

II INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

12 to 15 May 2008

Declaration of Fortaleza

We, citizens, communities, small tourism operators, researchers, governmental and non-governmental organizations and social movements, from 19 Brazilian States and 13 other countries of the Americas and Europe (Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, United States, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany and Italy), participants of the II International Seminar on Sustainable Tourism, which took place in the city of Fortaleza, Northeastern Brazil, from 12 to 15 May 2008, declare our support, motivation, action and defense for the construction of community-based solidarity tourism as a political project which respects the autonomy of local cultures, environmental conservation and socio-economy with solidarity.

During these four days of work, which included thematic panels, workshops, conversations, exchange of experiences and commemorations, we verified that another tourism model is not only possible and necessary, but already exists. There are multiple experiences that reflect thoughts, practices and new possibilities of tourism, having as premises the strengthening of community organizations through the permanent experience of participative and self-managed processes.

We highlight that the lifestyles that link the traditional populations to the local ecosystems, narrowly related to the historical processes of resistance against the logics of colonization and degradation of the environment, are the background from where creative processes of implementation of community-based solidarity tourism emerge as the expression of a life project that welcomes several cultures, empowers social actors and defends territories. Within this context, we list as features of those initiatives:

- The search for instruments for environmental protection, such as the establishment of Conservation Units and of environmentally protected areas, including marine and estuarine ones;
- The guarantee of legitimate access to land, water and territory as a mechanism of reproduction of cultures and local lifestyles;
- The implementation of small tourist infrastructure, which respects the natural environment and is built by communities;
- The strengthening of popular cultural expressions that value exchange and dialogue among cultures;
- The integration of tourism into other productive processes, especially fishing, small agriculture, gastronomy and handicraft;
- The creation of autonomous mechanisms of territorial management that regulate the relationship between tourists and tourist receiving communities;
- The establishment of alternative means of promotion and marketing of tourism attractions and products;
- The establishment of strategic partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations, development agencies, research institutions, social movements, networks, forums and other movements for the defense of rights.

As counterpoint to conventional mass tourism, therefore, community-based solidarity tourism emerges and affirms itself, as well as community-based rural tourism, community ecotourism and responsible tourism which, more than modalities, are expressions of the affirmation of tourism practices based on the ethics of sustainability and autonomy, built collectively in counterpoint to the logics of the economic dominance.

We understand that, in face of the conflicts and disputes that involve tourism, there are strategic and theoretical-methodological challenges to be faced with conviction, motivation and

commitment by the social actors who believe in and encourage the multiple processes for the consolidation of community-based solidarity tourism:

- The construction of alliances between organizations and social movements to produce information, make visible, denounce and face the impacts of mass tourism and real estate business on national and international levels;
- The construction of alternative tourist activities free from the marks of economic exploration of nature and of cultures, making possible solidarity practices of local experiences that strengthen community-based solidarity tourism;
- The deepening of debates on the dimensions of gender, race/ ethnicity, generation and class in community-based solidarity tourism, so as to revert the values and practices of oppression and dominance (re)produced by mass tourism and real estate speculation;
- The collective construction of autonomy and self-determination of communities as subjects of their histories;
- The linking of community-based solidarity tourism to the social struggles in defense of territories of local populations as a way of resistance to the re-colonization provoked by the process of neoliberal capitalist development;
- The incidence on public policies for the construction and promotion of collective and individual human rights of peoples, and not simply for the creation of precarious jobs and compensatory actions;
- To deepen the understanding of the dynamics and characterization of community and solidarity tourism experiences, so as to qualify and strengthen the potential of our interventions;
- To systematize and elaborate knowledge to consolidate a theoretical base on community-based solidarity tourism, placing it in the context of the critique of the conventional tourism model;
- To build processes that consolidate fair relationships in tourism, in which the exchange is not only carried out from the rich towards the poor, but also vice versa, in order to overcome social inequalities;
- To develop strategies to place community-based solidarity tourism in the market, guaranteeing ethical consumption, without corruption by the accumulative logic and competition;
- To develop solidarity strategies of fundraising that make feasible the experiences carried out in the various local contexts;
- To execute, daily, transparency and democracy in the administration of available resources;
- To establish processes that consolidate the democratization of information, as well as communication systems that favor the marketing of solidarity tourism experiences;
- To face the debate on the dimensions of race/ethnicity and gender, with special attention on sexual exploration, trafficking in human beings, and the commercialization of the body and the sexuality of women, children and teenagers;
- To build, support and develop networks of solidarity cooperation for the strengthening of community-based solidarity tourism on national and international levels.

Concerning governments, we finally emphasize – while recognizing the importance of some actions already implemented by governments of some countries – the need to redirect their policies to define a tourism development project that considers the needs and the rights of peoples, reflected in the experiences and the ideas that have been constituted by the proposal of community-based solidarity tourism. Thus, we highlight as urgent needs:

- To implement specific policies that guarantee the rights of populations to their territories, such as indigenous peoples, quilombolas*, riverside communities, fisher folk, urban populations, etc.;
- To guarantee the improvement of the qualified participation of those populations in the definition and deliberation of public policies for tourism;
- To implement necessary basic infrastructure policies for the consolidation of the self-managed experiences of community-based solidarity tourism;
- To implement policies of support and promotion of community-based solidarity tourism not as compensatory policies, but as structural aspects of community development;
- To implement policies of professional tourism formation, prioritizing an integrated vision of the socio-environmental dimensions;
- To implement legislative changes, so as to guarantee the feasibility of community-based solidarity tourism based on an appropriate legal framework according to the needs of the social actors (solidarity groups, small operators, among others) who develop that experience in several countries;
- To establish legislation to favor the preservation of ecosystems and territories; reverting the global tendency of watering down environmental legislations in favor of big tourist and real estate enterprises that have been harming local populations and have caused serious damages to the socio-environmental sustainability of the planet.
- To establish community based tourism enterprises as full members of national and global tourism trade organizations (UNWTO), to be able to influence tourism policies, to prevent the use of the term community tourism for social marketing by mainstream tourism companies and for misleading certification programs.

Recognizing the range of issues that involve the affirmation of community-based solidarity tourism, we conclude our meeting inviting the whole society to participate in this great collective trip in utopia and in action, making feasible this new solidarity tourism, committed with human rights, with justice (socio-environmental, of gender, race and ethnicity), democracy, sovereignty and autonomy of all peoples.

** Quilombolas = Dorfgemeinschaften der Nachfahren von Sklaven, die den Sklavenbesitzern entflohen sind und sich selbstständig gemacht haben. Sie werden durch den Staat Brasilien als Ureinwohner anerkannt, ebenso wie Indianerstämme, traditionelle Fischer ("jangadeiros") oder Flussanwohner.*