

The Mediterranean Association for the Sociology of Tourism (1987-2022)

Over the 1970s and the 1980s some economic, political and environmental events weakened the expectations of continuity in the tourist development, at the national and international level. Crisis was particularly evident in the seaside holiday, the “heart” of mass tourism. After the “boom” in the 1950s and 1960s, there is a link between changes in tourist behavior and the ones in the social meaning of tourism: new motivations were emerging, and new approaches are required to understand them. Here the role of sociology emerged. After some international debate, the similarity between Italian and Mediterranean problems was recognized and connected to changes in economic production and to the everyday life of European societies. If we consider the transition from industrial to post-industrial society, local phenomena had to be seen in relation to wider trends in the Mediterranean region. At the end of the 1980s, as a result, the foundation of the Mediterranean Association for the Sociology of Tourism was a try to study these new trends. All the congresses of the Association constantly compared the development of cities and areas interested in tourism in the Mediterranean region, trying to connect them to wider trends of social life, the globalization of economy, culture, and the tourist market.

This Association was born in 1987 after the first Mediterranean Conference in Bologna, Italy (*Tourism and Cultural Communication, For An Active Role of Local Communities: New Services and New Professions*). The formal creation, with a statute and a managing board, occurred in a general meeting at the second Mediterranean Conference (*Groups and Local Intermediate Structures, For a Change of Image in the Tourist System*, Cervia, Italy, 1991). From the papers and communications presented on these two occasions (Guidicini & Savelli, 1988, 1992) it was clear that, after many years in which local communities in mass tourism had been essentially marginal, being merely a source of service personnel, their role was changing. The vitality and the potential communication of these communities were beginning to emerge, being finally viewed as resources in their own right. The topics discussed at these two conferences considered the impact of tourism on the local communities of the Mediterranean area highlighting the values, meanings and opportunities that were emerging. In the second Conference, in particular, the attention has been focused on new forms of territorial organization and tourist activities capable of mediating between the local groups and operators on the one hand, and to the consumer and large-scale tour operators on the other.

The Third Mediterranean Conference (*Tourism and the Environment*, Estoril, Portugal, 1995) examined again the environment in which the local community lived, highlighting the different

effects, whether negative or positive, arising from the impact of tourism. It was pointed out that the term “environment” was to be understood as referring not only to natural resources, but also to cultural heritage which contained the symbols expressing the memory and identity of the local community (Savelli, 1997).

In 1999 the Association published *Strategie di Comunità nel Turismo Mediterraneo* (Community Strategies in Mediterranean Tourism); the most significant studies of the first three conferences were collected, linking them to some issues which were important for the Association like local communities and tourism, tourism and the construction of social relations, the ambivalence of memory and cultural heritage, nature and rural space in new tourist relations, differentiation processes (Guidicini & Savelli, 1999).

In the Fourth Mediterranean Conference (*Local and Global in Tourism: Forms of Aggregation and Communication Networks*, Ravenna, Italy, 2001), the place differences – ethnic, cultural or geographical – were considered. Participants discussed those dynamics of society that were leading to the creation of a global tourist market and they showed that any place difference is at risk to be reduced, obscured, or even cancelled completely by the diffusion of the dominating models. Particular attention was given to territorial and entrepreneurial aggregations that were aiming at using the specific aspect of local supply in order to penetrate the large infrastructural networks on global scale more efficiently (Savelli, 2004a, 2004b).

In the Fifth Mediterranean Conference – *Mediterranean Tourism beyond the Coastline: New Trends in Tourism and the Social Organization of Space* (Thessaloniki, Greece, 2005) – some possible forms of alternative tourism were debated: rural tourism, environmental tourism, sporting tourism, cultural tourism, etc. The need for other solutions beyond the coastline was stressed: these solutions had to be connected one another, in order to gain a new concept of holiday where sea and hinterland resources are part of a new and wider meaning of tourist region (Iakovidou, 2007; Savelli, 2008).

In the Sixth Mediterranean Conference – *Tourism as a development and cohesion factor in the Mediterranean region* (Granada, Spain, 2008) – the importance of the social context in international tourism was stressed. Globalization implies challenges and opportunities at the same time; offering new products is more and more important to survive in the tourist market or access to it. Several issues were debated. First, tourist products with particular attention to the relation between tourist and local population, and the recent changes in the tourist labor market. Also sustainability was taken into consideration; the concept of “responsible tourism” was a key-topic of the debate, through many case-studies which stressed the importance of environment in local tourism

development. Culture was frequently mentioned as well; it was considered not only as paying attention to local heritage, but also as a process in which tourists influenced its perception and changes. With regard to the organization of tourist space, it emerged as a strategic point for several regions; the importance of public-private cooperation was stressed, as well as the need to involve all the local actors in the promotion of tourist resources (Latiesa Rodriguez, Puertas Cañaveras, Paniza Prados, 2009).

The Seventh Mediterranean Conference was held in Sassari and Alghero (Italy) in 2011, with the title *Tourist mobility between crisis and change. Mediterranean cities and contexts*. The congress works were coordinated by Antonietta Mazzette and Antonio Fadda and it focused on the following topics: the connection between tourism and urban change, with particular attention to risks and opportunities; sustainability and un-sustainability of tourism; tourism and the development of networks, with particular attention to cooperation opportunities; perspectives of inter-coastal tourism in the Mediterranean region; the subjective representation of tourist space, both in demand and supply's point of view. The conference contributions have been printed in two volumes, *Contesti mediterranei in transizione* (edited by Camillo Tidore and Antonietta Mazzette) and *Città mediterranee nello spazio globale* (edited by Antonio Fadda and Romina Deriu). Both volumes are published by FrancoAngeli in 2013.

The Eighth Mediterranean Conference was held in Arcavacata Rende (Italy) in 2014, on the topic *Tourism and quality of life. Food, territory, identity, good and bad practices*. The conference, chaired by Tullio Romita and Gilda Catalano, was divided into the following sessions: "Wine and food as a tourist product", "Old and new tourist areas: local development strategies", "Tourism as a factor of identity: new trends in demand", "Good and bad tourist practices: for a new quality of life". About 50 speakers from 7 countries attended the conference. Many representatives from the University of Calabria and other local institutions took part to the conference as well as the coordinator of the S AIS Territory section: he reported the results of a Summer School held in Pizzo Calabro where planning of tourism policies was part of the program. The conference ended with a roundtable on prospects of tourism development in the Mediterranean area, with people from provincial and regional institutions, universities, entrepreneurial and retailer associations.

The conference papers were collected published in two volumes, *Scenari e tendenze della mobilità turistica* (2015) and *Turismo e qualità della vita. buone e cattive pratiche* (2016); both volumes have been published by Aracne and edited by Tullio Romita, Gilda Catalano and Antonella Perri.

The Ninth Mediterranean Conference was held in Kotor (Montenegro) in October 2019 on the topic *Slow and Fast Tourism: travelers, local communities, territories, experiences*. About 60 speakers

from 10 countries participated in the conference. The works were divided into eight sessions: “Literary tourism as a tool in the development of a sustainable destination”, “Slow tourism as a passport to development: perspectives and influences of the social and cultural effects of tourism in developing countries and general welfare”, “Ppp model for sustainable tourism in order to achieve sustainable development goals – role of educational institution, pedestrianism and attractiveness of urban tourist spaces in Mediterranean cities”, “Meeting and socialization. experiences and perspectives of social tourism in the Mediterranean countries / Root tourism”, “Slow food and tourism”, “Tourism for tomorrow: travel trends across generations”, “Networking in Mediterranean tourism: participatory government practices for the development and enhancement of local tourism”. The opening of the conference was accompanied by some reports from local authorities and the Italian ambassador to Montenegro, while at the end there was a plenary to return the main results that emerged from the eight sessions. A volume edited by Natasa Krivokapic and Ivona Jovanovic has been published by the University of Montenegro - Faculty of Philosophy with the title *Slow and Fast Tourism. Travellers, Local Communities, Territories, Experiences*.

As regards the study of Mediterranean dimension over the last thirty years, the sociology of tourism changed gradually but significantly. It initially took a defensive approach of local autonomy and identity against the impact of mass tourism, in opposition to the disintegration induced by big tourism companies. Sociology of tourism also pointed out the emerging contradictions of this process, trying to defend the peculiarity of local systems and local cultures. After that, it focused on the long phase of entrepreneurial uncertainty after the weakening of collective behavior patterns, with attention to the analysis of motivational factors and local aggregation strategies to support the reorganization of tourist economy.

Now the sociology of tourism seeks to capture the opportunities from globalization, being in favor of an increase of importance for local communities and their entrepreneurial systems. New regional dimensions are emerging: the sea is no more a border between different socio-cultural systems, but it gradually becomes an element of connection and it contributes to new images of territory. The networking of many territorial resources, both in the coastline and in the hinterland, gives back to the Mediterranean its own attractiveness, which is a prominent resource in a moment characterized by a more and more differentiated tourism.

The current Board of the Association, elected during the General Assembly held during the IX convention in October 2019, has the following members:

President: *Natasa Krivokapic*, University of Montenegro.

Honorary Presidents: *Asterio Savelli*, University of Bologna; *Marie-Françoise Lanfant*, CNRS-Paris.

Board of Directors: *Gilda Catalano*, University of Calabria; *Philippe Clairay*, Musées de Villedieu-les-Poêles; *Stella Kostopoulou*, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; *Joseph Inguanez*, University of Malta; *Ivona Jovanovic*, University of Montenegro; *Silvia Mugnano*, University of Milan Bicocca; *Inmaculada Puertas Cañaverál*, University of Granada.

Secretary: *Gabriele Manella*, University of Bologna.

We also would like to remember the past presidents here below:

1987-1991: Marc Boyer, University of Lyon “Lumière” (France) (president of the promoting committee)

1991-1991: Vojislav Jancovic, University of Belgrado (Serbia)

1991- 1995: Marc Boyer, University of Lyon “Lumière” (France)

1995-2001: Afonso de Barros, University of Lisboa (Portugal)

2001-2005: Marc Boyer, University of Lyon “Lumière” (France)

2005-2008: Olga Iakovidou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece)

2008-2011: Margarita Latiesa, University of Granada (Spain)

2011-2014: Asterio Savelli, Università of Bologna (Italy)

2014-2019: Tullio Romita, University of Calabria (Italy)

2019- : Natasa Krivokapic, University of Crna Gora (Montenegro)

Bibliography of the association:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Il turismo in una società che cambia</i>, Angeli, Milano, 1988; • <i>Il Mediterraneo come sistema turistico complesso</i>, in “Sociologia Urbana e Rurale”, Angeli, Milano, n. 26, 1988; • <i>Gruppi e strutture intermedie locali per una reimmaginazione del sistema turistico</i>, in “Sociologia Urbana e Rurale”, Angeli, Milano, n. 38, 1992; • <i>Turismo e Ambiente</i>, in “Sociologia Urbana e Rurale”, Angeli, Milano, n. 52/53, 1997; • <i>Strategie di comunità nel turismo mediterraneo</i>, Angeli, Milano 1999;
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- *Città, turismo e comunicazione globale*, Angeli, Milano, 2004;
- *Turismo, territorio, identità. Ricerche ed esperienze nell'area mediterranea*, Angeli, Milano, 2004;
- *Mediterranean Tourism Beyond the Coastline: New Trends in Tourism and the Social Organisation of Space*, Ziti Publications, Thessaloniki, 2007;
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- *Slow and Fast Tourism. Travellers, Local Communities, Territories, Experiences*, University of Montenegro - Faculty of Philosophy, Niksic, 2022.