

pursues well-informed goals, opts for tourism forms compatible with its whole, develops operational scenarios for both foreseeable and unforeseeable turns, and -significantly- treats tourism not just as an industry, but also as an important activity benefiting the local community, yet connecting and contextualizing all host and guest systems: into the global village in which different nations of the world have taken membership (Jafari 1987).

There is no other way to say this: sustainability of tourism lies outside its traditional parameters, and so do its predictable and unpredictable futures. Tourism-as a sociocultural phenomenon, as an economic tool, as a geopolitical force, as an institutionalized practice at and away from home – is too important to be left to itself, unguided in the hand of the industry alone. The public platform has a job to do, and all that ahead of it.

acknowledgement-a slightly different version of this paper was presented at a 2003 UNESCO conference held in Havana, Cuba, scheduled to appear in a UNESCO publication. The present version appeared in Informe Economic 2003 i Social de Les Illes Balears, pages 156-164, 2004 (Palma de Mallorca: Caixa de Balears SA NOSTRA).

## REFERENCES

Jafari, Jafar.(1987). **Tourism Models: The Sociocultural Aspects.** Tourism Management 8:151-159.

The Scientification of Tourism. (2002). In Hosts and Guests Revisited: Tourism Issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, V. Smith and M.Brent, eds., pp. 28-41. New York: Cognizant Communication Corporation.

necessary bodies such as TOCOM are constituted and membership for it are drawn.

- Tourism must be placed at a podium and on a platform appropriate for its global structures and penetrating functions. This is not a call for government bureaucracy, but a repositioning attempt to place tourism on higher grounds guided with informed holistic treatments (Jafari ,1987).

### **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, today tourism has become the epitome of the global community. It has transformed into a gauge of national and international affairs, with its slowdowns or growths as telling indicators of the state of broader socioeconomic performances. Tourism's patterns and volumes signal the coming of both good and bad times. When it slows down, this visibly suggests that economies are weak, conflicts are breaking out, and orders are being lost. And when tourism resumes to its height, this also signals something else: that the weakness has turned to strength and the disorder to resolution.

Should a country leave the making and functioning of this phenomenon and the reading of it as a barometer to the industry alone? Informed participation of the public in tourism is not a choice; in the light of recent developments, it has become a must. The formation of the Public Platform and the design of Tourism Observatory Commissions can pave the road ahead for what tourism is and can be all about.

Tourism should be proud of its past accomplishments. In a short time span, as its history clearly demonstrates, it first elevated itself to the rank below that of oil, then at par with it, suddenly above it, and it is now positioned as the largest industry in the world. But research also suggests that sustaining this position is clearly beyond its own ways and means.

Obviously each country needs to determine the level and participation of its many institutions in the making and functioning of tourism industry and what should constitute its TOCOM body: all placed in foresightful parameters. This way, the visionary mission of the tourism commission operates- in a grounded and contributing fashion- within the national framework, fully understands its sociocultural *raison d'etre*, works within its limits, protects the host natural and cultural heritage, respects wants and needs of its

forbid travel to "enemies". In its sociocultural realm, tourism has even been used to repair relationships between reconciling countries.

- The literature shows that tourism must become a locally – rooted and driven industry in order to succeed. Destinations that have gone native (using empowerment strategies to create a sense of "ownership") are among the successful ones, enjoying public support.
- While past accomplishments have brought this industry to present magnitude/forefront, its future appeal, success, and sustenance will continue to depend on resources that belong to the host system, be they natural or sociocultural. These are the very substances continuously nurturing tourism, yet the industry does not own or control them.
- Further, there are other external factors way beyond tourism's reach that restrain it – be it the weather, natural disaster, social disorder, political maneuver and turmoil, war, economic fluctuation, and even as specific as the foreign exchange rate – whether situated close to its base or waved thousands of miles away from its operation.
- As such, tourism is a multi- dimensional/-faceted industry, internally developed yet externally influenced and controlled. Hence, it takes more than the industry- it requires public means – to bring all layers affecting tourism into interplay. Institutions or systems larger than tourism can and must participate in and contribute to its constitution and operation.
- Further, tourism, more so in the light of recent developments, has no choice but to proactively think, plan, and operate. The industry-driven forces have done all they could to build it up to its present height: the takeoff time has arrived.
- Tourism being inherently inter-regional, intercultural, and externally sourced must be strategized with multidisciplinary means and repositioned for private/public collaborative options. Tourism is more than an art; the tactics of attracting, transporting, receiving, accommodating, entertaining, and serving the tourist.
- Significantly, tourism has become a science: the dialectics of studying, understanding, and connecting tourism to all that structures it and are influenced by it.
- Beside the public know- whys and operational know-hows, it takes an engineered vision to bring both its hidden and manifest dimensions

With the new serendipity – formed Public Platform – to which we all must purposefully contribute- the time for the formation of the proposed Tourism Observatory Commission is upon us, with a visionary mission and an orchestrated action that can influence the future, recognizing that change and crisis are no longer atypical. Of course each country needs to design and operate its own TOCOM brand: one which represents and reflects its unique geopolitical position in the region/world, and one which reflects its present / desired stage of development in and dependence on tourism. And this is exactly where WTO, UN, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, and World Bank can offer blueprints to their member countries.

### **The Public TOCOM Program**

Summarily, several arguments can be (re)stated for tourism taking the public route, with the Public Platform as its *modus vivendi* and TOCOM as its *modus operandi*, including:

- Today all countries are involved in tourism; either as receiving destinations, as generating markets, or both. Every nation is involved, as the host and / or the guest. Tourism is universal in the real sense of the term. As an anthropologist once put it, tourism has become "the largest peacetime movement of peoples in the history of mankind". It is no longer a sporadic event in nature and scope.
- Despite its volatility, tourism is a very resilient industry, and it is here to stay – despite economic fluctuation, natural disaster, war, September 11, SARS, and what have you.
- Tourism is no longer a luxury item: it is a necessity of life almost everywhere. Without tourism, bodies are drained and minds laxed. Economies – all powered by people – cannot retain the edge if their workers' drained batteries are not recharged. Tourism has become the means of restoring equilibriums and benefiting lives, both at homes and at workplaces.
- Thus, tourism is more than an industry-the limited way in which many continue to view and treat it- and the present administration of it by typical political appointees and technocrats to whom tourism means only marketing and promotion will not do.
- This industry represents more than what economics can quantify. The phenomenon called tourism has to be treated and understood beyond its present economic and operational constitutions. In its economics realm alone, governments have used tourism as a carrot

different ways of conceiving and engineering the future of the industry must be opted for.

### **Tourism Observatory Commission**

Yesterday's mindset- which saw the formation of as – needed (national) crisis committees/ treatments only when the occasion so demanded – should changed for a new mindset with its own "landscape" and strategies. In the wake of the new platform, this calls for the formation of Tourism Observatory Commissions (TOCOM): in countries or destinations with ongoing / forthcoming commitments to tourism World Tourism Organization, among others, can take the lead in developing and proposing the structure and function of this body.

The proposed commission does not react, as a crisis committee does. Instead, among other things, TOCOM will be a proactive body. Its broad – based membership knows and comprehends all relevant geopolitical, socioeconomic, and natural forms (as well as the traditional market- driven forces), and foresee what is to come, including what is expectable (and thus preparing for) and what is less probable/"what ifs" (and thus designing back – plans for).

To be successful, membership of TOCOM must be made up of both public and private representations, drawn from appropriate government agencies, operational outlets, academic institutions, and citizen/ interest groups. As already seen, many of those speaking on behalf of tourism during and since the two big incidents are not tourism's traditional spokespersons or stakeholders. As never before, governmental and nongovernmental agencies and high-profile individuals have become new tourism brokers or partners: inviting people to travel, despite the situation of the time, whether to the threatened grounds and skies of September 11 or to the SARS-affected destinations in Asia and North America. By drawing into its membership diverse representations, TOCOM fortifies the position of tourism: shifting, repositioning, and transforming it to an industry envisioned its mundane operational realms. When in 2003 the communities/ governments challenged the position of WHO in relation to SARS' travel alerts, then tourism had indeed evolved: for it was occupying a different position than in the past, and it is in such new grounds and setting in which the TOCOM program should be nested.

their respective tones), a fifth one – Public Platform – is thus potentially emerging. Granted, the decade is too young to name a thematic pattern for it, but at least one can argue that this would be a favorable development for and in tourism this is desirable professionally: a public platform/ voice helping tourism to assume its legitimate place – side by side with other industries – in local, national, and international circles.

The recent incidents, as already noted, have prompted government and nongovernmental agencies, and citizens of their respective destinations, to participate in voicing tourism and claiming "ownership" of it. It is important that this shift is taken advantage of so that the industry derives new homegrown roots and gains new "formal" mouthpieces. Those leading tourism as an industry and those advancing it as a field of study should be guided with the foresight of turning this brief transformational momentum into a trend (or a thrust for this decade), into a well – founded Public Platform. Why and how can this development help?

As is known to all, change and crises are norms, not exceptions, in tourism. Despite this, the industry still waits for things to occur and then it reacts or responds to them, to deal with the problems thrown its way.

The September 11 and SARS cases-both dramatic in magnitude and nature, with ripple effects worldwide- are excellent, though exceptional, examples. The typical wait – and – see practice must change.

Like other well- established industries, tourism too must have an audible public voice and must function proactively: to foresee developments (positives and negatives alike), to formulate options, to have in place alternatives, etc; in order to be able to influence and even shape its course ahead of time. The industry cannot do this by itself. To advance in this direction, rooted public voices/forces/stands should be further fostered and encouraged.

In other words, the prevalent technique of simply reacting to crises has no place in the future we have begun to sample. Even the strategies of the past, including "crisis management" through "crisis committees", suggests that no contemplations or actions will take place until a destination or a tourism company faces an undesirable situation. With the new Public Platform now in the air (but not landed

different realm, the transformation of the World Tourism Organization to a specialized agency of the United Nations is quite significant. In December 2003, the UN General Assembly unanimously made WTO a fully – fledged specialized agency of the United Nations, thus being entitled to participate as full member in the UN System Chief Executive Board for Coordination, which elaborates system –wide strategies in response to overall intergovernmental directives on economic cooperation and development. Significantly, this heightened WTO position enables it to work with the UN General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, and the Security Council, as well as giving WTO a status within the system equal to such institutions as UNIDO (UN Industrial Development Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), ILO (International Labor Organization), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), and WHO (World Health Organization). This all will provide WTO and – through the UN systems of organizations – tourism with an additional public platform or international podium from which the voice or influence of tourism (both its wanted and unwanted consequences) can reach afield. For example, one of its ill effects, sex tourism, actually made it to the speech of the President of the United States addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations on 23 September 23 2003: the very global platform to which WTO and tourism now cling.

Together such (inter) governmental representation, again mustered because of September 11 scar and the SARS scard, suggest the formation of a public platform of diverse external agents siding with or finding themselves in tourism: on behalf of peoples they represent and on behalf of the industry itself.

Because of these fortunate and unfortunate developments, tourism is increasingly finding itself on outbound turfs, going public, gaining a more authoritative stand than it has enjoyed before. Perhaps this is the right time-the momentum-for the industry to literally step aside and make room for these and other influential agents to occupy the podium: to represent tourism, to voice it, to speak on its behalf, to heighten its position, to advance it in the very arenas which it has traditionally been absent.

*With the four Advocacy, Cautionary, Adaptancy, and Knowledge*

shock for tourism. Immediately after the incident, the industry suffered almost everywhere, at near and far destinations.

The situation was so grave that even President George W. Bush of the United States loaned his face and voice to support tourism, encouraging Americans to travel and enjoy the beauty, vastness, and richness of their country from coast to coast. Never before had tourism been shocked and weakened in this way, and never before had it witnessed this level of public "sponsorship" – at the highest level of the government – in this country and elsewhere. True, the real intent of President Bush was not to promote tourism as such, but instead to encourage an east-to – west/north- to – south traffic in the United States in order to signal that things are quickly returning to normal. But still his presumed intent would not matter; the fact that tourism was considered being such a powerful sociopolitical tool counts, clearly suggesting its still-hidden public function and importance.

As if tourism had not suffered enough worldwide, in early 2003 came another surprise: SARS. The volume of the industry was immediately reduced to less – than – bare minimum in all affected areas/destinations and their nearby regions. Soon after the SARS incident, once more high – level public faces and voices (both government authorities and big names/popular figures) of affected areas – as a review of public media would show – did not sit back. Instead, they took initiatives to support/rescue their respective tourism industries.

This included reacting to and even questioning WHO's alerts against travel to their countries.

Soon after the normalization of the situation, the media exuberantly reported "Vietnam, Toronto, Hong Kong, Guangdong, and Singapore all had their turn in celebrating the much-coveted WHO-travel advisory lifting ". Significantly, the voice came from peoples and groups typically outsiders to tourism systems of operation, taking "ownership" of and supporting "their" own tourism industry, thus bringing together government and people as public forces for it. This clearly signifies that those outside its domain had recognized the importance of this industry to their economies and had taken firm and calculated steps on its behalf.

In addition to these developments and support, other "outsiders" such as UNESCO, UNDP, and the World Bank, though not new to



tool for economic development. Because of this tendency, this early phase may be characterized as the Advocacy Platform for tourism.

Then the Cautionary Platform of the 70s, voiced by those challenging the advocacy position, argued that tourism cannot or does not necessarily lead to the economic prosperities and benefits expected of it.

Citing both facts and conjectures, it was further argued that this industry could even lead to many economic disbenefits and sociocultural costs. In general, the second platform opposed tourism and its development. In its mildest form, it cautioned countries and destinations that it comes with many unwanted consequences.

After the arguments of the two advocacy and cautionary platforms were heard – including crossfiring between them – a conciliatory position emerged in the 80s. The Adaptancy Platform believed that the time had come to benefit from these insights by adapting tourism in order to minimize its costs and maximize its benefits. During this decade, various "appropriate" forms of tourism development were introduced and advanced, including nature tourism, rural tourism, agritourism, small- scale tourism, ecotourism, culture tourism, and many more.

The three advocacy, cautionary, and adaptancy stands led to the formation of the Knowledge- based Platform. Populated mostly by researchers/academicians, this scientification process and voice took shape and gained strength in the 90s. Some of the important academic advances and recognitions in tourism emerged during this decade, lending more strength and legitimacy to it as a field of research and scholarship.

Granted these are four generalized snapshots of tourism's recent past (Jafari 2002), then what may be the fifth phase? The new decade (actually the beginning of a new century) is only a few years old. Still, several colleagues familiar with my work have asked if I have already detected a pattern of development / thinking that might characterize the 00s, and what I might be naming its platform.

### **Tourism Going Public**

In everyone's mind, so far the biggest event of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that of 11 September 2001, which sent an immediate shock worldwide, with consequences still unfolding. This was also a big

# **Tourism Gaining Cogency from an Industry-Driven Force to a Public –Platform Choice**

**By: Jafar Jafari (Ph.D)**

A review of the literature suggests that tourism has gone through four major transformational phases, with the fifth one in its making. Representing a platform of action and thinking, each phase depicts an era of shifting/maturing process in this field.

The first platform took force and gained voice after World War II, when many countries in Europe and elsewhere (re)discovered tourism and used it toward economic (re) construction. As several new nations gained their independence in the 60s, they too quickly subscribed to it as a tool to improve their poor economies. Favorable perceptions about and on behalf of tourism-whether coming from the developed/developing countries or signaled by such institutions as the World Bank-supported and even advocated tourism as an important