Responsible tourism as an agent of sustainable and socially-conscious development: reflections from the Italian case

El turismo como agente de desarrollo sostenible y con conciencia social: reflexiones desde el caso italiano

PIERLUIGI MUSARÒ
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

Abstract

Despite the variety of banalities that are often associated with trips and vacations as mass consumption, the study of tourism – due to the commitment of social, economic, political and cultural energy – remains one of the predominant inputs for understanding contemporary society and the new social hierarchies that distinguish it. Tourism, which is increasingly seen as a process that has become integral to social and cultural life, also plays an essential role in the social and spatial dialectic that gives meaning to the places. Focusing tourism through the lens of «productive consumption» developed by Cultural Studies, the paper moves from the assumption that responsible tourism can be analyzed in the broader paradigm of *relational goods* to explore the role of responsible tourism as a possible way of sustainable and responsible development.

Keywords: Responsible tourism, sustainability, development, vacation, relational goods.

Resumen

A pesar de la variedad de banalidades que a menudo se asocian con los viajes y las vacaciones, como el consumo de masas, el estudio del turismo –debido al compromiso de la energía social, económica, política y cultural– sigue siendo una de las fuentes predominantes para la comprensión de la sociedad contemporánea y las nuevas jerarquías sociales que la distinguen. El turismo, que se está viendo cada vez más como un proceso que forma parte integral de la vida social y cultural, también juega un papel esencial en la dialéctica social y espacial que da sentido a los lugares. Analizando el turismo desde el punto de vista del *consumo productivo* desarrollado por los estudios culturales, el artículo parte de la asunción de que el turismo responsable puede ser analizado en el paradigma más amplio de *bienes relacionales* para explorar el papel del turismo responsable como una forma posible de desarrollo sostenible y responsable.

Palabras clave: Turismo responsable, sostenibilidad, desarrollo, vacaciones, bienes relacionales.

INTRODUCTION

Humans have always traveled, and today, as an average, one out of every six people in the world takes a trip each year outside his country for tourism purposes. This makes tourism obviously one of the main important sectors of the world economy. The increase in leisure time and income per capita available; the development of communications and transport that allow us to reach every corner of the planet in a short time and at low cost; the expansion of accommodation facilities and the improved health conditions have increased tourists from a few tens of millions in the immediate post-war period to the present billion. Today, the importance of tourism is at least equivalent to that of industry and commerce. It is influenced by exports and by giant investments and, unlike other human activities, proves to be resistant to crises and disasters. «Nevertheless, tourism still indicates entertainment, travel or rest and, for the majority of our contemporaries, [it] is just a synonym for vacation» (Lozato-Giotart, 2008: xv).

Despite the variety of banalities that are often associated with trips and vacations as mass consumption, the study of tourism –due to the commitment of social, economic, political and cultural energy– remains one of the predominant inputs for understanding contemporary society and the new social hierarchies that distinguish it. Let us consider, for example, the «time-space compression» identified by Bauman (1999) as the most paradigmatic of globalization-localization process. Among the different social spheres in which the relationship patterns of development and social justice may be focalized, tourism offers a privileged perspective to understand how the new social stratification digs a deeper furrow between the cosmopolitan elite of the extraterritorial world –«tourists»– and the rest of the population, forced to suffer the walls represented by the refugee camps or the immigration controls –«vagabonds». In fact, while these latter are tied to a local and inhospitable space, since they have no choice, the cosmopolitan elite lives the journey as a synonym for pleasure, recreation and relax. For tourists, in fact, the desire to travel embodies different values complementary to the daily routine: a playful parenthesis and an essential recreation to dispose of the toil of work. A sort of «double standard» underlies the tourism dimension: a puritan and fertile ethics for the daily routine, and a «right to leisure and transgression» which assumes the function of a safety valve during vacations (Savelli, 2004). Tourism also plays an essential role in the social and spatial dialectic that gives meaning to the places. On one side, it feeds the individual and collective imagination through the production of icons and

representations; on the other, it models the places in a «touristic version» through visible transformations towards tourist practices and through a contextualization of the same images. Tourism contributes to the processes of homogenization of society – also known as «McDisneyzation» or «Mc-Donaldization» (Ritzer, 1997) –activated by modern «cultural industries». According to the author of *Tourist Gaze* (Urry, 1995: 48): «in the modern era of mobility the tourist experience is reduced to the mere observation and to the representation of the places. Tourists are collectors of views; less and less interested in visiting the same place year after year».

To overcome the ancient dichotomy «authenticity or artificiality» of the experience and of the tourist places, tourism will be focused on the paradigm of «productive consumption» developed by Cultural Studies. According to this perspective, in fact, «the tourist – aware of being a tourist and conscious of the fact that tourism is a series of games with a variety of texts and no single authentic experience» (Urry, 2000: 91) – derives pleasure from the trip administering activities and heterogeneous motivations. In this perspective, consumers are committed to produce what they consume or to consume experiences that are only possible thanks to a role they themselves play (Pine and Gilmore, 2000). The role played by consumers is significant, since it is fundamental in the productive processes at the base of the economic value chain. Not surprisingly, many authors today argue of «prosumerism» (Toffler, 1987) and «bio-capitalism» (Codeluppi, 2008), which leads us to recognize the symbolic and affective dimension of consumption, the creative role that it plays in the processes of objectification of culture, as well as in the semantic re-appropriation of the territory (de Certeau, 2001; Parmiggiani, 2001).

The concurrence of the physical journey and the communications –forms of virtual mobility described by Urry (2000)– supports this perspective of tourism as a cultural process and creative consumption, which originates from new forms of tourism based on branch and dynamic social relations. With the rise of the «mobility paradigm» and the cultural perspective on tourism, this latter is analyzed as a multilayered actor, not exclusively made up of people moving to a place:

> «We refer to 'tourism mobilities', then, not simply to state the obvious (that tourism is a form of mobility), but to highlight that many different mobilities inform tourism, shape the places where tourism is performed, and drive the making and unmaking of tourist destinations. Mobilities of people and objects, airplanes and suitcases, plants and animals, images and brands, data systems and satellites, all go into 'doing' tourism. Tourism mobilities involve complex combinations of movement and stillness, realities and fantasies, play and work» (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 207).

From this point of view, places become a meeting point for relations, variable and co-created by the tourist-spectator who, through his presence and the same technology, interacts with and redefines them. Furthermore, in this context, the distinction between home and away varies*: the inter-connection of mobility systems blurs the boundaries between travel and everyday life, reorganizing spheres of experience previously separated. This «compulsion to proximity» (Urry, 2000: 75) gives substance to network relationships configuring them in terms of a definitely dynamic society. Tourism is increasingly seen as a process that has become integral to social and cultural life. It is not just about the purchase of second homes and the interconnections between tourism and migration. Rather, everything seems to be in perpetual movement throughout the world. Most people travel –filling the world's planes, trains, ships, buses, cars and streets. In the contemporary world all sorts of political, technological, financial and transportational changes have been critical in significantly lowering the mobility barriers for many. Tourism, leisure, transport, business, travel, migration and communication are thus all blurred and need to be analyzed together in their fluid interdependence, rather than discretely (Mascheroni, 2007).

Moving from the assumption that responsible tourism can be analyzed in the broader paradigm of *relational goods,* «because they can be produced and enjoyed only by those who are interested in them» (Donati, 2011), this paper aims to explore the role of responsible tourism as a possible way of sustainable and responsible development.

GLOBAL DEMAND AND LOCAL SUPPLY

Despite a situation of prolonged recession, in the last ten years tourism has been one of the global economic sectors with the highest growth. Tourists' expenses for travelling abroad have doubled and are expected to increase over the next decade by a further 50%. The growth trend that characterizes international tourism is constant and long-term: data show that in 2012 more than one billion people took a journey abroad for tourism. Constant since 1980, this growth is expected to be maintained for the next two decades. In terms of the flows of people generated by the tourism industry, passengers increased from about 280 million in 1980 to about 900 in 2010, and the pace of growth for 2030 is expected to double, reaching 1.8 billion annually. It will therefore represent a growth rate of 4% *per annum* in the fifty-year average (1980 – 2030) (UNWTO, 2012).

The steady growth of tourism, a phenomenon that affects all areas of the globe, appears therefore as a growth driver not to be disregarded in a period of severe recession like the current one. Particularly those countries that until now led the ranks of international tourist arrivals, nowadays must deal with a process of globalization that produces new emerging touristic destinations. The European Union –EU–, well aware of this phenomenon, includes tourism within the new priorities set out in the «Europe 2020» strategy, with the aim of making Europe the number one tourist destination worldwide. Aware of the fact that tourism is the third largest socio-economic activity of the EU –generating more than 10% of GDP and providing about 12% of total employment–, the Commission has proposed a new framework for coordinated action in the field of tourism in order to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainable growth of European tourism. Although for some it may be considered an oxymoron (Latouche, 2011), sustainable growth is one of the four axes identified in the Communication 352/2010: the new framework for tourism in Europe states in fact the need to «promote the development of a sustainable, responsible and qualified tourism». To achieve this goal, the EU aims to develop a system of indicators for the sustainable management of destinations, which could help create a brand to promote sustainable tourist destinations. It may be helpful to organize awareness campaigns on destinations for European tourists. These will include information on transportation and on interactions with the local population to develop a European brand for quality tourism, based on existing national experience, meant to increase safety and consumer confidence. Moreover, this will also facilitate the identification of risks related to climate change to protect the European tourism industry from loss-making investments and explore the possibilities for the development of tourist alternatives. Finally, the proposal of a Charter of sustainable and responsible tourism should be considered; to establish or strengthen co-operation between the EU, the major emerging countries and the Mediterranean countries for the promotion of models of sustainable and responsible tourism development and exchange of best practices.

Tourism is a key sector also for the Italian economy: it makes a strong contribution to national GDP –about 9%– and employment –about 10%. It represents a sector –perhaps the only one– of significant and long-lasting competitive advantage. It is therefore important not to lose share of the international market, which will continue to be positive thanks to the demand driven by high growth economies. Finally, after decades characterized by the lack of a political project on tourism and fragmented tourism

governance, it seems that also the Italian government has gained an awareness of this new growing trend.

The publication in January 2013 of the first Strategic Plan for the development of tourism in Italy, entitled «Tourism in Italy 2020. Leadership, Jobs, South» represents a real step towards this policy. The plan analyses the undeniable loss of competitiveness of our tourism sector, to determine the ways in which Italy still has a predominant role in international tourism. In fact, although Italy moved down from the first to the fifth place in the world rankings of the most-visited destinations, tourism remains an important resource. People engaged in this sector number around 2.2 million –that is half a million more than in the whole metal industry–, and it continues to offer great opportunities for the enhancement of our heritage and artistic resources. Investing in sustainable and cultural tourism can significantly improve the quality of life of local residents, protecting and strengthening the cultural identity, values, lifestyle and economy of local communities. As noted by Angeloni (2013) in *Destination Italy,* according to the Country Brand Index 2012-2013 prepared by FutureBrand, out of 118 countries, the «brand» Italy is the first in the world for «the attractiveness linked to the culture», the first for food, the third for shopping is «the first destination where tourists would like to go». However, in the final ranking, due to many other factors –including the value for money–Italy slides down to fifteenth place.

The strategic plan developed by the government, while highlighting criticisms of the Italian tourism industry –governance issues in the sector, promotion abroad highly fragmented, low business development, low competencies in building competitive tourism products, insufficient infrastructure, training of staff inadequate to the global market, difficulties in attracting international investment–, proposes guidelines and identifies a significant number of actions to improve its competitiveness. Above all, «it is necessary to promote a cultural change and focus on tourism as a «global» industry, with international competition but local supply. In this perspective, it is crucial to support strong and effective coordination among Government, Regions and Autonomous Provinces». For decades the Ministries of Culture –formed in 1974–, Environment –formed in 1986– and Tourism –removed by the referendum of 1993 and set up again– were divided and «minor». Therefore, the promotion of international tourism, held at the regional level by the Tourism Promotion Agencies or Departments and centrally by ENIT –National Tourism Organization–, is characterized by low efficiency and effectiveness due to the high fragmentation of activities,

without a central coordination of tourism promotion structured on several levels. The Italian tourism landscape appears to be significantly differentiated and lacks the central leadership necessary to compete in the international arena. The same legal and institutional framework does not facilitate the development of a unified image of the Italian tourism industry and, at the same time, the definition of local development paths (Trunfio, 2008).

When we consider that the «mental territory» –imagination, dreams, desires– nourishes the real territory and promotes the best tourism practices –considering for instance the landscape as something natural and cultural at the same time (Lozato-Giotart, 2008: 22)– then it seems clear that, to capitalize on the development opportunities offered by the incomparable abundance of Italian tourism resources, it is necessary to fully understand the demand and then offer tailor-made products. In order to compete successfully in the international tourism market, it is necessary to understand that the experience of tourism consumption is not reduced to a precise period of mobility –nor does the journey end once the destination is reached. Furthermore, it should be considered that demand is enriched both by an overall quantity development, and by a substantial evolution of the purchasing behavior and consumption patterns of tourists. According to the latest report by the World Tourism Organization –UNWTO–, we are currently experiencing new touristic dimensions. In particular, we are facing new preferences in tourist services; reduction in the period of holidays; increase in the number of short-term holidays; demand for new forms of tourism characterized by a proactive and sustainable component included in an authentic context, in line with the new expectations of involvement; knowledge and performing experience. These trends are impacting the redefinition of the various tourism products, with increasing relevance of the differentiating factors related to personal experience and local characteristics of destinations. In this context, the vacation concept must be reconsidered in view of a paradigmatic shift of tourism, based on the need for a constant link between the global and the local dimension. Governance models, local touristic systems and overall capacities of different local actors may become the focus of debate, rediscovering the territory and its traditions. According to the strategic plan developed by the government, in fact, a central role must be attributed to territorial governance models, with the aim of converting institutions and local actors from mere financial and promoting actors into organizational instruments for the management of local tourism resources, in order to activate a synergy of local development.

In summary, new global networks raise two observations: on the one hand, it is necessary to revise the criticism of cultural homogenization (Appadurai, 2001), and on the other, to emphasize how precisely in the local contexts resistant to globalized uniformity, it is easier to discover precursors for the reorganization of the development and well-being of the communities. In fact, regarded as the global processes of *disembedding* and *re-embedding* which could significantly affect the redefinition of local contexts (Giddens, 1994), it is clear that the economic reorganization of local contexts around the tourist allows the opportunity for a broader, participatory and collaborative management of territories, with positive effects on the social and cultural life. It is, in other words, a renewed politicization at the local level with an active participation of local stakeholders: economic actors but also the population, local governments and associations that can reactivate, in a perspective of shared social responsibility, new models of local development –original and focused towards a more sustainable horizon.

NEW PATTERN OF TOURISM

The steady growth in the tourism sector is a potential development opportunity for the hosting local communities. This is a concrete occasion of development only when benefits are equally redistributed among the structures linked to the territory and to local communities (Pieroni, Romita, 2003). Analyzing the stages that convert the journey into a holiday and consequently a «light industry» with heavy impacts on the economic, environmental and socio-cultural destinations, the «positional» value of tourism is evident (Hirsch, 1981), as is the need for reorganization in order to combine it with economic growth and sustainability.

A new understanding of the holiday, presently considered a necessity or duty, has been joined in recent decades by a critical reflection on mass tourism that led the UNWTO to promote, in 1988, «sustainable tourism» as a form of travel that meets the needs of tourists and of host regions, while preserving development opportunities for the future. Aware of the social and environmental limitations of development, since the '80s several international institutions started adding to the traditional 4-S of tourism –sun, sea, sex, sight–, the S of sustainability and that of «save the world». These new patterns pushed many non-governmental organizations –NGOs–, cooperatives, associations of craftsmen and farmers closer to the circuits of international

fair trade to support the diffusion of responsible tourism to promote local sustainable development and the fight against global inequalities.

Several important documents have contributed to the ratification and encouragement of a different paradigm of tourism: the *Charter of Sustainable Tourism* in Lanzarote promoted in 1995 by UNWTO, UNEP and UNESCO; the *Agenda 21 for Tourism;* the *Declaration of Montreal* in 1996, which proposes «social tourism» as a possible model for a new form of development and a vehicle of social cohesion; and the *Global Code of Ethics of Tourism,* promoted by the UNWTO in 1999. The last step in this direction is represented by the birth, in 2002, of the program ST-EP *–Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty–,* focused on poverty alleviation through tourism. All the above-mentioned instruments represent the main institutional steps that globally have contributed to formalize the paradigm of «responsible tourism», defined as «tourism implemented according to the principles of social and economic justice and in full respect of the environment and cultures.

Responsible tourism recognizes the centrality of the hosting local community and its right to be the leader of the development of sustainable and socially responsible tourism for its own territory. Responsible tourism operates by encouraging positive interactions among the tourism industry, local communities and travelers» –AITR, Italian Association for Responsible Tourism. Many meetings of civil society have been organized to reach this point, in which responsible tourism was examined in light of the criticism of globalization. These included the various Social Forum –Porto Alegre, Florence, Paris, Mumbai and Nairobi– and the first meeting of the International Forum of Solidarity Tourism, held in France in 2003. Also worthy of note is the Italian reaction to this debate, with the *Ethics Chart of Tourism* edited in 1993; the birth of the Italian Association for Responsible Tourism –AITR– in 1998, which validated the *Identity Card for Sustainable Travel* and helped to create the European network EARTH, the European Alliance for Responsible Tourism and Hospitality, oriented to transform the tourism sector according to the paradigm of responsibility (Davolio, Meriani, 2011).

In this context, the word *tourism* is understood in a positive sense, where the journey and the holiday are intended both as an opportunity for economic growth and an opportunity for cultural exchange as well. Taken together, they become a tool to foster mutual understanding between individuals, peoples and cultures. The critique of mass tourism, the attention to the collective good and the need to develop relationships through the consumption of time and space, which is emancipated from the simplified

behavior of a purely selfish, individualized and private sector, enables us to recognize the political value of responsible tourism. In fact, ignoring the question of terminology that involves the phenomenon of transforming sustainability and responsibility into «umbrella concepts» –sustainable tourism, ecotourism, tourism justice, community, social, rural and fair trade, ethical, accessible, pro-poor tourism– «the different approaches could be summarized within the Anglo-Saxon rule of three-E –Economy, Ethics, Environment– whereby economics, ethics and environment should have equal concern and respect» (Davolio, Meriani, 2011: 16).

To achieve a balance between these three dimensions, responsible tourism should make careful use of environmental resources to ensure the maintenance of essential ecological processes and the conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity. Furthermore, responsible tourism should respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, preserving their typical building structures, their cultural heritage and traditional values, and cooperating for better intercultural understanding. This form of tourism should support economically viable and long-lasting operations with economic benefits appropriately distributed to all stakeholders; and promote stable employment and the possibility of benefits and social services for hosting communities, contributing to poverty reduction.

In this context, tourism acquires the character of a consumer good, whose demand is based on its intrinsic properties and on its social, ethical and political relevance. Set in the broader phenomenon of «political consumerism», responsible tourism appears as a set of actions characterized by an altruistic dimension, linked to the value of farsighted selfishness (Becchetti, 2005), and by public interest that lend to consumption a «political» meaning (Micheletti, 2003; Leonini and Sassatelli, 2008; Paltrinieri, 2012). It is a form of tourism that contributes to the communities an added value much greater than mass tourism; a form of tourism that can generate self-centered local development and is able to activate all the existing links within the production system (Zamagni, 2002). The social, economic, environmental and cultural sustainability of travel proposals and their ethical purposes determine the characteristics of this sector. It requires a vision of greater awareness of the tourism phenomenon which, through professionally qualified operators and players responsible and receptive to new interests and dynamics, will be able to sustain both social values and sustainability and solidarity values, to originate a single model of 'tourism development', bearer of progress and social cohesion.

HOSPITALITY AND CIVIL ECONOMY

We have seen how the increased international competition pointed out the need for a link between the global and the local dimension to attract and manage touristic flows, increasing the potential for a virtuous interaction between the tourism industry, local communities and travelers. In order to achieve an overall tourist product based on the rediscovery of the territory and its traditions, it is necessary to recognize the centrality of local community and the right to be a leader in its sustainable and socially-responsible development. According to this perspective, responsible tourism can be considered an element of social cohesion at the time that an activity is aimed at protecting the rights of those often overlooked by the market. This will be an essential element not only in the development of society but in economic growth as well. It is a category of tourism particularly sensitive to spatial planning and local development dynamics that requires the implementation of public policies increasingly favoring the meeting point between the public and the private. In this context, stimulating and supporting this form of tourism is a way to protect the welfare of the people, in compliance with the dictates of the European Commission and with the recommendations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report. It emerges as the understanding of welfare appeals to the preferences and values of a society, and its fundamental link with free time and surrounding space.

Intended as an economy of movement and relationships, responsible tourism emerges from a post-materialist model of existence that focuses on the individual (Cesareo, Vaccarini, 2012). It is set in a context that requires a growing awareness of the collective size – a responsibility, also expressed by market experiences, as tourism itself, redefining it through a lens of greater responsibility and sustainability. From this point of view, in line with the paradigm of reflexivity in late modernity (Beck 2003), the concept of responsible tourism is fully part of the concept of the social economy, as an economic sphere with high social content. In particular, this form of tourism can be interpreted as a source capable of creating «relational goods», defined as those goods that depend on the mode of interaction with others and can be enjoyed only if shared in reciprocity (Nussbaum, 1996; Donati, 2011).

Since responsible tourism is not a separate sector or niche but, in compliance with the European Union position, as tourism should become, it is clear that the joint effort of many actors of responsible tourism is designed to contaminate the traditional tourist offer. This should be the result of vi-

able alternatives for consumers who refuse to travel in a superficial way with *all-inclusive* packages. Promotion of a different attitude towards the trip will help to create another view of the world based on values that tourists must absorb and apply in all circumstances. Responsible tourism aims to combine the anxiety of mobility with a culture of sustainability, advocating a behavior change according to logic similar to that adopted by the political consumerism (Musarò, Parmiggiani, 2007). It is based on empowering the citizen-traveler, rather than on blaming the consumer-tourist, recognizing his ability to choose and to understand the political fallout of such a decision, rather than considering him/her «the idiot on the road», helping him to understand that his/her power is small but important and incisive if combined with that of others. In other words, this new vision focuses on making the tourist aware that a move towards sustainable tourism does not mean condemning the development of an area. It rather means to mature and spread the awareness that there are limits even for the tourism business. Again, it means to make people understand that the economic dynamics of the sector, tourist satisfaction and protection of the natural, social and cultural development are therefore inseparable. Compared to standardized offers, focused on marketable destinations, responsible tourism is configured as a real practice of cultural *prosumerism*, able to comprehend territory and share the tourist experience through a new semantics of the trip.

Since natural, cultural and social resources are the source of attraction and value for tourism destinations, it is important to adopt the perspective of local knowledge and engage the community in the management of tourist flows. The local contexts become, in this way, the privileged referents to achieve sustainability goals but also the privileged places for the more general redefinition of its own development model. In the same spirit of the ideals of the Agenda 21 program or the experiences of the Transition Town, the local contexts become the main places of experimentation towards alternative models of society (Mowforth, Munt, 2003).

It is evident that the approach based on the involvement of local communities is the most appropriate way to reshape the tourism phenomenon as a responsible and sustainable trend. It is even more evident considering the new «glocal» vision, since the subjects of the community can take advantage of the global tourist flows as a form of revitalization of sustainable local development. In this perspective, in line with the aforementioned program sponsored by the UNWTO ST-EP, for several years transnational actors have been operating within the framework of development coopera-

tion, promoting forms of responsible tourism in poor countries to help reconcile the holiday of rich people –foreign or native– with the empowerment of the poorest communities (Musarò, 2009; 2011; Scheyvens, 2002).

Or, without going too far, let's think of the several proposals of rural, community and responsible tourism promoted and managed by some Italian communities. It is a tourism organized cooperatively by the community that lives in the area, sustainable and integrated within the local economy and the social dynamics of the resident population. It is intended to supplement traditional sources of income, reducing the concentration of income in the hands of extra-territorial investors. Community tourism is also an instrument to contain the phenomena of social isolation and territorial cohesion, as well as environmental and socio-cultural degradation. It is an optimal tool to avoid the «museification» and retrieve an identity in line with the tradition, the past and the spirituality of the community. By combining the *ethos* of the guest with the *ethnos* of the host, this kind of hospitality offers tourists the opportunity to experience cultural enrichment. In fact they will experience the hospitality in families or local social groups, sharing with them everyday life, work, gatherings and discussion, in a context in which exchange and mutual understanding become the real added value of tourism (Costa, 2005). Tourism that combines the *hedonistic* value of the holiday with an *eudemonistic* ethic –focused on the hospitality of quality and on the care of good behavior, based on participatory management of the holiday through a responsible approach to the territory– thus becomes a way of reconsidering local policies and a model of bottom-up approach useful in strengthening social capital and improving the governance of the territory (Ache et al., 2008). Responsible tourism puts in place a «*we-reflexivity*» (Donati, 2011) made by a number of social actors acting in a subsidiary network of relationships; it is focused as an example of «civil economy» (Bruni, Zamagni, 2009), which develops virtuous ways of interaction among citizens. Finally, responsible tourism is a central factor that above all promotes the discovery and valorization of the territory and of human relations in terms of common good, but at the same time allows us to nurture the relationship with the other and go beyond the ego (Donati, 2011: 315).

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