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Published by

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A Catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-84564-124-5

ISSN: 1746-448X (print)

ISSN: 1743-3541 (online)

*The texts of the papers in this volume were set
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Printed in Great Britain by Cambridge Printing

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Preface

The archetypal tourist is at present slowly evolving towards a cultural model in which human labour, on one hand, and nature and landscape, on the other, constitute the most important attractions with regard to his trip and stay in a given place. Classical mass tourism remains as the most relevant source of income in most tourist destinations and for the powerful industry associated with transport and with the destination itself, but it is interesting to observe that, once the mere need for holidays has been satisfied, many people set themselves objectives typical of more cultured societies. These circumstances constitute a serious environmental problem, as far as mass tourism is concerned, which is interesting from the perspective of the new objectives, and many ecology scientists, economists and anthropologists are considering the situation for study.

Indeed, the natural and cultural landscape's capacity to accommodate, the local and worldwide environmental effects of tourism, the typology thereof and its implication for human economy and society constitute very important study objectives. The development of tourism involves degradation of the natural landscape, caused by the industry associated with the phenomenon and, paradoxically, it is also associated with the high appraisal the tourist makes of places free of human presence.

The phenomenon of tourism also has much more serious implications for the aforementioned circumstances. While the media persistently inform us of starvation in the world, tourism continues to grow. Not even the present worldwide economic crisis is capable of stopping it, despite the investment crises and of consumers' reduced purchasing power. Thus, not only does the 'welfare society' make no effort to internalise the costs of their economic development (pollution, degradation of the environment, loss of quality of life in relation to standard of living); it also incorporates tourism among the priority objectives of this welfare system. In his quest for happiness, the individual considers this to be of such importance that he contributes to the maintenance of the tourism industry by getting deep into debt taking out loans to pay for his holidays.

People living under conditions of extreme poverty cannot dream of taking

holidays. The rich countries that provide funds to combat starvation do not consider vacations as a priority. Nonetheless, vacationing constitutes a highly important human need, and it can be said that the landscape, along with foodstuffs and raw materials, constitutes one of the natural resources that contribute to truly sustaining humankind.

The papers published in this book which were presented at the 3rd International Conference on Sustainable Tourism, discuss some of the above topics.

The volume was edited with the help of the members of the International Scientific Advisory Committee, and other colleagues, to whom the Editors are indebted.

The Editors
Malta, 2008

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