

# The *Desa Wisata Terpadu* as a vector of sustainable development in Bali?

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**Abstract**— The international diffusion of sustainable tourism requires the invention of syncretic models adapted to the sociocultural characteristics of local societies. That is the challenge of the touristic integrated village policy created in 1992 by the Indonesian government. This model promotes the establishment of an archetype of sustainable development adapted to the characteristics of the local villages. In Bali, 44 villages have been officially registered as such by the Ministry of Tourism of Indonesia. The purpose of our work is use cases study on two particular villages judged to be successfully-run, to analyze the capacity of this innovative model to meet the expectation of sustainable tourism while respecting the specificities of each village.

**Keywords**—*Tourism, villages; Bali; Sustainability; Innovation*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Bali is today a crossroads for domestic and international tourism which attracted over 8.6 million Indonesian visitors and more than 4.9 million foreign tourists in 2016 (Bali Government Office). The latter come from Western countries - particularly Australia, Europe and North America - but also from Asia - China, Japan, Singapore, etc. Bali has in fact benefitted from over a century of tourism development[1], helping to redefine not just its economy, but also its societal organization[2]. In fact, tourism there is boosted by the cultural and religious uniqueness of Bali – a small Hindu island in the largest Muslim country in the world, in terms of population. Tourism has taken advantage of what is available, yet has also changed its core offer. This tourism seems to have helped Bali's shift towards modernity, albeit producing significant effects on its social, cultural and religious organization, as well as on its environment[3]. The enormous increase in tourism in Bali since the 1970s has produced a double-edged phenomenon: on the one hand, it has boosted Bali's economic growth, but on other hand has generated growing feelings of discontent in relation to capital-intensive tourism development, sentiments which were identified as early as the 1990s.[1]

These reflections fused with new international questions relating to the fairness of global development since the 1970s, leading to the creation of the sustainable development paradigm in Europe. It is interesting to notice that the quest for a different model of tourism, in order to rebalance tourism development, arose as early as 1989 in Bali, resulting in the creation of the Bali Sustainable Development Project (BSDP). According to Yamashita[4], the project ran from 1989 to 1994 and emphasized traditional Balinese

culture as the foundation of sustainable tourism on the island. It favored the establishment of the policy of the “integrated tourist village” defined by the Indonesian government as:

*“village areas which have an atmosphere reflecting the authenticity of the Balinese village in regards to social and cultural activities, everyday customs, buildings and the traditional use of space, which at the same time are able to provide the infrastructure, attractions, catering, and accommodation required for tourists”*.

The principle is based on the enhancement of preexisting villages rather than ex nihilo villages created for tourism. Twenty five years after the creation of the *desa wisata terpadu* policy, we pose questions regarding its capacity to meet both official sustainable tourism development, defined as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”[5] –and local needs. It leads us to interrogate its potency as an innovative model that has involved the syncretism of international standards with local sociocultural specificities.

Our results should be of interest to researchers and students who research sustainability issues and/or the socio-economic and environmental effects of tourism in Indonesia and in Bali, in particular. It should also be of interest to institutions and professionals working on the establishment of sustainable models of tourism in Bali or around the world, by illustrating the complex appropriation of a western paradigm into non-western societies, a phenomenon that requires flexibility and understanding of local cultures.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

### A. Methodology

This work is based on a case study methodology [6] which allowed us to access data using a wide variety of tools, combining the secondary and primary data which we have collected and analyzed. We begin by providing a review of international literature, including statistical analysis, as required to understand tourism development in Bali, sustainable development issues in Bali, and the societal organization of the two traditional villages selected: Penglipur and Jatiluwih.

This secondary data brings little precise information about the socio-cultural effects of tourism in the villages. We need to collect primary data in order to understand those

transformations, examining the ability of the *desa wisata terpadu* policy to meet both the expectations of international sustainable development and local needs. Although tourism research includes a wide range of methods[7], we have given priority to qualitative approach with persons involved in this policy at different levels. We carried out a qualitative survey involving a total of 23 hours of in-depth interviews in the villages (February and March 2017) and at Sahid Institute in Jakarta (December 2017) of a total of 7 people. We analyze the «integrated touristic villages» policy as a top-down system which begins at the national decision-making level (Ministry of Tourism), from which it moves on to the local managers who are responsible for its application, and finally, the village residents it involves. In this context, we have found it necessary to interview the following social actors: 1) two representatives of the *desa wisata terpadu* policy working within the Ministry of Tourism, seeking to understand policy objectives and *modus operandi* (Kusma and Asep) 2) two village residents who are responsible for the application of *desa wisata terpadu* policy in their village, in order to gain insights into local organizational management (Supat and Suastika), 3) two traditional farmers in the villages who have developed tourism-related secondary activity, in order to understand the changes that tourism brings into villages and the life of their inhabitants (Sujendra and Nyoman) and 4) one Balinese tourist guide who takes tourists to the two villages, offering an outsider's perceptions of what recent evolutions in tourism of this type offers, its advantages and limitations from the point of view of tourists who are users of these services (Ketut).

We combined this survey with a total of 80 hours of participant observation, conducted on-site between February and March 2017. The objective was to understand the societal organization of each village but also to experience their tourism offers, examining their ability to reach sustainability criteria while respecting the local specificities of each villages.

#### *B. Study fields*

The two villages studied are considered to be traditional in Bali. Although they are differently organized, all they have maintained their partial dependence on agriculture. Their inhabitants chose to open their villages to tourism activity several decades ago, leading them to establish a new, complex and delicate balance combining traditional and touristic cultures.

Penglipuran is a «customary village» located in Bangli regency in a mountainous region, covering an area of 112 hectares composed of 45 ha of bamboo forest, 58 ha of farmland and 9 ha of settlements. The village is regarded as traditional, particularly due to the layout of houses, respecting the Balinese religion, which is a syncretic blend of shivaïque Hinduism, Buddhism, and previous local animism. The style of the houses is characterized by the regularity of the dwellings, built on both sides of the main street with a narrow entrance adorned by a gate and houses that stretch back towards the rear. The entrances to 50 out of the 76 houses in the village are used as shops. Penglipuran was declared an «integrated touristic village» in April 1993. It is regarded as the most successful of all the integrated villages, estimated to welcome around 150,000 tourists a year. This has resulted in the establishment of 30 private homestays and

3 guest houses which are run by the community. The tourist attractions, besides the architecture of the village, are dance performance, dancing and gamelan classes, trekking up Mount Batur and the Penglipuran Festival.

Jatiluwih is both an administrative and customary village. It is located in a rice paddy area, situated in the bottom of the Batukaru Mountain in Tabanan regency. It is famous as one of the emblematic sites of the traditional irrigation system, named *subak*, that was registered on the UNESCO heritage list in 2012, as the «Cultural landscape of the province of Bali: the *subak* system as an example of the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy». This listed system consists of a collection of 4 sites of rice terraces and their water temples covering 19,500 ha. The main objective of UNESCO classification is to conserve cultural and traditional social organization as well as the quality of the «natural» landscape. The *subak* remains a living social organization, concerning about 1,200 water cooperatives and their populations who manage the supply from each water source, but their continued existences is currently at risk. Jatiluwih village was selected to become an integrated touristic village in 1992. Its *subak* is amongst the oldest in Bali, mentioned as early as the 10th century in inscriptions. It extends over 303 hectares and includes 562 farming households and 7 communities in 2015. It is the biggest *subak* in Catur Angga Batukaru and the one which has invested the most in its tourism dynamic, with the construction of accommodation, specifically 5 homestays and 1 resort with 10 rooms and 5 restaurants. It is estimated that it welcomes around 100,000 tourists a year.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### *A. An economic success ?*

Despite their differences, the two «integrated touristic villages» studied reveal some similarities in their social organization. They are more touristic sites than real destinations, meaning that they are more a place to visit than to stay. In Penglipuran and Jatiluwih less than 10% of the tourists spend one night or more in the village. The average time spent visiting Penglipuran is between one and three hours, depending on whether they take a local tour guide or visit freely. In Jatiluwih, the average time spent is longer: they stay between 2 and 6 hours in general depending on the trekking option they choose -lasting from 45 min to 4 hours and because people often enjoy the accommodations – restaurants, cafes – before or after trekking in the paddy. Some stay overnight to make several treks, according to Ketut (March, 2017).

Thus, tourism in the two villages remains limited, in accordance with the expectations of the *desa wisata terpadu* (interview with Asep, December 2017), and also with the philosophy of «alternative tourism» in which tourism should remain a diversification of the traditional economy by contributing to its maintenance. In Penglipuran, 40% of inhabitants are still farmers, whereas 30% work in tourism and 30% work outside the village, mostly as government employees or for cruise-lines. In Jatiluwih, the community still live under the *subak* system. Even if not everybody works on the rice field, their societal organization remains predominant. Nonetheless, half of the 562 farming households are land-owners, holding property of different sizes. Agriculture continues to be the primary activity, yet

has been diversified. Rice production is still the number one activity, yet coffee, cacao and flowers are also produced. Tourism has become the main activity for some of the villagers who own the restaurants or resorts, but is still a form of diversification for most of the farmers offering homestays. Tourist guides are essentially farmers who are paid by the community to work for 15-day shifts before going back to the rice fields. Yet few of them are able to take part in these activities, since only five of the owners can speak English and are thus able to welcome those tourists who are predominantly international, according to Sujendra (March, 2017).

As such, tourism undoubtedly favors the economic development of the villages, allowing the maintenance of their population and even permitting slight growth, since the second decade of the 21st century. Penglipuran has around 230 families and Jatiluwih has more than 560 families. Tourism may not bring them wealth, yet it allows them to live in their village as part of the middle class, ranging from lower to higher, depending on the previous social position of their family but also on their capacity to invest in tourism opportunities.[8]

### *B. Tourism and heritage: a co-constitution ?*

The villages are characterized by a complex process involving the constant reconstruction of local societal models, combining conservation and innovation. This phenomena further identifies the ambiguous relationships between the communities and their heritage. This latter is defined by O. Lazzarotti[9] as “*a set of attributes, performances and activities attached to a non-contemporary object [...]*”. This means that not everything is heritage: its determination results from collective choices, joining a construction of memory through the recognition of common identical milestones, as demonstrated Richards[10]. Based on a Western principle of linearity of time, this notion of heritage results in a distancing of the past in relation to the present linked to the phenomenon of ring-fencing. The past is therefore fixed so as to be protected in its current state and shared with future generations.[11] This choice to ring-fence memory requires complicated relationships with culture, defined as ‘the grouping together of ideal products available in a given social reality’[12]. In some ways, heritage which fixes the assets of the distant past is then opposed to culture, enshrined in a contemporary time-frame and therefore subject to constant change, under internal but also external influences. The complexity of the relationship of the Balinese to their heritage comes from the fact that, although partially a legacy from a previous generation, it can’t be ring-fenced into the past but remains a part of their contemporary culture. Therefore, Balinese society illustrates the continuous process of reinvention of tradition, emphasized by Hobsbawm and Ranger [13]. It is a process to which tourism contributes, through complex relationships. The dialectic between tourism and heritage, feeding off one another[10] stems from the fact that tourism comes partly from the enhancement of the natural and cultural environment that it covets and transforms, due as much to modernization as to preservation that induces arbitrary fixations. [1]

This ambiguous co-construction is very relevant in the two villages. Rather than threatening or enhancing local heritage, tourism helps to revitalize it, moving from the inspiration of legacy to reinvention. Penglipuran testifies to this phenomena. First, the so-called typical architecture of the houses and the layout of the village which has attracted thousands of tourists as a “traditional Balinese village” is actually the outcome of repairs made for a planned visit by President Suharto in 1991 that in reality never took place[4]. This means that its appearance is not the fruit of spontaneous historical evolution, but of a design to fit with the expectation of a “perfect” model of a traditional village in Bali, which today gives it its singularity and identity [Figure 1]

*Figure 1. The village of Penglipuran, rebuilt to be a “perfect” Balinese village. Photo S.Pickel-Chevalier, 2017.*



This process continues with the handicraft production in the village. Nowadays, inhabitants sell local products such as baskets made from bamboo or paintings on bamboo leaves, but also sell food and products which they buy in other markets to re-sell (fabric, coffee, food). That is why Suastika would like to encourage new creations from the inhabitants, saying “*we need to make more local handicrafts, from our home production*”, with the double-faced objective of attracting tourism and increasing local identification. This dynamic, incorporating the invention of tradition, was already inaugurated through the creation, three years ago, of the Penglipuran village festival, a five-day cultural art event organized in December. As previously demonstrated by Picard[1] regarding Balinese culture, these new creations are neither traditional nor “fake”. Rather, they are the results of a living culture and unique because they are co-produced by the local population and tourists, in a desire to perpetuate a social idea of Balinese-ness, meeting the expectations of the local population who unconsciously appropriate the image of themselves conveyed by tourists.[14]

### *C. Tourism and environment: a nascent sensitivity through an intercultural process*

The Balinese have demonstrated their capacity to assimilate foreigners, and more precisely, western influences, by continuing the dynamic construction of their own culture through a process of syncretism. This has also characterized the evolution of the relationship between the Balinese and the materiality of their environment, arising alongside their own spiritual definition of it (Agama Hindu Dharma). However, environmental management as a part of sustainable development concerns Balinese intellectuals

more than it does the villagers [3]. This is obvious in the villages we study. Pollution or energy saving are rarely spontaneous concerns of village inhabitants due to both lack of money and lack of interest. The secondary importance given to the environment confirms [15] on the influence of levels of wealth on ecological concern. Village residents tend to develop a relationship to their environment that matches the 'weak' model [16] on the spectrum of sustainable tourism development; within this anthropocentric and utilitarian model, priority is given to the economic exploitation of natural resources in order to meet the needs of the local people. As such, their interests focus on economic and social development, demonstrating low degrees of sensitivity regarding environmental management or animal welfare. The economic fragility of these communities leads the local population to give prioritize human over animal interests. The latter are still seen primarily as objects for human exploitation.[17]

Nonetheless, tourism creates new pressures that begin to generate behavioral change. Whereas the production and accumulation of waste in Bali is today an endemic problem, in all two villages we have studied, very little can be seen on the streets, which are kept quite clean. According to the interviews we carried out on each site, the gaze and criticism of western tourists obliges them to keep public areas waste-free, although the Balinese, on their own terms, would focus on the quality of the interior of their homes rather than on public space. [3]

Tourism managers in Penglipuran have based part of their publicity on this factor. It is promoted as the '*cleanest village in Bali*'. Cars are not allowed there, in order to prevent pollution; neither the population nor the tourists are allowed to litter the streets. A local women's organization (PKK) also actively collects plastic and sells it to outside companies, and they have begun recycling the organic waste. According to Suastika, the village was awarded recognition for its efforts by the Asia Green Group in 2014.[18]

In Jatiluwih, maintaining the cleanliness of the vast area of the rice paddy is more complicated. Sujendra confesses '*we have a problem with plastic bags in the subak. The tourists, western especially, don't appreciate seeing them in the fields, so we need to get rid of them. We still need to make an effort*'. He specified they have just started recycling. However, environmental management requires techniques and investment that are still difficult for these communities, especially given their relative isolation. The latter, an element that, in a more positive light, has favored their uniqueness, continues to persist, despite recent improvements in accessibility. This may lead to sanitation problems.[17]

Although eco-management is not appropriated by most of the villagers, it is interesting to notice that they have assimilated the need to build "landscapes" to please foreigners. With the latter, we refer clearly to social constructions, rather than natural entities. As Schama argues, '*The landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock [...] Identifying it [...] involves our presence and, with it, the cultural baggage we all lug about*' (1995, p13-14). Landscape, invented in Europe in the 16th century, existed in China since the 5th century. Yet, the development of western

tourism brings about the assimilation of western concepts of landscape – based on an external and non-utilitarian gaze[11]– by the villagers, who have thus transformed their workplaces into sightseeing areas. As such, the Penglipuran bamboo forest has been redesigned as a tourist walkway with the creation of paved paths through the woods and the marking of different kinds of trees by explanatory signs. Jatiluwih village illustrates the most striking example of this territorial mutation, by reconstructing the rice fields as a landscape. The fields are covered with trekking paths of varying lengths that run through the paddy –Figure 2.

*Figure 2. The Jatiluwih paddy, reshaped as a landscape, covered with trekking paths. Photo S.Pickel-Chevalier, 2017.*



They all converge to come to an end in front of the restaurants on the main street, offering a '*view of the rice paddy*'. This means that the community has begun to rethink their farming land as a playground which requires an element of planning. This induces the villagers to combine their own farmer's perceptions of the field (fertility, productivity) with the foreign one (external spectators), bringing together two divergent interpretations of the land – utilitarian versus scenic.

Once again, we are brought to recognize the complex effects of tourism: on the one hand, it generates severe impacts on the Balinese environment, where many hectares of rice fields dramatically disappear every year under the pressures of the building industry. On the other hand, it has a paradoxical status as the major force behind the preservation of the rice paddy, redefined as living heritage.

#### IV.CONCLUSION

Our study emphasizes that the international diffusion of sustainable tourism requires the invention of syncretic models adapted to the sociocultural characteristics of local societies. We bring innovative knowledge about the desa wisata terpadu model, an efficient archetype that has been developed in Bali to meet sustainability expectations while respecting the specificities of each village. In effect, tourism there creates economic resources, strengthens social cohesion, revitalizes cultural heritage and favors environmental sensitivity, albeit incipient.

Admittedly, inhabitants do not become wealthy, yet the touristic development of their villages allows them to keep their society alive, in a constantly reworked balance between conservation and innovation. As a matter of fact, the desa

wisata terpadu system provides testimony of the strong adaptive and creative abilities of the local population. Far from assimilating western values through acculturation, their culture is enriched through intercultural syncretism. As such, in the two “integrated touristic villages” we have examined, tourism neither threatens nor enhances local heritages unilaterally but contributes to their constant evolution, promoting the dialogic construction of the Balinese identity that has been nourished over the course of the centuries by diverse endogenous and exogenous influences. This phenomena illustrates that, even within a sustainable design, tourism provokes important societal transformations and the restructuration of the traditional villages. These changes are also the fundamental essence of dynamic societies which do not wish to become mere museum exhibits. For example, the local populations progressively incorporate the needs of environmental management for the satisfaction of international tourists, that in turn can eventually bring healthier living conditions within the villages that can benefit their inhabitants.

The major difficulty that must be faced lies in the slippery balance that each community must contend with in trying to bring the conservation of traditional culture and openness to modernity together. Thus, the example of the desa wisata terpadu in Bali we have provided here demonstrates that the concept of sustainable tourism can be appropriated by non-western societies as long as it includes flexibility, recognizing the capacity of local populations to create innovative models adapted to their cultural diversity through intercultural syncretism. Nonetheless, its durability is never guaranteed; rather, it evokes a difficult processes of combining economic, social, cultural and environmental stakes that may sometimes falter or fail. It proposes a constant challenge to the local populations who try to reconcile their aspirations for both conservation and modernity, in an ever-changing world.

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