

## TOURISM AND PROGRESS OF PERIPHERAL SPACES

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### *Abstract*

After having defined and distinguished the geographical “peripheries”, this article discusses the characters and effects of the development of tourism in the countries of the South, seen as peripheries of the world, where international flows have grown greatly even in years of depression of the world economy. It rejects the thesis of those who explicitly or implicitly contrast, in a Manichean way, conventional mass tourism, considering it unsustainable, to new or better alternative tourisms (ecotourism, CBT, pro-poor tourism, etc.), considering them uncritically sustainable. In addition, it warns against the dangers of failure of local development proposals that rely too much, if not exclusively, on tourism and even more those that suppose that it is realized without careful planning. Finally, it emphasized the need for a systemic and participatory approach to development planning, capable of integrating the various activities and subjects of the destination, through their collaboration. In particular, for the progress of tourism in the peripheries, as well as in the centers themselves, collaboration must be implemented also between centers and peripheries.

*Keywords:* tourism, development and underdevelopment, centers and peripheries, conventional tourism, alternative tourisms

### **1. Tourism and “Peripheries”**

Periphery, as it is known, has a strictly spatial meaning: it is intended as an area opposite to a center. As such it is a less accessible space: this connotation entails different social relationships with respect to those characteristics of the centers and has multiple minor (as well as different) integrations in the world geosystem of capitalism. At the same time, this connotation is not to be confused with the few areas of the world which can be considered truly “marginal” as they are little or not integrated and generally have much less accessibility than peripheral devices - which largely explains their lack of integration. The geographical diversity between the center and the periphery does not necessarily lead to an economic disparity - in terms of income levels and even less in terms of well-being.

When there is no disparity or this is not relevant - even if the economic behaviors are different - and in essence the territorial order corresponds to the model of the central places<sup>1</sup> which is based on the balanced development theory, there is generally the

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<sup>1</sup> In this regard, see the excellent collection of the main contributions edited by Peter Scholler (1972).

presence of urban regions that are capitalistically backward. In most urban regions, either where the development of industrial capitalism took place, or even just for the concentration of political, administrative or service activities, there is also a spatial concentration of wealth and an evident geographical-economic disparity, consistently with the center-periphery models of unbalanced development theorists (Keynesians or reformists and neo-Marxists)<sup>2</sup>.

Disparity is so frequent that the periphery has assumed, in a broad sense, the social meaning of an area of limited economic progress, if not poor, often an area of social degradation and malaise, and, in a known development theory, of dependent social space. In this social, metaphorical meaning, we can find peripheral areas - but not marginal ones since they are however produced by the same dominant social system - in well-accessible spaces and even in the centers of the main metropolitan cities.

On the subject of peripheries, the scientific and political question, however, is to understand how to avoid that the spatial periphery, with its inevitable less accessibility than the centers of geosystems, becomes an area of too low well-being and even malaise, and how to guarantee progress and the overcoming of these conditions. In this regard peripheries must be distinguished geographically, considering the territorial articulation of the world geosystem and the levels of political decision and action, in:

- a) world peripheries, represented by the countries of the South of the world, less developed capitalistically or even underdeveloped which still clearly maintain subordination relationships (or even only the resulting structural characteristics) with respect to the world centers, represented by the countries of the North of the world, today extended beyond the OECD with the full integration of Russia and China into the system;
- b) national peripheries or peripheral regions, represented by the less advanced or even subordinate regions of the countries of the same North of the world, such as the regions of Southern Italy;
- c) regional peripheries, peripheral areas within the central regions of capitalist development, such as rural areas covered by European Community policy and the “internal areas” of recent Italian politics;
- d) urban peripheries, meaning all areas outside the central area (or “center”) of urban agglomerations - which normally includes the main business center together with the historical center of the city and the semi-central residential districts well equipped with residential services, with high accessibility and well integrated with each other -. They can still be densely built-up and populated areas, but generally well connected only with the central area. By including in them, in addition to the typical suburbs and satellite centers, all the peri-urban settlements within a one-hour radius, the urban peripheries can extend over a very large space, and can generally be characterized by less well-being, even if not always perceived, and in several cases by severe degradation in many respects. These areas are not necessarily those furthest from the center, but are even inside the center: that is, being spatially central and socially peripheral.

To try to understand tourism in peripheral destinations, whether it is a tool of local progress, that is of sustainable development, it is still to premise explicitly which

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<sup>2</sup> As far as the theories of regional development and the structure models of urban regions and therefore of center-periphery relations are concerned, there is a well-known geographic and economic bibliography, for which I limit myself to referring to Adamo, 1983 and 2017.

tourism concept should be preferred - beyond the acceptance of the definition of tourist by the World Tourism Organization for obvious practical-statistical reasons - and keep in mind the complexity of the tourism production system (as shown in fig. 1).

Tourism intended as a movement of people and a production system based on the desire to make new experiences - a concept that seems to regain strength after decades of mass tourism, limited to a rapid consumption of natural and cultural resources, which however continues to be pre-eminent - by its nature it favors peripheral spaces (Christaller, 1964), different from the central-urban spaces where most tourists reside, reachable and enjoyable slowly. Peripheral destinations, due to the growing process of urbanization related to tourism development, tend to become similar to mass tourism destinations. The destinations of the traveler who intends to discover and get to know the area - and recreate their physical and intellectual strengths in natural and cultural environments - must be accessible, however peripheral. The growth in the number of tourists - with the growth in accessibility, connected to the growth of tourism and more generally of the local economy - makes the destination a destination for mass tourism. This is not necessarily consumerist: it can also be sustainable tourism, but only to the extent that the offer is planned and the demand selected to allow to enjoy local resources and continue to have satisfying experiences and / or recreate.

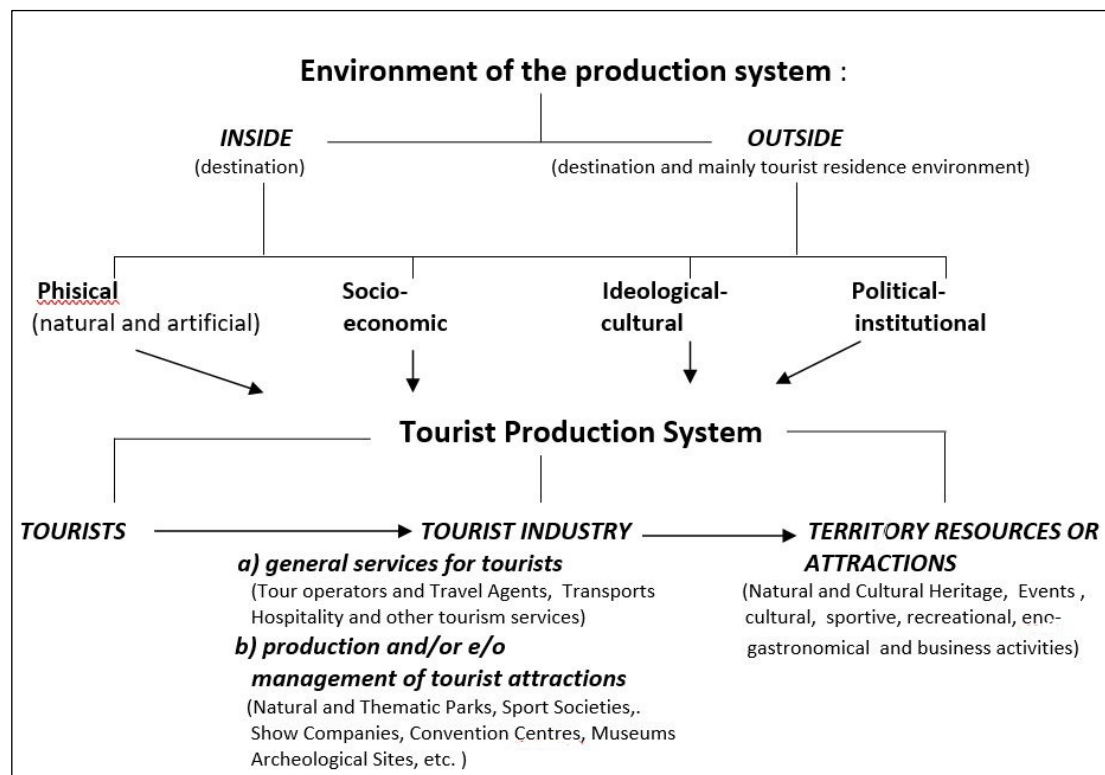


Figure 1: Subjects, resources and conditions of tourist production.

Recently, international bodies, governments of nations and regions, as well as NGOs, have given so much importance to tourism - and particularly to various tourisms, considered alternative and sustainable compared to conventional mass tourism - that it has been indicated in development and progress policies as the main growth tool, specifically in peripheral countries and in general in all peripheral areas.

This paper proposes some reflections in this regard, limited to the peripheral countries and also to the peripheral regions of developed nations, such as the South of Italy, where the development of tourism as well as other activities encounter difficulties similar to those of underdeveloped countries and in some respects even more serious, such as the inability to count, unlike sovereign states, on their own monetary and fiscal policies that favor economic growth. In particular, the reflections concern both the economic and social importance attributed to tourism in local development studies and policies, and the assessments of its economic, ecological and cultural sustainability. They question: 1) whether tourism is the best tool for development, 2) whether the forms of tourism proposed by various parties for these countries and regions, considered alternatives to conventional mass tourism, are sustainable per se and in any case more sustainable than conventional mass tourism.

## 2. The enormous growth of international arrivals in the peripheries of the world.

Tourism is one of the few growing production systems, practically all over the world, and which has continued to grow even in recent periods of economic recession. International arrivals estimated at just 25.3 million worldwide in 1950, rising to 165.8 million in 1970 and 540.6 in 1995 - the year from which a new, more reliable, series of data is available - have reached figures of 1,326 million in 2017 (UNWTO, 2018).

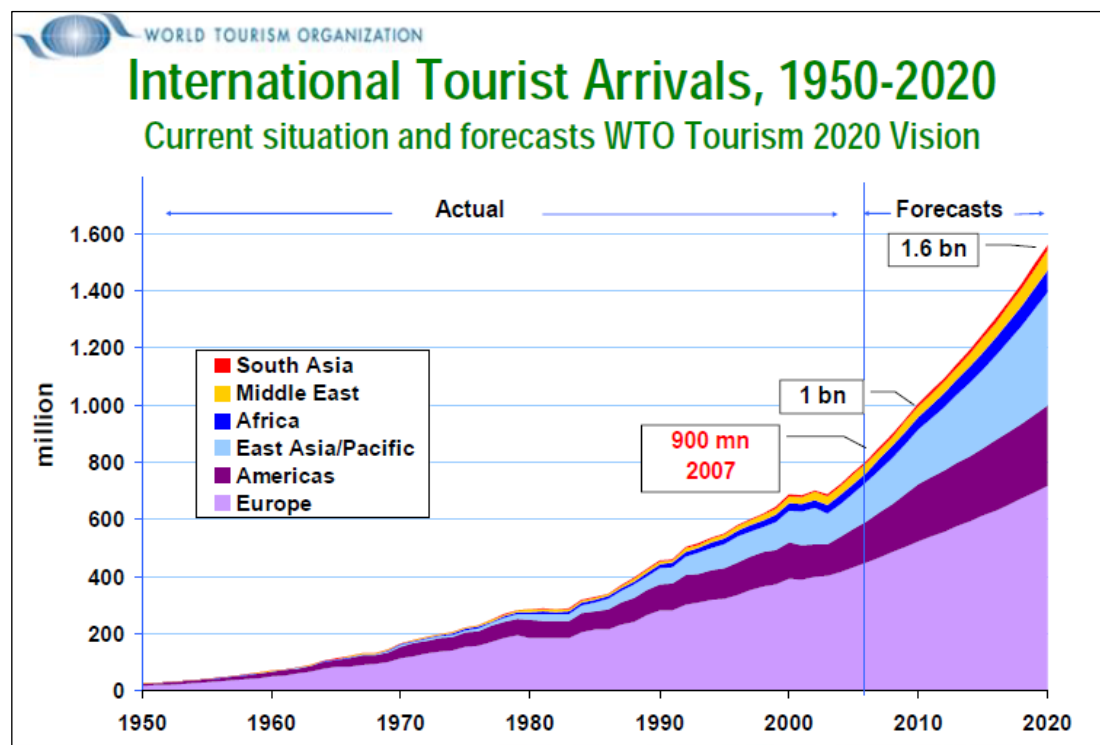


Figure 2: Growth of international tourism flows by macro-regions.  
Source: UNWTO (2018).

The countries of the South<sup>3</sup> of the world which in 1950 included just over 10% of international arrivals and in 1990 had just exceeded the 20% quota (only Europe and North America received 76.8% of that year), in 2015 they reached 46% and then slightly decreased, while their growth rate still remains high (+ 5.3% on average from 2015 to 2017, against a world rate of 5.5%).

Revenues generated by international tourism still amounted to 270 billion in 1990, reached 975.5 billion in 2010 and as much as 1,340 billion in 2017. The comparison between the countries of the North of the world and those of the South is significant in this regard. Although among them, some presents a self-centered development model, not different from that of developed or northern countries, they still show a lower per capita income and tourism is either lagging behind or retaining the features of extroversion, typical of tourist services and other activities in the underdeveloped world. The enormous growth in international tourism revenues is determined in the last period only by these countries, from the south, and not by the traditional, highly touristic countries of the North. In these countries (adding the data from Europe, North America, North-East Asia, Australia and New Zealand) for simplicity, revenues in this period have even decreased slightly: from 749.6 billion in 2010 to 733.5 billion in 2017), despite a growth in arrivals (from 707 million to 980.6 million). In the South of the world, the revenues of international tourism are certainly still lower than those of the North, but in this period they have grown by 380.6 billion (from 226 billion to 606 billion). The contribution of tourism to the growth of the economy of the South is considerable, despite the fact that the outgoing flows from the South - from the countries emerging from underdevelopment or from centrally planned economies - have favored traditional northern tourist countries.

Overall, the trend of tourist flows in recent years, despite economic recessions, is an expression of both the importance that consumers attach to travel and holidays, and the tendency towards saturation of tourist areas in the North of the world, but especially of the growing research by part of Northern tourists of new experiences and of the tourist offer in southern destinations connected above all to the globalization of investments in infrastructures and services (Daye, 2006; Dwyer, 2015).

Tourism, once essentially excluded from the southern countries of the world, is already today in a large part of them among the first export bases and in at least a third of them, especially in small countries, is indeed the main one. Due to its evident economic importance, although in various cases it seems more apparent than real, tourism has been elevated by many Governments to an instrument of fundamental, strategic, if not exclusive, development, also driven by international organizations.

In particular, after the affirmation of the need for “sustainable” development, following the publication of the report of the UNWCED (1987), Commission chaired by the Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, and the Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro (1991), it has often been argued uncritically that tourism would be a more sustainable production system than others, as well as more easily achievable.

Referring to the advantages of tourism with respect to other industries (Honey and Gilpin, 2009) - although in my opinion only potential - “The United Nations has

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<sup>3</sup> We include in this group the countries still underdeveloped euphemistically called “Developing economies” and the “Economies in transition” of the Country classification of the United Nations. See: [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp\\_current/2014wesp\\_country\\_classification.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp_current/2014wesp_country_classification.pdf).

For the “North” of the world, we assume the set of Developed economies.

identified in the development of tourism one of the methods that the poorest countries can use to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For the first objective - reducing poverty - the merits of tourism are evident. It can provide employment and income to communities that, in some cases, lack valid alternatives of means of employment..”, “Tourism can also contribute to the second MDG, that of promoting gender equality..” and “..make an important contribution to the promotion of sustainable development (natural and cultural), another of the millennium development goals... Finally, since tourism by definition involves the transfer of people, cultures, and ideas, it is in the ideal position to promote an effective global partnership, the eighth MDG..”. Consequently, in addition to pursuing development goals, some have seen tourism as a tool for building and sustaining peace. Like other studies, now numerous, the aforementioned report by Martha Honey and Raymond Gilpin for the United States Institute of Peace underlines in conclusion that “if tourism can be a force for good.. Much depends on how the system is planned it is managed by”; in this regard, however, like other studies, it unfortunately gives us only a few political recommendations.

Numerous writings on development in the world peripheries emphasize the neocolonial or dependent character of services connected with conventional mass tourism<sup>4</sup>. However, it should be noted that this character is neither different, nor more accentuated in tourism services, compared to other industries promoted in whole or in part with foreign investments and entrusted to the management of foreign companies. Like other activities, tourist services reflect the conditions specific to “underdevelopment” (Adamo, 1980, 2006 and 2017). On an economic level, the problems that are attributed to tourism are perhaps more evident but it is to be shown that they are greater. A certain “leakage”, deriving from external supplies of goods and services that the country is unable to provide, is also known in manufacturing production systems and comparative analyzes are not available to claim that it is greater for the tourism businesses. Nor do the possibilities offered in the South of the world to export or conceal profits seem greater for tourism companies.

As for workers’ incomes, it seems true as well as evident that the humiliating scourge of the “tip”, in addition to low wages, is still widespread in the South while it has almost disappeared in many Northern destinations. However, in the southern world the incomes of the workforce engaged in tourist services are certainly not lower than in other sectors, where starvation wages often still exist; on the contrary, in many cases the opposite could be said<sup>5</sup>.

“Scandal”, rather, generates tourism when, as was evident in Cuba a few years ago, the income of a taxi driver or a waiter - and of anyone who provides a service activity for tourists and accepts a dollar tip - exceed that of a surgeon, a researcher or even a company manager or local public body.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Canestrini Duccio, *Which tourism after or tsunami*, from [www.homoturisticus.com](http://www.homoturisticus.com), 2005 - cit. from Berutti and Devecchio (2009) - who would make dependency a peculiar feature of tourism activities in the South of the world.

<sup>5</sup> The available data seem to highlight that in the southern countries, except in the “emerging” or industrialized ones, the hospitality and tourism services sectors generally offer wages higher than or at least equal to those of the other sectors. Just compare for example: [kellyservices.co.th/thailand-salary-guide/](http://kellyservices.co.th/thailand-salary-guide/); and also, for Thailand, [www.paylab.com](http://www.paylab.com); [www.ceicdata.com](http://www.ceicdata.com)> Kenya; [r4kenia.com/employers/salary-survey/](http://r4kenia.com/employers/salary-survey/); for Brazil, emerging country, [salario.com.br / tabela-salarial /](http://salario.com.br/tabela-salarial/); in addition to general sources such as <http://www.ilo.org>> Global Wage Report 2016/17, ILO and [data.oecd.org/earnwage/average-wages.htm](http://data.oecd.org/earnwage/average-wages.htm).

Scandal, discontent and social conflict then generates tourism in the destinations of poor countries where for a night in a resort the tourist spends the equivalent of a month's wages of a permanently employed local worker and therefore relatively well-heeled compared to the mass of unemployed or underemployed in the country, as is still the case today almost everywhere in the southern world.

Evidently, scandal generates, in particular, the manifestations of excessive luxury and above all of waste by the tourist and the reception facilities, especially in the poorest countries. We can therefore understand, as a corollary of tourism growth, the growth in the South of the world of drug use, prostitution and crime. Among many negative effects, a positive indicator of liveliness and social development, we can consider micro-crime, which is the aspect most immediately perceived by travelers, and which is particularly acute in some destinations, especially in Latin America, where the level of hunger has been exceeded and young people have become aware of social inequities and react as they can, even badly.

For some years many contributions have focused on various forms of tourism considered alternatives to conventional mass tourism, such as Eco-tourism, Green Tourism, Agritourism, Rural or Agro-Cultural Tourism and various other forms of open-air tourism, Social Tourism, Community Based Tourism (CBT), Pro Poor Tourism, Ethical Tourism, Religious, Experiential or, better, Active tourism. They are especially useful when they illustrate the methods of development and organization of the tourism systems of the destinations considered. Too often, however, the prevailing interest of scholars is to define the characteristics of one and more of these "alternative" tourism or to verify the correspondence of the cases analyzed to the model adopted, rather than highlighting the actions and tools chosen to respond to the problems of underdevelopment, poverty and environmental degradation, and assessing their effects.

Furthermore, studies that aim to assess the sustainability of tourism development projects often only investigate the perception of residents. But what is worse is that in many studies - as in the documents of national governments and international bodies themselves - unconventional forms of tourism are often considered sustainable in themselves, even responsible. However that may be, it is generally assumed that these forms are more sustainable than traditional mass tourism. However, these unconventional or alternative forms are identified some for the type of attraction, others for the form of management of the offer.

The ambivalence or ambiguity of the terms with which some species of tourism are designated, as is evident in the use of "ecotourism", creates a useless and unacceptable confusion: ecotourism - a term often extended in a broad sense to all forms alternative to traditional mass tourism - strictly speaking, it properly designates tourism which has nature and ecosystems as its main attraction; at the same time, however, it is used to designate a way of doing tourism that respects nature. The confusion is accentuated with the use of the term "greentourism", which often limits itself to specifically designating an industry that is based on service companies that adopt ecologically healthier behaviors and technologies.

The same is true of "Community Based Tourism" (CBT), that should be designated as a type of tourism in which the main attraction is the local community itself, where tourists can also stay; it can be an ethnic or experiential tourism in general, but it also designates a form of development and a mode of tourist production that provides for the "participation" of the community in development choices and activities. CBT,

which has become more fashionable and used more often as a model of development and management, is privileged in the proposals of “Pro Poor Tourism” (PPT), i.e. aimed at eliminating poverty and considered for this purpose the best form of tourism, even if in reality PPT projects include various types of tourism and every organizational form based on a certain “participation” of the community which may even be limited to some stakeholders.

The alternative forms of conventional mass tourism are therefore proposed as a solution to the problems of the development of the peripheries of the world, of the peripheral regions of the northern nations and also of “marginal” regions, that is, of territories not yet fully integrated into the world system of the capitalism. Together with the diffusion of these forms of tourism, tourism is often taken as a strategic, if not unique, tool for economic growth and the fight against poverty.

For this reason, hoping that future research will focus more on such forms and on tourism in general in the countries of the South, I intend to propose here still few reflections on the role of tourism in social development and its sustainability (economic, ecological, cultural) for the destinations concerned, questioning 1) whether tourism is the best tool for development, 2) whether the alternative forms proposed are sustainable and in any case more sustainable than conventional mass tourism.

In this regard, however, I would like, at the same time, to try to go beyond the many writings on the definition of the different types and forms of tourism, the various criteria for assessing and measuring their sustainability<sup>6</sup>; since (despite the continuous terminological newism, common in academia as in politics) the scientific debate on the subject does not seem to have progressed compared to the clarifications of Richard W. Butler (1999) of twenty years ago, which continue to be current. Consequently, I would limit myself to some reflections on the actual issues to be addressed: how to promote economic growth and the progress of the territories of the poor communities? With what types and forms of tourism would it be possible to contribute more to the various destinations, referring not only to the peripheries of the world but also to the regions and peripheral areas of developed countries?

### **3. Tourism: tool for sustainable local development?**

The many positive and negative effects on the social communities of the destinations of arrival of tourists are now illustrated in almost all the geography, economy and tourism management manuals<sup>7</sup>. They are reproduced in countless articles and in documents of governments and bodies that propose tourism-based development policies, enhancing their beneficial effects (mainly economic, such as income and employment, created by visitors’ expenses, and tax revenues for the Public Administration). However, the balances between benefits and costs are neither so numerous, nor clear enough to allow tourism to be used as a privileged tool for promoting local development.

Of course, tourism is undoubtedly to be promoted in various peripheral or marginal territories as integration of other economic bases and also as a marketing tool for local products. Promoting the protection of natural and above all cultural assets can also be

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<sup>6</sup> See in this regard UNWTO (2016).

<sup>7</sup> For example: Ioannides and Debbage (1998), Cosgrove (1972), Cazes (1992), Inskip (1991), Godfrey and Clarke (2000), Lozato-Giotart (2008 and 2009), Duhamel (2018), Innocenti (2007), Bagnoli (2014), Smith (2015), Page (2015).



useful, regardless of tourism, to the benefit of the quality of life of the residents and of the development based on any activity and especially on innovations.

However, I believe it is wrong to promote tourism as the exclusive basis of the economy, although this often happens in individual centers, in many regions and also in the territories of small states, especially where seasonality is reduced. The local tourism industry - understood as an economic basis as it is that which depends on international flows - is an extroverted activity, by definition: particularly subject to international political and economic instability. In addition, a large part of the jobs created tend to be low paid, seasonal, part-time, have limited career prospects (except in some sectors), have inconvenient time schedules (especially in hospitality services). Furthermore, especially if this industry is promoted by foreign investments - as was generally the case in the South of the world and still happens in poor countries which thereby highlight their character as underdeveloped countries - it "often brings external skills to manage the structures, which further weaken the benefits for employment in the destination" (Godfrey and Clarke, 2000, p. 20).

Before embarking on tourism development projects, therefore, a careful evaluation, specifically for the territory under consideration, of the social costs and benefits - which certainly cannot be limited to the economic-financial account, as happens for the evaluation of private initiatives, but obviously also to ecological and cultural impacts - as well as a comparison with other possibilities for enhancing the territory. In short, it is necessary to include the tourism development project in the local development program - and, if it is not, in the context of trends - taking into account both the interactions with other local activities and, last but not least, that tourism activities, after an initial phase of development determined by the financing of the tourism project by some international body and by the support of some NGOs, must be able to continue.

The development of tourism to be successful and be "sustainable" - that is, according to the original definition of this concept (UNWCED, 1987) lasting and able to allow future generations of the destination to continue to draw equal, if not superior, benefits<sup>8</sup> - must be first of all coherent with the resources and environmental conditions (social and natural) of the territory. The types of tourism that can be carried out and the possible targets of visitors depend on the territorial resources that constitute actual and potential tourist attractions; while the choice of the forms of organization and management of tourist services that are most suitable for each destination, and therefore "best" for it, depends above all on the conditions of the social environment of the destination (entrepreneurial skills and other qualities of human resources, cultural characteristics, forms of government and governance models, etc.) as well as on the tourists themselves targeted by the destination.

Open-air tourism, in contact with nature, community tourism in the village with destination and stay in remote villages, in poor or less-developed countries, can undoubtedly constitute forms of sustainable tourism, but they are not per se and unlikely to be in all three aspects of sustainability: economic, ecological and cultural.

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<sup>8</sup> Taking the definition of the WCED, the World Tourism Organization also states that "development of sustainable tourism is a process which meets the needs of present tourists, and host communities whilst protecting and enhancing needs in the future". Moreover, "sustainable" would be "tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems". (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, pp. 11-12).

On the other hand, even conventional seaside, mountain or cultural tourism, with a stay in traditional tourist accommodation facilities, such as small and medium-sized hotels or even large resorts, can be (and will have to be) no less sustainable. In fact, there are cases of success, in which the positive results outweigh the negative ones, both for destinations with extroverted development based on large companies (especially in the Caribbean, despite ecological and socio-cultural problems generated in some areas by rapid tourist growth), and also for destinations with forms of alternative tourism development, although many of these are due to recent projects for which it cannot yet be said with certainty that these are successes. The results of various community development projects in Asia are certainly positive for now, “including government poverty reduction programs (Masuleh, Iran ..), programs sponsored by NGOs and international donor agencies (as in the case of the dolphin, in Cambodia), development cases started by national parks (Kanas, China; Gorhi-Terelj National Park, Mongolia), by the village itself (Yubeng, China), also community tourism development programs started by external companies (Dai Folk Village, China) and by multiple forces (Klong Khwang, Thailand)” (WTO, 2009, p. 15). In Asia and particularly in the regions with the highest economic and socio-cultural level, development based on small and medium-sized tourism service companies and on the enhancement of natural, rural landscapes and artistic-architectural and ethnic heritage is undoubtedly positive (UNWTO and Huzhou City, 2017).

Even the cases of failure (Daye, 2006, pp. 478-480) - considering such cases in which the negative effects under some aspect (ecological or cultural or economic) are clearly superior to the positive ones - concern both destinations with exogenous development, characterized by large accommodation facilities, but even more so, endogenous development destinations promoted by many and various initiatives carried out by small local entrepreneurs (as is the case of the “homestay program” in Thailand, or of the tourism development of Ghana). Among the cases of development based on particularly negative small businesses are those that have given rise to a disordered and miserable urbanization, such as that which characterizes many tourist districts in the South of the world and especially in the main tourist countries of the North (e.g. many parts of the centers coasts of Italy, Portugal and Spain). In these cases, the negative impact, ecological, landscape related and in the long run economic, is lasting and consequently even more serious than in exogenously developed destinations where the much deprecated luxury “ghettos” created by large companies can gradually open up to the territory, especially where politics plays its necessary role, and encourage the formation of a supply chain of local suppliers and increasingly qualified personnel.

No less negative is the ecological impact of ecotourism when it, as usually happens if the destination becomes renowned, turns into mass tourism. Ethnographic tourism would definitely be discouraged - when it is not limited to enhancing and thus preserving local artistic traditions, transforming them into cultural attractions and therefore a foundation of cultural tourism, as is evident in Indonesia and other Asian countries. Strongly negative on a social and cultural level and often without adequate compensation on an economic level, it is keeping some communities, in Africa or in the Amazon, in their traditional customs only to satisfy the taste for the exotic, on the one hand deceiving the tourist, on the other humiliating the natives or even making them beggars.

Sustainability, in tourism as in other activities, is not, nor can it be limited, to niche initiatives or happy islands: it must be a continuous concern and fundamental objective for any activity. From an ecological and landscape point of view, it is a necessity for tourist destinations, aimed at perpetuating its attractiveness, the more important the higher the stage of the destination in the life cycle of its tourist development (Butler, 1980).

Sustainable tourism and significant for the necessary economic growth of low-income countries and the progress of their communities, can only be achieved in various forms and with various tools, depending on the level of economic development of the country, the cultural characteristics of the community and natural conditions. It is in relation to local conditions and tourist demand that we evaluate what tourism can be with the least possible negative, ecological and cultural impact, and with the greatest "possible" impact on the economic level.

In order to alleviate poverty and at the same time guarantee satisfactory, if not better, ecological conditions for future generations of tourist destinations in poor countries, especially tropical ones, sought after by tourists from rich countries (or in the "North" of the world or "central" in the world capitalist development), it can however be said, all things considered, that the construction of large tourist resorts, often criminalized in studies on the impact of tourism in poor countries (or in the "South" of the world or "peripheral"), may be more important economically and more ecologically and culturally sustainable than carrying out a community tourism project in a village, whose demand is limited and whose offer can only be limited to some cases. Furthermore, to accommodate a growing mass of tourists, this polarized and often exogenous tourism development model, founded on large hotels, companies that often become the "engines" of the local economy, is more sustainable, at least ecologically and landscape-oriented, than the spontaneous development model, endogenous, founded on a growing number of small accommodation facilities of improvised local entrepreneurs. This statement, which is evident from the landscape and ecological point of view in the most renowned tourist resorts of the Pacific, Indian Ocean, Caribbean and the Brazilian Northeast, is now also valid in many cases from an economic point of view, since the development of local suppliers and a significant integration with local production and even a growing number of local entrepreneurs and managers of large accommodation facilities and other tourist services have already been achieved.

In the southern countries that have still remained underdeveloped - as they have maintained the character of dependent, extroverted economies, inherited from colonial domination - and also in the peripheral regions of the northern countries - also lacking in savings and financial capacity in general but above all of entrepreneurial skills, with low levels of education and lack of professional experience in the field of tourist services - the most appropriate development model that a government can accept, if not incentivize, to promote the arrival of tourists, if the territory has a significant supply of attractions for which there is a high demand, can be based in the first place on investments by external companies, of the countries of departure of tourists, to whom to entrust the management of hospitality services, if not the construction of the structures and the necessary infrastructure. This has happened in Indonesia, Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries where international incoming has grown the most in the past twenty years.

Well-known are the criticisms of this model of development based above all on large multinational tourism companies (hotels, but also transport, vertically integrated), in the studies on the “enclaves” created in southeast Asia and in the other main seaside destinations in the countries of the South of the world and in peripheral regions also in the North, already highlighted in the tourism study manuals since the early 1970s. However, in the starting conditions of the process that model seems inevitable: guaranteeing an increasingly positive fallout of those investments that start tourism development, which can be achieved by promoting the transition to an increasingly endogenous model, is a question that essentially concerns political direction and territorial development: first of all the promotion of actions that favor the training of qualified local staff, the birth and growth of local suppliers of goods and services, according to the quality required by tourists, and a social environment that favors a growing mutual interaction and enrichment between tourists and residents. The history of tourism in various Latin American countries, such as Brazil and Mexico, and in most of southern and south-eastern Asia, highlights that the growth of the tourist offer and the incomes deriving from tourism presupposes a certain threshold of economic development of the country.

The attractions that motivate the tourist to move from home to the tourist destination, as well as the structure and hospitality models offered by it, can be the most varied. To ensure maximum sustainability, in relation to local and market conditions, what is needed in all cases is careful planning of local development, in which tourism is assumed to be among the main economic bases<sup>9</sup>. It is therefore on this need and particularly on planning with a systemic and participatory approach that I will focus again, albeit briefly, on the next pages.

In addition to the supposed sustainability of alternative forms of tourism, a second topic of reflection is the very role of tourism as an instrument of progress, that is, of sustainable development, if not achieved through a process of careful planning of the territory. The growth of tourism is encouraged and often proposed as a strategic response to the problems of underdeveloped countries, especially the poorest, and peripheral regions - and even “marginal” regions, i.e. territories of indigenous communities still not integrated today, if not marginally, in the world system of capitalism -. Serious doubts are also nourished in this regard: on the role assigned to tourism for local progress and particularly on the role of tourism forms, alternative to conventional mass tourism, which are proposed as sustainable. Numerous writings are available on the subject, but unfortunately they mainly concern the illustration of projects, financed by governments and international bodies and carried out with the competition of NGOs, published by specialized magazines<sup>10</sup> and by UNWTO<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> In confirmation of the above statements, there is now a very large bibliography of tourist studies, so please refer to <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/94057>, and to the systematization provided by [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibliography\\_of\\_tourism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibliography_of_tourism). In particular for the development of tourism and the role attributed to planning, it is sufficient to see the now classic manuals of Inkeep (1991), Cazes (1992), Beech & Chadwick (2006).

<sup>10</sup> Like *Annals of Tourism Research*; *Tourism Management*; *Anatolia - An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*; *Current Issues in Tourism*; *Tourism Geographies*.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www2.unwto.org/publications>.

#### **4. For a competitive and sustainable development of the peripheries: a systemic and participatory planning.**

The tourist product is ultimately the overall “experience” - that is the set of images, activities and knowledge - that the tourist gets from a destination. This experience and the tourist satisfaction do not depend only on the attractions and services offered, but on the social environment that welcomes the tourist, on the welcome culture of the community with which the tourist comes into contact. To try to build this environment, the involvement of the whole community in the local planning process is indispensable and can be achieved through the active participation of its representatives and various forms of mass consultation (democracy is tiring, but in this case economically essential!).

This approach is also essential with regard to the factors to which the experience and success of tourism is normally attributed: the equipment and quality of the attractions, the activities that the tourist can carry out and the services he can enjoy. In fact, also for this reason, to guarantee a competitive offer of ever better quality for the entire destination (this is what counts and not the quality offered by a single company) it is necessary to involve all the different sectors and subjects of the production system. First, the main task of local development planning is to promote and achieve coordination between these different subjects of the production system, and also between them and the subjects that make up the environment and together with them form the local tourism geosystem. Without such coordination and the collective decision of the objectives and development actions, in the context of a planning that considers the entire geosystem of the destination, it is very difficult (if not impossible) to effectively integrate the various tourist services and also the infrastructures and services of the geographic environment, for example even in the same digital system through an Internet of Things network.

The start of the planning process requires the establishment of a permanent committee representing all social and political forces, which will take its decisions, if not unanimously, by an overwhelming majority. This is the condition for the chosen actions to be effectively implemented and for the strategic choices to remain such and therefore lasting. Plan choices cannot be changed with every change of Minister or Councilor! It is useful that the Committee includes a small team of experts who have the task of providing information, knowledge and working hypotheses to the Committee and of planning and coordinating the actions deliberated by the Committee itself.

Planning is a continuous process and requires continuous monitoring of the plan's results and market changes, starting from an initial plan. The preparation of this plan, the choice of the offer development actions and the related marketing actions, require a preliminary, careful, work of target resource audit. Referring in this regard and to the planning methods to one of the now numerous manuals available (Inskeep, 1991; Godfrey, Clarke, 2000; Page, 2015), I would like to emphasize here only one aspect of great interest for the geographer, but generally neglected by scholars of other disciplines: the delimitation of the region-program or plan, specifically for the promotion of the development of tourism or the spread of its positive effects in the regional peripheries, issue which I will mention later.

As is evident in the case of the Italian peninsula, regional peripheries can be mainly “internal” or precisely inland areas opposed to coastal areas where we not only find important cities, central places of economic development, but also renowned tourist

centers and districts with good accessibility. More generally, they are also rural areas of continental regions, which can be defined as rural peripheries: they are generally mountainous or hilly areas, but even plains, less accessible and often also with lower levels of well-being than regional, national and international cities, central areas of capital development.

Not only that, but regional, peripheries (spatial and social) can even be some coastal areas. In the latter areas, however, as in lake or mountain areas, when endowed with natural resources which elsewhere have allowed satisfactory economic development largely based on tourism, it is understandable that public decision-makers and local operators try to promote similar conventional mass tourism (seaside, mountain); which in fact are already spreading “spontaneously”, unfortunately with effects often even worse than those occurred in areas where tourism has rapidly grown (miserable urbanization, degradation of nature). For these, as for several long-established tourist destinations, a problem of requalification of the offer arises in Italy and other Mediterranean countries, particularly in Portugal and Spain, through a process of continuous planning and monitoring.

It is very different for the other regional peripheries, internal or not, which can base the promotion of tourism, still within the framework of continuous planning and monitoring of local development, on the potential attraction exercised by their protected natural areas and by “agro-cultural” landscapes - combinations of typical agricultural crops, inhabited areas and historical monuments of the rural landscape (villages, castles, places of worship etc., country roads) and often endowed with a relevant food and wine, artisan and even artistic tradition -. Due to the growing trend of tourists attentive to these cultural resources, interested in learning about the lifestyle of residents in the countries and regions visited, to make new experiences in a short time, the contribution of tourism is already growing in many of these regional peripheries; but of course it should still be promoted with careful planning where it is not yet adequate to local potential and in any case to improve its effects<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> It is useful to remember that in Europe the Tourism Unit of the European Commission's Enterprise Directorate has identified 8 tourist destinations in the rural area:

- traditional and popular destinations, close to large urban areas that receive significant daily flows of tourists and whose development strategies aim to improve the naturalistic, infrastructural and transport offer in order to transform the dominant hiking into tourism (permanent), such as at Sächsische Schweiz in Saxony and in Trossachs in Scotland;
- traditional vacation spots, characterized by a substantial accommodation and infrastructure offer whose development strategies aim to improve the tourist offer and reduce the environmental impact, in response to the needs of more sustainable forms of tourism such as in Schouwen West in the Netherlands;
- protected areas, where an integrated management of tourism, environment and economy is aimed, for example in Vosges in Northern France;
- rural areas, characterized by small villages and villages with a rich historical, architectural, cultural and craft heritage, whose development strategy is to systematize places and resources with the local community but also to balance conservation needs of material assets and improvement of the accommodation offer. Examples are: Pays Cathare in France, Vallonbruk in the Uppland region in Sweden, Vale do Lima in Portugal;
- isolated areas, the attraction factors of which are flora and fauna with particular problems of accessibility, transport, local services, and with opportunities for interventions regarding environmental protection and the development of ecotourism activities (Skaftarhreppur in Iceland);
- agricultural areas, where agriculture and related activities are the main attraction for tourists and whose development strategies focus on quality production and food and wine (Ballyhoura in Ireland or Bregenzerwald in Austria);

In addition to the attention each destination has pay to the planning of tourism development, the promotion of tourism in regional peripheries requires first of all that the program region includes, together with the potentially tourist peripheral areas a central area, such as the regional capital city or, in the maritime regions, even just an established tourist district. In these regions it is a question of making the coast-inland relationship organic - between the “pulp” and the “bone”, as Rossi-Doria (2005) said - for mutual benefit. Encouraging trips and even short stays in the hinterland constitutes a diversification and expansion of the offer of attractions for residents on the coast as well as for tourists who will generally stay there for almost all the duration of their stay. Promoting the enhancement of the resources of the hinterland should therefore be considered by the operators of the cities and coastal districts - where the sea is the main attraction and which tourists will continue to favor for their stays - an advantage especially for them.

The contribution of tourism to the growth of the economy of the hinterland and more generally of the regional peripheries - both through on-site spending by visitors and even more indirectly, for the role of tourism as a territorial marketing tool - can certainly be important to reduce the gap with respect to central areas. However important, tourism can only constitute a complementary basis to agro-zootechnical, pastoral, forestry activities and also to innovative manufacturing services and industries 4.0, which still favor the values of centrality, on the basis of which the new fundamental telecommunication infrastructures are spreading.

The growth of tourism must therefore be promoted within the framework of an overall, systemic, local development policy, which takes into account all local activities, their possible additions and the necessary environmental conditions (economic-financial, socio-cultural, political-institutional and natural): a policy that requires planning to be used as a fundamental tool for territorial governance. This requirement - indispensable also to the peripheral countries and regions and common to any territory to be promoted as a tourist destination - is even more stringent for the regional peripheries because it requires close collaboration between the center and the periphery, so as to allow an endogenous process that feeds itself - after the initial phase of the local planning and development process, during which the support of superior territorial entities is desirable. Part of the taxes deriving from the contribution of tourism (direct, indirect and induced) which benefit the central areas (metropolises and coastal districts) should be used in the peripheral areas for the development of the offer of attractions (buildings and other historical-artistic heritage, natural resources, agricultural landscapes, to be preserved and made accessible) for tourists and residents of the same central areas. For this collaboration it is necessary, as we said, that the area of the plan includes “pulp” and “bone”.

Unfortunately, however, this collaboration between center and periphery, between their operators and their communities, although beneficial to both, constitutes the most

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- areas near the sea, which aim to develop new forms of rural tourism in inland areas starting from the coast and to focus on a specific rural offer with traces of history and culture (Sitia on the island of Crete or the Basilicata Region);

- mountain or wooded areas, with a defined rural offer but looking for differentiation and strengthening, especially with reference to the quality of local accommodation, the offer of tourism support activities, heritage and food and wine, such as Lungau in the Salzburg region of Austria, Pohjois-Karjala in Finland and the mountainous area of Navarre in Spain (Artale, 2015-2016).

difficult aspect of the planning process and the main obstacle to an adequate promotion of tourism and economic development in peripheral areas, all the more so for sustainable development, in Italy and in other countries.

At this scale it remains difficult to organize direct participation; an adequate involvement of operators and citizens requires, as at regional and national level, a significant presence of associations and a good functioning of representative democracy, founded on political parties rooted in the territory and based on transparent and democratic internal rules.

The inability to plan their future and direct it to progress by territorial communities and their institutions, which is evident today, not only in Italy and in Europe, but in all the countries that are inspired by the current form of liberal or western democracy, also partially defeats the efforts of more broadly participatory planning at the local level which must find consistent political and institutional support at higher decision levels. However, some form of involvement of operators and citizens must be sought at any scale, together with awareness campaigns; at the local scale it is essential to promote direct participation, both in the rural communities of the European regional peripheries, and even more in the rural communities of poor countries and, not least, in peripheral areas of cities, in developed countries and underdeveloped ones.

Peripheries par excellence, those of urban agglomerations, are generally an obstacle to tourism or, at least, are seen as such: as urban and suburban districts from which to exclude the tourist - as is clearly evident from the examination of the itineraries for visiting the cities of organized tours - for safety reasons and for the often negative image offered to tourists by the degradation of the physical and social environments. The periphery of the urban districts is given not so much by the spatial attributes as by the environmental (social and landscape) ones: in fact, there are spaces with poor accessibility but not negatively characterized, since they are prestigious areas, also in pleasant positions, inhabited by higher incomes and /or from activities capable of supporting the high rent of the land; on the other hand, there are areas close to or in the center which, due to their ecological and social degradation, are undoubtedly considered as peripheries.

Some urban peripheries, however, have been transformed into leisure places for residents and tourists and thus redeveloping their socio-economic and even physical environment: on the one hand due to the development of artistic, entertainment, sports, recreational activities in general, craft and commercial; on the other hand due to the growing interest of tourists (especially independent) not only to visit the monuments and museums of the historic centers, but also to experience local ways of life and activities.

The role of tourism in urban regeneration (Amore, 2019), above all in the industrial cities of the North of the world, constitutes a broad and interesting topic which goes beyond the limits of this paper and which certainly deserves specific study. From the studies available, however, it seems clear that the renovation mainly affected the city centers: particularly the “environmental peripheries” included in the central spaces of the agglomerations and the abandoned industrial and/or port areas close to the historic centers. The regeneration of spatial peripheries has been rather poor and limited mostly to areas that increased their accessibility with the extension of fast public transport networks. In some of these areas, the tourist space has been extended for the location of fair and congress or sports facilities and hotel structures; more than a renovation of peripheral neighborhoods, it was the construction of new urban areas (Amore, 2019;



Colantonio and Dixon, 2010; Collins and Shester, 2011). On the other hand, the building recovery of dilapidated areas of the historic centers and their transformation into leisure spaces (for tourists and residents) were mostly carried out with a process of “gentrification”<sup>13</sup>: they did not constitute progress for the previous residents in those areas belonging to the lower income social classes, who were simply expelled and replaced by richer businesses and residents. Often these areas have also returned to being environmentally central, as before their building degradation.

In the wake of the successes of some cities, many others in the last twenty years have focused and are focusing on leisure activity development policies, in order to renew and improve the quality of life in their suburbs. These policies, even where they do not significantly increase the tourist presence, are however very important for the recreation of local human resources, whose quality is a fundamental factor of territorial competitiveness and the development in particular of innovative and in any case highly qualified activities (Adamo, 2012).

## 5. Conclusions

Tourism in the peripheries is growing, often more intensely than in the centers of urban development and other traditional tourism districts, and it is to be expected that it will intensify again: on the one hand, due to the growing desire of tourists to return to being explorers and discoverers of new realities, at least for them; on the other hand because the Internet potentially makes each location visible and makes it possible to intensify “DIY tourism”, independent tourism or in any case tailor-made packaging.

The geography of tourist destinations highlights cases of good practice, success and sustainable development - as well as less satisfactory contrary cases - both in exogenous and endogenous development destinations, both in conventional mass tourism and in the attempt of alternative tourism, often still embryonic.

To avoid offenses to the landscape or the compromise of local ecological conditions, as well as the original reasons of attraction of the destinations, but also to create a coordinated, closely integrated and therefore competitive local production system of subjects, it is essential above all in the peripheral destinations in growth: 1) the adoption of planning, with a systemic and participatory approach, as a fundamental tool for governance and progress; 2) the integration of tourism with other local economic bases. To guarantee their success, local development plans, specifically of peripheral destinations, must also be coherently included in regional plans that integrate their tourism offer with that of the nearby central destinations.

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<sup>13</sup> Among the many writings on the subject I have the pleasure to remember: Lang (1982), Castells (1983), Knox (1991), Smith (1996), Diappi (2009).

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