Cultural gateways: building partnerships for sustainable development in destination regions

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Abstract

The aim of the «Cultural Gateways» project[*] is the development of a sustainable urban-rural relationship in the organisation of tourist regions around main urban destination. This paper introduces the main lines of the research and proposes a conceptual framework for the analysis of a number of case studies.

The departure point is that the preservation of cultural heritage through responsible tourism is the key to generating well-being in host communities. The main challenge to that respect is that many stakeholders do not realise the value that features of their local communities may have to the outside world, and are thus passively participating to a "tourist system" with strong regional unbalances; furthermore, the prevailing regimes of tourism development support this "disconnection". This happens on spatial and thematic lines, leading in many cases to a "compartmentalisation" of tourism.

It is argued in this paper that an alternative development model should look at the "metropolitan" or "regional" dimension of tourism governance — and thus of cultural strategies — to guarantee a more sustainable use of the cultural assets for the host community. A restructured core-periphery regional pattern as far as cultural-tourist functions is concerned is conducive to lower pressure levels on central destinations, enhanced entrepreneurial capacity in rural areas, and eventually a more articulated visitor mobility on the territory. The costs and revenues generated by tourism are then brought to a better spatial balance, and the spin-off potential of tourism in areas with a weak economic basis (but rich in culture) is boosted. All concerned parties may thus profit from the implementation of "gateways", physical and virtual, which reconnect culture with existing distribution channels, or favour the development of new ones. The case study of Catalonia is a pilot illustration of this analytic framework, and of the richness of policy implications that can be identified through its use.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, destination regions, governance, information technologies

JEL codes: R12, R58, L83

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1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Sustainability and cultural tourism

Cultural tourism development in urban destinations produces economic and spatial unbalances, and risks being subject to short life cycles. In other words, tourism may be an unsustainable development option for destinations regions. Research shows that both urban areas and rural or coastal environments may suffer, in different ways and under different circumstances, from the external costs implied by tourism development.

The concept of sustainability, though sometimes over-used in the tourist literature, hints at the preservation of the capital assets on which development is based, and on the capacity of the economy to allocate welfare in an efficient way across generations, territories and social groups. This implies that any kind of development option, for example through the tourist use of the cultural and natural assets of a region, should not only be durable and produce benefits that exceed its costs in any sense, but also that it contributes substantially to wider development opportunities for the community interested by such activity. If a system is not sustainable, then perturbations may lead to decline in the performance and eventually to the death of the system. If on the contrary a system is sustainable or *resilient*, at least to some extent, it may change and adapt to the new circumstances but in fact it remains stable in the long term (Prigogine and Stengers 1984, quoted by Innes and Booher 1999).

Places are social and economic systems, with numerous interrelations with their "external" environment. They are therefore a playing field where sustainability concepts can be seen at work A destination which cannot produce sustainable tourism may waste its capital assets: the economic capital needed to keep the development cycle going; the society needed to preserve, nurture and regenerate the local culture; and ultimately the physical integrity of the monuments and landscapes. This whole idea is captured by the idea of Tourist Life-Cycle: a complex system of impulses and responses between a destination and its environment, mediated by the dynamics of accumulation (or dissipation) of its capital assets.

In the framework of the original version of the TALC (Butler 1980) sustainability is analysed in association with recreational carrying capacity. It is believed that there is some maximum level of tourism or recreation activity intrinsic to an area above which the system is harmed beyond recovery, or unable to continue delivering the same level of utility to its stakeholders. To the extent that this might be an implicit outcome of unguided development, the implication is that government

intervention is needed to re-bring the system towards a sustainable path. Policies are different from case to case, as the "paradigm" notion of Hunter (1997) suggests, because different are the ways in which tourism development affects the local resources. It is reasonable to expect that the effects vary according to the nature of tourist destinations (e.g. urban rather than rural, resource-based rather than man-made, etc.).

Cultural tourism, which is at the centre of this study, is no exception. However, most accounts of cultural tourism development are limited to impact analysis, and merely focus on economic values. Instead, sustainability requires a more sophisticated analytic approach that grasps the full dynamic implications of tourism activity. These can only be fetched looking at the *structure of the market*, the *nature of the resources* involved, the geographic *scale* at which tourism activity takes place, the *stakeholders* involved. In the continuation of this study, we intend to investigate how all these aspects can be articulated and related to one another.

1.2 Cultural tourism and destination regions

It is possible to identify a number of "tension lines" which accompany tourism development at various stages and in different contexts, such as the emergence of negative externalities from development, the take-over of the local tourism industry by outsiders exhibiting a "hit and run", short-term attitude towards destinations, changing visitors profiles with a compression in time and money budgets, the enlargement of "tourist regions" around localities. These aspects (and their combinations) represent the building blocks of the TALC and its variations (see Butler 2005, forthcoming). Symptoms that tourism may be eroding the cultural capital of places rather than enriching communities are on the newspapers every day, and are increasingly perceived as problems in local policy circles: price (and taxes) inflation, destruction of natural and cultural assets, cultural pollution, gentrification, traffic, resident discontent, etc.

Such processes escape simple environmental accountancy; their management tends to become a "political" issue, requiring the attribution of values, the design of a "project", and the fixation of priorities. The tourism literature based on "traditional" (albeit highly sophisticated) approaches hardly helps. Not only it pays little attention to intra-regional patterns of development of tourism and to the interrelation between *market* and *space*, that, intuitively, is the key to explain the (un)sustainable development of regions as tourist destinations and to analyse implications and policy responses. It also falls short to hook up with decisive aspects of contemporary geographic, economic and social studies, such as:

- the compression of distances and the changing values resulting from the "digital revolution";
- the change in the status of culture from the industrial society (culture as aesthetic content and product) to the knowledge society (culture as information and capital);
- intensifying urban competition and the geography of the networks, as well as the complexities of "glocalisation";
- the holistic idea of sustainable development;
- the consideration of stakeholdership as a strategic factor in tourism governance.

It should be noted that in spite of the importance of cities and urban systems as tourist destinations and the urgency of the problems posed by tourism to urban areas (as well as the opportunities that it provides to them), such themes have received surprisingly little treatment in tourist studies. [1]

2 THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

2.1 Tourist regions: cores and peripheries

The French geographer Miossec (1976) developed the concepts of *cores* and *peripheries* within tourist systems. He conceived cores as the "centre of attention" for tourism activity in a place, and thus a "used" space. On the other hand, peripheries — be them the spatial edges of world tourism flows, or the territory around a destination — are described as a "transversed spaces", which, in spite of being necessary elements of a travel, never get to become "centres of gravity".

Endorsing the political economy discourse, Miossec's juxtaposition could be broadened to see cores as the spaces which maintain a power over development: for instance, reaping the benefits from tourism development, or leading the development. We could even refer to cores as concentrations of financial capital deployed in tourism development. As such, they can be distinguished from peripheries, which are places that *are affected by* tourism development strategies determined elsewhere. In his formulation of the problem, however, Miossec was maintaining a spatial and not a political-economy perspective, implying that visited centres were *better off* as a result of their capacity to catalyse tourist flows, whereas peripheries were sort of "cut off" from these benefits.

[1] A survey of the number of publications with the words "city" or "urban" as keywords on Tourism Management and Annals of Tourism Research, reveals that they figure respectively 16 and 11 times in the last 10 years, compared with 20 and 16 on rural tourism, and 19 and 15 on island and seaside tourism, to name a few other types of destination.

They would participate in tourist systems as passive players, like the territories crossed by rail and air lines bringing tourists to a destinations, as well as the exotic island were tourist functions would be taken over by foreign capital.

The introduction of *externalities* breaks down this "centripetal" conceptualisation of the tourist region: visited areas may leak out tourist revenues to the benefit of surrounding territories, to the extent that the latter can intercept part of the visitor flow directed to them. The reason why this happens depends on a number of factors, both ascribable to the spatial structure of the visitor flows or the physical shape of the region, and to endogenous economic factors, investigated among others by Caserta and Russo (2002). Hence, turning again to the regime-theory jargon, centres become unable to control their development, because the gaining actors are not there, and locals do not have full control over investments and planning. It is the case, for instance, of exotic destination that see very little filtering down of the tourist revenues they generate, but more importantly for this research, of European regions in where the resistance to development of small historical cores is overwhelmed by pro-development strategies deployed by regional and national governments.

In this research, the definition of cores and peripheries adheres to Miossec's conceptualisation, but a tourism marketing perspective is also endorsed. These concepts stand for distinct "focalisations" of the tourist product: the core being the driving system of attractions, the image of a place and its representation, and the peripheries including non-core elements (whatever their attractiveness) because they lack elements of identification with it, or are spatially eccentric with respect to the system of mobility of visitors' flows, hence are not promoted as tourist attractions. Thus, the diamond showrooms, the Van Gogh museum and the red light district are part of the core of the tourist system of Amsterdam, while the Defence Line of Amsterdam and the Western Gas Factory[2], despite their outstanding cultural relevance, can be conceived as peripheral, or niche, tourist products.

There is a thread connecting the geographic to the semantic sense of peripherality, which is one of the main objects of this investigation: spatially eccentric products tend to be cut off from the *imaging* of places provided by tourist distributors, who concentrate on easy-to-spot, central locations; and products that do not "fit" the image of a place tend to find natural locations at the edge of an urban or regional system, where their survival does not interfere with the value generation mechanism of the tourist economy. So, the outstanding skyscrapers and the port of

[2] The *Stelling van Amsterdam* (http://www.stelling-van-amsterdam.nl/) is one of the seven Dutch entries in the World Heritage List of UNESCO. The Westergasfabriek is one of the biggest and most successful "planned" cultural clusters of Europe according to Hitters and Richards (2003) (http://www.westergasfabriek.nl/).

Rotterdam – which are peripheral with respect to the visitor flows directed to the Netherlands, almost exclusively centred on Amsterdam – are not actively promoted as national tourist attractions, and the Jazz scene of Munich, a world destination for high arts and classical music lovers, happens in the suburb of Schwäbing.

The basic assumption of this research is that these strategies may not be sustainable (Russo 2002a), to the extent that there emerges a spatial mismatch between the regional structure of attractions, especially when they are public atmospheric goods or subsidised cultural attractions, and the area of tourist activity, because that would affect the capacity of the (cultural) attraction system to generate the value that is needed for its preservation. There are two possibilities for this mismatch, illustrated in Fig. 1.

In the first case, the core elements are so spatially concentrated that they cannot internalise all the tourist economy that they generate, leaking it out to the territory which can offer "footloose" but essential elements of the tourism product (accommodation, accessibility, recreation, etc.) (Fig. 1a).

In the second, the attractions are dispersed in a very large territory, so that only the places that may offer a critical mass of diversity and integration in the tourist product emerge as "cores" while the rest of the territory becomes "periphery", becoming unable to valorise its cultural or natural riches though the tourism economy, which is concentrated in the core (Fig. 1b).

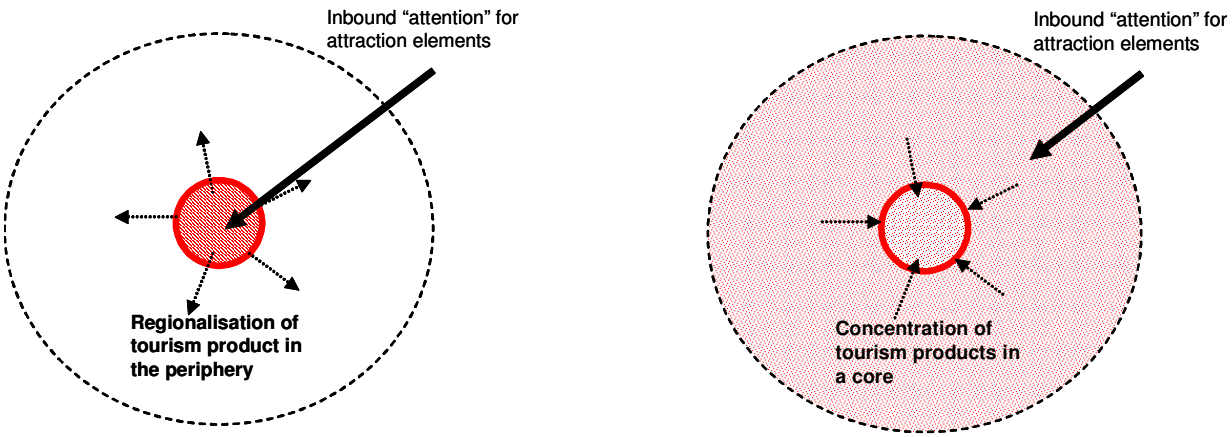

Fig. 1a and 1b: alternative models of dual development of a destination region.

In both cases, the development threatens to produce unsustainable outcomes. In the first case, which is typical of small-medium size heritage destinations already ridden with tourism, tourism activity develops in "passive hinterland" and the external costs of tourism development remain concentrated

in the cores. However, the attractiveness of the core itself is at stake – and hence the foundations of regional tourism development – as the spatial organisation of (mass) tourism determines sensible changes in the market mechanisms at work (Keane, 1996; Russo 2002a). It is reasonable, then, to anticipate a negative "cycle" for heritage tourism, in the same way as "3S" tourism has undergone (or is undergoing) a negative profit cycle in destinations (Ioannides 1992).

In the second case, fitting the case of large metropolitan destinations and coastal tourism areas, hub elements are "magnets" that take away all the sunlight to the peripheral elements of the region, concerns arise for the process of new revalorisation of place elements leading to environmental pressures, gentrification and "urbanalization" (Muñoz 2004). The two sources of instability may be at work at the same time in large "metropolitan" destinations with a central system of heritage attractions (Barcelona, Rome, Paris).

2.2 The "peripheralisation" of cultural assets in tourist systems

One question that deserves special attention is indeed how "cores" and "peripheries" evolve within tourism systems; in the conceptual framework illustrated above, this is equal to investigating what are the forces behind the unsustainable tourism development of regions.

The layman's reasoning would go like this: if a certain tourist product is successful, why not extend it, or diversify it in space and nature? That happens in almost all economic sectors: Nestlé makes good chocolate sweets, and it came to sell also soft drinks. Coca Cola now does the cherry taste. EasyJet starts renting cars. Bocuse, the best restaurant in France, opens more diners at the four corners of Lyon. A successful winery introduces innovation by developing new vines and production methods.

What happens with tourism in destination regions is often just the opposite. Whereas nobody could doubt that Venice is successful because it is a complex entity, *civitas* and *polis*, not just *urbs*: a collection of people, moods, tastes and sounds, nowadays only the "theme-park" elements are offered in most tourist packages (the "gondola tour", the palace reception at Carnival, the visit to the Murano glass factory): gone are the nights at the theatre, gone the old Venetian taverns, the lively student areas are avoided by tourist groups, and the most recent piece of news is that the Biennale of Arts — in origin an expression of Venice's cultural diversity and openness — is taken over by the government just seeking for more Hollywood stars on the catwalk. This process is at work, maybe to less threatening degrees, in many other European heritage tourism "stars": Amsterdam, Bruges, Toledo, Florence, Prague.

The same "restriction" takes place as far as he spatial level is concerned. Again, the case of Venice is just an exemplary illustration of what is happening in many other places, or risks to happen in the near future if tourism development strategies are de facto left in the hands of the industry. Instead than trying to sell the *diffused Venice* that is present in a region large at least as the north-eastern corner of Italy as a cultural attraction with many diverse attributes, rural and urban, maritime and mountainous, the "periphery" of Venice is to a great extent developed just as a dormitory for tourists that do not fit in the overpriced Venetian hotels or want to park their car in accessible lots. The attraction is only the core. Images of Venice peep up in brochures advertising trips to Padua or Bologna or even Croatian islands, and increasingly so: not necessarily any jewel of the old city, but just St. Mark's square and the attractions revolving around it — as the Rialto bridge, where, accidentally, most visitors would transit on their way there. To a large extent, many other cultural riches of the city and its regions are pushed at the edges of the tourist economy, and become dependent on subsidies, like for instance theatre and music production.

This process of "peripheralisation" of the cultural attributes of a place is the result of an aggressive, short-sighted institutionalisation of cultural symbolism by the tourist industry. One line of argument is that as the control over distribution channels is largely in the hands of outsiders.[3] Any concern of interest for the community is not internalised in the behaviour structure of these agents, so they just profit-maximise. "Deviating from the main route" is risky (Money and Crotts 2003), and difficult to organise at an industrial scale for large tour operators and wholesalers, whereas it may be an interesting niche for specialised, small scale tour operators. That is why most organised visitors (open to innovation and moderately interested in culture, but risk-adverse, with small time budgets and medium budgets) do not have an easy life if they want to do something different and experience any peripheral cultural products.

This process is unsustainable because it goes against the ecology of any local cultural system, which needs to be kept alive through a process of value attribution and active endorsement by the local community. It is also inherently unstable from the economic point of view, as a commodified or "turisticised" culture becomes subject to downturns in fashion, in the world economy, etc. Furthermore, it does not stand up the increasing quest by visitors for the "genuine and original" (Urry 1990, Richards 1996). Of course, even educated, aware visitors face time and money budgets. If the only affordable way to visit a famous tourist site is to do that as excursionists, and if there are

[3] In his analysis of territorial tourist organisations in Catalonia, Pearce (1996) illustrates this argument quoting the Director of the Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava Girona, which despite its efforts was ineffective in bringing tour operators from established markets to sell inland products with the coastal ones: «many of the visitors 'are the clientele of the tour operator, not of the zone'».

no information on alternative routes, they would end up behaving just like any other visitor with less noble intentions. What should be stressed, however, is that seen from the point of view of the community, there is market potential in enlarging, diffusing and informing.

Anyway, the question remains whether this is a "rational" strategy under any respect. Why tour operators, even those with a large capacity of investigation and product development, cannot anticipate a possible decline in place qualities, investing in more sustainable tourist products? There are different possibilities to answer such question, the simplest (and probably over-simplistic) being «because the do not understand or care about what communities want, and do not understand the dynamic interplay between place qualities and social capital and the competitiveness of places as tourist destinations»[4]. More interesting alternatives are the following:

a. They know (from experience or research) that they would not change the quality of the place to the point that it becomes unprofitable for them to continue their operations (which would *not* falsify the research assumptions because we are not concerned with the conditions for the industry profitability, but with the issue of sustainable community development).

b. Even if this were the case, they have many possibilities of developing alternative products so that when one place is "burned out" for tourism, they go for another (that is what is likely to happen with "3S" destination, but does not necessarily apply to heritage destination which have a lesser degree of "substitutability").

c. Their rationality is bounded by the market structure (they would not be the "first movers" in a highly competitive and risky tourist market) or by the intrinsic "irrationality" of a McDonaldised tourist world à la Ritzer (Ritzer 1998).

At the same time, it must be noted that simply describing the process of erosion of destinations as a pointless "victory" of outsiders over the brave heralds of the local is simplistic to say the least. In fact, conservative attitudes masked with the rhetoric of sustainability (Ryan 2002) are as dangerous as "boosterist", capital-led development. On this account it must be considered that at any stage of the development path of a destination there are tourist suppliers that enjoy location rents (at the origin of declines in quality in the model of Caserta and Russo 2002), which would oppose adaptation and change. In the case of Bruges (Russo 2004) the biggest resistance to a change in the "concentration model" that produced banalisation and commodification in the historical core (the "golden triangle") came from the HORECA sector.

[4] Quote from an interview conducted with a representative of a Catalan incoming agency.

2.3 ICT as a tool for tourism industry deconstruction?

The ensuing question would then be: to what extent would a different configuration of the industry — and namely of the distribution channels — change the structure of incentives in the direction of a more sustainable tourist development? Presently, the following factors prevent, for instance, peripheral cultural producers to become integrated in the tourist distribution chain:

- *Lack of interest or awareness* – why should we do that, how do we gain from it? Especially for communities that are not used to be exposed to visitors flows, benefits from tourist may be hard to evaluate and there may be reluctance to engage in tourism activity due to cultural barriers.
- *The distance (physical or mental/social) from the tourist market core* – it costs more than it earns to bring these cultural assets to the visitors, or to attract visitors where they could be accessed.
- *The nature of cultural assets and products* – some cultural assets may not be easily experienced by visitors, they need some degree of elaboration to become "tourist products" and be distributed in traditional channels.
- *The lack of organisation of the sector* – existing actors may be insufficiently trained or the production networks insufficiently developed to become engaged with a demand made by visitors.

The potential of ICT to enhance tourist processes in the direction of more profitability, more quality and better coordination has been the object of thorough research. In the framework of Buhalis (1997), ICT re-engineers the functions of intra-organisation, inter-organisations and customer relations, bringing the three dimensions closer together with enormous impact on costs, productivity and quality. By allowing a *direct contact through web technologies*, information kiosks or emerging intermediation platforms like interactive digital TV and mobile technology[5] between networks of producers and customers, ICT facilitates smart packaging and marketing of the destination. Un-intermediated marketing relations between producers and visitors erode the information or location rents on which most of the sub-economy of the heritage city thrives; small, peripheral operators can compete with larger, better located incumbents if they can offer more convenient products and a smarter packaging. In the end, the decisional scheme of heritage tourists is also restructured: secondary products can be chosen after, and in function of, the elected itinerary. Therefore, by packaging itineraries and cultural products, destinations can modify the location behaviour of the hospitality industry, leading to a more balanced tourist region.

[5] Buhalis, D. and M.C. Licata (2002), "The Future eTourism Intermediaries", Tourism Management 23(3): 207-220.

Yet another impact area for ICT and tourism is receiving increasing attention. The key suggestion is that both culture and IT are embedded, respectively, in a local community and a global network, as opposed to disjointed processes. Altogether new products can be generated by the digitalisation or seamless distribution of cultural content, or new and more sophisticated models of distribution can be engineered.

Through ICT, we do not only dispose of a better way to make tourist firms work and sell, but also of new products altogether, new markets, and new delivery modes. A whole set of goods which have no market or are not economically produced, may become rentable again, and new *heritage enterprises* may develop. These new products have a commercial value that is normally higher than that of the original assets on which they are based. They become "interesting" for the tourist market and its main distribution channels, because they offer more possibility of integration with the core products, and to some extent, they provide a "business model" for diversification in tourism that rewards the cultural richness of a region. What is more important, a brand new *business environment* is stimulated which is directly related to empowerment opportunities and the engagement of "passive" stakeholders in the destination region in the delivery of a more interesting, community-oriented, flexible, genuine – in short sustainable – tourism supply.

The digitalised cultural contents or *eHeritage,* an integral system of elicitation, production and distribution of cultural content in digital form, is bound to overcome the barriers that keep peripheral products disconnected from distribution channels:

- *It generates awareness* in the community for the benefits from tourism, serving as an "internal marketing tool". In an interactive environment, locals have a direct way to evaluate and interpret the visitors' interest in their culture. They get a better control to the modes of access to the heritage, and can make visitors aware of the cultural and social implications of their interest (Go, Lee, Russo 2004);

- *It reduces the distance from the tourist market core* as they can be sold or distributed in association with "central" visits as a way to stimulate the visitors' curiosity;

- *It changes the nature of cultural assets and products* from "public goods" for which a price cannot be paid or "non-existent" and "intangible" which cannot be directly experienced, into services and products that can be bought or accessed exclusively – CD-Rs, live broadcasts, VR experiences, database entries, etc.;

- *It improves the literacy* of the peripheral cultural producers and *their coordination* with the other components of the tourist industry.

At the same time, *eHeritage* could be seen as tool to prevent the compression in time and money budgets from translating in reductions of the quality of tourist experiences, by enhancing the availability, completeness, interactivity, transparency, and reliability of the information needed by visitors to organise their time in the destination in the best possible way, escaping "quality traps", bandwagoning and overcrowding.

2.4 Structure of the research

The investigation agenda for this project is organised in three main research questions:

A. How does tourism develop in cultural / heritage destinations, as far as the structure of the market, the spatial distribution of activities, and the inclusion of community stakeholders are concerned? What are the implications for the continued attractiveness of the destination, and more generally for sustainable development?

B. What are the prevailing strategies the market for cultural tourist products? What are their main "distribution channels"? How do the spatial structure of the destination and the nature and location of the existing cultural assets affect the strategies of different stakeholders and their evolution?

C. How can policy, and which kind of policies, may achieve the restructuring or diversification of distribution channels for cultural tourism products?

This article focuses on the first question and proposes some hypotheses regarding the second and the third, to be verified in later stage of the project through the analysis of qualitative empirical information from the case studies.

Hypothesis 1: The "cores" of European heritage regions are experiencing high levels of pressure from tourism, and this pressure may lead to unsustainable downturns in the quality of tourist products and the expenditure levels by visitors according to Russo's (2002) model of tourism development.

Hypothesis 2: The strategy of most tour operators and wholesalers is to "restrict" the range of attractions (in variety and location) as a response of the visitors' reaction to market changes.

Hypothesis 3: "Excluded" cultural products are nevertheless potentially attractive to many visitors with are motivated by genuine cultural interest.

Hypothesis 4: Peripheral cultural producers face relevant cultural, organisational and economic barriers in getting integrated to the distribution channels which deliver the core cultural products.

Hypothesis 5: The widespread introduction of ICT-based training and development tools in the cultural sector has the potential to overcome these barriers by changing the structure of benefits and costs from tourism development, and therefore by causing a restructuring of distribution channels for cultural tourism towards more comprehensive, and ultimately community-oriented forms of product development.

In order to cover the whole range of issues that could be expected to arise in a study of cultural tourism development, the project focuses on three destination regions: one characterised by a metropolitan centre and a vibrant cultural production sector (Catalunya), one with a more strictly "heritage" character (Galicia), and one with a sensitive environmental embedding (the Veneto Region in Italy including the city of Venice).

All three case studies are characterised by the existence of a strong core of urban tourism (Barcelona, Santiago and Venice), a large but "dispersed" offer of cultural attractions and landscapes in the region, the presence of other types of visitor attractions sand products in the same region with an overlapping visitor markets (leisure, maritime, health, naturalistic/green, sports, etc.), and a network of attractive secondary cities and towns in their proximity (some with airports: Girona, Reus, La Coruña, Vigo, Treviso). In this paper only the Catalan case study is illustrated in depth and recalls to the other case studies are provided as benchmarks.

3 THE CASE STUDY OF CATALONIA

3.1 Presentation of the case study region

The Community of Catalonia is one of the main tourist destinations in Spain, attracting some 17,1 million visitors and 35,7 million overnight stays from foreign countries (Tab. 1) and the rest of Spain (EUROSTAT data 2003 not including stays in second homes), while it is estimated that stays including second homes may reach 128 millions in the same year (data Statistical Institute of Catalonia, IDESCAT). These data place Catalunya as the third destination after Balears Islands and Canaries for number of stays, thus the first in "continental" Spain.

Table 1 – Main tourist demand and supply data for Catalan provinces, year 2003. *Source*: EUROSTAT.

		Population 1999 (1,000)	Total stays by foreigners and rest of Spain	Total stays by Catalans	Supply of beds in all accommodations
	Catalonia	**6,128.1**	**35,744**	**21,854**	**698**
provinces:	Barcelona	4,643.8	51,958	3,175	170
	Girona	542.7	48,048	6,069	304
	Lleida	355.2	4,313	4,225	42
	Tarragona	586.4	23,838	4,257	183
	TOTAL SPAIN	**39,626.2**	**217,851**	**124,689**	**2,867**

Though part of the Spanish state, Catalonia is a nation on its own, characterised by a strong cultural identity, a millenary history and abundant cultural heritage resources. The diversity of its territory creates the conditions for the presence of a wide range of tourist products, including a world-class destination for urban tourism like Barcelona, beach tourism on many different stretches of coast including another renowned territory like Costa Brava, but also mountain and green tourism, health tourism, active tourism. So rich is the territory in culture, that cultural tourism is a transversal theme present in all different supply segments, though the critical concentration of resources and attractions is in the capital Barcelona. This city, one of the "winners" in the latest European urban tourism trends, represents an ideal bridge between Catalonia's history and the vibrancy and multifaceted of contemporary culture.

More than an overlapping of many different tourist regions, Catalonia could be described as a highly diversified destination region, centred on the Barcelona-Costa Brava axis, two interdependent but complementary poles of tourism attractiveness.

The anticipated decline of mass "3S" tourism on Spanish coasts (Priestley and Mundet, 1998) also touched Catalonia, where coastal areas (notably in Costa del Maresme and Garraf) have known the same style of development-by-concrete as many other resorts in South-Eastern and insular Spain, while Costa Brava has largely been spared for more rigid planning regulations and for the geomorphology of the territory. In any case, maritime tourism growth rates have started to decline in the same period in which urban and cultural tourism in Barcelona boomed (after the 1992 Olympics-driven urban renewal), brining culture and urban atmospheric elements at centre stage as the main focus of tourism development strategies.

At the same time, Barcelona fell under the threat of a possible "thematisation" of the city (Muñoz 2005) which coupled with large to excessive crowding levels from tourism in specific parts of the

city, would in part disrupt the original reasons of its attractiveness: that is, its festive environment, its down-to-earthiness, the originality of its cultural production and complexity of its social fabric.

Thus Catalan tourism managers and local government started to look for ways to "export" the cultural interested raised by Barcelona to other culture-rich areas but neglected by tourism, and at the same tome to use culture as a theme, a by-product to reduce the worst features and effects of coastal tourism (strong seasonal patterns and infrastructure development). Much of these efforts, however, have been inconsistent between different areas (Pearce 1996), largely missing a central coordination umbrella from the Autonomous Community: the tourism strategic plan for Catalonia is only today on the agenda when an important destination area like Girona-Costa Brava launched it six years ago, and the City of Barcelona still does not have an explicit document for tourism planning.

An insightful analysis of a spatial strategy for cultural tourism planning may come from the observation of the organisation of culture and tourism in the territory. The spatial analysis of Catalonia is conducted at two spatial levels: the "*comarca*", smaller administrative units than the province, which nevertheless have points of cultural homogeneity, and at the level of "*marca turística*", a governance level reuniting more *comarcas* (and in some cases cutting through provincial borders) which is approximately subdividing the Catalan territories by "specialisations" and has coordination and marketing tasks.

Again, it should be noted that cultural assets and specific cultural themes are present all through the Catalan territory and the *marcas*: from the Roman archaeology, the Romanesque and the many cultural events of northern and southern coasts, to the monasteries on inland and mountain areas, from the folklore traditions of southern Catalonia, to the modernist and industrial heritage of many smaller resorts in Central Catalunya, from the distinct traditions and language of Val d'Aran to lifestyles and landscapes of the remotest remote Pyrenean *comarcas*.

3.2 Spatial analysis of culture

In this analysis, four categories of cultural assets have been considered:

1. The immovable heritage assets and sites, including monuments and religious buildings, garden and parks, architectural conjuncts, sites of historical value, and archaeological sites, as resulting from the Spanish register of protected monuments;

2. The museums of Catalonia, as listed by the Autonomous Community's cultural office;

3. Events and festivals, as listed by the Autonomous Community's cultural office;

4. Performing arts organisations, as listed by the Autonomous Community's cultural office.

The cultural assets counted in this way are distributed rather homogeneously on the territory, with a slight concentration in the central-western part of the community (provinces of Barcelona and Girona) and in coastal *comarcas*, that in 18.5% of the territory concentrate 32.7% of the cultural assets. If the "star" attractions – that is, the cultural resources that are explicitly mentioned in tourist guides and in the website of Catalonia – are counted and given a weight of 10 in this calculus, coastal *comarcas* are even more rich in culture; it is here that the 35% of cultural attractiveness of the region. "Urbanised" areas are slightly richer in heritage: the correlation between population density and cultural endowment in *comarcas* is 0.73. At the rougher scale of *marca turística* the same trend appears, with more cultural assets concentrated in the north-eastern tip of the Autonomous Community, and in the whole Northern (Pyrenean) region when "star" attractions are counted.

When it comes to art and culture forms (Fig. 1a-d), Catalunya's built heritage assets appear to be concentrated in the coastal *comarcas* and in two distinct corridors on the south-west and north-east of Barcelona, with significant concentrations in Alta Ribagorça and Pla d'Urgell. Museums and visual arts collections spaces are again more intense in coastal *comarcas*, and in areas adjacent to Barcelona and Girona. Performing arts are markedly concentrated in coastal *comarcas* and in the area of the metropolitan area of Barcelona and the Province of Girona. Finally, traditional events like folklore festivals and *fiestas mayores* (popular pageants) are more evenly spread around *comarcas*, with a higher than average concentration along the coast, and on the south-west of Barcelona, especially in the area of Tarragona, and in the vicinity of Girona.

Fig. 1a: Cultural attractiveness for heritage assets; 1b: weighed cultural attractiveness for visual arts; 1c: cultural attractiveness for performing arts; 1d: cultural attractiveness for traditional events in Catalonian *comarcas*.

However, a map of the distribution of cultural and heritage attractions between *comarcas* and *marcas* would inevitably result biased by the large difference in the size of the territories, therefore it is necessary to build relative indexes. These indexes are also illustrative of tourist attractiveness, on the assumption that a higher concentration of attractions on a small portion of the territory works like a magnet for visitors and for the development of a tourist industry as opposed as a situation in which attractions are dispersed over a large territory.

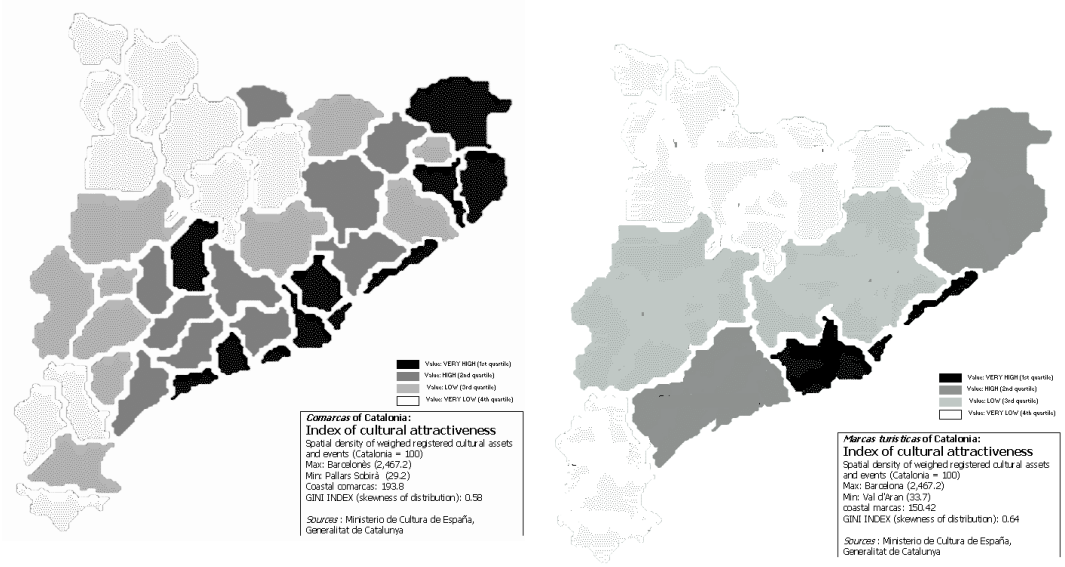

Fig. 2a: Cultural attractiveness index in Catalan *comarcas* and 4b in *marcas*

An index of cultural attractiveness (ATTRX) (Fig. 2a-b) has been therefore built as an indicator of "density" of the weighed number of cultural resources. Looking at the different values among *comarcas* shows that the index (Catalonia being 100), is 93% higher than the average in coastal *comarcas*. The skewness of this distribution is 0.58 against 0.48 of the simple distribution: meaning that there is evidence of "clusters" of attractiveness.

The highest values are found in Barcelona and the lowest in Pallars Sobirà; this means that, all other things being equal, Barcelona and its environs are 100 times more likely to attract cultural visitors and to develop a tourism industry than that remote Pyrenean comarca. The highest values of the indicator are all in coastal comarcas. Northern and eastern comarcas again result as more attractive than southern and western ones. Barcelonès alone, the smaller comarca, has 259 weighed attractions in a territory of only 143 kmq, 4 of which are World Heritage Sites; its attractiveness index has a value almost 10 times higher than that of the comarca ranking second, Maresme, and 24 times higher than the average in the Catalan community. Tourist marcas with the highest cultural attractiveness index are Barcelonès, and the two neighbouring coastal marcas, Garraf and Maresme.

3.3 Tourist activity

The analysis of tourist activity is only possible at the level of tourist *marcas*, as visitor flow data at the *comarca* level are not available. Tourist pressure (visitors per residents, Fig. 3a) is highest in coastal *marcas* such as Costa Brava and Costa Daurada, followed by Maresme and Pireneu. It is lower in Barcelonès and Garraf, and reaches the lowest levels in Catalonia Central and Terres de Lleida. No data are available for vall d'Aran and Terres de l'Ebre. The analysis of distributions shows that cultural attractiveness does not imply tourist pressure: there is a very low negative correlation between cultural attractiveness and tourist pressure, which is an indication that tourism pressure depends on other factors than mere cultural attractiveness.

Combining tourist pressure and data on visitor per square kilometre, a composite index can be built (Index of Tourist Stress: visitors per resident-kmq, Fig. 3b). The analysis of tourist stress is again only possible at the level of tourist *marcas*. Tourist stress is higher in coastal *marcas* like Barcelonès and Costa Brava, and is also high in Maresme and Costa Daurada. No data are available for Vall d'Aran and Terres de l'Ebre. This is very much a supply-biased index: tourists go where hotels are. Barcelonès has a stress index which is some 6 times higher than the community average, and almost double than Costa Brava, ranking second.

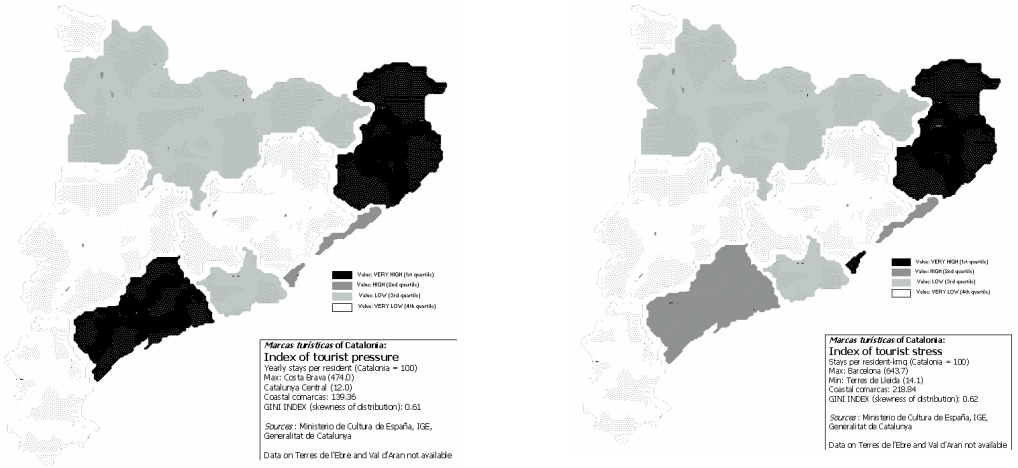

Fig. 3a: tourism pressure index and b: tourism stress index in Catalonian *marcas*

The distribution of tourist-related businesses over the total number of businesses in Catalonia is relatively even across the Catalan *comarcas*, with a Gini index of 0.23. The *comarca* with the highest share of tourist businesses is Pallars Subirà (23%), which is 3.1 times higher than the community average, while in Pla d'Estany only 7.6% of the businesses are touristic. The touristicity index is constructed taking Catalonia as the value 100. The map in Fig 4a shows that *comarcas* in the Pyrenees and some among the less tourism-crowded areas in the South-West of Catalunya, together with Alt Empordà and Garrotxa, are most tourist dependent, while some of the more heavily visited coastal *comarcas* like Barcelones and Maresme have low values. Val d'Aran, Pireneu and Costa Daurada also result the most tourism-dependent *marcas* (Fig. 4b), while Barcelonès ranks among the lowest with a mere 9.4% of businesses that are 'touristic'.

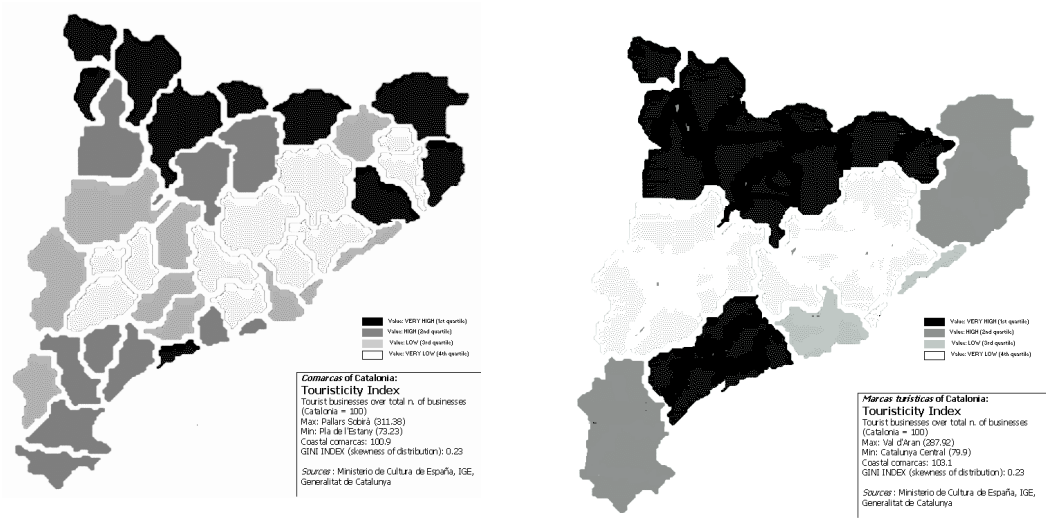

Fig. 4a: Touristicity index in Catalonian *comarcas* and 4b: Touristicity index in Catalonian *marcas*

3.4 Sustainability analysis of tourist territories

The combination of different indicators yields information about the "sustainability" of tourism development in a destination region. The hypothesis is that where cultural attractiveness exists, the valorisation of the heritage assets generates some tourism pressure (but not excessive) and a moderate presence of tourism business in the economy. Many different situations are possible. For the moment, this analysis is conduced only at the level of *marca turística*. In the following table we order *marcas*

turísticas according to the rank they get in each of the criteria, with a range of four grades from VH: very high to VL: very low corresponding to the distributions of the indicators in quartiles.

In case of a region that despite the low concentration of cultural assets attracts many tourists (ATTRX: L/VL) there is potential for tourist development (↗) through investments in cultural attractions and events, enjoying the advantage of a visitor market that may already be there or can be attracted from neighbouring areas with excessive pressure, in this way becoming instrumental to spreading and diversifying tourism activity out of the zones which are most subject to environmental pressure.

Regions with a high concentration of cultural assets are those who have more chances of attracting visitors and to generate a sustainable tourism economy. For tourism to be sustainable, tourist pressure must not be excessive. Hence, attractive regions (ATTRX: H/VH) have a "sustainable tourism" profile if they present themselves the situation (ATTRX; STRESS; TOUR): (H/VH; L/H; L/H). In that case they receive a ✓ mark in the table. In our ordering of *marcas* turisicas, only Garraf receives this grade. Tourism development is not sustainable in the other alternatives:

(ATTRX; STRESS; TOUR): (H/VH; VL; *). In this case, we have an insufficient valorisation of the cultural heritage (↶). The region does not attract the number of visitors that would be reasonable to expect given the richness and concentration of heritage assets. No *marcas*, however, gets this kind of combination.

(ATTRX; STRESS; TOUR): (H/VH; VH; *). This situation of excessive tourist pressure (↷) means that the number of tourists attracted in the destination is not consistent with the preservation of a balanced socio-economic environment in the region and is a peril to the integrity of the heritage resources. Costa Brava and Barcelona find themselves in this situation.

(ATTRX; STRESS; TOUR): (H/VH; H; L/VL). This situation of insufficient development of a tourist economy (➲) identifies a tourist region that attracts many visitors on account of its cultural richness, but this does not translate in an acceptable level of tourism businesses activity. An evaluation on such situations is highly dependent on the specific contexts: it is a normal situation in the case of a very diverse

urban economy (Barcelona). It is also more likely to happen in destination areas that are at a early stage of development, where competition in the tourism market has not matured. Only Costa del Maresme has these characteristics among all Catalan *marcas*.

(ATTRX; STRESS; TOUR): (H/VH; H; VH). Excessive dependency on tourism (⟲) is found whenever an unusually high share of tourism businesses have started to create problems of excessive dependency of the local economy from tourism, which may also be an element of disruption for the economic and social capital of the region. Costa Daurada – Tarragona and Pireneu-Prepireneu are the only Catalan *marcas turísticas* that presents themselves in this situation, though the latter is particularly attractive for reasons different than the strictly cultural, as nature and active tourism are dominant products.

Table 2: multi-criteria analysis of tourism sustainability in Catalonia

Marca	**ATTRX** (weighed n. of assets per kmq)	**STRESS** (visitors / residents per kmq)	**TOUR** (share tourist business on total)	**SUSTAINABILITY**
Costa Brava	H	VH	H	⟲
Pireneu-Pre Pireneu	VL	L	VH	⟲
Val d'Aran	VL	—	VH	⟲
Costa Daurada - Tarragona	H	H	VH	⟲
Terres de l'Ebre	VL	—	H	↗
Terres de Lleida	L	VL	VL	↗
Barcelona	VH	VH	VL	⟲
Garraf	VH	L	L	✓
Catalunya Central	L	VL	VL	↗
Maresme	VH	H	L	⟳

Legenda: VH: Very high (4th quartile of distribution); H: high (3rd quartile of distribution); L: low (2nd quartile of distribution); VL: very low (1st quartile of distribution).

3.5 Towards a better balance of tourism functions in Catalonia

The analysis carried out above highlights that on the overall the most heavily visited areas of the region are those where cultural assets are concentrated. Other important

factors to explain relative visitation levels seem to be coastal locations. Proximity to Barcelona does not result significant; but it seems that areas that are immediately bordering with Barcelona are "shadowed" by the attraction capacity and the good infrastructure of the city.

Large cultural endowment does not imply equally large levels of tourism valorisation; this depends on the other tourist attributes of the area (accessibility mainly) and on the structure of the local economy. Some overly visited areas like Costa Brava possess a solid economy and tourism is not dominating, though there are dangers for the stress on the cultural assets of the region.

Three main directions are ensuing from this analysis as far as cultural tourism is concerned.

1. developing a larger number of cultural "products" in attractive areas with low levels of tourism pressure like Garraf, Catalonia Central and to some extent Pireneu, where a potentially wide range of cultural products could be developed, taking off the pressure from the more congested areas

2. increasing the variety of cultural attractions in areas subject to high levels of tourism pressure (Barcelona, Costa Brava), in order to catch the market potential already there and to support the spatial dispersion of the flows and the re-imaging of areas which suffer from "banalisation"

3. developing cultural enterprises in "virgin" tourism areas that are disadvantaged form the point of view of endowment and access to tourism markets, in order to support a development of the local economy based on the valorisation of local cultural skills.

Some specific experiences can be quoted which go in the suggested direction. The first example of a "diversification" of tourism product in one area also involving a larger territory is the recent effort to market of Girona, the main city of the coastal-tourism focused *marca* of Girona-Costa Brava, as the "second city" of Catalonia, owing to its impressive medieval centre, and the uniqueness of a Jewish heritage (now being re-discovered also in Barcelona and other smaller towns), that makes of this city a

preferred detour for visitors of Jewish descent (among which many Israeli and American visitors and cruise passengers), and puts Girona at the head of the so-called "red de juderias", a large network of Spanish Jewish heritage cities. Pyrenean *comarcas* Pallars Sobirà and Val d'Aran are instead trying to promote their "remote" location (it is almost impossible to include a visit to those areas in day-trip packages for Barcelona or Costa Brava stayers) as an alternative to more crowded attractions, developing heritage itineraries and focusing on the discovery of lifestyles and landscapes. Priorat, in the South-West of Catalonia, a rural and sparsely inhabited region, has an excellent wine production organised in historical "cellars" and a network of Cistercensian Gothic monastery, which is trying to promote as an easy catch for vacationers in Costa Daurada and Barcelona visitors. Finally, Sitges, a trendy beach resort south of Barcelona, organises small scale cultural events all through the year and a large Horror Cinema Festival. It should also be mentioned how the Provincial Administration (Diputació de Barcelona) is organising itineraries which reconnect thematically the city with its environs: the modernist, the historical beer distillery, the industrial heritage.

4 PROSECUTION OF THE RESEARCH AND FINAL REMARKS

The spatial analysis of culture and tourism in Catalonia confirms the first hypothesis in the Cultural Gateways project: there appears to be a strong spatial mismatch between the provision of culture and tourism activity in the territory, which can only in part be explained by the presence of other non-cultural points of attractiveness but could be better explained in terms of the development of a core-periphery pattern in Catalonia, centred on the core products urban tourism (Barcelona) and seaside tourism (Costa Brava-Maresme), according to which a cultural product is attractive only if it "close enough" – spatially and thematically – to the core elements. In thus way, the Catalan case replicates closely the model of Miossec (op. cit.) with the presence of used and transversed or altogether "unused" spaces within a region which is as diverse as culturally homogeneous.

The analysis will continue seeking for the reasons of this "dual development", and thus attempting to test our second and third hypotheses that there exist a divergence between

the aspirations of communities (including visitors) to valorise and appreciate "peripheral" cultural themes and a restrictive attitude by which core elements are preferably supplied by the gatekeepers of tourism: tour operators and intermediaries. A survey with a number of postal questionnaires and some in-depth interviews with tourism government authorities and operators will be used to investigate this matter.

The same kind of analysis will be conducted in two other case study regions, namely Galicia in the North West of Spain, and Veneto in North-eastern Italy. Benchmarking the spatial analysis of Catalonia against these two cases will allow the recognition of alternative models of dual development. Specifically, in Veneto existing research conducted by this author (Russo 2002b) has shown that the core-periphery pattern has a different structure, with "benefited areas" which extend to the large, "passive" and transversed backyard and a clear core, Venice, which bears all costs of tourism development. Galicia appears to be a case in the middle, with a strong attraction as Santiago de Compostela in the middle and a territory of dispersed cultural attractiveness around it, where tourist activity is homogeneously organised; however Galician tourism is in a stage of development and it might become unbalanced in the future if the dangers of excessive "centralisation" are not take into account in regional tourism planning.

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