

# 10

## Key Challenges in the Planning and Management of Tourism in Marine Environments

Throughout much of this text to date I have suggested that the public sector needs to be doing more to plan and manage tourism to reduce its negative impacts on the marine environment. However, I have never said this would be easy and in the Preface, I outlined some of the complexities involved in the planning and management of tourism of the oceans, from the beaches and shoreline to the most remote areas of open sea. In this chapter we will explore some of these complexities and endeavour to look beyond them to see how we might try to develop a model of best practice for the future. Planning and management is obviously a wide field so I will be focusing upon three main areas of activity as follows:

- The planning process for tourism including master planning of new resorts, zoning of land and sea for various uses and the system for evaluating and making decisions on proposed new developments.
- The ways in which the operations of the tourism industry are managed by the public sector, including legislation and regulations and their enforcement as well as policies on infrastructure development and management.
- Emergency planning and crisis management in the event of various kinds of natural disasters which is an important issue in relation to tourism.

We will focus upon what happens in the coastal zone, the inshore waters and the narrow belt of land that fronts on to the sea, and its impact on the marine environment. We will also consider what happens in the open seas where the scope for planning and management is more limited and what does take place is usually based on international agreements which are rarely focused on tourism. In terms of the open seas, the focus will, naturally, be on the cruise industry.

We will concentrate on those tourism activities which have a direct impact on the marine environment rather than those with indirect impact, such as air travel's emissions which increase global warming that ultimately increase sea levels and water temperatures. A number of the factors we will be discussing in relation to tourism also apply, in various ways, to other economic activities that based in marine environments such as shipping, mineral, oil and gas extraction, and commercial fishing. However, it is fair to say that these industries do seem to attract more interest from regulators and policymakers than tourism for some reason.

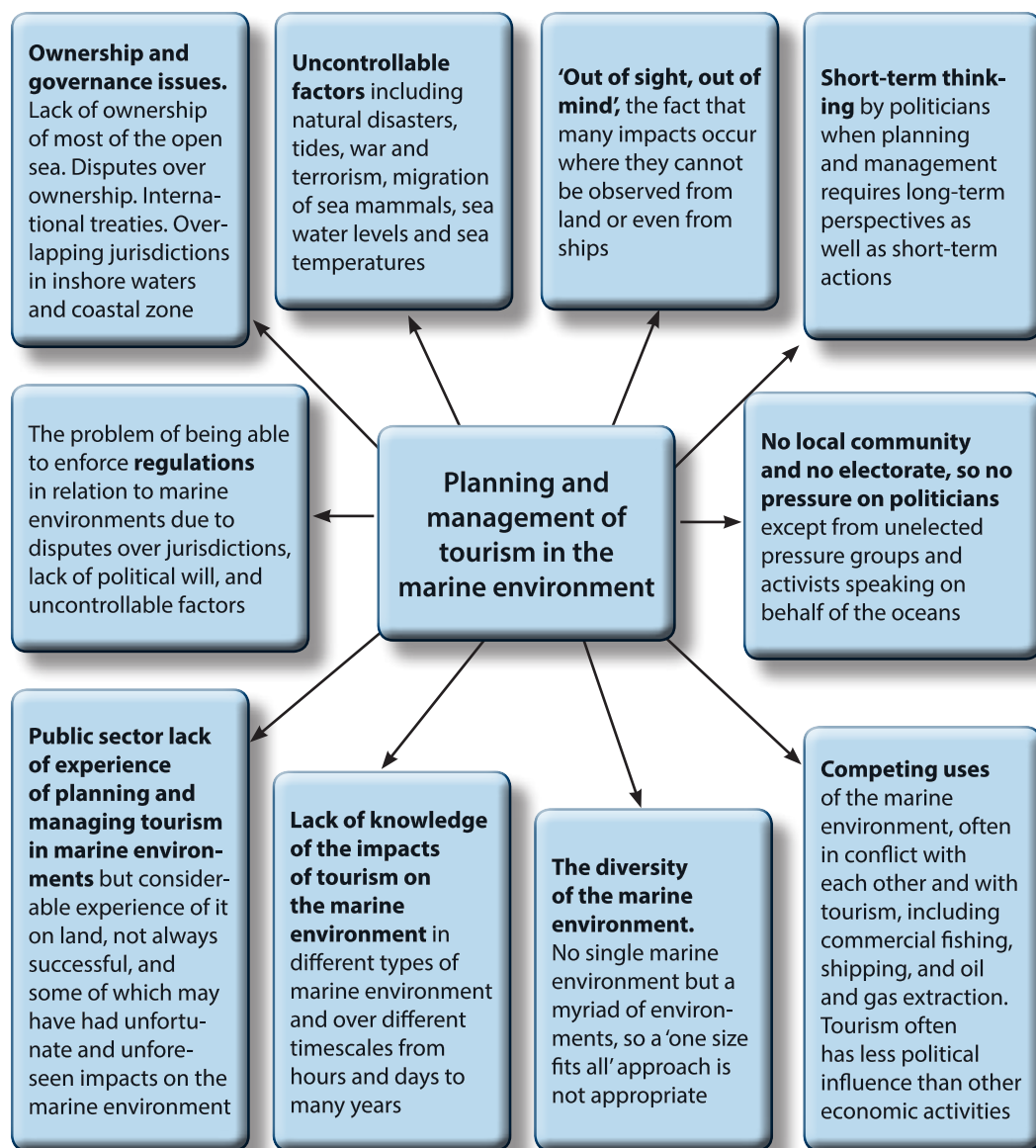


Figure 10.1: Key challenges in the planning and management of tourism in marine environments

In Figure 10.1 I identify what I consider to be some of the main complexities involved in the planning and management of tourism and its impact on the marine environment, and these will then be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Before that readers will notice that there are also connections between a number of the factors highlighted in the diagram, which are important to an understanding of the challenges involved in trying to plan and manage tourism impacts on the marine environment.

## ■ Lack of clear ownership and governance responsibilities

I was a student of urban and regional planning some years ago, and clearly recall being told very clearly that to plan and manage somewhere effectively you had to either own it or have a form of clear legal jurisdiction over it in respect of new development. The latter means having the statutory right and authority to regulate development within a defined geographical area. On land, this authority is usually vested in central or local governments, which are, in most countries, usually elected bodies responsible and answerable in some way to their electorate. Theoretically, at least, every hectare of land in every country is the responsibility of at least one government body. The same public sector bodies are usually also empowered to regulate a wide range of other things which impact on the environment, including industrial pollution, waste disposal, and traffic management, for example. However, the situation in the oceans is very different in a number of important ways.

First, in complete contrast to the situation on land, no country or body owns the sea as such, even the sea which just a few hundred metres offshore.

Second, despite no one owning the sea, the ships of all nations have the right to ‘innocent passage’ through any waters under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was ratified by most of the countries of the world in 1982. This is important because ‘innocent passage’ would include cruise ships going about their business, and this might make it very difficult to prevent them from going to places with fragile marine environments, unless they agreed.

Third, not owning the sea does not mean that national governments have no rights in relation to the oceans and the marine environment. The same UN Convention allows countries to introduce a 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) an area in which theoretically ‘*the coastal nation has sole exploitation rights over all natural resources*’ (www.globalresearch.ca, 2019). This is interesting because it permits exploitation but puts no responsibility at all on the country to conserve or protect the marine environment. There is no such equivalent on land to my knowledge. This implicitly suggests that the marine environment exists to be economically exploited, which is not conducive to the idea of sustainable development. Interestingly, tourism is not explicitly acknowledged to be an