

**Special Issue Roots Tourism**

# FUORI LUOGO

Rivista di Sociologia  
del Territorio, Turismo, Tecnologia

*Guest Editors*

**Tullio Romita**

**Antonella Perri**

**Philippe Clairay**



Direttore Fabio Corbisiero  
Caporedattore Carmine Urciuoli

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# Multiple Identities: Roots Tourist's Perception in the Host Communities<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

In this work, we will look at the perception of what is known as "root tourism" by local communities specifically referring to the Italian case. The topic is not only relevant to scientific interest, but of clear national relevance as well. In fact, a specific measure was devoted to this form of tourism in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), a document that has been drawn up by the Italian government in 2020 to find a way out of the global coronavirus pandemic's economic crisis, using the funds allocated to Italy under the European programme Next Generation of the European Union.

The aim of NRRP is to find solutions to facilitate spending the holidays in the places where one's roots reside for the many people of Italian origin present around the world (estimated at about 80 million). Talking about this social phenomenon, according to the ENIT (Italian National Tourism Agency), 15 years ago these tourists in Italy were estimated to be about six million; according to the same study, the income generated was estimated at about €4 million.

However, the tourism industry in Italy has paid limited attention to this phenomenon, and moreover public functions have not produced policies to incentivize and re-evaluate it. The same consideration applies to the scientific literature in Italy on the subject, which is difficult to identify as an organized body of studies and research. In this moment, there is a lack of rigorous studies on the real motivations that drive people to organize this type of journey, as well as on the perception of the tourist of the roots by the local hosting communities. The same happened for the analysis of the relationship that is established between roots tourists and the people of local communities. Finally, the reasons that drive the tourist's roots to return, or not return, to the places of origin.

In other words, the existing body of knowledge makes it difficult to conceptually define the phenomenon, in terms of what enables it to focus on its real essence, and two important features that may help to identify slight differences among different types of root tourism, including, for example, genealogy tourism. Generally, there are few studies and research addressing root travel analysis included in his tourism directorate, or in other words, an analysis of the phenomenon which is approached from the perspective of a specific form of tourism.

We conducted the field research towards this direction, aiming at elaborating on the 'tourist' purpose of this kind of journey. Within the framework of these studies, we wish to offer here a reflection of a specific aspect of the phenomenon in question, which relates to the way the host community perceives and evaluates the social figure of the tourist of the roots. This is a reflection that represents an in-depth analysis of an itinerary of reading about roots tourism who found its appropriate address in a document published more than a decade ago (Romita & Perri, 2009a).

## 2. Tourism of the Roots: Reading Routes and Development Prospects

In this script, by the expression "tourism of the roots", we mean the social phenomenon which drives migrants and/or their descendants to return, frequently or occasionally, to their place of origin, based on non-instrumental motives, strongly associated with supporting or delving into their family identity. This topic, as already mentioned, does not find a specific and articulated

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field for research and scientific studies. However, the theme finds space in different areas of social science analysis, as helpful elements for theoretical reflection and empirical knowledge, which focus on emigration studies, on local communities, and those who place the emphasis on the tourist experience and therefore on the analysis of the motivations and phenomena involved in the behaviour of tourists.

A useful and wide literature about the analysis of the phenomenon of emigration of return can be found about those individuals with a profound desire that leads them to return to their origins, a vital need for the migrant person. Within this scientific context, which is essentially anthropological, the emigration of the return is summarized in a triple direction (Pitto, 1988): return home, as a subjective need of the outmigration phenomenon (Frigessi Castelnuevo & Risso, 1982); return from another country, as appropriation of another reality in the diachronic sense and, therefore, the assumed history in its own cultural specificity (Harrison, 1988); return to the family, as the reappropriation of a cultural space from its own system of values, whether the village or the metropolis (Cerase, 1970).

In this type of study, the necessity of the return inherent in the migrant population is mainly related to family structure. The theme of the return shows itself as a sort of bridge between two familiar places (the present and the origins), two different spaces but unified by interests, kinship relationships or knowledge of traditions. Therefore, the need for return is revived by regular and temporary visits to the place of origin during holiday periods, which have become customary in time. Furthermore, in this same type of study it should be noted that among the factors that push travelers towards the realization of the journey of the roots, it is possible to find, in addition to the instrumental and material reasons such as the necessity to rediscover their family affections, and taking care of their own economic interests, there are also motifs that go beyond instrumental patterns, and really help to understand more deeply the phenomenon of root tourism.

In fact, the return to the place of origin is often the consequence of the need to rediscover one's identity and cultural roots. In this case, the return foreshadows more a spiritual path than a space-time offset. This generates the so-called "emigrant syndrome" a condition of disorientation which, in turn, triggers the constant search for an identity that is both ancient and original. An imaginary place because, in memory, it tends to draw itself as a known landscape, a protected place of its own childhood, more than a real and material place where a person spent a period of their life (Lombardi Satriani, 1976).

Other knowledgeable studies, which can be used for the analysis of the root tourism phenomenon, can be found in the sociological literature on migration. In this context, scientific production has mainly focused on the social and economic transformations generated by migratory flows, both on the places of departure and arrival, also on the social and cultural rehabilitation processes adopted in the "new" places, and finally on the comparison between the living and working conditions acquired with those held at the time. With respect to this part of the study, some perplexities were reported that pertain to subjects of interest to us. In particular, the empirical approach to the phenomenon of international migration, which was seen as not fully encompassing the deepening of some important dimensions, notably: the life led by emigrants before their departure and the socio-economic environment in which they had lived, the less general status of emigration in the analysis of sociocultural integration processes, and the lack of attention to the social changes which produce migration processes (Scidà, 1994).

However, from such studies we draw interesting insights into the analysis of how to determine the interpretation of reality, and the process of identification with the group to which individuals belong, between people with different cultural backgrounds. With that in mind, the analysis which highlight the substantial failure of the melting-pot theory are particularly relevant (Glazer, 1963). According to this theory, the modernization would push "by its nature" towards standardization and uniformity of cultures, and thus of different identities, but instead a variety of research has shown that migrants have not lost their sense of ethnic origin. Whereas on the one hand there are groups of migrants engaged in total assimilation with the cultural context in

which they were welcomed, on the other hand, it has been observed that most of the groups of emigrants tend to keep their original identity as much as possible (e.g., Little Italy).

In this direction, the presence, in the places of migration, and the continuous expansion over time, of social networks made up of individuals belonging to the same ethnic groups, who therefore, share language, traditions and territorial belonging, seems functional (Boyd, 1989), since it also restores a sense of social identity through membership, and support their members in fulfilling symbolic needs (Donati, 1988). In this regard, we can confirm that another factor that has recently played an important role in maintaining and reinforcing the original identity of migrants was the great step forward achieved in the area of physical and virtual mobility of people and ICT technologies (Perri & Romita, 2020). In particular, the latter creates available tools that facilitate a rapid, cheap and frequent verbal and visual connection with friends and relatives living in the communities of origin. To help understand the phenomenon of root tourism, we also have so-called community studies, where the "communities" are considered a form of local territorial organization of human and social relationships. In these cases, the individuals who belong to them work together to try to satisfy their material and intangible needs, creating a sense of community and building a local identity. All this goes beyond the territorial, organisational, psychological and cultural aspects of the community itself (Hillery, 1955).

The local community is defined as a centre of identification of a group and population within a geographical area, sharing a sense of mutual interest, tradition and purpose, and the awareness of the existence of the community itself both among its members and in those of other communities (Mela, 2016). Yet, it is a centre for the building of meaning and the reconstitution of belonging, regardless of the type of community and its contextualization (Piazzini, 1984). In fact, many researchers have based their studies on this essence of belonging and territorial connection, based on the assumption that the intensive processes of modernization and globalization of society (Bauman, 2000) would lead to a growing sense of belonging to a social and universal world and hence to a diminishing sense of belonging to a restricted social world. Furthermore, the field research activities carried out by some scholars (Gubert & Pollini, 2002) have led to surprising results compared to those expected, in fact, despite they were facing with a largely modernized society, the link with limited spaces and with the community has clearly prevailed on the universal.

Other useful sociological contributions in the analysis of tourism roots come from the tradition of studies that have been conducted in Italy since the 80s, and that have concerned the examination of tourism as a mass social phenomenon. Even today, the common approach is to consider the tourist a hetero direct consumer and the host community a passive subject compared to the organization of the tourism industry. In that context, root tourism played a secondary role. However, although we have no specific knowledge of the relevant evaluations carried out, they are indeed useful for our reflection/analysis on this subject: the motivations that drive people to practise tourism; tourism behaviour; existing and potential forms of tourism; the impacts of tourism on local territories and communities. Pertinent to our study is the attention paid by tourism sociologists to the social role of the tourist (Cohen, 1974; Ogilvie, 1933) and with special attention to the factors which affect the definition of the relation between the host and the guest, highlighting the fact that the tourist himself and the host community perceive him as "another" (foreign) subject. In this respect, it may be superfluous to recall that, since the condition of extraneity was well explained in the early definitions of sociological "tourism" (Hunziker & Krapf, 1942), in which tourism is defined as a phenomenon consisting in a set of relations generated by the travel itself and the stay as non-residents (same definition as given by United Nations World Tourism Organisation - UNWTO).

These analyses derive their conceptual origin from the studies on the social figure of the foreigner/stranger, especially in those by Simmel (1908) and Schutz (1944) and in the accurate reconstruction carried out by Tabboni (1993). This perspective highlights a typical situation: the tourist, as an "other" subject, will have mainly formal interactions with the host community since

the main interest will be to satisfy their needs as best as possible, including those who motivated their trip, even those who will show up during the holiday; the host community, indeed, has a certain ambivalence in their relations with tourists. On the one hand, it will show controlling and closing attitudes designed to defend its identity, but at the same time they will have a certain openness towards a subject that is the direct expression of a social phenomenon (tourism) from which the community itself is expected to benefit from. Therefore, what has been emphasized so far provides elements of knowledge that can be used for the purpose of understanding theoretical thoughts pertaining to the phenomenon of root tourism. Moreover, contemporary society compared with modernity (De Masi, 1985; Harvey, 1993) presents ideal conditions for the conscious development of root tourism. In fact, in our current society, we have faced a new tourist offer system, which considers local communities as protagonists in expanding tourism and more as active subjects for its development (Romita & Perri, 2021; Giumelli, 2020) meanwhile, we are witnessing the revitalization of cultural traditions, increased attention to environmental quality resources, the broad diversification of tourism services and the reinforcement of their integration.

In the Italian experience, different territories adapt to these changes, having understood the active and independent role in the development of tourism attributed by the present society, and the need for professional support with relevant skills to improve and promote their cultural heritage and host services.

Tourism has changed, and so has the tourist. The post-tourist is aware of being a tourist and of the fact that tourism is not a unique authentic experience (Urry, 2000), the post-tourist makes spontaneous, specific trips that are out of tourist mass sphere. Destination is the primary reason for this journey and travel is a habit. The quality of services is an essential value, besides going on vacation for the pleasure of doing so, it is important to be active, informal and focused to discover local cultures and traditions. In this new social situation, the relationship between the host and the guest has also changed significantly. In fact, as the holiday tends to become a time of enrichment and genuine cultural growth, the direct encounter between the host and the guest is now an indispensable condition. The guest is increasingly interested and not only for instrumental reasons in highlighting his resources, his territory, his cultural identity, his qualities. The guest for his part, is not only interested in the knowledge that territories and communities offer to the traveller, but also all the special features and relationships that can be established with the local population.

This contemporary tourism scenario represents an overall favourable situation for the proper and accomplished development of tourism roots. In fact, as more recent publications have highlighted (Carrera, Perri & Romita, 2020; Romita, Perri & De Ruggiero, 2020; De Ruggiero, Perri & Romita, 2020) in order to develop the tourism roots, a basic condition is the adaptation to the needs of the modern post-tourist by the territories that aspire to be competitive, which also increases their capacity to attract demand as a result of this type of tourism (it is therefore easy to understand the strategic role of the territorial public government). For this purpose, it should be noted that we have went from an essentially hetero-direct way to enjoy the tourist experience, to methods which largely admit and even nurture self-organized forms of travel and stay (the latter being widely preferred and widespread among radical travellers). In addition, this contemporary society aims at creating conditions of use of tourist places that make the vacation an intense, emotional, sensory, cognitive experience, and it is a relevant aspect that fully meets what the tourist of the roots are looking for during stays in their place of origin (Perri, Romita & De Ruggiero, 2020).

Finally, it is now time that we witness the developments of the hospitality services that enhance the direct encounter between host and guest, and which also greatly meet the needs of roots tourists, whose direct contact with the living people of their places of origin leads to a better understanding of the history of their families.

### 3. Root Tourism: a Research Path

The theme of this work, the so-called “tourism of the roots”, is a “not expected” result of the research activities of the Center for Studies and Research on Tourism (CREST) of the University of Calabria, carried out on the analysis of the tourism phenomenon. The research process started by trying to understand why some Italian territories have had difficulty in creating competitive tourist destinations, even in the presence of similar or better conditions than the tourist areas considered advanced. In this respect, it was considered essential to broaden the initial knowledge available on the problem in question, since, while it was substantial, it was considered insufficient to formulate a working hypothesis. Therefore, the first research activities were oriented towards a descriptive study through exploring and describing in detail the phenomenon of tourism in its qualitative and quantitative aspects as well as its social and economic impacts. In order to formulate an initial working hypothesis, the consequences of this study were to identify a possible explanation of the problem to be investigated in the process of local tourism development. Consequently, the initial general hypothesis adopted, based on the theories of underdevelopment, and particularly on that of modernisation, took the position that the causes of inadequate local tourism development were due to the simultaneous presence of: infrastructure deficiencies; holders of (local) interests opposed to development; unfinished processes of public governance; cultural models and social structures of the communities that go against the processes of change in the traditional social context (Germani, 1971; Harrison, 1988; Lerner, 1958; Levy, 1966; Hoselitz, 1952, 1960; Rostow, 1960). In other words, it was considered that the delay in developing tourism could depend on the presence of asynchronous modernisation processes, inefficient local development mechanisms in terms of capacity to plan, manage and promote territorial development, that is, to understand and promote the ever more complex and specialized logic of tourist production and its industrial management. The most suitable area to be studied for the purpose above, appeared to be Calabria, the southernmost region of the Italian peninsula, with high tourist potential, but which holds the lowest positions in the Italian national ranking (<https://www.istat.it/it/files//2019/12/C19.pdf>). For the case studies, Calabrian local communities were identified, differentiated into sub-units based on their specificity, territorial, social and cultural diversity, and thus for the typology of potential tourist development (seaside, mountain and inland Municipalities). The research methodology for the analysis of the phenomenon was based on consultation of official statistics and existing literature, direct observation within individual communities and semi-structured interviews with local actors (public administrators, commercial operators, professionals, etc.).

The first data gathered brought forward a certainly surprising situation. The initial working assumption did not seem substantially correct, since when there were shortcomings in the modernization process between local communities, there was intensive local tourism development processes in others, extended to be a significant strategic factor for the economic and social growth of the local community. In other words, the research activities had led to the revelation of an actual tourist situation very different from that which was supposed to be analysed. In fact, we have confronted local communities characterized by a strong presence of «undetected tourism» or «tourism which does not appear» (Romita, 1999), that is, tourism in private houses substantially “submerged” (in the sense that it cannot be officially evaluated), self-organized and often prevailing over conventional official tourism. These areas have been determined independently in the absence of organisational and planning actions for local tourist development, and that we have synthetically called “spontaneous tourist contexts” (Romita & Perri, 2009b), or non-conventional. In this situation, it was important to the local community that the “tourists” got there, not the reason of the trip. For this reason, it was an indispensable a research activity to understand the holiday motivations of these tourists, in particular during the summer. To this end, the above research activities have been supplemented by data collection campaigns which, via structured interviews (questionnaires), aim to find out not only the motivations, but also the

behaviours, needs and evaluations of tourists present in the communities studied. As a result of these activities, we have conducted over “ten thousand” structured interviews with tourists in non-traditional tourism contexts over time (second home tourism). Every year, from 2007 to 2021, mainly during the summer, interviewers trained ad hoc have administered to the tourist population a structured questionnaire composed of over 50 variables. The Calabrian municipalities, different in size and geographical location, where the interviews were carried out were about forty, and in at least ten of them this kind of tourism has been monitored through surveys repeated over time. In recent years, face-to-face interviews have also been joined by web-based interviews. The senior research team has been the same since 2007 and has produced several publications and research reports.

We so encountered the so-called phenomenon of “tourism of the roots”, acquiring that basic knowledge, which since 2009 has made it possible to understand how valuable this phenomenon is for local communities and the dynamics and factors that have affected its evolution over time (Perri, 2020). By digging even further, we managed to carry out an ad hoc survey on the topic of the perception of the phenomenon by the local population, gaining knowledge on the following topics that motivated the writing of this work. However, before continuing our discussion, it should be noted that the materials related to the research activities mentioned and conducted are available at the CREST of the University of Calabria. Moreover, we wish to point out that, in our methodological process, we have started from the idea that the object of interest of sociologists is human relations, and they make individuals into social beings. Based on this assumption, social research appears to be one particular type of social action based on language relations (Bezzi, 2022), so the meaning acquired by the data should therefore be considered in a different way, and thus the meaning is to be ascribed to its faithfulness and the merits of its construction. First, the researcher deals with each empirical problem according to certain hypotheses; has one or more theories on the subject that is analysed (in our case a theory on root tourism); has a knowledge of the context (in our case Calabria, and its deep knowledge as qualified witnesses, even before as researchers); has a “method theory”, that is, the skill required to understand the nature of the data. The conclusion is therefore necessarily hermeneutic: a hundred questionnaires carried out in a tourist centre, are probably only a micro-survey of variables (mainly a syntactic-deductive analysis; Bezzi, 2022); but thousands of questionnaires conducted over fifteen years in a vast survey of the field, plus many biographical interviews, focus groups, personal explorations, interviews with qualified witnesses, become a significant extended document in which the researcher seeks a semantic upon which to produce inductive and abductive inferences. Only these are capable of creating an original and not tautological thought (Peirce, 1989). Our questionnaires are not interesting because their analysis by variables would produce percentages with 2 decimals to support our thesis, but because they are readable as interview protocols (remember that interviews are structured face to face). They built up a relationship, they have therefore produced significance (Hofstadter, 1990), they have hermeneutically induced hypotheticals, confirmations, theoretical declensions. In conclusion, we feel confident that we have a huge amount of data (of different formats, built in different places and times) which they go towards a clear point of convergence, underpinned by a theory we call “roots tourism” which confirms this theory itself and from which obtains its confirmation. The data we have is documentation that has helped us make inductive inferences, and these inductions have roots in the scientific literature which we have partly stressed previously.

#### **4. The Tourism of the Roots: Multiple Identities and its Perception**

As already stated, the analysis of the tourist situation in the local communities of Calabria has produced an unexpected result, which has detected a consolidated and widespread phenome-

non which, as we have accurately described on of the second paragraph, is defined "root tourism"; tourism made up of people who, residing elsewhere, stay temporarily in the place of origin of their own family. Specifically, as a result of our search path, the detected root tourism is mainly self-organised and unconventional. Among the travellers of the origins interviewed were first generation emigrants, their sons, nephews and great-grandchildren, and by the analysis of their travel motivations we arrived at the distinction of the tourists of the roots in two groups. The first group consists of travellers of roots among whom instrumental travel motivations prevail, mainly related to the maintenance and construction of social relations with the aim of a possible return in the future. In this regard, some reports have shown (Report Migrantes, 2011) that migrants (themselves or their familiar) who have fulfilled the "dream" to return to live in their birthplace are a very limited percentage. The lower the percentage, the more distant the place of origin is from the place of emigration. The second group consists of root travellers for whom the place of origin is the place to spend a holiday, an environment in which there is an indissoluble historical family bond with their roots, where you are surrounded by the affection of family and/or friends with whom to discuss facts and stories that rekindle a sense of belonging to their family identity. Despite the different travel motivations, both groups have similar characteristics. These are travellers who do not interact daily with the local host community, who choose the specific place to spend the holidays in order to rediscover and/or maintain their identity roots, and that at the same time assume the behaviors and daily attitudes typical of the tourist figure (Romita, 2019). For years now, this type of tourist has helped to revive the social and economic life of the local communities studied, particularly in the smaller inner cities where the importance of their coming is more obvious and easier to follow. Such a presence is sometimes strategic for the economic survival of the local community, as well as for the creation and accumulation of social capital. Even today, for many migrants, it is almost an "obligation" to spend, at least partially, their working holidays in their places of origin, and for the host communities, this is a very important time of the year that must be celebrated through the organization of the "Festival for the Emigrants" (an actual widespread summer event). This event is very important and celebrated mostly in most inland cities of the Italian country.

However, this event sometimes seems unpleasant for the roots tourists, who during a group conversation in the municipality of San Fili, said: "The Feast makes you feel too much like an emigrant and not a 'sanfilese' a local form San Fili. We are not immigrants, but people who have left and who come back every year, or every two or three years, etc." Nevertheless, thanks to the tourism of the roots, the cities, especially the most internal and small towns, during many periods of the year like summer or Christmas holidays, record an increase in the current population, and in addition through special events like baptisms, weddings, engagements, lunches and dinners, construction and/or renovation of estates, can record a thriving economy.

From the information collected, we have deduced that, over time, the dominant motivation that drives the return journey has certainly become that of tourism, whereas the instrumental reason is marginal or impromptu (helping a family member, caring for an economic interest, etc.). In fact, for the majority of the roots tourists interviewed, the return today is almost exclusively a holiday opportunity, in an environment with an inextricable historical connection. In addition to that, new meanings have been added, especially to the travel experiences of second, third and last generations of emigrants. For them, staying in their families' places of origin is not only a holiday, but also the occasion to deepen the oral narratives about the history and the construction of the family identity passed on from generation to generation. Analysing travel reasons is very important for our work. In fact, they are very helpful for understanding the general tourism phenomenon, addressing the question of the perception of tourism and the tourist roots by the local host population, and that is the primary purpose of this document. As a matter of fact, the process of transforming travel motivations, has led to a split in the social role these travellers play when they stay in places of origin: they are not only "emigrants" but they are also "tourists of the roots".

During our research, one of the main observations deduced is the sense of confusion that pervades the travellers of the roots. The emigrant who returns to their origin place, during the stay sometimes feels as a tourist, and other times they don't. This psychological disorder is clearly highlighted in certain interviews given by some Italian-Americans:

*Question:*

«When you or other family members return to Italy to the place of your origin, do you feel as a tourist going on vacation or people belonging to that community?»

*Answers:*

A: «This is a very difficult question. Neither one nor the other. We do not feel like tourists, but also not as a local Italian living there».

A: «The truth is, I feel a little outside of the community, but I don't even feel like a tourist. Now that I've come back more often, it's different, but I used to feel like a stranger to the community. Not because they made me feel so, I felt different».

A: «Neither one nor the other, I don't even know how to explain it. You definitely feel connected to Italy, but you are not Italian, although I lived there for 4 years, and I attended primary school. You don't even feel like a tourist, though. I think for every first-generation Italian American, we live with one foot in the U.S. and one foot in Italy».

A: «It depends on whom I'm talking to. Sometimes I feel like a tourist in my city. At other times, I have the impression that I have never emigrated».

A: «I feel like I'm in the community, but I feel like I'm looking from a distance».

In short, as noted in the literature, emigrants often find themselves in a state of suspension and uncertainty, between two histories, two societies, and different forms of culture (Gozzoli & Regalia, 2005). This fact, because of the complex condition of extraneity which belongs to this kind of tourist, nourishes and at the same time confuses the process of perception, among the local host communities, of the multiple identity that characterizes the traveller of the roots. It notably obscures the visibility and social perception of the role of tourism, focusing only on its contours, thereby confusing its understanding among the host population.

This issue had already been raised and reported in the publication "From emigrants to tourists" several years ago (Romita & Perri, 2009a). Based on the research that was done, we found that among the local population surveyed dominates a traveller's perception of the roots that we sum up as follows: if I "know him" I think of him as an emigrant, if I "don't know him" I think of him as a tourist. If I "don't know him" but someone from the community tells me that his family has its origins here, I consider him once again as an "emigrant". In other words, when it comes to the movement of emigrants back to their place of origin, the outcome of our research is that the host community is not always able to differentiate between what is labelled as root tourism and what is not.

This is a very important question. Indeed, the confusion of social roles can only lead to an inadequate enhancement of the tourism of the roots: what for us is clearly tourism (roots), could be something else for the local host communities. In practical terms, this creates a twofold problem. First, it is unlikely that a hospitality model will be put in place to adequately meet the needs of these types of tourists. Secondly, it can create less interest among root tourists to return more often to the place of origin of their own or their family.

## **5. Final Considerations**

This work has enabled us to conclude that the traveller of the roots is today considered mainly as a tourist, because, as we pointed out, its travel and accommodation arrangements are those that, by definition, differentiate the general traveller from the tourist traveller. They

actually actualize a temporary, mostly non-instrumental stay, showing daily behaviours and visitation patterns that make them virtually in-dissociable from other tourist categories (Romita & Perri, 2009b), and like any tourists they are an "other" (stranger) subject because they usually live somewhere else (Romita, 2020; Cohen, 1974, 1979), placing them in a position of extraneity which, even in the eyes of the local host community, grows over time.

Tourism roots is not a niche tourism, nor even a market segment, but a tourism made up of people who travel for the pleasure of travelling to the places of their origins and their family history, to find a relevant piece of their historical identity. Indeed, the main purpose of this journey is the unification of family identity, which in the case of the first-generation emigrant traveller, finds a proper fulfilment already only in the return to physical, social and cultural spaces, already known and experienced. When, on the other hand, a descendant of emigrants is the one that organises this roots journey, which therefore stands ahead along the generational line, the reconstruction of identity finds fulfilment by staying in the places where their ancestors lived-in, worked, and were buried, along with the acquisition and consultation of documents relevant to the reconstitution of their genealogical tree, or by experiential conversations with the people (family, friends, etc.) of the place.

The strength of this experience is nevertheless intense and leads not only to the desired reconstruction of identity, but also to a partial redefinition of the identity status of their family as it is passed on and understood. But we cannot forget the extraneity conditions that belong to all tourists, and in the case of the tourist of the roots it brings to an uncertain, complex and malleable identity which sometimes manifests itself by exalting the predominant belonging to the original culture and other times by praising that one connected with the places in which it now lives. In other words, for the tourists of the roots the concept of "community" leads to a constant redefinition of the notion of attachment and belonging in relation to places.

This situation has a major impact on the perception of this social figure by the home communities that host them, who are confused by feeling like they belong/don't belong to their own community, showed by the same "rootist" as a result of the multiple identity which characterises them, they do not understand that the presence of those compatriots is mainly touristic. When this happens, the flow of root travellers that is determined in these territories is not punctually perceived as a tourism phenomenon, which generates not only cultural but also economic and social damage for the local host community.

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