested to the short term economic advantages of tourism.

To deal with these issues a project was launched on «Preserving Places. Managing mass tourism, urban conservation and quality of life in historic centres» co-financed by the European Commission in the context of the Culture Programme (2007-2013). The aim of the project was to investigate on the impact of tourism on the monumental and symbolic cores of historic cities and to analyse, on a European comparative basis, urban conservation and tourist policies in order to propose best practices for sustainable development. The project had seven partners – Belgium, England, Spain, France, Greece, Italy and Turkey – and was co-ordinated by the Rome section of the Institute for the Conservation and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage (ICVBC) of the CNR (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche). The project's web site is: <http://www.preservingplaces.co.uk/>.

Two conferences were organised within this project. One in Ankara on December 5-6, 2008 and the other one in Rome on *Preserving places. Tourism and conservation for a sustainable enhancement of historic centres*, on November 13-14, 2009.

The collection of papers of this special volume is the outcome mainly of the international conference held in Rome. The conference had a twofold aim. On one hand to investigate on the contemporary dilemma on how to increase tourism in historic centres while preserving place identity; on the other to arise awareness among principal players (such as local authorities, tour operators and citizens) on the risks both tangible and intangible cultural heritage is undergoing, thus promoting participation for positive action.

To achieve these aims the papers propose an interdisciplinary, comparative and international approach, dealing both with theoretical aspects (urban conservation, sustainability ...) and empirical case studies (London, Athens, Rome ...) in an attempt to highlight solutions for a sustainable enhancement of historic centres. One of the distinguishing aspects of the conference and of this publication is to have brought together experts of tourism and urban geography with experts of town planning and urban design, as well as public administrators, thus fostering debate and profitable insights.