

# PLEASURE PERIPHERIES: WHEN TOURISM BECOMES REAL ESTATE-TOURISM DEVELOPMENTALISM

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become a global phenomenon as one of the most important industries and one of the main agents of production and land transformation (Knafou, 2006; Fernández and Mendoza, 2007; Vera and Baños, 2010). However, today it must also be seen as a means for the reproduction and expansion of the global capitalist system, used in association with the real-estate sector as a way to accumulate capital (Britton, 1991; Buades, 2006, Aledo, 2008; Navarro *et al.*, 2012; Dachary and Arnaiz, 2006; Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Buades *et al.*, 2012).

While in many countries tourism has become one of the main sources of foreign currency and employment, its expansion is also linked to negative impacts that in many cases bring into question the sustainability of destinations (López, 2007; Enríquez, 2008; Mowforth and Munt, 2009). In the case of the less wealthy countries, it has been shown that tourism is not always «the passport to development» (De Kant, 1991), even if it is used as an instrument within international cooperation for development (ICD) policies.

This article aims to support the argument that advocates a critical analysis of the way tourism is implemented and expanded in the context of capitalist globalisation (Britton, 1991; Buades, 2006; López, 2007; Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Janoschka, 2011). It takes as reference the union of the evolutionary models of Butler and Gormsen to explain this expansion from «peripheries». In doing so, it reflects on the unequal effect of tourism as a development factor, comparing two tourist regions, one from the third periphery (Andalusia)

and another from the fourth (the Caribbean and Central America), establishing the similarities in their tourism and real-estate development and the consequences of these for the socio-economic revitalisation of the region in question. Finally it questions and places in doubt whether in this context ICD helps to reduce poverty in tourism areas.

## II. EVOLUTION AND TRANSFORMATION OF TOURISM AREAS

Traditionally the literature focuses on analysing destinations with evolutionary models (Antón and González, 2008; Vera and Baños, 2010). The best known, albeit widely criticised, is Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), formulated in 1980, based on the growth in the number of tourists over time (Butler, 2011). Other notable models include Miossec's functional model of 1977, Chadefaud's diachronic model of 1987 and Gormsen's pleasure peripheries of 1981. The first three centre on the evolution of a local destination and on how this destination transforms over time. Gormsen's model has a global dimension and describes the proliferation of four «tourist peripheries» depending on their location and the main means of transport used, where internal transformations occur in the supply and demand and in the nature of the investment capital as the destination evolves (Rullán, 2008).

Here we highlight the analysis of the Butler and Gormsen models, and their union in the context of global capitalism, to observe how tourism has expanded globally. The result is a repetition of the *life cycle* model for each of the *peripheries*, so that upon reaching the end of the growth stage in a periphery, the exploration stage in the next periphery begins, and so forth. The TALC, however, gradually becomes shorter in each periphery. It is now known that «*the faster the speed at which a destination was developed the shorter would be its lifecycle*» (Butler, 2011:13), which affects the «new» tourist destinations of the fourth periphery.

This situation cannot be evaluated in isolation from the logic of capitalism, which is based on the income differential characteristic of unequal geographical development, on the financialisation of the economy, which has facilitated the free movement of capital between different parts of the world, and on the spatial expansion of tourism (Harvey, 2004; Naredo, 2006; Blázquez *et al.*, 2011a) progressively centred on property flows.

## III. THE THIRD PERIPHERY: THE CASE OF THE ANDALUSIAN COAST

The Andalusian coast is one of the most important destinations of the Mediterranean. In Andalusia it accounts for 70 % of the total of the regulated beds in the region and 62 % of the demand (13.1 million tourists in 2010 (Andalusian Regional Government, 2011)). There was strong tourism development in the sixties and it has rapidly evolved, driven largely by the overlapping of tourism developments and real-estate processes.

The pioneer and main hub has been and remains the Costa del Sol. The implementation of tourism began following the Gormsen model: first with hotel accommodation and then expanding with tourist apartments and residential developments for tourist use. In the late eighties, in response to the changes in demand and the symptoms of depletion of mass and standardised tourism, a *redefinition* of the tourist destination began, which accelerated in the second half of the nineties, characterised by the spatial expansion of the tourism model,

growth and diversification of accommodation and, in particular, the intensification of the real-estate offering (López *et al.*, 2005; Fernández and Mendoza, 2007). In this context, the Costa del Sol «expands and exports itself» to new coastal and pre-coastal areas (Navarro *et al.*, 2012).

This process which new Andalusian coastal destinations have engaged in has displayed similar patterns to other coastal areas such as Alicante, the Canary Islands and the Balearics, at varying paces and intensities (López *et al.*, 2005, Exceltur, 2005). The result is intensive urban development of the entire coastline, with spaces that have a notable regulated offering complemented by second homes, and other spaces where, though a regulated offering exists, second homes functionally and physically predominate. This situation is consistent with the evolution of residential tourism in Spain (Aledo, 2008).

#### **IV. THE FOURTH PERIPHERY: THE CASES OF THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA**

This dominant form of growth on the Spanish Mediterranean coast has been cloned and replicated in the *fourth periphery* (Blázquez *et al.*, 2011a). This is evidenced by the tourism development in the Caribbean and Central America, which has been characterised by the insertion of hotels managed by external capital, where in recent years (mainly prior to the economic crisis) real-estate and tourism development processes have been manifest, delimiting and closing off spaces for the development of essentially endogenous tourism (Cañada, 2010; Román, 2011).

In the Dominican Republic, for instance, the government gave impetus to the tourist industry from the late sixties by making the first investments and applying measures aimed at promoting domestic and foreign private investment, initially focussing on Santo Domingo and the hubs Puerto Plata and Boca Chica (López, 2007). Following the opening of the International Airport (1985) tourism development accelerated and tourism hubs such as Punta Cana and Bávaro took shape. Large hotel companies established themselves there through mainly foreign investment and All-Inclusive (AI) *resorts* were developed, with little or no influence on the local communities. These destinations quickly reached maturity and from the beginning of the new century they were reorientated towards the luxury segment and primarily towards residential tourism, generating a property boom similar to the one occurring in other parts of the world, with significant consequences for the environment.

In the Mexican Caribbean, Cancún has grown rapidly, and in turn this has driven growth in the region (ECLAC, 2009; Sosa and Jiménez, 2011). Its tourism development began in the seventies as one of the five «tourism development hubs» built from scratch, promoted by the federal government. During the eighties domestic and international investment grew, leading to the privatisation and deregulation of the destination and intensive use of coastal land. The real-estate component joined the hotel operations with the sale of timeshares and condominiums in the form of condo hotels. The Mayan Riviera began its development in the eighties as a result of the expansion of the tourist industry and the loss of quality in Cancún, and its growth was even more rapid than the latter (Sosa and Jiménez, 2011:16). Investment was channelled primarily into mega resorts or self-contained tourism complexes where hotels are just one of the components. Virtually none of the various towns and cities have been able to escape the property business, including destinations that started life as large developments.

In the case of Central America, in general terms, the development of tourism activity has also taken place through big capital investments, of foreign origin at first and later also of regional origin (Cañada, 2010). This has been concentrated mainly on the coasts, both on the sea and on lakes and lagoons, first with investment in international hotel chains under the AI format and in residential hotel complexes, giving way in recent years to large integrated enterprises, associated with what (2008) terms New Residential Tourism (NRT). The traditional stages of the Gormsen model are skipped in the region, because before consolidating itself as a destination for mass tourism, investors have been attracted to create tourism hubs geared towards foreign visitors and residents with high incomes. Concrete examples can be seen in Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua and, more recently, El Salvador.

In this context, one case that appears to be an exception is Cuba. Its peculiarity is that, due to the unique nature of its political system, it is the State itself that manages the process of intensifying and expanding the implementation of tourism, so that, for the time being, it is not associated with real-estate development. It is true that residential tourism complexes are planned, but at the moment the process is slow and controlled by the government (Miller *et al.*, 2008).

In short, much of what has happened with tourism development in the Caribbean and Central America in recent years is a product of the logic of capitalism, which seeks to expand spaces in which to invest and reproduce capital, which has led to the need to constantly extend urban development processes around the world. This situation is also a clear reflection of the union of the Butler and Gormsen models, involving constant construction in new locations in a succession of «tourism peripheries». This has led to expansion towards -and within- the fourth periphery and a «development» that is based on outsourcing the costs borne by the State, the population and the environment, which in turn offers a high level of «return» (a low percentage of what the tourist spends remains in the country), augmenting the impacts (Buades *et al.*, 2012). Further to this, development in these countries and the increase in its contribution to GDP have not been synonymous with an improvement in development standards (Buades, 2012).

## V. IMPACTS ON THE COAST FROM TOURISM AND PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

The impacts have been systematised in the literature since the seventies (Jurdao, 1979; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Hunter and Green, 1995) and continue to be of interest today, particularly in developing countries (Gascón and Cañada, 2005; Miralles and Roselló, 2009; Jiménez and Sosa, 2010; Janoschka, 2011). A comparison is drawn here between the impacts of tourism on the *third periphery* and those of the *fourth periphery*, attempting to demonstrate and emphasise how the problems are amplified when the dominant tourism expands from the third to the fourth periphery.

On the Andalusian coast tourism has acted as an economic driving force that enabled the region to break away from an underdeveloped society in the sixties, and improved the quality of life and skill levels of the local population, among other factors. It is considered a strategic sector in Andalusia due to its ability to generate income and employment. From a socio-demographic point of view, tourism has generated a notable «coastalisation», with strong immigratory movements that led to *ghettos* of unrest that have gradually dissolved and

integrated following the dynamics of development. Furthermore, openness of society and cosmopolitanism are starting to be seen as positive traits, since they generate very consistent and up-to-date places for information exchange (Antón, 2011:24). Nevertheless, tourism has negative impacts that must be controlled, such as high density and pressure on the land that determine the quality and functioning of tourism areas (Navarro *et al.*, 2012); major public investments in infrastructure that never reflect the true rate of growth; formation of new «ghettofied» (elite) spaces; greater difficulty for locals accessing their own homes, or higher levels of crime and corruption, among others. However, it is in the environmental dimension where the most alarming impacts have been generated, which have increased due to the rapid expansion in recent years of the *urban development tsunami* (Fernández, 2006). Some examples are the high occupancy of land on the beach front, scenic impacts, pressure on natural resources and water shortages.

On expanding to the fourth periphery critical factors are amplified. From a socio-economic perspective this expansion has generated exclusion and restricted benefits to small groups, benefiting the local population only *marginally*. In the Dominican Republic, for instance, its two tourist provinces, La Altagracia (Playa Bávaro-Punta Cana) and Puerto Plata, display higher rates of underdevelopment and inequality (Isa, 2011). In Central America and the Caribbean there are high levels of illegal migration, forming very humble neighbourhoods lacking in services (Cordero, 2011), which contributes to outbreaks of social unrest and problems with the provision of urban infrastructure and equipment, which comes on top of the pre-existing basic needs. Overall, tourism has generated worrying effects such as the dispossession of land and natural resources from the original population, the privatization of beaches or gentrification with the creation of gated communities (Blázquez *et al.* 2011b). Equally, the rapid process of tourism growth has brought about serious environmental impacts, changes in the use of land, disruption to the water system in coastal areas, the destruction of coral reefs, mangroves and wetlands, the loss of natural scenery, the threat to nature reserves and greater vulnerability to climate change, as just some of the effects (López, 2007; Enríquez, 2008; MITUR, 2012; USAID, 2013).

The current crisis, however, seems to have stimulated development policy with measures aimed at recovering and/or promoting tourism and real-estate dynamism both in the third and the fourth periphery.

## **VI. TOURISM, ELIMINATION OF POVERTY AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Tourism has been and continues to be used as a development strategy in international cooperation for development (ICD); however, its success is difficult to assess given the limited coverage the subject has received in the scientific community (Romero, 2011).

Nevertheless, some issues are presented here that raise doubts regarding the effectiveness of tourism as a development strategy (Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Romero, 2011; Gascón en Buades *et al.*, 2012): (1) practically all the donor countries are Western and the associated bilateral assistance is determined by their criteria and priorities for development; in the case of tourism it is necessary to bear in mind that over half of worldwide official development assistance (ODA) comes from countries of the EU, a region where the type of tourism

exported to the fourth periphery was developed and where the main multinational tourism companies are located; (2) multilateral cooperation, especially from organisations such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), exerts powerful control over the economies of developing countries (DCs), which remain in a situation of weakness in the face of neo-liberal economic development criteria as a requirement for accessing the funds, an example of which is the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers*, a product of the external debt crisis of the 80s; (3) the World Tourism Organization, a body allied to the strategies and policies of the WB and IMF and which sets the tone of the international debate on tourism, has among its strategies the ST-EP initiative (Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty) based on the Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) philosophy, a strategy that has been the subject of strong criticism because it places income for the poor as a priority measure before socio-environmental factors, such as marginal income for the poor and the promotion of neo-colonialism through tourism, even if it does not deny the unsustainability of this.

In short, after 30 years implementing ICD policies, the worldwide HDI has not seen notable growth, and levels of inequality between countries with a very high HDI and those with a low HDI are virtually unchanged (United Nations, 2013). In the specific cases of the Caribbean and Central America, the number of foreign tourists has barely had an impact on the progress of the Human Development Index (HDI) classification (Buades, 2012), since an increase in tourism has not translated into equivalent human development. Tourism is just one strategy among many, which by itself does not promote development if it is not integrated or accompany wealth distribution policies, so that it can be useful in eliminating poverty.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

This article has sought to demonstrate that tourism is not always a factor in development. There is a widespread idea of its socio-economic benefits and its negative environmental impact; however, in the collective imagination the positive effects far outweigh the negative ones. In this regard, the comparison between the regions of Andalusia and the Caribbean-Central America, as cases of the *third* and *fourth peripheries* respectively, demonstrates that similar strategies and actions have yielded very different results.

First, global capitalism has worsened the conditions for overcoming underdevelopment, so the cycle of the destination that begins in the sixties in the *third periphery* is not comparable to one beginning in the *fourth periphery*; it generally makes destinations' cycles increasingly short. Consequently, while in the case of Andalusia tourism has helped revitalise an underdeveloped area, in the cases of the Caribbean and Central America the increase in tourists and the contribution of tourism to GDP has not resulted in equivalent human development.

Second, the expansion of tourism has overlapped with real-estate expansion, at a pace set by the international market. The problem is compounded in some Caribbean and Central America areas that have not been consolidated as tourist destinations, displaying major problems with poverty and social exclusion and weak local governments, which comes on top of a lack of previously consolidated local tourism entrepreneurs and of a service structure and advanced infrastructure (Román, 2011).

Third, creative strategies are not being implemented when the destination reaches maturity and begins to have symptoms of depletion; instead, attempts are made to rejuvenate the destination with the same strategies that have disqualified it. The investment needed to address the negative consequences of socio-environmental degradation comes from the public coffers, so it is borne by the local population. These external factors do not enter into the calculation of the benefits of tourism and they generate an even more unsustainable situation when it comes to DCs, because the poorest population has to bear the costs. This is where the ICD should help in the search for alternatives to alleviate this situation. However, actions are controlled by multilateral bodies and bilateral mechanisms that favour, if not impose, the expansion of the Western neo-liberal economic system. Added to the negative effects that the northern countries bring to the south, this favours a situation more accurately described as «anti-cooperation» (Gómez and Tarafa, 2012).

Despite the above, the authors argue that tourism is not by definition negative; it all depends on how it is implemented and who it benefits. In the Caribbean and Central America, resistance to the dominant model can be seen (Blázquez *et al.*, 2011a), although the ability to mobilise jointly is still very limited. There are initiatives of an endogenous nature (Cañada, 2010) which could be useful tools for combating anti-cooperation. Though they require further analysis, public support and validation, they demonstrate the possibility and need to consider alternatives to the current model.