

Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>

Scientific Symposium - Session D  
The impact of Tourism

## **LIFE BEYOND TOURISM**

**For INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE, LIFE BEYOND TOURISM**  
**Tourism based on values, not just on consumer services.**

### **THE SOUL OF A PLACE**

The soul - the “spirit” - of a place is subject to its own kind of evolution as time goes by, but in recent decades the exceedingly rapid development of travel has impressed such speed, on this otherwise natural process, that the changes taking place cannot easily be assimilated by local culture.

The fall of the Berlin Wall led many countries to aspire to freedom and to self-determination; there was an increased need to respect cultural diversity; and intercultural dialogue, along with the need to boost awareness of the multiplicity of cultural expressions and traditions, began to take on crucial importance. If diversity is to be respected, it has to be known; and to be known, it has to be properly communicated.

### **MASS TOURISM**

Mass tourism is making a major contribution to the destruction of all of this, because industrializing the services offered to tourists makes travel simpler to organize, with standard services being offered internationally and having an immediate appeal for most tourists.

While all of this might be understandable from the point of view of the tourist industry that provides the services, it is unacceptable on account of the way in which it erodes spirit of place. Selling Coca Cola at the foot of the pyramids is not offering the tourist a service, it is feeding him or her disinformation.

The mini-bar in any hotel room around the world contains the same international products and make it impossible for a tourist to tell what part of the world he is in ! All of this is pure disinformation!

All of this amounts to millions of wasted opportunities for communicating “spirit of place” to the visitors !

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The tourist, the visitor is nothing more than a ..Credit Card Numer !  
So, we were saying that the kinds of services being offered to tourists have gradually become more and more standardized as a result of procedural simplification.  
In other words, without realizing it, those working in the tourist industry are undermining the image of the very place they're trying to promote, by offering standardized products to make sure they don't stray from the consolidated habits their international clientèle is deemed to have acquired.

### **MANAGING TOURISM to BE AVOID BEING MANAGED BY IT**

Tourism is a positive phenomenon per se, but it has to be managed in the destinations with a strong tourist “calling”. I am merely pointing out a fact. We in Florence are very familiar with what has happened to Venice: it has become an open-air museum. Yet despite the tangible experience of its close neighbour, Florence too has become “Venetian”; in other words, it has fallen into the very same trap.

All of this means that the centre offers fewer and fewer facilities for residents and more and more services exclusively for tourists, which naturally deters an increasingly large number of Florentines from wanting to live there.

A postwar city planning document reckoned that Florence would have a population of 700,000 by the end of the 20th century; well, today it has a population of just over 350,000.

All of the downtown shops and businesses are tourist-oriented in terms of the goods they sell and the services and facilities they offer, in terms of their design, their colours, and their opening hours; that's the proper way of killing off the memory and spirit of a place.

The city's façade is still there, but its life and its authenticity have gone.

Quick kill tourists get there by taxi from their cruise ships in the nearby port of Livorno, reaching the city at 11 a.m, and by 4.30 p.m. they've gone!

But they'll be perfectly entitled to say ... “I went to Florence” !

### **“BEING THERE, DONE THAT ... GOT THE T-SHIRT !”**

If all of this is true, then we need to start with precisely those words “been there, done that ...” and turn them into: “I got to know...”, “I realized...”, or “I've woken up to the fact that there is so much to understand in this world and that I'm unlikely to be able to understand it in such a short time”.

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So a few less certainties, and a lot more awareness, ... please !

Beyond the current “mask” of tourism, so desired yet so dreaded, there is a neglected world, a world of boundless potential. It is precisely this crucial aspect that the Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco mulled over at some length.

Its aim was to highlight the fact that beyond tourism, as we know it today, there is a precious world of opportunity which we have called “Life Beyond Tourism”, using the emblem of a flower to put the idea across.

The petals on this flower are “encounters”, “communication”, “knowledge”, “conservation” and “economy”. This flower, these petals, this penta-petals flower indeed “Life Beyond Tourism” itself, enshrine the knowledge that it is possible to foster a new style of tourism strongly aware of its own potential, not as a force for standardization in the world but as a force for the enhancement of difference.

*Figure 1. The flower of “Life Beyond Tourism”*

This, to allow the visitor to become closely acquainted with his or her destination in terms both of its tangible and of its intangible heritage, thus fostering knowledge and, consequently, *respect*.

**LIFE BEYOND TOURISM a RADICAL REVERSAL of PERSPECTIVE**

“Life Beyond Tourism” is based on the realization that the tourist industry (from the Tour Operator through the Travel Agencies till the Restaurants, Hotels etc.), tourist industry which can only operate in peace time, has failed to take on board the importance of its potential role in the world today -- a role of crucial importance for understanding and preserving “spirit of place”, but also for promoting “intercultural dialogue” and an awareness of “cultural diversity and traditions”. So we're talking here about a radical reversal of perspective: the very people who contribute today to the standardization of the world, in other words who represent a threat to the preservation of “spirit of place”, can rapidly begin to make an active contribution to its preservation and to spreading awareness of it, throughout the world via “Life Beyond Tourism”.

On 15 March this year, “Life Beyond Tourism” was presented in the Salone dei Duecento council chamber in Palazzo Vecchio, Florence's city hall (<http://www.lifebeyondtourism.org/>) and simultaneously implemented at the Vivahotel Pitti Palace al Ponte Vecchio close by, as just one point of the tourist services distribution chain.

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## **THE LIFE BEYOND TOURISM INITIATIVE**

“Life Beyond Tourism” is designed to contribute to the dissemination of such universal values as ‘respect and harmony’ among peoples, through Tourism ! To achieve this, Life Beyond Tourism aims to turn travelling from a purely leisure-driven experience into a precious moment of knowledge and encounter between people from different cultural backgrounds.

There is way of travelling that goes beyond snapshots, souvenirs and shopping. Building an interactive network between travellers and their destination provides an opportunity for promoting intercultural awareness that we cannot afford not to seize.

In the spirit of Life Beyond Tourism, it is absolutely crucial that the relationship between a traveller and his destination not become a mere offering of standardized services; it must get the traveller involved with his destination, with its past, its present and its future.

### **The “LIFE BEYOND TOURISM” MANIFESTO**

- Tourism is a crucial source of prosperity;
- Tourism provides an opportunity for getting to know:
  - spirit of place
  - cultural diversity
  - traditional knowledge
- Tourism in its various forms goes way beyond the mere satisfying of personal need;
- People working in the tourist industry foster awareness of spirit of place and of intercultural dialogue;
- The tourist is a potential harbinger of knowledge and of intercultural dialogue;
- Land and environment planning and management must take into account the need to foster intercultural dialogue and awareness;
- Tourist destinations become LABORATORIES
  - . for knowledge and cultural enrichment for every traveler,
  - . to stimulate an increasingly high-quality demand for tourist products not only in terms of consumer-related services but, above all, in value-related terms.

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In other words any TOURIST PLACE can become a LABORATORY for KNOWLEDGE and for INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE.

In other words

TOURISM become a SCHOOL for the WORLD

Things will really start to change

when in travel agencies

will be ready to ask to their customers:

*ARE YOU LOOKING for TOURISM BASED on VALUES*

*or*

*JUST on CONSUMER SERVICES ?*

Life Beyond Tourism is a way of getting the ‘mass tourism’ to think, ask, choose and change the market (supply and demand).

On 16 March 2008, a *Declaration of Intent* (Figures 2-3) was signed approving the “Life Beyond Tourism” project, the promotion of that project with the loftiest international institutions such as the WTO, UNTO, UNESCO, and the start of an experiment in Europe to be conducted over a five-year period from 2008 to 2013.

(<http://www.lifebeyondtourism.com/uk/index.php>),

To follow up on this *Declaration of Intent* the Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco has sponsored the establishment of an *international association* for the enhancement of tourism for the purposes of intercultural dialogue, and for promoting an awareness of cultural diversity and traditions.

In pursuing its aim, the association will subscribe the “Life Beyond Tourism” philosophy.

Practice, product, procedures and methods, which have already been laid down, will accompany the project's development in its ongoing drive to become known and appreciated around the world.

The Association, known as

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE with LIFE BEYOND TOURISM for Tourism based on values, not just on consumer services, was founded the 25<sup>th</sup> July 2008 under the Auspices of ICCROM.

The Association will develop worldwide through a network of local associations designed to preserve and enhance the value of the ‘Spirit of Place’, with the full local involvement.

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All the Universities of the network of the Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco will be involved in developing the network of this international association.

Please accept our PENTA - FLOWER

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TOURISM BASED on VALUES not JUST on CONSUMER SERVICES**

**Thanks !**