

Climate resilience, sustainable development and fair tourism in the oases of the world

1. Purpose

The industrial tourism, strongly questioned nowadays

With 1,4 billion of travellers per year, tourism represents for many countries an essential source of currencies, employments, an effective way to improve the infrastructures. However these growing flows of tourists upset the pre-existing balances and have significant negative effects. We hear more and more of over-tourism.

If the impacts of the touristic frequentation are usually taken in consideration and each time managed in a better way by the responsible operators, they are confronted to new questions related to sustainability and the functioning of the earth's ecosystem: road and air traffic growth confronted to climate change, the use and protection of the limited and rare water resources, energy saving, natural areas destruction, etc.

Another tourism is possible

The development of an "other tourism", fairer, and more responsible tries to answer as fully as possible these questions, by making the travellers acting more responsibly, by prioritizing local consumption and short marketing circuits, by encouraging a local return of the added value, by protecting the areas, and, more generally, by reducing the phenomena of "touristic erosion" that tends, in the long term and if we are not careful, to destroy the actual object of the destination.

For decades, more and more countries have been developing a territory tourism, managed by local populations and for their benefit. Diffuse, founded mostly on social capital rather than financial capital, this tourism is based on a network of small facilities and activities that irrigate the territory. It is strongly related to the social and solidarity economy. Carried and supported by organizations, networks, unions and federations, it also usually involves local governments.

This model, which fundamental values are the participation, solidarity, partnership, integration, autonomy, independence, can only work as part of a sustainable local development approach based on a joint and concerted mobilisation of the actors of a same territory, mutual space of life.

The FITS, key moments for meetings and interactions

The objective of the FITS, the International Forum of Fair Tourism and sustainable development, is to promote these alternative forms of tourism and to facilitate their development. The FITS, which idea emerged during the World Summit on Sustainable Development of Johannesburg in 2002, was created the year after in Marseille on the initiative of the Office of Tourism Hautes Terres de Provence (France).

Placed under the patronage of the World Organization of Tourism, the UNESCO and the International Organization of Fair Tourism, it then received support from the Region of South Provence Alps Côte d'Azur, the French Government and from the institutions and organizations of the host countries of each FITS.

The successive FITS in Marseille in 2003 and in 2008, in Chiapas (Mexico) in 2006, in Bamako (Mali) in 2008, in Tiznit (Morocco) in 2012, in Granada (Nicaragua) in 2014 and in Tataouine (Tunisia) in 2017, had the same objective to promote these forms of tourism and allow meetings and exchanges of good practices between the local and international actors. They also permitted to develop an appeal in favour of an alternative tourism, opposed to a massive tourism.

After the FITS Tunisia 2017, the international Comity decided, upon a proposal of the President of the Ouarzazate Provincial Council, to realize the 8°FITS in Ouarzazate, in Morocco, about climate resilience, sustainable development and fair tourism in the oases of the world.

The oases in crises

The oases are spread out in 25 countries, between North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia), Sub-Saharan Africa (Mauritania, Niger, Chad), East Africa (Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia), the Middle East (Libya, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Jordan), South America (Chile Peru, Mexico) and Europe (Spain).

Spread out for most of them along the great historical caravan routes, the oases are true models of sustainable development. These oasis ecosystems, patiently elaborated by human beings for millineries, are based on a fragile alliance of water and earth resources, in a complex social system.

For several decades, the oases have experienced series of big crises. Water and land crises, erosion of the biodiversity and also social and cultural crises with the brutal transformation of the traditional societies, the oases are threatened from all parts.

Yet, the oasis ecosystems have a strong touristic appeal, combining the interests of a growing number of travellers for the ecology, health, exoticism, the sun or the silence that characterized these desert spaces. However, if this tourism turns into a massive one, it will constitute a major risk for these fragile areas.

This situation needs to review all of the practices that combine both the preservation of the natural resources and the creation of economic activities. The responsible and fair tourism combines these two elements as it constitute new sources of incomes for local populations while at the same time it valorises the cultural heritage and protects the natural one.

A FITS dedicated to the oases tourism

In that context, it is important to examine at which condition, the responsible and fair tourism is able to take up the challenge of the preservation and the development of these oases ecosystems.

By having actors from fair tourism and oases development working together, the FITS Morocco offers to examine, in different topics, what are the characteristics of the conservation and the development of the oases, and under what modalities the principles of responsible and fair tourism can be applied to it in a positive way.

2. Objectives

The FITS Morocco 2020 has therefore a double goal :

- (1) Reinforce the advocacy for the oases conservation :* contribute to alert world opinion, and in particular the leaders, about the very critical situation of the oases of the world confronted to the climate emergency, which is added to the other various social, economic, cultural crises.

- (2) Promote responsible and fair tourism forms :* make known these tourism forms as a privileged way of sustainable local development

This Forum is part of the context of the *Vision 2020* defined by the Moroccan Government for its touristic development, and which aims at promoting sustainable tourism, rural tourism, at diversifying supply, at improving the touristic products quality and at promoting them.

3. Participants

The FITS gathers about 400 participants from about 30 countries, in particular from oases countries : state representatives, experts in charge of varied conferences and interventions, practitioners with specific experience, media representatives, tour operators, representatives of local actors networks.

Besides, other Moroccan or foreign personalities will be present, as well as regional governments representatives, national and international funders.

4 – Organization

The project, in Morocco, is placed under the aegis of the Ministry of Tourism. It is led by *the Ouarzazate Provincial Council*, the city of Ouarzazate, ANDZOA and provincial council of tourism bind by a convention.

Comitees based in Ouarzazate are in charge of the organization. The event realization is supported by the international committee of FITS who delegates the executive function to the General Coordinator. The international committee controls the process and participates to the principal decisions making. It leans on a group of experts.

Another convention binds Touiza Solidarité and the CARI – Center of Support and International Realizations, for the mobilisation of the RADD0 – Non profit Network for Oases Sustainable Development.

5 – Proceedings

Preparatory actions

These preliminary actions aim at mobilizing people and organizations to include them in the FITS process and the preparation of an Action Plan in favour of the sustainable development of oasis tourism. It consists of different steps :

- The identification, in the region Drâa Tafilalet, of actions which could constitute the Action Plan for the development of a responsible and fair tourism.
- The organization of mobilization or information actions (debate-dinners) in each province for tourism professionals
- The realization of a study assignment in Provence about rural tourism by a delegation of the region of Drâa Tafilalet, directed by the president of the Regional Council
- The realization of a summary document : overview of the situation of the oases of the world and of its touristic activity

Caravans in the oases

They are organized in each province of the region of Drâa Tafilalet. Reserved for foreign guests, they predate the forum and lasts 3 days. Their goal is to introduce the oasis context and issues. Each caravan has a specific itinerary, with a step in each chosen place.

The forum itself

The forum lasts 2,5 days. It starts with an inaugural session with guests participation. The session is followed by introductory conferences about oases and climate change and about responsible and fair tourism.

Then, round-table discussions and workshops deal with principal topics in detail and give the floor to participants. Feedbacks of varied caravan works is done in a plenary session. The Action Plan for developing a responsible and fair tourism in oases, produced by preliminary works, is presented and discussed.

The closing session makes possible, with officials participation, to approve the main productions from the forum : the fair tourism Charter, the Declaration of Ouarzazate, the Recommendations for the Action Plan, the Solidarity Commitments for action, subscribed by participants.

The exhibition of handcrafted and local products

The exhibition takes place in Ouarzazate at the same time of the forum. It welcomes numerous exhibitors of best agricultural and handcrafted products from Moroccan oases.

The cultural evenings

After caravans arrival, foreigners are invited to participate to a convivial evening in order to know each other. The next two evenings, hosted by traditional music and dance bands, is organized under oasis cultures.

The Photographic exhibition : Oasis of the world, oasis in danger

The exhibition located in the Congress palace of Ouarzazate gathers 30 photographs of the most beautiful oasis in the world as well as photographs showing the troubles that are encountering those same oasis.