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"Tourism and Sustainable Development: Lessons from the Caribbean Experience for Sub-Saharan Africa"

Jean Rahier

African & African Diaspora Studies Program, Florida International University, jrahier@fiu.edu

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SALISES 50/50 Conference 2012, University of the West Indies, Jamaica

The Pegasus Hotel, Kingston, Jamaica

Thursday, August 23, 2012

Tourism and Sustainable
Development: Lessons from the
Caribbean Experience for Sub-
Saharan Africa

**Dr. Jean Muteba Rahier, Director
African & African Diaspora Studies
Florida International University**

Work in Progress

- This paper has for objective to present one of the initiatives that is developing within what I and several of my colleagues present at this conference hope will become a renewed fruitful and multifaceted partnership between Florida International University (FIU) and the various campuses of the University of the West Indies (UWI). That specific initiative is comparative in nature as it wants to deal with two different regions: the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa. It has to do with the exploration in the two region of the linkages that currently exist, and perhaps not enough, between the tourism industry and what has been called “sustainable development.”

- As conceived at the current moment, the initiative will engage in specific policy analyses that could lead—that’s the hope—to suggestions for the adoption in the two regions of policies in favor of “pro-poor sustainable tourism” or “sustainable tourism preoccupied with poverty reduction.”

- Some of the antecedents that lead us, in the African & African Diaspora Studies Program (AADS) at FIU to propose this as one of the initiatives we would like to see included in the FIU-UWI partnership are the Memorandum of Understanding or MOUs we had our Provost sign with the University of the Gambia (UTG) in The Gambia, and the Universite Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar Senegal. AADS organizes every summer a study abroad program entitled **“Senegal & The Gambia: Traditions, Globalization, and Tourism in West Africa”** that brings undergraduate and graduate students to these two countries for a number of weeks.







- This is a program during which students explore the reality of globalization through the prism of tourism by engaging and reflecting upon their experiences as academic tourists, and during which we explore through the reading of selected scholarly texts, two specific tourist niches (or tourism formations): roots/heritage tourism and sex tourism.

- Some of us, among the AADS faculty, have engaged in research on these tourist niches more specifically in Gorée Island (Senegal) and in Juffureh and James Island in the Gambia (James Island was recently renamed Kunta Kinteh Island by the Gambian government, in a move that shows the importance of roots or heritage tourism for governments of the West African region); as well as on sex tourism in both countries, which usually involve the more or less planned encounters of older, mostly European men and women who come to the region to have sexual experiences with local young men and women.



La Statue
de la Libération
de l'Esclavage
Sculptée par
Antoine MEYER

Les Frères Guadeloupéens
à
leurs frères d'Afrique
Offert par
Léon MICHAUX-CHEVRY
Ancien Ministre
Sénauteur
Président du Conseil Régional de la Guadeloupe
le 17 Juillet 1988

La Statue
de la Libération
de l'Esclavage

Sculpteurs : ☎ 05 90 86 05 97
Mrs Jean et Christian MCISA

Les frères guadeloupeens
à
leurs frères d'Afrique

Offert par

Lucette MICHAUX-CHEVRY
Ancien Ministre
Sénateur

Présidente du Conseil Régional de la Guadeloupe

le 31 juillet 2002

MINISTERE DE LA CULTURE

MAISON
DES
ESCLAVES

*Le peuple sénégalais a su garder
l'actuelle MAISON des ESCLAVES
afin de rappeler à tout africain
qu'une partie de lui-même
a transité par ce Sanctuaire*

JO NDIAYE

MAISON DES ESCLAVES
Rénovation 1990
GORÉE FRATERNITÉ
Prince Libertés - Comité de Crise
Cheikh MHTJIBALLOU

ENTREE

NON RESIDENTS: 500^{FCFA}
RESIDENTS: 250^{FCFA}
ENFANTS: 50^{FCFA}

**ENREGISTREMENT
ET PHOTOGRAPHIE
INTERDITS DANS LA
MAISON DES ESCLAVES**





*The Voyage
of no
Return*

*The Atlantic Slave
Trade and
The Senegambia*









- Other antecedents have of course to do with the quality of the research conducted by various colleagues on the UWI campuses on the many aspects of the tourism industry in the region. Without that, there would be no reason for us to seek the building of such a partnership around this specific initiative.

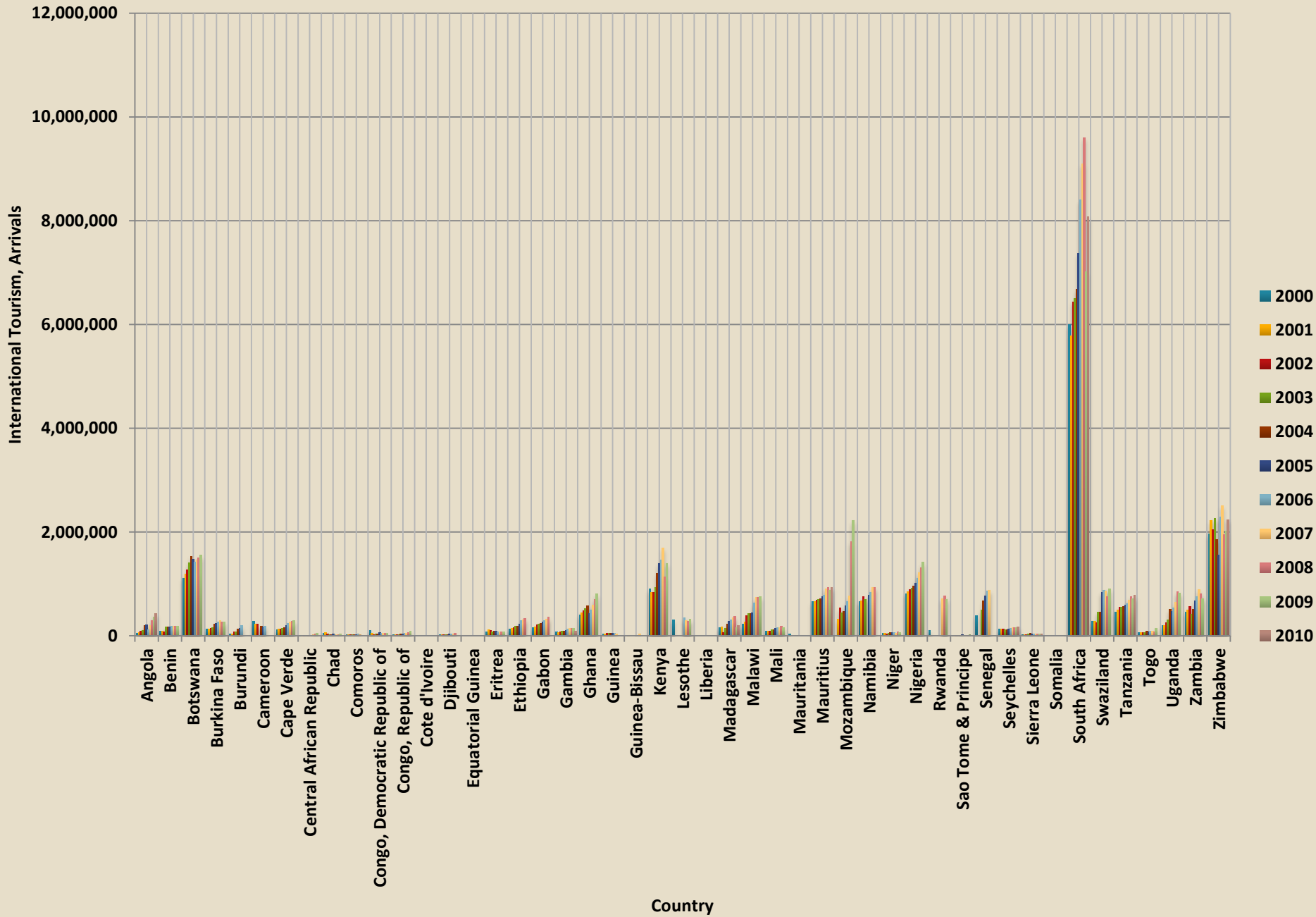
- The approach that brings together, comparatively, the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa is not only justified by the existence of these two tourism niches (roots and heritage tourism and sex tourism) in both regions. It is mainly justified by the fact that the history of the tourism industry (and here I think mostly at “mass tourism”) is certainly longer in the Caribbean region than in Sub-Saharan Africa. As the title of my paper indicates, I am convinced that a critical exploration of that longer history of the tourism industry in the Caribbean should bring about a number of lessons for tourism industry policy makers in Sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, the enthusiasm of contemporary Sub-Saharan African officials in state agencies and ministries of tourism, as well as by presidents and prime ministers themselves for seeing in tourism a kind of, if not a panacea for development, a major opportunity for economic development evokes the formidable enthusiasm of Caribbean state officials for tourism, as they saw tourism as the key that would allow “modernization” to reach all corners of their islands through the construction of infrastructure and good paying jobs...

- At this point of my presentation, I'd like to show you a video clip I took from the documentary film by Esther Figueroa and Diana McCaulay entitled "Jamaica for Sale: A Documentary about Tourism and Unsustainable Development" produced in 2009. I chose this particular clip because it nicely links the content of my presentation with the theme of this conference about the 50 years of independence of Jamaica and Trinidad.

A woman wearing a red headscarf and a blue floral shirt is sitting on a wooden stand. She is surrounded by various tropical fruits, including bananas, mangoes, and pineapples. There are also baskets of flowers and a woven basket nearby. The scene is outdoors, likely in a market or a fruit stand.

**The Caribbean gets
5% of the world's tourists**

- It has been said in various publications and other outlets that the tourism industry in Sub-Saharan Africa is perhaps more diverse than in the Caribbean where what tourists mostly seek are its beaches, which brings to the equivalence that one can often find between “island tourism” and “beach tourism.” If it is true that in Sub-Saharan Africa you do have various tourist niches or formations—ecological tourism (which takes different shapes in Ruanda where gorillas are a major attraction or focus than in, let’s say, Madagascar), cultural tourism, roots/heritage tourism (different shape in West Africa where the focus is on the Transatlantic slave trade than in South Africa where the focus is on apartheid and South African history), safari tourism, etc.—the recent development of the tourism industry in that region has seen a major increase in beach tourism and the construction of all-inclusive resorts of the type found in so many places in the Caribbean, and which have been made so famous by the critical work of Polly Pattullo in *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean*, of Mimi Sheller in *Consuming the Caribbean*, and by the documentaries “Life and Debt” and “Landscape and Memory.”



- As indicated by the title of this paper, the initiative I am describing here wants to take as a departure point the short definition of “sustainable tourism” proposed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO or WTO):
- [A sustainable tourism is a] 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.
- Thus, sustainable tourism should:
 - 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
 - 2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
 - 3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.
- (<http://sdt.unwto.org/en/content/about-us-5>)

- The initiative wants to use that definition to critically explore the history of the tourism industry in each one of the two regions that are the focus of the comparative approach adopted: the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa. It also zeroes in on contemporary trends, considering the different niches of tourism segments in each region, and asks questions about the lessons that could be drawn from the somewhat historically longer Caribbean experiences for a better and sustainable tourism development in Sub-Saharan Africa.