

Analysing the Social Perception of Residential Tourism Development

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Abstract — Is the residential tourist model a type of development which is accepted by society? This question will be answered using the qualitative analysis of the discourses made by the main social actors involved in the dynamics of this process in the host societies. The information has been gathered via 45 in-depth interviews from the stakeholders who are directly involved (hotel managers, managers of travel agencies, estate agents and housing developers), as well as those who are indirectly involved (presidents of trade associations, bank managers) and those in administration (Tourist office staffs, councillors from all of the political parties). Our field of research is the Costa Blanca on the Spanish Mediterranean coast where residential tourism has been recognised as the dominant tourist typology when compared with other development models. Three basic thematic areas can be identified around which the information has been arranged: the economic, geoenvironmental and the socio-cultural dimensions. The dominant discourse tendency produces arguments which are closer to legitimisation of the residential tourism model than to resistant.

Index Terms — Qualitative research, residential tourism, social perception, Spain

1 INTRODUCTION

The shores of the Mediterranean Sea are one of the world's leading tourist destinations, the residential tourism model being one of its most important developments [1]. In other words, a second-home based tourism has become the predominant model for a huge number of cities on the Spanish Mediterranean coast, [2]. The province of Alicante, an area commercially known as the Costa Blanca, located in south-east Spain, has become a paradigmatic example of mass tourism provided we understand tourism as the rendering of services combined, to a greater or lesser extent, with property development [3]. The figures relating to the development of the residential tourism model on the Costa Blanca do not leave room for doubt. According to the 2001 census 482,919 households are not permanently occupied in the province of Alicante, and 281,275 of them are second homes, whereas the province's 308 hotels provide 61,334 beds [4].

The modernisation which links tourism and the property market has almost always been characterised by the lack of due planning, both tourism and town planning, and by its subjection to land speculation processes [5].

Thus, numerous towns have seen a huge expanse of second homes grow in their local area which are destined to tourism and are promoted by private interests. To this respect, several experts report, referring to the Spanish case, historical confusion between tourism development and property development, as well as the subsequent exploitation of property related to tourist activity by local elite groups of businessmen and politicians [6], [7]. Many of the towns in which thousands of homes have been built for tourist use do not have enough hotels to offer and in some cases this offer has a merely symbolic presence. So, it is not surprising that a "triumph of the tourism property sector over tourism in the stricter sense" has come to be mentioned [8].

We are interested in studying the dynamics present in well-established residential-tourism centres, and not in emerging destinations or those which are in the early stages of development. For this reason, in order to carry out our research, we have chosen three towns on the Costa Blanca: Santa Pola, Guardamar del Segura and Torrevieja. In all three cases these are tourist towns with an extensive offer of second homes which forms a contrast with the number of hotel beds which, in comparison, proves to be scarce. Second homes can accommodate approximately 625,000 compared to 4,279 hotel beds in 2007 [4]. The territorial continuum which the three towns make up forms a typical case of a coastal region with residential dynamics leaning towards the saturation of the existing

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space, where the overspill of property development linked to tourist development, above all in Torrevieja, is evident [9], [10], [11].

The study of the impacts caused by tourism and in particular, the analysis of the perception of residents regarding said impacts, as well as their attitudes towards tourism development, makes up one of the most prolific lines of research in specialised literature on different subjects [12]. However, it is still necessary to elaborate a theory on the social impacts of tourism which goes beyond the peculiarities of the places of destination [13]. Research on the perception of local citizens may help planners to understand the support and rejection surrounding tourism development. This information could be useful for selecting those development policies which are supported by the local society as a whole. However, the diversity of attitudes, perceptions and evaluation of the impacts create challenges for the politicians responsible that have to evaluate the costs and profits which their measures imply for the groups involved.

The host society's perception of the social dynamics of residential tourism is the object of this project. For this reason we are interested in understanding the comments made by those in various positions of power on a local sociopolitical scale. Our aim is to analyse the discourses made on tourism dynamics by the social groups with, whether directly or indirectly, a greater influence on important decision-making in the residential tourism system on a local scale.

2 METHODOLOGY

The leading line of research is the understanding of the process of legitimisation of residential-tourism development, that is, the way in which this development is explained and justified. Thus, we analyse the discursive codes which determine the creation of ideas and beliefs of the "hosts" regarding the meaning of tourism, as well as the appraisal of the social changes brought about in their cities as a consequence of the residential tourism process.

The qualitative approximation of the analysis of the ideological context in which residential tourism activity takes place requires the application of tools which are grouped under umbrella of qualitative methodology and which make reference to interpretive techniques which intend to discover, decode and synthesize the meaning, and not the frequency of the facts which occur in the social world [14]. In order to do this, the

main stakeholders of the area were asked a series of questions. The design of this study, and particularly the selection of those interviewed, is inspired upon the tourism planning model based on the "stakeholder theory" which Elise Sautter and Birgit Leisen [15] adapted to the tourism system from Freeman's idea [16]. This model integrates a selection of social agents who act within the tourism system. We have made an adaptation of this for the case of the residential tourism system which exists on the Costa Blanca taking some of our previous experiences as a starting point [3], [5], [17], [18].

We carried out 45 interviews between March and October 2007, with different social agents in the area which we have classified in three groups:

1. Those who are not directly involved in tourism: representatives of banks, trade unions, trade associations.
2. Stakeholders directly involved in this industry: representatives of the hotel and catering sector, travel agencies, estate agents and developers.
3. Administration, represented by town councillors and technicians with responsibilities in tourism management.

Once the information gathered had been transcribed, it served to produce a variety of codes which were then associated with three thematic blocks: economic, geoenvironmental and sociocultural. Following this, we reclassified the material collected associating ideas and drawing up lines of argument. In the presentation of the argument below, the revision of the thematic sections takes precedence over the compared analysis of the discourses given by each of the actors. This is so because our interests try to look in depth at the compared analysis of the discourses given by the most important actors, and more specifically, to look deeper into what we had identified in previous studies as dominant discursive positions: "legitimizing partial criticism" and the "permissive position" [17]. A third possible line of analysis would be to classify the material making a distinction between the three communities, but starting with the premise that the three form a single tourism region with shared characteristics. Nevertheless, we wish to point out that the study did not reveal any significant differences between the discourses produced in each of the cities, the opposite being the case.

3 DEFINITION OF THE SITUATION: THE RESIDENTIAL TOURISM MODEL

Practically all of the interviewees identified

residential tourism as the dominant typology in their communities, understanding this to be a dynamic of socioeconomic development supported by the production and use of second homes destined to tourism or a similar use. This model is associated with a more constant tourist (also called a "loyal tourist" or an "obliged tourist") than the traditional hotel tourist: *"we have some regular and loyal customers"* (Travel agency); *"residential tourism is much better, as people go back home and are better able to resist times of crisis, which is exactly the opposite with hotel tourism"* (Property developer). And this is exactly the case; as he is often the owner of the home, this tourist visits the area in his holiday periods as well as at other times throughout the year, normally Christmas, Easter and bank holiday weekends. So, the expenses generated by these flows of visitors help to revitalise the economy of these towns and cities: *"as they are property owners they tend to come more, for short weekend breaks and bank holiday weekends"* (Travel agency). The immediate multiplying effect of construction on local economic activity is highlighted by those interviewed: *"this is good for creating a lot of jobs such as plumbers, electricians, furniture assemblers, etc."* (Estate agency).

Generally speaking, residential tourism can be understood as the natural response to a certain demand in the market. This response has been channelled by the creation of a product which, as can be recognised, has often lacked the due planning by political authorities and property developers. However, it is also considered that this is an "easy" criticism to make looking at it from the present time, when the passing of time allows you to see relatively clearly what effects have been most beneficial and which have been most damaging. The majority of the interviewees come close to this discursive position, although, as is logical, they are the social actors who most benefit from the process – property developers, banks and, on a smaller scale, the majority political parties – and they are those who defend it most adamantly. Only a small proportion of the interviewees questioned the touristic nature of residential tourism. The majority opted for a more positive rather than negative appraisal of its impacts: *"residential tourism is capable of generating wealth for the town if it is well integrated and offers what people need, the solution has to be given by the town council and business owners"* (Estate agency); *"second homes are not so bad for us because in winter a lot of people rent them out*

and more people come who then consume" (PP- Spain's main right-wing party- town councillor).

This social discourse contains some important criticism which, as we can see, far from delegitimises the general logic of the process. Firstly, we could mention the statements which aim to show the low level of dynamism and high level of seasonality of residential tourism, exactly the opposite to that what would happen if there were a strong hotel industry similar to that which exists in Benidorm. So, we frequently hear opinions which point out that the daily pace of life of residential visitors is, during their stay, more "domestic" and less prone to spending money on leisure activities than that of the tourists who stay in hotels, something which would have a negative affect in the hotel and catering trade and in the general trade of the area. In the same way, the more critical sectors reproach that the policy which allows the promotion of cheap housing is not the right one, as more visitors arrive, but with less purchasing power, which, in the end, leads to massification and the deterioration of the social environment, going against the interests of tourism development and the property business itself: *"urban massification in certain areas with elements of low quality and the sale of homes at a very low price is damaging and will take its toll in the future"* (Tourist office staff). As is foreseeable, this type of opinions normally comes from different spheres (sometimes antagonistic) to those mentioned in the previous paragraph: *"there is less movement, people go out less so as not to spend money"* (Hotel manager); *"the people who spend the summer here do the same as they do at home"* (Small and medium traders association); *"there are entire residential areas which are empty for a good part of the year"* (Trade union representative); *"in winter there is too much of everything, and in summer the services fail completely"* (Tourist office staff). This last statement is also symptomatic of a critical discourse, highly common, and relative to the imbalances which are created between the offer and the real necessity of urban infrastructures -water and electricity supply, refuse collection, etc.- and of leisure and recreation. Criticism which, on the other hand, is often excused when this problem is placed within the framework of a process of highly intensive social change which has taken place very quickly within very few years.

4 REGARDING ECONOMIC IMPACT

The main positive appraisals of almost all of the interviewees are centred around the economic impact of residential tourism development. This particular development model is identified as the key element which has made socioeconomic modernisation of the region possible: the transition from economic systems supported by fishing, agriculture and salt mining to others which are based on the hotel and catering trade and above all, construction, a sector which produces great trickle-down effects in many other related subsectors. The appraisal of all of the changes experienced depends on the perception of an improvement in the socioeconomic well-being of the population which compensates for the negative impacts. Until now the host communities have not clearly acknowledged another growth alternative capable of equalling the revenue brought in by residential tourism development, as what is not questioned is the convenience and the necessity for demographic growth and building activity to continue. The interviewees have expressed a highly positive opinion regarding the rapid growth of all kinds of services and facilities related to tourism property growth. An improvement in amenities and in the quality of urban infrastructures which, it is acknowledged, has been possible thanks to, in particular, the revenue raised by the town councils via taxes related to the granting of building licences: *"the town itself has been able to undergo greater development, with better health and education services"* (Shopkeeper); *"the population has increased and therefore so have all kinds of services leading to a substantial improvement in the economy of the area and in infrastructures such as hospitals, security services and all kinds of city services"* (Association of small and medium traders).

The stakeholders interviewed assert that, thanks to the arrival of tourists, the economies of the towns in the area which is object of our study have changed radically. They consider that the economic development that the construction of houses brings cannot be denied, and nor can the jobs that it creates, both directly and indirectly. Also valued positively is the fact that the increase in building development has made the significant demographic growth of the last few years possible. The modernisation process mentioned above has in turn established feedback effects with the process of demographic growth which has been provoked, above all, by a double migratory flow: on the one hand, a young population

attracted by job prospects and, on the other hand, a flow of retired people, both Spaniards and northern Europeans who are residents or semi-residents in the new residential areas. In quantitative terms, the second flow is much more intense than the first meaning that, linked to the vegetative ageing of the local population, the situation has provoked a progressive ageing of sociodemographic structures and also, occasionally, has created a peculiar type of settlements of groups of nationalities which some of the interviewees recognise as ghettos. This double growth (urban and demographic) would constitute the most significant expression of a stage of "progress". The emerging social dualisation processes (due to the tendency of some national communities, which consider themselves to be self-sufficient, to isolate themselves or "encapsulate" themselves) are not normally seen as something problematic. These people, mainly retired English and German citizens, are seen in this way and their right to make practically no effort at all to integrate or interact in the host society (apart from in the case of bureaucratic procedures with official bodies and institutions) is acknowledged. They are not referred to as immigrants, as often happens with the contingent of economic immigrants from the Maghreb, eastern Europe or Latin America. In this way, it can also be noticed how serious problems of integration are associated with working immigrants. This complex group has led to the concentration of the negative perception on migratory processes, as they are associated with "difficult economic and working conditions", which make up a breeding ground for potential conflicts. "Difficult conditions" which are not linked to the European retirees, of whom, on the contrary, the same level of integration is not required. The latter are not perceived as people with economic problems and, even if this were the case, they mainly live in the outlying districts of the town, the opposite situation to that of the working immigrants. In the case of the retired, competition to get into the labour market is not evident, on the contrary, they are perceived as a source of income. In this sense, it is curious that hardly any references are made to their significant use of public resources, funded by public finances to which they have hardly contributed. So a certain dualisation is produced in the process of social perception which consists of a very simplified divide between desirable and undesirable immigrants, or even better, between the immigrants (a label reserved for labour

immigration) and the European residents (the denomination given to retired citizens from the European Union). Thus two specific lines of discourse originate for each of these groups: the discourse on the demands of integration (for the workers) and the discourse on the right to coexistence, respecting the customs of each group (for the retired Europeans).

As far as the negative impacts mentioned by the social agents interviewed are concerned, the reference made to the bad or non-existent development planning must be pointed out. The reproaches referring to the relationship between tourism and economic development are clearly marginal. Once again the imbalances between intensive urban growth and the inadequate resources of public infrastructures are emphasized. So, the most critical voices believe that the interests of the property developers have been favoured in detriment to sustainability. Some of those interviewed also show their displeasure regarding the current development situation, as they consider that mass construction leads to serious massification problems which do nothing more than to damage the touristic image of the area. The high pace of growth which has been experienced over the last twenty years is questioned by several of the interviewees who regret not having opted for slower action more inclined towards planning in the past. Exceptionally, even the property developers come to recognise this problem: *“a highly accelerated level of growth has been encouraged which has not given itself time to be taken in”* (Property developer).

In any case, we must stress that the most widespread opinion among the interviewees is that the current economic situation is satisfactory or very good. The relevance gained by the construction sector in the economic development of the area has continually been emphasized, more specifically the subsector of homes: *“a few years ago people were very humble and now, thank God, there are people who have a quite acceptable standard of living”* (PP- Spain's main right-wing party- town councillor); *“construction has been fundamental for the growth of the town”* (Estate agency); *“tourism has been beneficial by making it possible to open up a lot of businesses and there are a lot of people who indirectly make a living from tourism”* (Hotel and catering trade association). There is a consensus when acknowledging that the urbanisation process has generated a high level of wealth in the area and for this reason they value very positively the fact that construction, associated with residential tourism, has

formed one of the main pillars upon which the socioeconomic growth of these cities is based. This starts from the consideration that thanks to the construction of residential areas a wide range of services has been able to be developed which is of advantage to local employment and wealth. In parallel with this, some of those interviewed question the criticism which refers to the possible tourist seasonality as, they reason, by having more citizens all year round than those actually officially registered, there is a floating group of consumers who sustain the local trade system and who, definitively, make unemployment in these towns almost symbolic.

It is interesting to think that the main worries expressed in relation with economic dynamics are to do with the appreciation of a certain stagnation and slowing down of construction and the property market. That is to say, there are no objections towards the sector, but quite the opposite, it is like a son who is worried about a sick parent: all that he wants is for his father's health to improve, he owes him everything that he has achieved in his life and without his protection he feels exposed. Of course, this worry is first of all conveyed by the banks, who are the first to appreciate the dynamics leaning towards recession, to recognise an atmosphere of economic uncertainty and to become aware of the withdrawal of capital, the closing of estate agencies and the movement of development companies to other places in which the urban growth margin is still far from saturation: *“in the banks there are once again problems with paying back debts”* (Bank manager); *“the building developers are moving to other places”* (Bank manager); *“less flats are being rented”* (Estate agency). At the same time these are changes which have been identified in the lifestyles of traditional residential tourists which are not of benefit to the host society. The main fear is still to end up with the “goose that laid the golden eggs”: *“the high season has become shorter, before it was three months and now it's twenty days”* (Shopkeeper); *“tourist spending has decreased and subsequently, the level of income of the families in the town”* (Estate agency).

5 THE GEOENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

The critical discourses are gathered together in this section. There is a consensus to localise the highest number possible of negative externalities in the ecological subsystem. The environment has paid the highest price in residential tourism

development, and it is precisely in this subsystem where the fundamental risks for the future viability of the development of the region can be found as, for some time now, irreparable damage has been done. The interviewees do not only accuse the town councils of the inexistence of adequate planning for the growth of their towns, but they also think that it has been a question of private initiative, led by property developers and the high demand for housing, which has forced the councils to continually approve new property developments with little or no planning: *"we are running out of green areas due to the desire for property"* (Shopkeeper); *"local autonomy, as far as being able to free up land is concerned, together with the voracity of some developers, has been the trigger of this boom which we have been experiencing for twenty years [...] it has been made very easy to prey on the territory and there is the key to tourism expansion; the greed of both the councils as well as the developers in making the coast into what we call a wall of concrete"* (Councillor of Izquierda Unida -A coalition of left-wing parties-). Therefore, a complete transformation of the area has been brought about with the aggravating circumstance that growth has been compelled by the logic of the market. This logic has caused the action to depend usually on the urgency dictated by demand, without the due land planning. So, the development has been carried out in an improvised manner without properly weighing up the future consequences of this type of disorganised growth: *"local policies have led to disorganised land planning"* (Trade union representative); *"there hasn't been any town planning, it has been private initiative motivated by demand which has made the council move itself"* (Shopkeeper); *"there was a lot of improvisation, a lot of excitement and awful things were done"* (Tourist office staff); *"growth was forced by demand and the future of the town wasn't planned"* (Hotel and catering trade association).

However, these critical ideas, dominant in this section, are accompanied by other less severe and legitimising ones, and there are even discourses via which a certain dissatisfaction can be seen due to an economic exploitation of the natural environment which is perceived as insufficient: *"there is a high level of awareness of protecting the environment"* (Shopkeeper); *"there is no information, nor accessibility nor signposting of protected areas, and for this reason good use is not made of them for tourism"* (Hotel manager); *"the environment*

has extraordinary potential for future tourism" (Estate agency). It could be of interest to point out that the necessity to differentiate between an aspect linked to environmental management of water and solid urban waste was pointed out, which in some towns is valued positively thanks to the investments and improvements made over the last few years and that, however, there would be a contrast with absurd management of land and protected areas. In fact, these preservation areas are empirical evidence both in supporting critical stances as well as in supporting others who try to reduce the "problematization" of the environmental situation: *"the environment is respected quite a bit, thanks to the fact that nature itself has given us some areas where nothing can be done and... well, what could have been damaging as far as the environment is concerned is the bad quality of the houses which have been built, the built-up areas, the proximity of some of them to the natural areas that we have. But anyway, we still have some quite big areas where nothing can even be done and this is like a breathing space for us"* (PSOE -Spanish Socialist Party- town councillor).

6 TOURIST RELATIONS: SOCIOCULTURAL REPERCUSSIONS

Going over the previous two sections, we find that the legitimising discourses of the residential tourism process are grouped together around the generation of economic wealth and that environmental impact arouses the most critical stances. In this section, relating to sociocultural changes, the general appraisal is positive, although there are significant hints of criticism. More precisely, these disapproving ideas are linked up with those expressed in the last section. In this sense, a lot of the interviewees pointed out that the negative impact is not exclusively centred on the natural environment; it is also acknowledged that, connected to the degradation of the environment, deterioration of the elements which affirm the cultural identity of these towns has taken place. These towns have managed to stay away from the processes of socio-urban massification. As a result, recently the way of life and "signs of identity" of the town as understood by the citizens would have suffered: *"massification has meant that the town's identity has been lost"* (Hotel manager); *"the land seen before as a cultural and landscape reference has been lost"* (Tourist office staff); *"habits and customs have been lost"* (Developer).

Upon frequently asking questions about the quality of the established model of urban and tourism development, some questions also arise about the type of tourist who visits the region. The majority of the tourists are perceived as belonging to a medium-low socioeconomic class, mainly in the case of the Spaniards who, often, find themselves with a mortgage for the purchase of their second home. This situation has a negative effect on the expenses that they may have to face when on holiday and causes discontent among the shopkeepers and hotel and catering trades in the area: *"we reap what we sow, if we sow cheap apartments we get tourists with low purchasing power"* (Shopkeeper); *"purchasing a house makes people get a mortgage, they don't make it to the end of the month and cannot even spend during the holidays, something which does not interest a tourist resort"* (Hotel manager). Thus, the most severe criticism is directed towards Spanish tourists. Those interviewed affirm that these are people with very little environmental sensitivity, a high level of demand compared to the very little that they spend during their stay in the area and an arrogant attitude towards the local people: *"the tourist from central and northern Spain demands a lot in exchange for the very little that they leave in the town"* (Tourist office staff). Relationships are clearly influenced by business interest: *"the people from Madrid say that they feed us and people here say that all they do is bother them"* (Hotel manager); *"people from a town are very set in their ways, especially if they don't have a penny, those who have a business or a livelihood in tourism are very openminded and friendly, those who have nothing just want them to go as soon as possible because they're taking away their parking spaces and their space on the beach"* (Shopkeeper).

Regarding foreign tourists, the reproaches are considerably more moderate and are due to the scarce or nonexistent integration into local society: *"the foreigners stay within their own circles, have their bars, restaurants, shops and customs"* (Bank manager); *"the foreigners form their ghettos and don't mix with the natives"* (Tourist office staff). As was pointed out in the section dedicated to commenting on the perception of economic impact, there is only a shy criticism of the fact that the foreigners tend to stay isolated in their residential areas and set up their own companies and meeting places without making an effort to learn Spanish, in spite of the fact that many of them have spent many years settled or living almost permanently in

Spain.

Although it seems to contradict that which has been pointed out in the previous paragraphs, the truth is that the critical ideas set out are bound by a generally positive appraisal of the profile of the tourist who moves to this area. This positive appraisal is encouraged firstly because part of the society as a whole has quite a generalised awareness of the economic dependence on the tourism-property sector. Although not all local workers are directly involved in these economic subsectors, the majority benefit one way or another from its good health. So, the following fragments are representative of the most common discourses: *"aggressive tourists don't come here as happens in other towns"* (PP-Spain's main right-wing party-town councillor); *"in this town there are no conflictive tourists"* (Travel agency); *"those who come here are normal tourists, first the parents and then their children"* (Estate agency); *"the foreign tourist is more grateful, appreciates the service more and spends more than the Spanish"* (Shopkeeper). They think that this is a type of tourism which responds, generally, to what is known as family tourism, with very few problems or conflicts, pointing out that many of the tourists are retired and come from the European Union, and they have a higher opinion of this collective than they do of the Spanish, perhaps influenced by the fact that it is equally acknowledged that they have a higher purchasing power. Likewise, in the legitimising discourse on cultural interaction between "hosts" and "guests" the expression "massification", loaded with negative connotations, is redefined as a process of "democratisation": *"The tourists who came before were people who could spend money, weren't they? Now people come who also spend money but probably on another level, don't they? So, well, probably the reality of tourism, well, there's a higher quantity... better, worse? Well, now I think that everybody has the right to have their summer holidays upon equal terms and there are all kinds of people"* (PP-Spain's main right-wing party-town councillor).

7 CONCLUSION

The most critical and pessimistic discourse interprets the residential tourism model as the result (and the cause) of a tourism model which borders exhaustion and which generates a worrying risk setting. This vision, on the one hand, must take into account that

there are certain questions which, when faced with them, people do not tend to carry out a detailed analysis of the costs and benefits, but, mainly, what they do is form a general opinion resulting from the perception of the main discourses which discuss the matter. On the other hand, it must be taken into account that the analysis of the interaction between tourists and locals is registered in the tradition inherited from the pessimistic results obtained in different parts of the world via numerous socio-anthropological studies in which the disappointment suffered regularly by the "hosts" in their tourism experience can be verified. However, it is worth pointing out that a considerable part of these studies has been carried out in the heart of social systems in which the inequalities are very acute, and for this reason there is nothing similar to that which could be understood as a structure of middle classes and/or a network of mechanisms for adapting at least part of the benefits, as well as the costs, to social needs.

A qualitative study has been completed on the ideological context in which the process of residential-tourism modernisation takes place in the southern region of the Alicante coast, a socioeconomic development model which is dominant in numerous towns and cities next to the Mediterranean Sea. The local social agents with power to make decisions consider that this model does not only respond to the "*laissez faire, laissez passer*" logic, as the private interests of the businessmen (above all property developers) and the local political leaders intervene decisively in the market. The critical ideas are focussed on environmental impact, urban disorder and a massification which has damaged social life. The situation is recognised to be extremely complex and few of those interviewed dare to make definitive statements. Equally, the fact is acknowledged that many mistakes have been made, but on the scales the positive impacts (mainly economic) have more bearing more than the negative ones. Residential tourism is perceived as the fundamental industry and other really solid options cannot be discerned, although the necessity to change urban planning, create a network of infrastructures, diversify and improve the quality of the leisure offer, minimise environmental impact and promote a greater development of the hotel sector, which is appraised as being socially more sustainable, is recognised.

In the light of what has been set out, the main contribution of this study is a proposal for the new orientation of research work on

the impacts of residential tourism, especially those which raise the question of social perception in developed countries. This reformulation should take into account that it is important to consider the possibility that there is an "ideological context which encourages development" in which the legitimising discourses have a greater presence than the discourses which proclaim social criticism or resistance, at least among the stakeholders with the capacity to make decisions in the host societies. This is a sociological code which has not been studied enough and which has an important explanatory capacity for understanding why leisure and tourism associated with residential property dynamics has given rise to processes of such intensity and significance on the Mediterranean coast. By the expression "ideological context which encourages development", and within the framework of this study, a social area can be understood in which the discourses and opinions closest to occupying a dominant position are those which proclaim an idea of "growth". This can be associated with the idea of "wealth" and "wellbeing", by virtue of which the possible sociocultural and mainly environmental costs which said growth involves are accepted as viable, whether due to a motivation sustained by the sincere conviction of the benefits that it creates, or due to the society being enveloped in an environment of resignation towards the existing reality and mistrust when faced with alternative methods for guaranteeing a balanced system. The limits, the pace and the manner of this growth are the object of debate in the different towns, but the idea of continuing to grow is not.

In the research which we have presented, a peculiar type of dualism can be seen: people accept and reject at the same time the diverse effects caused by the residential tourism process, but, in the end, the dominant discursive tendency produces arguments which are closer to legitimisation than to resistance. The explanation of this situation is related to three lines of reasoning which remain intermingled and which are prefigured as a working hypothesis destined to direct future research: a) a certain adoption of bourgeois ways by virtue of which broad sectors of the population perceive an improvement in their quality of life, thanks to residential tourism modernisation; b) the attempt to produce a legitimising dominant discursive model, which Foucault would call a "regimen of truth", from the social agents who have power to define the reality, which, in

turn, would correspond to the groups who most benefit from this type of “progress”; and c) narrowly associated with the two previous points, the acceptance of the existing reality by the citizens who are torn between resignation and approval.

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