

DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS AND TOURISM INDUSTRY AT THE REGION OF WEST BALKANS : TOURISM AS A SOCIOPOLITICAL FORCE

Priniotaki Ioannis Maria

*Tourism Management, Hellenic Open University , Sappfus 17 , Kallithea, Athens, Tel: +6937425944,
Email: address:mpriniotak@hotmail.com*

Kapsis Stavros Dionisios

*Promotion of Mental Health, University of Athens , Dafnomilis 36 , Licavitos, Athens,
Tel:+6978180763, Email: address: kapsisd@yahoo.gr*

Abstract : This paper aims to highlight the political aspect of tourism: politics is a fundamental yet much ignored component of tourism development and tourism studies. A research into the political dimensions of tourism industry towards the democratization fulfillment in the region of West Balkans is further discussed. The stipulated trade-off between democracy and growth is also examined. The results suggest that democracy reinforces progress in economic liberalization, which, in turn, improves growth.

Keywords :democracy, tourism industry, development , West Balkans

1. Introduction

It is unanimously accepted that, the sudden wave of democratization which prevailed in Eastern Europe during 1989-1990, provides a formidable challenge to politicians and academic scientists trying to explore the causes and patterns of democratization. In other words, they were literally unable to predict or even to anticipate the forthcoming collapse of socialist systems in Eastern Europe and the consequent democratization. In this general context, Samuel Huntington had concluded in 1984, in his article on whether more countries would become democratic, that there was less likelihood of this occurring in Eastern Europe and more specific in West Balkans than elsewhere in the world (Huntington 1984).

However, 20th century has politically acknowledged to be a certain period of time with enormous evolutions for the region of Eastern Europe (Kouvertaris 2002) and more interestingly for the region of West Balkans. It is near after the collapse of the Ottoman empire, the genesis of “new” ethnic nations, their intervention into two global wars, the separation into two different zones of conflict and finally the collapse of their authoritarian regimes, that West Balkans managed to initiate a new crucial period for their future. After a long period of intensity and national conflicts (1989-2001), region’s political, financial, and social instability appears to be over. Thus, the undergoing re-regulation of their geopolitical priorities and the mutual cooperation offered by international organizations, has led to the so-called policy of “transition” (Kubicek 2000).

Almost all of the eastern countries have a shared historical experience upon which their perception of democracy and its promotion is based. For a large part of researchers, democracy building, especially in the Eastern neighborhood, is a common mission for all new member states of EC. In other words, democracy promotion is becoming institutionalized and could, therefore, become a consistent and long-lasting element of the region’s states (Laurynas Jonavicius 2008).¹⁹⁷

In this specific field, tourism - as a powerful mix of cultural, economic and political phenomena with multiple meanings, applications, and perspectives – and its relationship, if any, with democracy and the region’s political evolutions is examined (Burns and Novelli 2007). Tourism is, without a doubt, one of the most important forces shaping our world (Cohen and Kennedy 2000), while tourism development as a concept has been widely considered as an essentially political concept. Political philosophy and ideology has a substantial impact on tourism development processes and vice versa (Hall 1998). In this research, one has to remember that, economically, tourism is of growing importance to many nations and is recognized

¹⁹⁷ See Raik, Kristi and Gromadzki, G. (2006), Král, D. (2005).

as the largest export earner in the world and an important provider of foreign exchange and employment (WTO).

This paper sets out to explain democratization in Eastern Europe from different perspectives and mainly to investigate the possible and actual linkages between tourism industry and the undergoing democratization process in the region of West Balkans .

2. Democracy : its nature and prerequisites

Democracy as a normative and analytical concept is fairly difficult to be defined. The word ‘democracy’ comes from the Greek words *demos* ‘the people’, and *kratos*, meaning ‘power’. For Abraham Lincoln, democracy depicts ‘the government of the people, by the people and for the people’ ; assessing the processes of democratization in Eastern Europe , though, requires a more comprehensive working definition as such: a political system in which ideologically and socially different groups are legally entitled to compete for social power and in which institutional power holders are elected by the people and are responsible for the people (*Vanhanen 1990*).

Taking Vanhanen’s definition as a useful analytical tool, we can see that democracy depends on both formal constitutional structures, and a broader of pluralist power relations in society. For Andrian G.V. Hyde –Price (1994), a democratic system of government consists of institutionalized mechanisms for interest articulation and integration, based on broadly agreed constitutional and political structures. However, as he notes, a flourishing democracy must be grounded on much more than formal constitutional and political structures.

Democracy, though, has clearly evolved to include so much more than government by majority. Minority rights, civil liberties and policy making by elected representatives of the people have come to be part of the equation. A mechanism for democratic government can not be assured without a pluralist distribution of economic and social power in society, without a democratic political culture –in other words, a healthy and well developed civil society. This is the reason that Eastern European democrats have given such a considerable importance to the notion of civil society, by which they include the existence of a network of formal and informal groups, representing different social, political, professional and economic groups, and organized autonomously by the state – according to Keane’s (1998) criteria.

For Laurence Whitehead (1986), this political discourse on democratization process is obliged to take into account the following common characteristics, having occurred by the cases studied in the Wilson Center’s project on ‘Transitions from Authoritarian Rule’:

- Peacetime transitions;
- Transitions from ‘rightist’ regimes;
- Countries with a liberal, European tradition (what Whitehead calls ‘children from the French revolution’)
- Developing or newly industrializing countries ;
- A geopolitical position within, or close to, the Western bloc.

Whitehead comments that it is about factors that, taken together might prove an important restriction on the role of foreign actors, and by excluding other cases, the ‘project narrowed its frame of reference to these recent experiences of attempted redemocratization in which local political forces operated with an untypically high degree of autonomy’. A comparison with Eastern Europe unveils that it differs from these cases mainly on the character of the regime (2) and in some of the traits of the state, i.e. the economic situation (4). Eastern Europe though, does have in common with the cases studied, that they occurred in peacetime, that the countries had a liberal tradition to some extent, and, why not, they were close to, and beginning to integrate into the Western bloc.

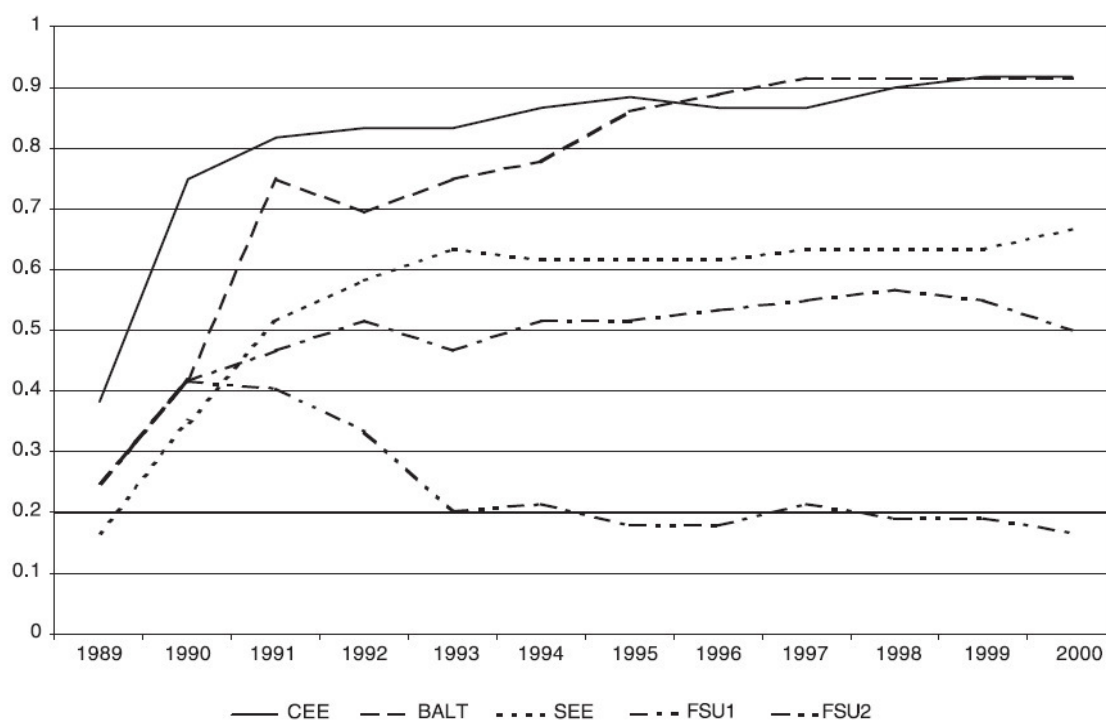
3. Democratization process in EC new member states

There is no doubt that a strong EU 'Eastern Policy' is a shared goal for the new EC member states, mainly due to their geographical location. The belief that all Central and Eastern European EC members share the same vision and interests towards Eastern neighbors and Russia is widespread in many Western European States. As Laurynas Jonavicius (2008) notes, however, the differences between the new member states are significant, since each has its own vision of the role it should play inside and outside the EU : Poland aspires to become a regional power, while Estonia strives for internal development first.

The simultaneous transitions to liberal democracy that commenced as a whole in Eastern Europe at the end of 1980s, in some cases earlier, are certainly a development of major historical importance, but in some cases, as researchers observe, they are still in a relatively early phase. Due to their different characteristics (historical, cultural and geographical) new member states can be clustered into three general categories : Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary constitute the first group of states, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are widely known as the Baltic States, while Romania and Bulgaria can be classed as a separate group due to their geographical position and different EU accession date.

The democratization progress in the above mentioned states may be depicted in Figure 1. It is the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Hungary, the three frontrunners having attained a level of political freedom and civil liberties comparable to the United Kingdom, France or Germany. Although the other post communist countries did not democratize so rapidly, they also made considerable progress.

Figure 1: Evolution of democracy in post –communist Europe. Notes : CEE: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. BALT: Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. SEE: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Romania. FSU1: Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. FSU2: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



Source : Fidrmuc (2003)

Before investigating the democratization process in the above mentioned states, it is of major importance to examine, first, their economic level of development according to OECD Annual Report 2005 and the Eurostat data (See Table 1 & 2).

Table 1 : GDP in capita in PPS (EU 27)

EU 27	100	Cyprus	92.9
Luxembourg	283.9	Slovenia	90.6
Ireland	143.8	Greece	89.5
The Netherlands	133	Czech Republic	81.4
Austria	129.3	Malta	75.5
Denmark	126.6	Portugal	74
Belgium	122.3	Estonia	72.5
Sweden	121.8	Hungary	65.7
United Kingdom	119.4	Slovakia	66.6
Finland	117.3	Lithuania	60.9
Germany	114.2	Latvia	60.3
France	112.6	Poland	55.1
Italy	103.3	Romania	39.5
Spain	103.1	Bulgaria	38.7

Table 2: ODA of new EU member states

COUNTRY	2006 ODA (min of EUR)	2006 ODA (%of GNI)
EU-15	45854	0.44
EU-10	556	0.10
Czech Republic	110	0.11
Estonia	6	0.06
Latvia	8	0.06
Poland	250	0.1
Lithuania	14	0.064
Slovakia	30	0.085
Slovenia	35	0.127
Hungary	89	0.1

Source : Laurynas Jonavicius (2008)

Under this scope, we observe that new EC member states still rank amongst the poorest member states, while, it is worth mentioned the limited external aid funds, as opposed to the formal requirement to increase development cooperation. In this general context, one has to mention many recent empirical studies, pointing out that transition countries are also facing serious institutional handicaps, beyond the well known structural weaknesses related to their outworn economies (high share of traditional agriculture in GDP, obsolete technology, cheap labor, and high-energy consumption) (Wallden 1994, Panteladis and Petrakos2000, Totev 2002).It is their former communist institutional legacy which maintains an economic environment, discouraging for an increasing productivity, as North notes (1991). Insecurity of property

rights, the absence of a stable legal frame determining in permanent way the rules of the game, soft budget constraints, that is governmental inability to impose financial discipline both to private and to state-owned firms and, of course, corruption are among the institutional failures often cited (Stiglitz 1994, Rizopoulos 1999).

In this paper, we limit our research into the most recent EU comers (2007), namely Romania and Bulgaria. After joining the EU in 2007 both Romania and Bulgaria have assumed commitments in the development cooperation sphere : 'the Member States which have joined the EU after 2002, and that have not reached a level of 0.17% ODA, will strive to increase their ODA to reach within their respective budget allocation processes, that level by 2010 ... Member States, which joined the EU after 2002 will strive to increase by 2015 their ODA to 0.33%' (The European Consensus 2005).

Romania is acknowledged to be a sentry on this last frontier of the democratic world (Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu 2005). For Fuss (2003) though, after having conducted a survey in several European cities, European identity and especially European constitution are not yet significant issues in Romania but, as he notes, the increased European integration will soon lead to visible tensions between national and supranational levels. However, the triple action for an increased security, democracy and stability in its neighboring areas (Black Sea and the Western Balkans) proves to be a priority issue for the country, since Romania believes it has a strong moral and political duty to be an anchor country along this frontier of the democratic community. Romania is also known for its strong political activism in the region : sharing common interests with Moldova – since a great number of Moldavians have Romanians passport and citizenship – and in view of the idea of the so called 'Ring of the Friends' in the region, Moldova's democratization is the most important target of the Romanian policy. Commenting the Romanian policy, one has to keep in mind that major importance of the Black Sea region, with two crucial fields for the EU policy: energy and hard security.

Although Rumania and Bulgaria share a plethora of socioeconomic characteristics, the latter is perhaps the most isolated state concerning the democracy promotion policies. It is the Black Sea dimension for both, that provides Romania and Bulgaria a chance to become important democracy promoting players in the region. Bulgaria's however weak economy and as yet unaccomplished achievements in consolidating democracy inside the country hampers its further activism.

Democracy, however, is perceived to be closely correlated with the performance of the economy (De Melo et al. 1996, Dethier et al. 1999, Fidrmuc 2000). It is interesting to see, though, how people are satisfied or not with the development of democracy in their country (See Table 3). The database employed here combines several Central and Eastern Euro barometer surveys conducted on behalf of the European Commission from 1990 to 1996 covering up to 21 countries in the form of a panel.

A quick interpretation of the results shows that if people are better off compared to the past and expect to be even better off in the future, they will be more pleased with democratization process and vice versa. In other words, one has to anticipate that personal economic success (failure) has a positive (negative) impact on the attitude towards the democratization development.

According to the income quartile variable, relatively reach people are more satisfied with progress in political transformation. It is further inferred that inflation has a negative effect on satisfaction: it does not only reduce support for market reforms (Hayo 1999) but it also decreases satisfaction with progress in reforming the political system. Generating low inflation rates may result in a 'double dividend' in terms of increasing support for market reforms and higher satisfaction with progress in reforming the political system. Furthermore, respondents in countries that are characterized by a higher GDP per capita index are less satisfied with the political transformation progress. In other words, if living conditions have improved, people demand a similar amount of progress in political transformation (Inglehart 1977).

Table 3 : Explaining satisfaction with democracy (1991-1996)

Independent variables	Coefficients	SEs
<i>Personal financial situation</i>		
Deterioration compared to the past and negative expectation	-0.93**	(0.04)
Improvement compared to the past but negative expectation	-0.06	(0.08)
Deterioration compared to the past but positive expectation	0.05	(0.04)
Improvement compared to the past and positive expectation	1.02**	(0.07)
Income quartiles	0.09**	(0.01)
<i>Macro variables</i>		
Inflation (% p.a.)	-0.0001**	(0.00003)
GDP per capita index	-0.003*	(0.001)
Employment index	-0.02	(0.01)
Degree of openness ((exports + imports) to GDP)	0.04	(0.53)
<i>Fiscal stance</i>		
Government expenditure to GDP	0.02	(0.02)
Government surplus to GDP	0.05*	(0.02)
Private sector share of economy	0.02*	(0.01)
<i>Transition indicators</i>		
Index for price liberalization and competition	0.07	(0.62)
Index for privatization and banking reform	0.93	(0.90)
Index for trade and foreign exchange rate system	-0.81	(0.43)
F-test	F(42,35) = 61.2**	
Pseudo-R ²	0.092	

Notes: Country and time dummies are included. Additional control variables are gender, age, age squared, and education. The sample contains 19 countries.* (**) indicates significance at a level of 5% (1%).

Source : Dragoman (2008)

4. Explaining democratization factors

Democratization process has been acknowledged to be closely correlated with factors such as : socio-economic structures, historical, political and various other conjunctural factors. In any case, studies of democracy show that many different conditions may affect the chances of democracy in a given country. These may well be cross-nationally variable.

At this point, it is of major importance to present the outcomes of an extensive survey by questionnaires of Balkan entrepreneurs :

In a recent study based on an extensive survey by questionnaires of Balkan entrepreneurs, Liargovas and Chionis (2002) found that, the most significant barriers to the transition of enterprises from central plan to market economy are mainly socio-economic: "attitudes and values accounting for 40% of the total, followed by the business environment 25%, and skills and knowledge with 35%." In a further desegregation between state's and private entrepreneurs' attitudes and values scored even higher as a barrier, reaching 49% of total, as compared with 31% within the sub-category of post-communist entrepreneurs, who correspond to our players of the "new or the capitalist game." According to the aforementioned study, major values and customs inhibiting change in these economies included: (1) doing practically no work whatever is a status symbol among wide strata of people employed, (2) mistaken conceptions of the world around them by men of power because they had never traveled before to a non-Communist country and could not speak any foreign languages, (3) putting the brakes in any attempt by their subordinates to introduce even minor reforms until it was too late, (4) employees' mentality, a lack of trust in improving their work, (5) unwillingness of the staff to change their stereotypes due to their mentality formed in the past decades, (6) a false sense of security taken over from the Communist era, that whether you stay, or you lay you will be paid your salary, and related to this, (7) an unwillingness of

employers to dismiss people, and (8) the communist mentality, that wages must be differentiated according to employee's years in the firm, not to their competence and knowledge.

In each country of the region the past exercises a significant influence on the present. Any analysis of recent change must deal with layers of history, to some extent shared, and to some extent, individually experienced. As Waller (1994) comments, the most recent and universally shared historical layer is the forty and more years of communist rule. Imposed on all of them except Albania and Yugoslavia in the aftermath of the Second World War, communist rule is often perceived as a 'glacier' that froze that history (Rupnik 1990). For these states, the communist political system was not only authoritarian, but it characteristically atomized society, breaking up autonomous concentrations of power in the middle reaches of the political system, and making the organized articulation of interests impossible to sustain. The countries of Eastern Europe all claim to have put behind them the political system of communism and to be seeking, to establish a pluralist democracy. At the same time, however, a large part of academics, has recorded a number of factors that have impeded the development of democratic politics in the region and may be expected to have an influence also on future developments (See for further analysis Waller 1994).

Political factors ; The high speed of democratization reflected in Fig. 1, depicts, not only the desire of these countries' citizens to live in democracy, but also the encouragement or outright pressure from Western governments, international organizations and especially the European Union, which made democracy an explicit precondition for accession negotiations. After all, one has to keep in mind that in the new EU member states' foreign policy agendas is the imperative need to anchor their European identity. According to the social-constructivist theoretical approach, the process of "identity construction" drives a state's behavior towards other actors: how you are perceived by others is of crucial importance for the general understanding of "who you are". In this light, as all the NMS have been going through identity transformation processes from "post-communist countries" to "European states", today they have an urgent need to strengthen this "European" identity.

5. Tourism as a sociopolitical force

Tourism is usually promoted by a country for its ability to spread economic development and reduce inequalities in income distribution by providing employment to people in a particular geographical area (Pearce 1988, Coccossis & Parpairis 1995, Wahab & Pigram 1997). Governments, particularly in the Third World encourage tourism investment because of the assumption that it will contribute to economic development of their countries (Hall 1995). In poor countries, regions, towns and cities, tourism is seen as a fast track to development (Glasson et al. 1999). Governments therefore, view tourism as a catalyst for national and regional development, bringing employment, exchange earnings, balance of payments advantages and important infrastructure developments benefiting locals and visitors alike (Glasson et al. 1999). In this light, the primary concern of tourism in destination areas is its ability to have strong linkages with the domestic economy, particularly agriculture, manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants, transport, banking and insurance services, water and electricity, and social and personal services. Therefore, an assessment of tourism's contribution to development requires an analysis of the backward and forward linkages between tourism and other sectors, an understanding of the spatial location of tourism activities, and identification of the beneficiaries of its economic and other impacts (Mbaiwa 2005).

Despite the prevailing view of tourism as an economic phenomenon, tourism is a social -economic phenomenon that acts both as an engine of economic progress and a social force. For Davidson (1994) tourism is much more than an industry. Tourism is much more like a 'sector' that impacts a wide range of industries. Tourism is just not businesses or governments – it is people. Supporting rational tourism growth and development needs to be viewed in this broader context. The words of the 1980 Manila Declaration on World Tourism highlight perhaps the strongest vision for tourism : Convinced ... that world tourism can contribute to the establishment of a new international economic order that can help to eliminate the widening economic gap between developed and developing countries and ensure the steady acceleration of economic and social progress, in particular of the developing countries. Aware that world tourism can only fly flourish if based on equity ... and if its ultimate aim is the improvement of the quality of life and the creation of better living conditions for all peoples.

In the practice of tourism, spiritual elements must take precedence over technical and material elements. The spiritual elements are essentially as follows :

- The total fulfillment of human being.
- A constantly increasing contribution to education.
- Equality of destiny of nations.
- The liberation of man in a spirit of respect for his identity and dignity
- The affirmation of the originality of cultures and respect for the moral heritage of peoples (WTO 1980).

In this light, at the 2nd World Travel and Tourism Summit, organised by the World Travel and Tourism Council, which gathered together in Portugal more than 200 of the world's decision makers in governments and global businesses, the participants made the following commitment in the Vilamoura Declaration 2000:

(1) To continue to measure and promote the importance of tourism as a force for economic growth, job creation, and peace to measure political and economic policy makers; (2) To foster cooperation between private enterprises, the public sector and communities at local, national and regional levels; (3) To encourage the expansion of infrastructure and human resource training and development, and the reduction of the great debt in some emerging economies, to match growth in demand for tourism in both emerging and developed economies; (4) To develop tourism that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable and enriching ;(5) To promote tourism's unique role in harnessing technological advancement to fulfill human aspirations.

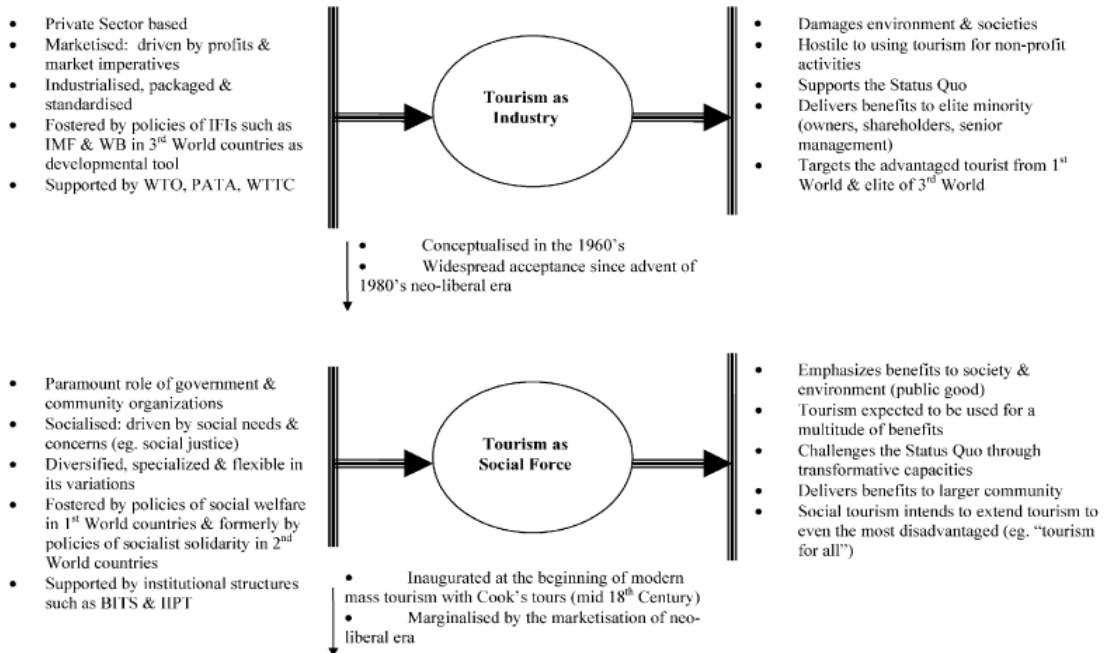
According to Dogan (1989), tourism has been a major source of intercultural contact and it has influenced the sociocultural structures of most touristic countries either positively or negatively. Hosts have reacted in different and varied ways, ranging from active resistance to complete adoption of western culture. As a general conclusion, Dogan notes that “in a community previously dominated by a particular response to tourism, a diversity of responses will emerge as tourism develops, and groups with different interests and characteristic responses to tourism will be formed within the community”.

Historically, the ability of tourism to contribute to important sociopolitical aims was early recognized at the birth of the modern phenomenon. Turner and Ash claim Cook viewed the railway as “a great and beneficial social force” (1976, p. 52) and they quote Cook describing travel as “appertaining to the great class of agencies for the advancement of Human Progress” (cited in Turner & Ash, 1975, p. 53). Turner and Ash argue further:

He saw “excursionism” as an agent of democratization, and in 1861 he demonstrated the sincerity of his democratic principles by organizing an excursion of 1500–1600 people to support a working men’s demonstration in Paris. Cook made a loss of 120 pounds and described the venture as a “labor of love minus profit”. Nevertheless, a similar excursion was organized in the following year (1975, p. 53).

Despite this promising beginning for tourism, though, Turner and Ash conclude that “tourism has proved remarkably ineffective as a promoter of equality and as an ally of the oppressed”. Brohman (1996) has thoroughly critiqued the use of tourism as part of the outward-oriented development strategies promoted by the neoliberally driven IFIs such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Such agencies pressure developing countries to adopt neoliberal policies as part of the structural adjustment programs that are a pre-requisite to obtain loans. Reviewing Brohman’s work, Scheyvens has claimed “rather than encouraging domestic tourism or promoting tourism as a means of developing crosscultural awareness, for example, for most Third World countries tourism is explicitly pursued as a means of earning foreign exchange” (2002)

Figure 2: Perspectives on the purposes of tourism



Source : F.Higgins –Desbiolles (2006)

6. Tourism Industry in the Region of West Balkans - a major factor towards the democratization process

Tourism economic sector has been widely acknowledged as one avenue for boosting socioeconomic development. In developed countries, attempts are often made to convert former industrial areas and impoverished rural areas to a tourism economy. For the developing countries, more interestingly, the major importance of tourism closely correlates with national development in all aspects .

For the West Balkans, the collapse of communist rule created a 'spring of hope', which promised to the peoples of this much-abused region a new era of democracy, prosperity and national independence. It has also lead to growing worries about the future, as the pains of market-orientated economic reform and resurgent nationalism have generated fears about the emergence of various forms of authoritarian nationalism in at least some of these post-communist countries. Fifteen years after regime change swept across the former Soviet bloc and contrary to the widely held hopes and expectations at that time, liberal democracy has emerged and taken root only in a small number of post-communist countries. In the majority of former communist states, political transformations have either lost their momentum and resulted in partially democratic systems or have been reversed and brought new authoritarian regimes. As Hall argues (1998), in the limited number of analyses undertaken on tourism development and post-socialist processes of restructuring in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), most attention has been paid to the more advanced societies of Central Europe. By contrast, Europe's less developed and relatively unstable south-eastern corner, where tourism development issues may take on a different complexion, has been relatively neglected.

The relationship between politics and tourism is complex and multi-faceted, and a subject which is assuming a higher priority in the research literature. In this general context, it is of essence to see the intellectual relationship between tourism, as described above, and the democratization process under evolution in the region of Eastern Europe. The breakup of the USSR and the neo-liberal era in Eastern Europe have increased freedom of travel while reducing the right to leisure, economic security, and health care. Eastern Europe and Russia are increasing destinations for Western travelers but the intra Eastern Bloc travel that prevailed in the era of soviet hegemony has been in some places reduced by the increased cost of travel and the lack of workplace retreats, and guaranteed leisure once widespread in socialist countries. Under this scope, it is interesting to see, the evolution of tourist phenomenon in the region of the Southeastern, central and eastern Europe as described in Table 4.

Table 4: Southeastern, central and eastern Europe :international tourist receipts per capita, 1990-2000

Region	Country	International tourism receipts per capita (in US\$)						2000/	2000/
		1990	1995	1998	1999	2000	1995	1990	
							(as %)	(as %)	
South eastern European (including Turkey)									
	Albania	133	1625	1929	NA	NA	NA	NA	
	Bosnia-Hercegovina	NA	175	233	233	155	89	NA	
	Bulgaria	201	136	362	377	385	283	192	
	Croatia	242	905	607	654	473	52	195	
	Macedonia, FYR	80	127	94	117	168	132	210	
	Moldova	NA	133	200	200	235	177	NA	
	Romania	35	214	88	79	111	52	317	
	Serbia/Montenegro ^a	352	183	125	112	NA	NA	NA	
	Turkey	672	700	801	755	796	114	118	
Central and eastern Europe (2004 EU entrants)									
	Czech Republic	58	851	679	541	503	59	867	
	Estonia	NA	666	643	589	459	69	NA	
	Hungary ^a	40	135	209	236	220	163	550	
	Latvia	NA	38	319	241	NA	NA	NA	
	Lithuania	NA	118	323	387	318	270	NA	
	Poland	105	344	423	340	351	102	334	
	Slovakia	85	688	543	470	411	60	484	
	Slovenia	1109	1485	1110	1084	878	59	79	

NA: data not available.

^a Arrivals data include all visitors.

Source : Hall (2004)

By encouraging greater and closer interaction, Hall (1998) comments, between formerly restricted host populations and the outside world, both inbound and outbound tourism may be seen as a catalyst of change: as a positive educational force stimulating a thirst for knowledge of the outside world, encouraging entrepreneurial activity, providing supplementary incomes, generating new forms of employment, creating new patterns of travel, or in setting up potentially negative demonstration effects, modifying cultures and generating major economic leakages through transnational involvement. The integration of CEE into the global economy and in particular in preparation for individual countries' possible accession to the European Union (EU), has been a prime foreign policy driving force, especially of the more advanced economies of Central Europe. In this general context, ex-communist CEE countries might welcome cultural tourism in the furtherance of political ends that arise through its image-generation potential. There is a continuing dialectic about the role of culture, the significance of tourism and the relationship between these two in CEE societies in transformation. Both culture and tourism have been utilised to display a break with the past, to promote particular national identities and to demonstrate a new openness and willingness and eagerness to embrace a wider European identity. In CEE, emergent post-communist governments have been keen to establish (and re-establish) national identities that are free from any connection with communism (Hall 1999). The debate about identity finds some expression in countries of CEE in tourism images that are promoted (Hall 2000). There has been a particular desire in tourism development to affirm an affinity with and reintegrate with 'European' cultural heritage and to demonstrate a new openness (Fox 1997).

7. Conclusions

Charles Dickens's opening words from his epic novel aptly sums up the contradictory and ambiguous mood prevalent today in much of eastern Europe: it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of

despair (*A Tale of Two Cities*). Tourism as a political force, among others, may be a promising agent at this historical evolution. Tourism, in other words, has nowadays a unique opportunity to prove that it is not only a strict economic agent during this long lasting neo-liberal era; it is about a major sociopolitical force, enmeshing democracy globally.

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