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**From remains Of the war to
the aRchiTecture of peace
in cross-border area of Italy-Croatia**

D.1.2.4. Sustainability Lab Report

Beneficiary Responsible: **PP6 Municipality of Vieste**
with the support of **LUM Strategy Innovation Srl**

Vieste, Italy | May 19th, 2025



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1. Executive Summary

The Sustainability Lab, implemented within the FORTIC project and coordinated by the Municipality of Vieste with the support of LUM Strategy Innovation, aimed to engage young citizens in imagining sustainable future pathways for the city. The activity contributed to Deliverable D.1.2.4 by fostering reflection and co-design around two strategic trajectories aligned with EU and regional policy frameworks: the transition toward a smarter and greener urban environment, and the reduction of tourism seasonality through the valorisation of cultural heritage.

The Lab combined contextual perception analysis, exploration of emerging tourism trends, and a targeted focus on six Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) that are particularly relevant for sustainable tourism development. Participants were introduced to a dystopian–utopian scenario methodology derived from the Palo Alto School’s strategic approach to change, enabling them to envision extreme future conditions and generate creative responses unconstrained by technical or economic factors.

Six working groups addressed six distinct dystopian scenarios, each illustrating a potential risk or challenge for the future of Vieste, including overtourism, depopulation, infrastructural isolation, climate-driven disruptions, competition from low-cost destinations, and the rise of fully virtual travel experiences. Across these scenarios, participants formulated concrete ideas and proposals that highlight emerging needs, opportunities for innovation, and potential strategies to increase resilience, improve quality of life, expand off-season attractiveness, and preserve Vieste’s cultural identity.

Overall, the Sustainability Lab successfully activated a structured participatory process that generated valuable insights for local development planning and contributed to FORTIC objectives. The results offer a meaningful foundation for future actions aimed at strengthening Vieste’s sustainability, competitiveness, and cultural cohesion within the Italy–Croatia cross-border area.

2. Introduction

The Sustainability Lab was carried out within the framework of the FORTIC project, which promotes cross-border cooperation between Italy and Croatia through the enhancement of cultural heritage, community engagement, and sustainable local development. As part of Work Package 1, the Lab was designed to stimulate reflection on the future of Vieste and to explore innovative approaches to sustainability consistent with European and regional policy priorities.



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The initiative brought together students and local stakeholders to discuss current challenges, analyse emerging trends in the tourism sector, and work collaboratively on future scenarios. Through this participatory process, the Sustainability Lab contributed to strengthening local awareness, encouraging forward-looking thinking, and supporting the definition of strategies aimed at making Vieste more resilient, inclusive, and attractive throughout the year.

3. Sustainability overview

The Sustainability Lab continued with a series of contextual questions aimed at capturing participants' perceptions of Vieste's current tourism dynamics and sustainability challenges. This initial reflection was followed by an in-depth analysis of emerging trends in the tourism sector, highlighting how global shifts—such as responsible travel, digital transformation, and the search for authentic experiences—are reshaping visitor behaviour and creating new opportunities for more resilient and sustainable destinations.

A dedicated focus was then placed on sustainability through the lens of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particular attention to six goals closely linked to tourism and local development:

- **SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth),
- **SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities),
- **SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production),
- **SDG 13** (Climate Action),
- **SDG 14** (Life Below Water),
- **SDG 15** (Life on Land).

These SDGs provided a conceptual framework to interpret local needs and identify possible directions for fostering smarter and greener urban environments, reducing tourism seasonality, and promoting the cultural and natural heritage of Vieste.

Building on this foundation, participants were introduced to the dystopian scenario methodology, a strategic thinking tool used to stimulate creativity and challenge conventional perspectives. Through this approach, six provocative future scenarios were presented, each describing a potential risk or undesirable evolution for the city. Participants were instructed to work collaboratively in groups, generating ideas and solutions without constraints related to feasibility or resources.



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This methodological choice allowed younger generations to explore the concept of sustainability not only as environmental preservation but also as a comprehensive approach to economic resilience, social well-being, cultural vitality, and long-term territorial cohesion.



4. Context questions

Contextual questions were asked to participants before introducing sector insights in order to gather their perceptions without influencing them with the contextual analysis subsequently discussed during the workshop.

The questions shared with the audience are listed below:

1. Who is satisfied with tourism in Vieste today? The general answer is “no, I am not satisfied”
2. What do you think Vieste is missing? The answers collected are “many things” and “foresight.”
3. Who thinks tourism in Vieste is sustainable? The general answer is that sustainability is not a central issue currently addressed by the tourism sector in Vieste. It is a general issue that young people consider important, but they were unable to give specific examples focusing on the active promotion of sustainable tourism in Vieste, at least from the point of view of local citizens' perceptions.



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4. Who is afraid of overtourism? Some of the participants said they were afraid of this possible future, while others shared that they do not believe such a scenario could happen and therefore are not afraid.
5. Who is afraid that Vieste will become depopulated in the future? Most participants believe that there is a high possibility that Vieste will become depopulated in the future; however, they are not afraid of this happening.

5. Trends in the tourism sector

The Sustainability Lab continued with an in-depth analysis of trends in the tourism sector, which were mapped and identified by the LUM Strategy Innovation team:

- Do-it-yourself Tourism - Travellers increasingly design and organise their trips autonomously, relying on digital tools rather than traditional tour operators.
- AI-Powered Travel - Artificial intelligence supports personalised travel planning, suggesting destinations, itineraries, and services based on user preferences.
- Locals as New Travel Influencers - Residents become key promoters of destinations, sharing authentic experiences that influence tourist choices more than traditional marketing.
- Responsible Tourism - Visitors prioritise environmentally and socially conscious behaviours, choosing destinations and services that minimize negative impacts.
- Health & Wellness Tourism - Growing interest in experiences focused on physical and mental well-being, from spa retreats to outdoor activities.
- Bleisure Travel - Business travellers extend their stays to include leisure activities, merging work and vacation time.
- Notriphobia - Fear of not travelling enough, encouraging people to maximise the number of trips or experiences each year.
- Destination Dupes - Travellers choose alternative destinations that offer similar experiences to famous locations but at lower cost and with fewer crowds.
- Off-the-beaten Track Travel - Tourists increasingly seek less crowded, lesser-known places that offer authentic and unique experiences.
- Nostalgia Travel - Growing demand for experiences, locations, and aesthetics that evoke past eras or childhood memories.
- OTA Revolution - Online Travel Agencies evolve into comprehensive platforms integrating booking, reviews, personalised suggestions, and dynamic pricing.



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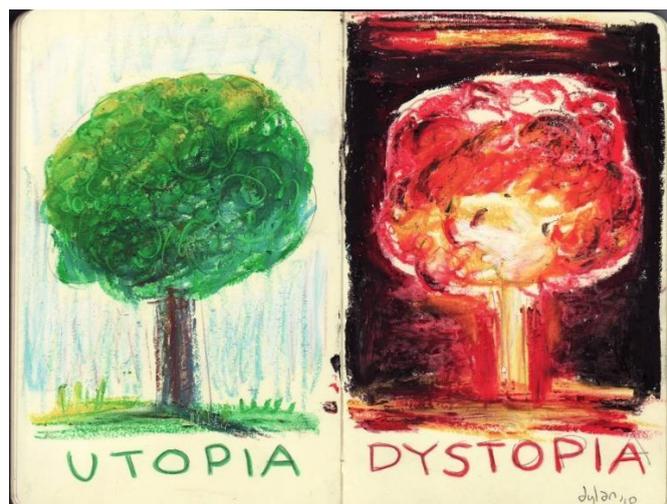
- Nocturism & Calmcations - Emerging preference for night-time travel experiences (“nocturism”) and ultra-relaxing, slow-paced holidays (“calmcations”) focused on rest and disconnection.

6. Methodology: dystopian scenarios

Methodologically, dystopia as a strategy derives from the Palo Alto School, a US psychological movement that takes its name from the Californian town where the Mental Research Institute is located, a center for psychological research and therapy founded by Donald deAvila Jackson in 1959, which was itself largely inspired by Fritz Peris' Gestalt therapy. The School attracted leading figures such as Paul Watzlawick, a Jungian psychologist and constructivist philosopher, and Gregory Bateson, a sociologist and anthropologist.

Scholars at the Palo Alto School highlight how communication between individuals with themselves, with others, and with the world is most often governed by paradoxes, contradictions, and illogical beliefs that have nothing to do with rationality. Rather, it is often the case that seemingly irrational dynamics prevail, which are in fact the expression of non-ordinary logic (Nardone, 2003; Nardone, Balbi, 2008).

This approach is characterized by the fact that it derives not only from clinical practice, but also from the study of how change occurs spontaneously in nature, relationships, and society. The strategic methods to be applied are derived from this observation.



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7. Results of the working groups

Participants adopted a dystopian-utopian scenario approach. Utopia refers to an imaginary political, social, and/or religious structure that does not exist in reality but is proposed as an ideal and a model, understood in common usage more as a purely ideal goal than as a truly achievable goal. Dystopia, on the other hand, refers to an imaginary political, social, and/or religious structure that does not exist in reality but is proposed as a highly undesirable or frightening model of society or community.

Below are the six dystopian scenarios proposed and the possible solutions suggested by the participants. Participants were asked to divide into six working groups and come up with at least five ideas for the selected dystopian scenario, without taking technical and economic feasibility into account.

1. Cool-cation, holidays in the cool



The participants in this group presented the following ideas:

- Deseasonalization of tourism, with a particular focus on the elderly, proposing May and September as the peak season for this target group.

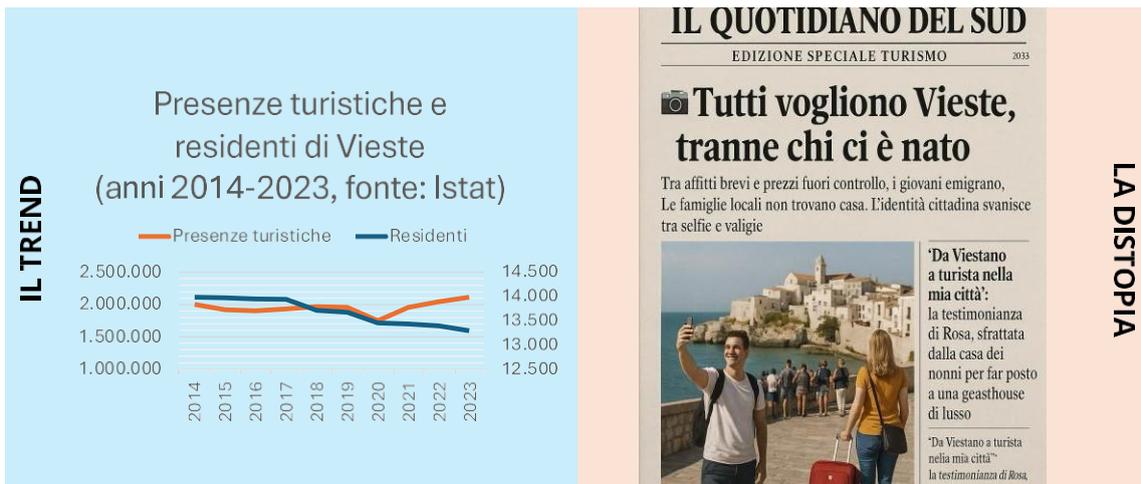


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- Create and promote more spaces dedicated to young people, such as discos and recreation centers.
- Promoting tourist trips in the autumn months focused on tasting and discovering local foods such as oil and wine.
- Promoting religious tourism in order to attract more visitors during religious festivals throughout the year.

2. Vieste, a city of tourists only



The participants in this group presented the following ideas:

- Invest in healthcare in order to give both young people and the elderly further motivation to stay in Vieste instead of moving to neighboring towns.
- Create a small university or a small branch of another university to give young people the opportunity to pursue their university studies in Vieste. This would increase the possibility for young people to attend university and, as a result, produce more competent professionals in the

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future, given the current situation of difficulty in leaving the city both logistically (only two access roads) and in terms of travel time (traffic).

- Try to lower prices for locals and increase transportation.

3. Vieste unreachable

IL TREND

LA DISTOPIA

IL CORRIERE DI VIESTE

10 AGOSTO 2029

⚠ VIESTE TAGLIATA FUORI: FRANE E SMOTTAMENTI BLOCCANO TUTTE LE VIE D'ACCESSO

La SS89 e la litoranea crollano sotto le piogge torrenziali. I turisti bloccati nelle strutture, gli operatori turistici: "Così non possiamo lavorare"

- Evacuazioni in elicottero per i più fragili
- Cancellazione di prenotazioni a raffica

Il sindaco: "Paghiamo anni di incuria del territorio"

The participants in this group presented the following ideas:

- Invest in strengthening the mountains with networks capable of effectively preventing landslides that would otherwise block the city both at its entrance and exit points.
- Create underground tunnels to provide another route into the city.
- Increase the number of ferries and create new ferry routes to multiple destinations.
- Develop creative and sporting activities in Vieste to provide more leisure options for those who may be stranded in the city due to natural disasters.

4. Natural disasters in the Gargano



The participants in this group presented the following ideas:

- Organize walking and cycling excursions on the beach to encourage people to use the beaches in a different way than they have done up to now.
- Create sensory trails with workshops and reinterpretations of local products in order to promote Vieste from an innovative perspective and through its products, not just its locations.
- Implement the sports activities offered within the city of Vieste, targeting them also at tourists who stay for short periods.



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5. New emerging low-cost destinations



The participants in this group presented the following ideas:

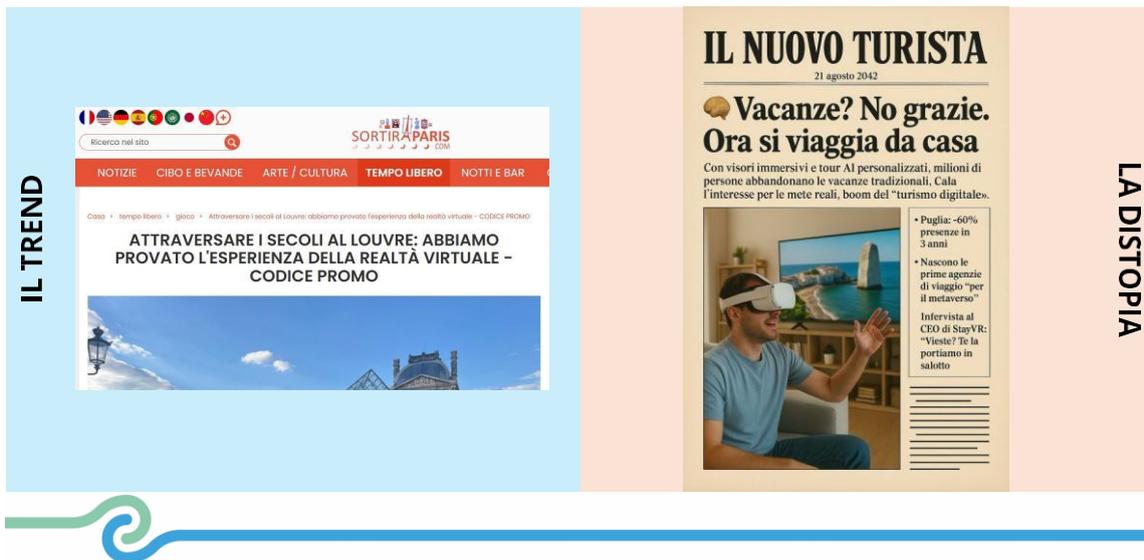
- Offer discounts and special deals to encourage tourist loyalty. These should reward those visiting Vieste for the first time and those who regularly holiday at the same establishments.
- Propose and implement new services at accommodation facilities, such as free shuttle buses included in holiday packages connecting facilities from Foggia to Vieste, encouraging the joint management of these services at facilities in Vieste.
- Encourage and support the opening of accommodation facilities in the Vieste countryside, in order to better distribute tourists and at the same time offer lower cost and more competitive prices.
- Given the high prices for holidays in the city of Vieste, these high costs should be supported and justified at the facilities, especially those in the catering sector, with a cultural explanation within the services provided by the facilities. This idea applies in particular to the food and wine sector.



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6. Virtual holidays



The participants in this group presented the following ideas:

- Offer physical and sensory activities that can only be done in Vieste by the sea. Promote complete sensory experiences.
- Promote Vieste's culinary offerings.
- Promote first-hand participation in events and festivals in Vieste.
- Promote contact with locals, as ambassadors of the history of the city of Vieste and its evolution over time.
- Promote online visits to the city's historical sites.

8. Conclusions

The Sustainability Lab represented a valuable opportunity to engage young citizens and local stakeholders in a forward-looking reflection on Vieste's sustainable development. Through contextual analysis, the exploration of tourism trends, the study of relevant SDGs, and the use of dystopian–utopian scenario



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building, participants were able to critically examine current challenges and imagine alternative futures for the city.

The ideas generated across the six working groups highlight a strong awareness of issues such as seasonality, infrastructural vulnerability, demographic change, climate-related risks, and increasing global competition among destinations. At the same time, the proposals formulated by participants demonstrate creativity, openness to innovation, and a desire to preserve the identity and cultural heritage of Vieste while improving quality of life for residents.

The outcomes of the Sustainability Lab provide useful insights for future local planning and can support the Municipality of Vieste in identifying strategic priorities consistent with EU and regional sustainability objectives. As part of the broader FORTIC project, this activity contributes to reinforcing community engagement, promoting resilience, and encouraging the long-term transformation of Vieste into a smarter, greener, and more inclusive destination throughout the year.

