

Roots Tourism as a Means to Foster Sustainable Development of Small Destinations: A Focus on Italy

Rita Cannas

Dept. of Pedagogy, Psychology, Philosophy
University of Cagliari, Italy

Abstract: Roots tourism is increasing awareness among businesses, policy makers and public authorities about its capability to attract tourists which hold direct or indirect family bonds with the communities of destinations where such tourists come from. One of its particular characteristics consists of being a means of tourist development for potential destinations which have been affected by population loss: those same migrated people could nowadays be roots tourists by visiting their homeland. Although roots tourism has been already investigated in literature, particularly in diaspora tourism, what seems not to be fully explored are paths and road maps for developing such market within the stakeholders theory, especially in Italy where roots tourism is still underexplored. In this regard, the present study seeks to fill this gap by offering a systematic analysis of the actors potentially involved in roots tourism, in order to contribute to the creation of development paths for local communities which host return tourists. In fact, the study's main goal is to outline paths and tools addressed to small destinations and rural areas, rather than already established destinations, by engaging together policy makers, businesses, NGOs and local community around a shared plan.

Keywords: Roots tourism; sustainable tourism development; stakeholder theory; shared planning; destination management.

Introduction

Roots tourism is defined as “international travel to places of one’s own, or one’s family, relatives, or ancestral origin for sentimental or other emotional reasons” (Tomczewska-Popowycz and Taras, 2022: 245). The motivations for travelling to where visitors hold family bonds may be related to visiting friends and relatives (VFR), discovering places and community of their own family history, reliving past memories or, as stated by Hogan (2019: 1), “seeking for a sense of belonging to family, to community, to nations and to history”.

Roots tourism represents a significant growing part of global travel, especially in the light of the total number of international migrants that has grown by 41% since 2000 arriving to 244 million (United Nations, 2016), and many migrants desire to visit their home countries (Li, McKercher and Chan, 2020). It is out of doubt that roots tourism plays a significant role in Africa where it is mainly related to African diasporas caused by the transatlantic slave trade (Dilette, 2021). In this regard, scholars estimate that 11 to 12 million Africans were carried off for a life of slavery (Timothy and Teye, 2004). Particularly in Ghana, one of the leading roots tourism destinations for African diasporas, the movement “Back to Africa” encourages African-Americans to

relocate back to their homeland in order to re-settle and influence the Ghana socio-economic development (Alex-Assensoh, 2010). A relevant aspect of such movement action, reinforced by national politics, consists of providing festivals and special events to attract roots tourists. The main aim of such activity is addressed to create a safe space for diasporic Africans to explore the roots of their identity through travel (Dilette, 2021).

In the European Union, the niche of VFR and pilgrimages counts for up to a quarter of all international visitors (UNWTO, 2018), which corresponds to around 155 million of international trips. The Scottish Tourism Observatory shows that in 2019 the niche of VFR accounted to 865 thousand visits, 7,5 million nights, which brought £466 million; by a visitor survey, VisitScotland (2017) reports that 66% of visitors had an existing connection to Scotland and among them, long haul visitors most likely to mention ancestry, hold a share of 29%. The Central Statistics Office of Ireland (2020) reveals that in 2019 VFR trips cover 25% of total overseas trips and that expenditure by overseas travellers who visit friends and relatives accounts to 17.8%, of total expenditure.

Although roots tourism involves many countries of Europe which have been characterised by migration flows such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and represents a profitable niche market, it is also no targeted properly everywhere. For instance, in Italy, only recently roots tourism is seen as a consistent market raising interest of various tourism players. Scholars estimate that around 80 million people in the world have Italian ancestry (Perri, 2020; Ferrari and Nicotera, 2021). Since 2018, the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) has undertaken actions aimed at targeting this niche tourism particularly in communities of Italians who live abroad (Gabrieli, 2020; Perri, 2020) and sponsored, together with the University of Calabria and the Italian National Tourism Organization (ENIT), the First Italian report on roots tourism (Ferrari and Nicotera, 2021).

In the past, roots tourism had been studied, for example, by geographers (e.g., Gentileschi, 2011), sociologists (e.g., Romita, 2010; Perri 2010, 2020), and anthropologists (e.g., Busu, 2005; Vietti, 2012) because of its close link with migrants' phenomena. In fact, roots tourism regards emigrants, or their descendants, who return with their families and friends to their places of origin for tourism reason (De Marchi and Mingotto, 2016). A specific feature of this niche is that it appears almost overlapped by cultural tourism because of the 'how' roots tourists visit their homeland: in fact, they are animated by maintaining family relationships and emotional ties with the places of their childhood / youth or of their own origins. The roots tourists are inclined to enjoy the places of their family roots through a path of re-appropriation or knowledge in the case of Italian descendants, of the historical, cultural and enogastronomic heritage of their homeland. They feel a sense of belonging to their homeland, which constitutes a fundamental trait of roots tourism.

According to some scholars (Romita 2010; Perri, 2020) roots tourists, especially those of Calabrian origin, prefer to renting houses rather than staying

in conventional accommodation facilities and are sometimes hosted in family homes or by relatives. Roots tourists are also very promising hosts because compared to mass tourists who choose Italy as a destination for summer holidays, they make more trips during the year, even in less canonical periods and, as a relevant feature to the focus of this study, they choose to visit places because of their origin and not in relation to the fact that these places are located in well-known tourist destinations: for example, in Sardinia – an island destination characterised by coastal tourism - the emigrant festivals take place in rural villages, which are far from the sea and have no proper tourist infrastructures. These festivals are aimed to strengthen the links between local communities and emigrants who return there for vacation. This aspect (going on holidays to homeland rather than to a general tourism destination) reveals even more how roots tourism embodies features of slow tourism (Calzati, 2011; Di Clemente et al., 2015; Fullagar, Markwell, and Wilson, 2012), which is respectful to the places visited, local traditions-oriented and very sensitive to food that recalls simple flavours of a family dimension. In this regard, roots tourism is considered a niche coherent with the bedrock of sustainable tourism.

Despite the relevance of roots tourism, the Italian initiatives for the widespread organization of hospitality offers, firstly, appear in an embryonic state and, secondly, mainly aim at promoting incoming activities in communities of compatriots abroad, as it is in the case of the MAECI. In the roots tourism literature review emerges a gap to be filled in outlining conceptual maps and paths for planned activities for small and rural destinations, addressed to create, manage and promote their product. In this regard, implementing a stakeholder theory is seen as a key factor to achieve goals of organising and managing destinations both at national and local level. Therefore, the study deals with roots tourism as a means of socio-economic development to communities (mostly located in rural areas) affected by migration flows that can become organised destinations based on sustainable basis (Santos, Castanho, and Lousada, 2019). The focus on Italy represents an empirical laboratory to explore potential roots tourism destinations, such as in the Southern Europe, in which national and local stakeholders lack in marketing and promoting such a niche tourism. In other words, the study aims at raising awareness about roots tourism and outline paths and tools addressed to unbeaten destinations, such as rural areas, which could become more structured tourist destinations by engaging together policy makers, businesses, NGOs and local community around a shared plan.

Roots tourism features

Roots tourism is connected to migratory flows and the main trip motivation is, as already mentioned, to search for one's origins through the belonging to a different place in which one resides, to re-establish a link with the history of one's own family (Ferrari and Nicotera, 2021). Return trips to the country of origin represent an important step in the discovery of the individual and family identity of emigrants, and also a personal search for meanings (Basu, 2005). In addition to visiting places linked to family history, the journeys to the roots also

include moments dedicated to search and meeting with distant relatives of family branches who have remained in the country of origin. As highlighted by Vietti (2012), the discovery of new relatives is considered one of the greatest satisfactions of the journey.

The starting point for understanding and analysing roots tourism is, therefore, the migration phenomenon (Basu, 2005; Li, McKercher and Chan, 2020; Perri, 2014). A clear aspect that emerges is the lack of systematization of data and statistics of Italian emigration abroad (Ferrari and Nicotera, 2021). Probably, the interest in quantifying and analysing emigration flows by a tourism lens was not perceived because of the lack of awareness about the importance of roots tourism. As already said, Italian emigration abroad is estimated by 80 million people (Perri, 2020); in comparison, for example VisitScotland estimates that over 50 million people in the world have Scottish ancestry. Compared to the geographical areas of origin, Southern Italy and the islands are those particularly affected by emigration. By crossing this data with the national tourism statistics for which the Northern regions hold the biggest share for tourist attraction capacity in Italy, it would seem a priority to intervene in the Southern regions to focus efforts on minor and rural destinations that could achieve socio-economic benefits from the proposition of offers for the roots tourism niche and, in perspective, counteract the demographic outflow that largely depends on the lack of job opportunities (CREI-ACLI, 2022). Calabria is the pilot region for the promotion of this segment, an activity that cannot be separated from the role of the University of Calabria, the first to have established a special master degree aimed at training professionals in this area.

The reasons for migration can be different; for instance, they can be portrayed along a lifestyle to economic rational continuum, or including a mix of both (Boyne, Carswell and Hall, 2002; Li, McKercher and Chan, 2020). Migration may also be made voluntarily or forced on individuals; those who move voluntarily tend to maintain close ties to their homeland and, at the same time, develop strong attachments to their new place of residence (Li, McKercher and Chan, 2020). Other scholars (Williams and Hall, 2000), consider the tourism-related migration nexus as made up of two types of migration flows: production-led or labour migration, which is generated by the requirement to service tourism activity; and consumption-led migration systems which include seasonal migration and second home ownership, and permanent migration at the retirement life-cycle stage.

The reasons to migrate may also come up from the stories of the experiences of emigrants and paths taken by them for the re-appropriation of their roots and their desire to travel to the native country (Perri, 2014, 2020). The migratory phenomenon is indeed significant in certain historical moments, such as the great emigration of the first half of the twentieth century; however, emigration is a constant of every epoch that varies only in intensity in relation to socio-economic phenomena or wars and, more recently, the component of environmental emigration due to climate change is growing (Piguet, Pécoud, and

de Guchteneire, 2011). There are also reasons for emigration that have nothing to do with improving one's job position and income and which are instead more attributable, interpreting the post-modernization discussed by Perri (2020), to aspirations of 'being' than 'having', like living in "other" dimension, outside one's comfort zone.

Roots tourism in Italy was quantified by ENIT: in 1997 over 5 million travellers attributable to returning tourists were accounted; in 2018, 10 million were registered: this represents a clear sign of considerable growth of roots tourism, although Italy is very far from countries like Scotland where roots tourism has been targeted since 1999 (Basu, 2005). Table 1, taken from ENIT, details not only the number of arrivals of returning tourists by country of origin, equal to over 670 thousand, but also the expenditure which generates an income of almost 650 million euros. From table 1 it emerges also that the main areas of origin of roots tourists are in North America (United States and Canada) and secondarily in South America, in particular Argentina and Brazil. According to ENIT, the main roots tourism markets are made up of Brazil, where 25 million people of Italian origin, Argentina (20 million) and the USA (17 million) reside, followed by France, Switzerland, Germany and Australia. During the 2007-2008 global crisis, there was a further migratory flow from Italy to Germany, the United Kingdom and Belgium and at the same time directed to the United States, Canada and Australia.

These data are very valuable as they support political decision-makers to direct the communication and marketing actions of the destination Italy, on the one hand towards the areas of greatest origin of current tourists; on the other hand - with the help of more in-depth data on the emigration of Italians abroad - to promote awareness-raising actions towards areas of potential returning tourists, for example, those scattered in Europe who can make more trips a year than Italians residing in the American continent.

Tab. 1 Return tourists to Italy, 2017

Area of residence	N° Tourists (thousand)	Expenditure (€ million)
United States	474	434
Canada	104	86
Brasil	35	49
Argentina	57	75
Total	670	644

Source: ENIT, 2018 (<https://www.enit.it/wwwenit/it/pressroomonline/comunicati-stampa/3055-turismo-di-ritorno.html>)

Another important element for understanding roots tourism, especially in terms of destination management, concerns the experience of the visit. As mentioned at the beginning, roots tourism is particularly interesting for the fact that it embodies the characteristics of sustainable tourism (Cannas, 2020) for the following reasons:

- deals with countries and communities that have been afflicted by migratory phenomena and often these are rural and mountain areas; this may allow the activation of virtuous circuits of local economies (for example, for accommodation facilities, catering services, the purchase of local products, visits to historical and cultural museums and sites), generating socio-economic rebalancing processes in places not beaten by mass tourism;
- generates a limited environmental impact on the territory compared to other forms of tourism, since it tends to be distributed spatially (avoiding the centralization and congestion of places) and also temporally (more visits are made during the year, even outside the seasonal peaks); therefore, root tourism shuns the worst defects of seaside tourism and can be promoted especially in areas of the country characterised by temporally and spatially concentrated tourist peaks (Cannas, 2012; 2020);
- respects and reinvigorates the local culture by favouring historical-cultural visits and travels over time in search of family histories and their origins, involving the local community;
- reinforces the local identity of places, giving value to the rhythms, habits and customs of the countries of origin;
- motivate the return of emigrants or their transfer (Perri, 2020) where the emigrants from tourists, re-become or become permanent inhabitants of their places of origin for the first time.

There are also other aspects of roots tourists, not strictly related to sustainability, such as generating the word of mouth effect among their circle of friends in the place of residence, acting as ambassadors of Italy; or that of soliciting emotional levers that make the visit to the places of origin memorable - in this area there is a thriving line of marketing studies that analyse, precisely, the emotional keys that make the visit “memorable” (Kim and Ritchie, 2013) especially in cultural sites (Cannas and Pettinao, 2018).

The human exchange component is certainly central. If for some years scholars have been discussing *experiential tourism* both in the international context (see, for example, Sternberg, 1997; Prebensen, Chen and Uysal, 2014), and nationally (for example, Pencarelli and Forlani, 2002) by declining such a concept in various ways, roots tourism allows the overcoming of the experiences connected to *having*, with *being*, with finding oneself among people without necessarily buying up “experiences”. In fact, for roots tourists, the time of the visit is not metaphorically comparable to a box of experiences to be filled to the brim, balloon rides, gallops on horseback and so on. Instead, it is perceived as a time to find oneself, to strengthen ties with people and places, to learn about the history of one's origins, to sit on the table with family and friends, to linger to the village bar to talk with fellow villagers, to feel or resent part of a community from which one comes and make treasure the sense of belonging. This does not exclude roots tourists from living experiences, but reinterpret experiences and

fills them up with meaning in the light of a common thread which is the inner search for oneself.

Compared to other tourist segments, roots tourism has been assimilated to cultural tourism and tourism to discover places, also from an environmental point of view. A particular trait compared to other segments lies in the fact that roots tourism requires figures by local operators who act in the role of *intermediaries of local communities* as defined in this study. In fact, roots tourists - especially those of the second or third generation of descendants - need operators who help them to reconstruct the genealogical tree of their family, who know where to look in the municipal or parish archives and who are available to be contacted, thus avoiding the necessity that roots tourists become professional investigators. Whether these are individual operators or operators in groups gathered under the aegis of associations, the intermediaries or facilitators of local communities perform the function of acting as an intermediary between tourists and homeland communities, but also between them and goods and services' companies that operate in the area. If it is true that roots tourists act as ambassadors abroad in spreading knowledge and curiosity about traveling to places in Italy, it is equally true that intermediaries from local communities act as territorial ambassadors for tourists and as glues with social, economic and environmental aspects of the territory visited. For this reason, it is necessary to reserve for the actors an important role when drawing maps for the planning of the activities and the management of the destination.

In the managerial implications of roots tourism and the context of building territorial strategies for the dissemination of this niche, it is also necessary to consider the actors who play a key role, such as those who offer accommodation services. Regarding the accommodation facilities preferred by roots tourists, scholars express different views: some authors (Romita, 2010; Romita and Perri, 2015) highlight the role of rented houses or stays with relatives and link roots tourism to residential tourism, especially in the case of Calabria. Others (Schilirò and Grasso, 2021) state that roots tourists are more inclined to purchase properties for one euro, an option that has become quite popular in towns and villages holding a built heritage in disuse that have/HAS been entirely or partially abandoned by people; otherwise, they search for accommodation in widespread hotels (Dall'Ara, 2010). The diffused hotels represent a model of sustainable accommodation (Cannas, 2020) since they reuse the existing building heritage, creating tourism entrepreneurship together with a network of other hospitality services, aimed to create tourism facilities and offers even for small villages. Regardless of the specific type of accommodation chosen, roots tourists show a clear propensity for accommodation facilities, as well as for visiting places of their origins, rarely beaten by mass tourism. This distinctive feature, together with the others already mentioned, reveal how roots tourism is a very promising niche, especially for activating new tourist attraction circuits in rural or marginal areas of the country, where it may be possible to change the state of abandonment and emigration into forms of sustainable tourism development.

However, Italian national and local stakeholders lack in a strategic vision for promoting the tourist development of the destination, as well as they lack in knowledge about the relevant segment of roots tourism (Schilirò and Grasso, 2021). Furthermore, stakeholders are not fully aware about opportunities that roots tourism can offer if fully recognized and promoted extensively by marketing tools (Ferrari and Nicotera, 2021) and new technologies (Perri and Romita, 2020). Differently from Italy, many destinations have instead undertaken marketing campaigns and promoted their image across multiple media platforms (Newland & Taylor, 2010), which represent the rising importance of information technology to management of diaspora destinations (Li, Mc Kercher and Chan, 2020).

Stakeholders theory to roots tourism

Tourism, regardless of the type of segment, is notoriously a complex of activities that combines different resources such as the natural environment, the physical environment - in a broad sense - shaped by human activities and the socio-economic environment. The decisions made regarding the use and transformation of these resources by the actors of a tourist destination, whether they are at a local or extra-local level, should therefore take into account a plurality of needs and related effects. This implies that tourism, which today cannot ignore the paradigm of sustainability (Cannas, 2020), depends on creating balanced relationships between the needs of the different stakeholders involved in the reception system (Martini and Buffa, 2014). Consequently, the development of tourism, as well as the root tourism segment, involves a stakeholder approach (Cannas, 2020) which must consider:

- the satisfaction of tourists' expectations;
- the achievement of economic objectives for the various private operators involved in the hospitality system;
- the achievement of development objectives for public institutions;
- the satisfaction of the social and professional needs of the residents with the improvement of their quality of life;
- the preservation of the natural and social capital of tourist destinations.

In other words, the stakeholder approach requires balancing the different "voices" of the stakeholders (Getz and Timur, 2012) and requires that tourism development is managed with awareness and with projects or plans shared between the various stakeholders. Stakeholders theory was introduced in strategic management by Freeman (1984). It is based on the definition of a stakeholder in a managerial and organizational context, or of any group or individual that can influence or is influenced by the achievement of the objectives of an organization. In essence, stakeholders theory asserts that firms must consider the interests of the groups or individuals that influence, or are influenced by, the firm, not limiting themselves to their "internal" boundaries but understanding their relationships with society (Wood and Jones, 1995).

As stakeholder theory suggests to organizations to consider a wide range of influencers in the act of developing their business strategy, the same can be suggested for sustainable tourism development planning (Byrd, 2007) and demand niches such as roots tourism. In line with the stakeholder theory applied to tourism in various parts of the world (Barakat and Wada, 2021), the tourism development of a destination requires that decision-making processes are based on the negotiation and participation of different and multiple stakeholders (Hardy, Beeton and Pierson, 2001), including those who have no direct economic stake in play (Cannas, 2020).

Briefly, the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) is founded on four pillars. The first consists in the identification of stakeholders and in the tourism planning and management process which, in this specific area, refers to roots tourism. The second pillar consists in determining the importance of each stakeholder within the considered system, in this case of the tourist destination in which it is intended to promote roots tourism. The process of identifying the importance of the individual stakeholder takes place in consideration of a series of elements such as, for example, the role played in the tourism system in terms of possession of critical resources, of information possessed and of financial position in the tourism system at the level of destination, but also of specific relevance to the segment to be promoted. In the case of roots tourism, the identification of stakeholders should not be done by limiting the field only to the tourist destination, but also including potential external organizations: these can be associations of Italians abroad, economic operators of tourist intermediation, public bodies such as ENIT and MAECI. The third pillar is to determine how the needs and expectations of each stakeholder are met by the destination. The fourth pillar consists in modifying tourism development taking into account the interests of stakeholders that have not previously been accepted in the political and operational planning of the destination. The latter represents the most delicate feature of Freeman's model since it implies the ability of destination organizations to act on even opposing interests of stakeholders (Getz and Timur, 2012). For example, the stakeholders of tourism companies holding the economic power to generate consistent income, may come into conflict with associations that represent instances of conservation of nature or historical-cultural resources that do not create immediate jobs today, but defend resources for the enjoyment not only of current generations, but also of future ones.

Discussion and conclusions

By applying stakeholder theory to the tourism sector (Nicolaidis, 2015), stakeholders may include transport carriers, travel agencies, tour operators, hospitality operators, public authorities, the press and communication agencies, but also other interest groups involving residents (Song, Zhu and Fong, 2021) or indigenous groups. In the specific case of roots tourism, the following agencies should be included: local associations that promote the encounter between tourists and local communities - here referred to as facilitators or intermediaries of local communities - as well as local action groups (LAGs), public libraries,

cultural associations that deal in various ways with the promotion of local culture and history, and also companies that offer products (for example in food and wine or crafts) or guided tour services.

The circle of potential actors must then be extended to others, such as, for example, representatives of associations of emigrants abroad, data analysts and sector scholars in schools, universities and local authorities (such as Municipalities, the Region of reference, the regional agencies that have competence on tourism). In addition to the local / regional context, stakeholders already mentioned as ENIT and MAECI must be considered, including the European Commission and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Once a map of possible stakeholders has been identified (schematised in Figure 1), it is necessary to proceed with the development and sharing of a plan that operates in conjunction with the initiatives from top-down (for example, MAECI and ENIT) and bottom-up (for instance, at local level). Local plans may take specific forms depending on the territories and actors involved, but it is necessary that bottom-up planning proceeds in line with national strategic planning, otherwise the bottom-up processing activity would risk to be an end in itself. For example, the involvement of communities of residents abroad implies the implementation of communication and marketing actions in the territories of residence of tourists that can be carried out as synergistic interventions, structured and planned by designated working groups. This is in fact the role that MAECI has obtained, in agreement with ENIT and on which operational developments are expected in relation to the resources allocated by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) of the Italian Government (Governo Italiano, 2021).



Fig. 1 Stakeholders Map for Roots Tourism

Although the activities of local plans for roots tourism depend on the organization of working groups on a territorial basis, this study provides suggestions about possible interventions that a shared plan for attracting roots tourists and organising the destination hospitality may include, such as:

- communication actions on media and social networks to inform to and raise awareness of the various stakeholders about the opportunity to attract the roots tourism;
- relational marketing activities with public bodies (Region, Municipalities, Universities) to facilitate contacts in the construction of the operational network of the actors to be involved; and to activate resources or to make communication or teaching spaces available (for example, roots tourism could be promoted in master's or master's degree courses, as is already the case at the University of Calabria, with specific teaching modules and involvement of testimonies in the classroom);
- involvement of trade associations business, local cultural associations, LAGs, with the identification of the most proactive subjects;
- national and local surveys for mapping roots tourism supply and demand;
- identification of pilot areas for initial experimentation of initiatives to be put into operation;
- creation of online and offline communication tools for tourists (for example: social pages, dedicated blogs, video channels, information guides);
- management of collaborative networks, systematization of data and identification of auditing tools to monitor and improve the plan in progress.

Roots tourism is a very flourishing and highly sought-after market internationally. In Italy roots tourism has not been fully explored, and national authorities lack in providing detailed statistics on the migratory phenomenon and the travel of the roots (Ferrari and Nicotera, 2021). However, on the initiative of MAECI and with the commitment of resources of the PNRR, roots tourism today has chances of being investigated more closely in order to be promoted both in the places of Italian immigration and in the context of Italian destinations characterised by emigration flows abroad.

Starting from a conceptual framework of roots tourism and within the theoretical perspective of the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), the study aims at outlining maps of the actors to be involved in the process and possible actions to be taken, addressed to policy makers and operators in the sector. Roots tourism is a particular niche compared to other segments. One of its main characteristics consists of being easily assimilated as sustainable tourism (Cannas, 2020) due to the way it takes shape: first of all, roots tourists travel to the places of their origin solicited by sentimental and emotional motivations,

regardless of how objectively attractive they are from an aesthetic or touristic point of view (i.e., equipped with tourist services). These are places (most of the time villages placed in rural and mountain areas) of their childhood, family life, the life of relatives and even when tourists are descendants of the second or third generation, those villages and towns embody an inestimable emotional value for them. This implies that the places of destination do not necessarily coincide with well-known tourist destinations and that possible development prospects for small destinations or new connections may be opened up, in order to reconnect rural and marginal areas to already established destinations. In the case of Sardinia, a seaside destination which mainly concerns coastal areas and cuts out from tourism numerous countries located in inland areas, roots tourism can generate virtuous circuits for the hospitality of returning tourists originating from inland villages, without upsetting the local socio-economic asset, and not even the building heritage, in order to create ghost towns. On the contrary, roots tourism may operate a sort of local regeneration both by reusing the existing real estate assets, with the free rental or use of private houses (Romita and Perri, 2015) and revitalising local cultural, with the provision of specific services for this type of tourist, provided by associations that act as facilitators between the needs of the tourist and the local community, for example for the reconstruction of the family tree of one's family or historical-cultural-environmental knowledge of the places. The opportunities for local development in Italy through the less spontaneous and more planned attraction of root tourism requires structured paths between players and programs.

The main contribution of this study is twofold: on the one hand, it proposes a varied map of potential actors which should then be adapted to the individual cases of concrete application. This map includes both public actors (such as MAECI, ENIT, Regions, Municipalities, local development agencies, universities, etc.) and private actors (such as tourist service operators, local associations, trade associations of businesses). On the other hand, the study has outlined the possible roles of the actors and actions to be undertaken in the framework of shared planning, especially at the level of the organization of the Italian offer, which include communication and marketing in several areas, but also auditing and monitoring of the actions themselves, to contribute to a greater structuring of roots tourism. The focus on Italy is not a case in itself: this could be shared globally with other destinations characterised by consistent migration flows in which marketing and promoting activities for roots tourism are at the initial stage of their development path.

References

- Alex-Assensoh, Y. M. (2010). African Americans, African immigrants and homeland-diaspora development in Africa. *African Diaspora*, 3(2), 207–234.
- Basu, P. (2005). Roots tourism as return movement: semantics and the Scottish diaspora. *Emigrant homecomings: The return movement of emigrants*, 1600-2000.
- Barakat, S. R., & Wada, E. K. (2021). Stakeholder theory in the hospitality field: insights drawn from a systematic literature review. *Hospitality & Society*, 11(2), 183-207.

- Byrd, E.T. (2007). Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism Development and their Roles: Applying Stakeholder Theory to Sustainable Tourism Development. *Tourism Review*, 62, 6-13.
- Boyne, S., Carswell, F., & Hall, D. (2002). Reconceptualizing VFR tourism: Friends, relatives and migration within a domestic context. In C. M. Hall & A. M. Williams (Eds.), *Tourism and migration: New relationships between Production and consumption* (pp. 240–256). Morwell: Kluwer Academic.
- Calzati, V. (2011). Territori lenti: Nuove traiettorie di sviluppo. In E. Nocifora, P. de Salvo, & V. Calzati (Eds.), *Territori lenti e turismo di qualità, prospettive innovative per lo sviluppo di un turismo sostenibile* (pp. 62–72). Milan: FrancoAngeli.
- Cannas, R. (2020). Il turismo sostenibile nel Mediterraneo. Le visioni degli stakeholder a Malta e in Sardegna. Milan: Franco Angeli.
- Cannas, R. (2012). An overview of tourism seasonality: Key concepts and policies. *Almatourism-Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development*, 3(5), 40-58.
- Cannas, R. & Pettinao, D. (2018). Measuring Tourists' Emotional Experiences in a cultural site. *Mercati&Competitività*, 3, 121-145.
- Central Statistics Office of Ireland (2020). Statistical Yearbook of Ireland 2020. Retrieved in: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-syi/statisticalyearbookofireland2020/tt/tourism/>
- Centro Regionale Emigrazione-Immigrazione della Sardegna (CREI) & Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori Italiani (ACLI) (2022). *Rapporto annuale emigrazione*. Retrieved in: www.aclarisardegna.it
- Dall'Ara, G. (2010). Manuale dell'albergo diffuso. L'idea, la gestione, il marketing. Milan: Franco Angeli.
- De Marchi, D., & Mingotto, E. (2016). Turismo delle origini. Quadro preliminare sulle potenzialità in Italia. IRSS (eds.). *XX Rapporto sul Turismo Italiano*, 589-596.
- Di Clemente, E., Hernández-Mogollón, J. M., De Salvo, P., & Campón-Cerro, A. M. (2015). Slow tourism: An alternative model for local and tourist development. In E. Di Clemente, J. M. Hernández-Mogollón, P. De Salvo, A. M. Campón-Cerro (Eds.) *Sustainable performance and tourism: A collection of tools and best practices*, 23-37.
- Dillette, A. (2021). Roots tourism: a second wave of double consciousness for African Americans. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(2-3), 412-427.
- Ferrari, S. & Nicotera, T. (2021). Primo rapporto sul turismo delle radici in Italia. Dai flussi migratori ai flussi turistici: strategie di destination marketing per il 'richiamo' in patria delle comunità di italiani nel mondo. Milan: Egea.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). Strategic management: A stakeholder theory, *Journal of Management Studies*.
- Newland, K., & Taylor, C. (2010). Heritage tourism and nostalgia trade: A diaspora niche in the development landscape. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Gabrieli, M. (2020). "Caso di studio: l'esperienza dell'Associazione Raiz Italiana". In A. Perri (Ed.) *Il turismo delle radici*, 81-92. Aracne.
- Gentileschi, M. L. (2011). Turismo della memoria: alla ricerca delle radici in Brasile. *Ammantu*, 3, 131-149.
- Getz, D., & Timur, S. (2012). "12 Stakeholder involvement in sustainable tourism: balancing the voices". In W.F. Theobald (Ed.) *Global tourism*, 230-239.
- Governo Italiano (Italian Government) (2021) Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (PNRR). Next Generation EU
- Hardy, A., Beeton, R. J. S., & Pearson, L. (2002). Sustainable tourism: An overview of the concept and its position in relation to conceptualisations of tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 10(6), 475-496.
- Hogan, J. (2019). Roots quest: Inside America's genealogy boom. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kim J. & Ritchie J.R.B. (2013). Cross-Cultural Validation of a Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (MTES). *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(3), 323-335.
- Li, T. E., McKercher, B., & Chan, E. T. H. (2020). Towards a conceptual framework for diaspora tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(17), 2109-2126.

- Martini, U., & Buffa, F. (2015). Local networks, stakeholder dynamics and sustainability in tourism. Opportunities and limits in the light of stakeholder theory and SNA. *Sinergie*, 96(Jan-Apr).
- Newland, K., & Taylor, C. (2010). Heritage tourism and nostalgia trade: A diaspora niche in the development landscape. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Nicolaides, A. (2015). Tourism Stakeholder Theory in practice: instrumental business grounds, fundamental normative demands or a descriptive application? *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 4 (2), 1-27.
- Pencarelli, T., & Forlani, F. (2002). Il marketing dei distretti turistici-sistemi vitali nell'economia delle esperienze. *Sinergie*, 58(02), 227-271.
- Perri, A. (2020). *Il turismo delle radici*. Rome: Aracne.
- Perri, A. (2014). La mobilità turistico-residenziale. Forme di neo-nomadismo nell'era della globalizzazione. Doctoral thesis, Università degli Studi della Calabria.
- Perri, A. (2010). Alcune riflessioni sul turismo residenziale delle radici. In T. Romita (Ed.) *Il turismo residenziale: nuovi stili di vita e di residenzialità, governance del territorio e sviluppo sostenibile del turismo in Europa* (pp. 145-156), Franco Angeli.
- Perri, A., & Romita, T. (2020). Nuove tecnologie e mobilità turistica. *Fuori Luogo. Rivista di Sociologia del Territorio, Turismo, Tecnologia*, 7(1), 117-123.
- Piguet, E., Pécoud, A., De Guchteneire, P., & Guchteneire, P. F. (Eds). (2011). *Migration and climate change*. Cambridge University Press.
- Prebensen, N. K., Chen, J. S., & Uysal, M. (eds.). (2018). *Creating experience value in tourism*. Cabi.
- Romita, T. (2010). Il turismo residenziale. Nuovi stili di vita e di residenzialità, governance del territorio e sviluppo sostenibile del turismo in Europa. Milan: Franco Angeli.
- Romita, T. & Perri, A. (2015). L'impatto della mobilità territoriale delle persone sulle aree turistiche. *ROTUR, Revista de Ocio y Turismo*, 10, 23-42.
- Santos, R., Castanho, R. A., & Lousada, S. (2019). Return migration and tourism sustainability in Portugal: Extracting opportunities for sustainable common planning in Southern Europe. *Sustainability*, 11(22), 6468.
- Schilirò, D. & Grasso, F. (2021). "Per un turismo sostenibile: il turismo di ritorno. Aspetti socio-economici e politiche turistico-territoriali [For sustainable tourism: the return tourism. Socio-economic aspects and tourism-territorial policies". MPRA Paper 109694, University Library of Munich, Germany.
- Sternberg, E. (1997). The iconography of the tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(4), 951-969.
- Song, H., Zhu, C., & Fong, L. H. N. (2021). Exploring residents' perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism development in traditional villages: The lens of stakeholder theory. *Sustainability*, 13(23), 13032.
- Tomczewska-Popowycz, N., & Taras, V. (2022). The many names of "Roots tourism": An integrative review of the terminology. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 50, 245-258.
- United Nations. (2016). International Migration Report 2015: Highlights. Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division.
- UNWTO. (2018). European Union tourism trends. Report commissioned by the European Commission (April).
- Vietti, F. (2012). Hotel Albania. Viaggi, migrazioni, turismo. Carocci.
- VisitScotland (2017). Scotland Visitor Survey 2015&2016. Connection to Scotland Extract. Retrieved in: <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers/connections-to-scotland-extract.pdf>
- Williams, A. M., & Hall, C. M. (2000). Tourism and migration: new relationships between production and consumption. *Tourism Geographies*, 2(1), 5-27.
- Wood, D. J., & Jones, R. E. (1995). Stakeholder mismatching: A theoretical problem in empirical research on corporate social performance. *The International Journal of Organizational Analysis*.

Acknowledgement

This paper derives from the collaboration with Prof. Tullio Romita and Dr. Antonella Perri of the University of Calabria in Italy, within the project entitled: “The tourist perception of the roots places. The story of holiday places in the perception of the residential tourist of Calabrian roots”. A partial version of this paper, written in Italian, can be found on MPRA Paper No. 114240, posted on 18th August 2022 - <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/114240/>

About the Author

Rita Cannas (PhD, Marie Curie Fellow) is an experienced researcher collaborating with the Department of Pedagogy, Psychology, Philosophy of the University of Cagliari in Italy. Her main research interests are in the field of sustainable tourism, social entrepreneurship and digital transformation. Email rita.cannas@unica.it