

Horst Kopp (Ed.)

Area Studies, Business and Culture

Results of the Bavarian Research Network **forarea**[®]



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The Development and Economic Impact of Newly Established Tourist Areas in Rural Areas of Morocco and Tunisia

Andreas Kagermeier

1 Economic Expectations Linked with the Creation of new Tourism Areas

Aside from the primary motives of creating foreign cash income and jobs, the development of tourist areas in countries outside the OECD is often coupled with the expectation that economic impulses can thus be created in peripheral areas. Both Morocco and Tunisia as nations are relatively well suited to such a strategy, being well established as tourist areas, and so a redirection of the tourist flow into new areas within both countries can make use of and build on foundations and infrastructures already present.

In Tunisia the state attempted at the end of the 80s with the tourism project *Tabarka* to develop a completely new complex for beach tourism on the Northern coast of the country. The creation of new tourism areas in Morocco is primarily focused on the south of the country, with the Ouarzazate region at the fringe of the Sahara constituting the centre of the area to be developed.

The establishment of an important new economic activity in a perifer region should function as a growth pole vis forward and backward linkages in addition to its direct effects on the labour market. However, the efficacy of the linkage effects hoped for in state industrialisation policy has often proved itself to be limited in scope. According to VORLAUFER (1996; see Fig. 1) one can assume that forward and backward linkages are only partially developed in the initial phase of a tourism project. The reason for this is that the regional economy of peripheral regions frequently lacks the factors that are necessary for the development of integrative relationships (capital, skills, production capacity).

2 Basic Facts on Ouarzazate and Tabarka as Tourist Areas

In Ouarzazate and Tabarka the investigation of the economic impact has been performed some 10 years after the start of the projects: private sector activities have responded to the impulse given by the investment in tourism.

This involved

1. evaluating the degree to which the local economic activities showed direct links to tourism
2. estimating the direct effects on the local job market and
3. analysing the degree of involvement of local and regional participants in the tourism and para-tourism fields.

Both areas experienced a considerable growth in accommodation capacity. In Ouarzazate it grew by approximately 3,300 beds and in Tabarka by more than 2,500, and thus a comparable basis exists on which to investigate tourism oriented commercial activities. However, the delay in starting the project in Tabarka meant that most of the accommodation was created in the early 90s, whereas building began in the mid 80s in Ouarzazate. In contrast to the original concept, i.e. to establish in Tabarka an area that would belong to the high end of the market, most of the hotels built in Tabarka are in the medium price range. However, this has made the hotels affordable for a group who were barely considered during the original planning, namely the Tunisian middle classes. As a result, more than a third of overnight stays in Tabarka were Tunisian, while only 7% of the guests in classified hotels in Ouarzazate were Moroccans.

The increase in the number of hotels in Ouarzazate has, however, not been accompanied by a corresponding rise in demand and particularly the goal of attracting guests for longer stays has remained largely unfulfilled, the average stay being only 1.6 nights in 1996. The level of occupation in the province of Ouarzazate was on average only 25 % of the average annual capacity in 1996, compared to a level of about 40% in Morocco as a whole and even over 50% in Agadir. In Ouarzazate, the creation of accommodation capacity has not been accompanied by a comparable increase in demand.

The climatic conditions in northern Tunisia mean that Tabarka is fundamentally disadvantaged in comparison to other Tunisian resorts as beach tourism is viable only in the summer months. As a result the average level of occupation in Tabarka was just over 30% of the annual average capacity in 1996, considerably lower than the value of 48% for Tunisia as a whole. The aim of achieving a more even distribution throughout the year with the help of additional activities (golf, hunting) has only been partially achieved. The level of capacity to which hotels run by foreign travel companies are filled differs markedly in both resorts from that of other hotels because the foreign companies try to market the area more intensively and sometimes even run the hotels at a loss in the off-season.

The projects in the areas of both case studies were initiated by the state but not carefully monitored during implementation. In Ouarzazate the public role was largely restricted to the provision of appropriate land. Apart from the founding of a college for hotel management and the extension of electricity, water and road infrastructures, there have been hardly any additional measures taken by the public sector so far. In Tabarka, a private development company took over the developer role from the state under favourable conditions and it has been mainly interested in the marketing of land, and concerned to a

lesser degree with playing a supportive role in further developments of the area. The low levels of occupancy mean that we can already suspect that losses have occurred during implementation.

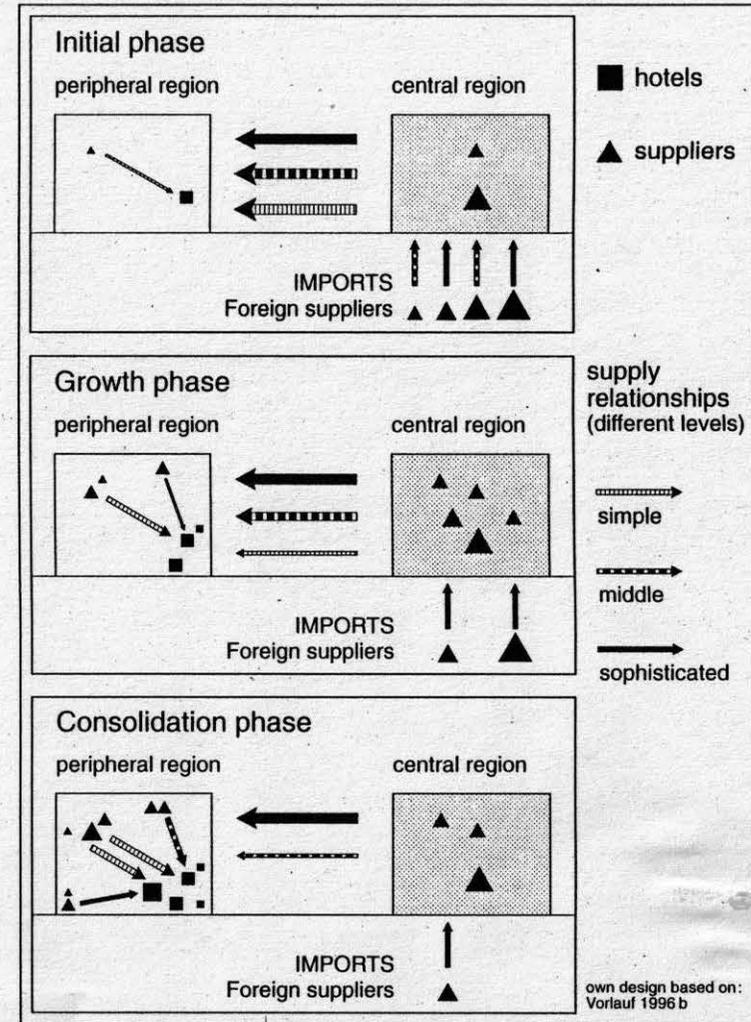


Fig. 1: Emergence of reverse linkage effects in the development of tourism in peripheral regions

3 Economic Effects of Tourism Development

A survey of commercial enterprises in the towns of Ouarzazate and Tabarka was carried out in 1997 in order to investigate the economic effects of tourism development. Every enterprise in the town center of Ouarzazate was included in the survey and those outside the centre were selectively included if a relation to tourism activities was considered likely. A total of 413 interviews were conducted with the owners of business enterprises in Ouarzazate. The relatively smaller size of Tabarka, however, allowed all 385 enterprises in the town to be surveyed. In addition, other enterprises in the region whose names arose in the survey of the town as producers (e.g. of art and craft objects) or suppliers to the mass tourism sector were included.

The survey included the enterprise owner's opinion of what proportion of their customers were tourists. A percentage of more than 5% business from tourists was mentioned by only some of the owners in both towns (see Fig. 2). Whereas only a bare third of the enterprises in Ouarzazate profit directly from tourism, almost half do in Tabarka. The difference is largely based on the fact that about a third of overnight guests in Tabarka are Moroccan tourists and the local enterprises benefit more from these than from European tourists. The positive direct economic effects of tourism are thus restricted to only some businesses while many of them do not benefit directly.

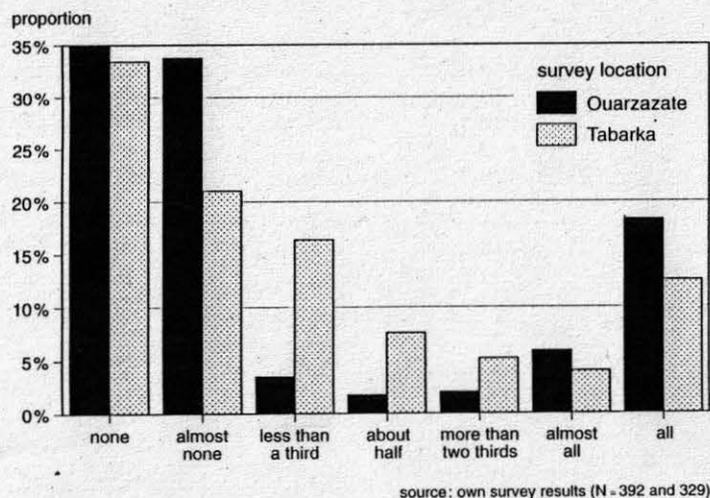


Fig. 2: Proportion of tourist trade in enterprises surveyed

In order to investigate the effect of tourism on the job situation in both areas of the case study, the percentage of tourist business was compared to the number of employees in

each enterprise. For example, an enterprise with two employees and a tourist business of 50% would have 1 job. The result of this calculation is shown in Fig. 3. From a purely mathematical point of view, this results in a total of almost 1,400 and 1,100 jobs directly resulting from tourism activities in Ouarzazate and Tabarka respectively. However, the great majority of jobs directly related to tourism arose in the accommodation sector whereas the employment effect for enterprises not exclusively dependent on tourism was extremely small, especially in Ouarzazate. Nevertheless it should be noted that marked positive economic impulses result from the direct employment effects in both sample localities.

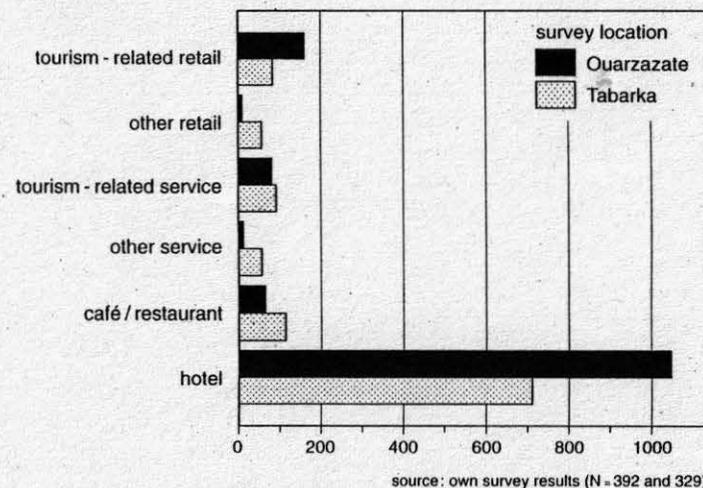


Fig. 3: Tourism related jobs by sector

The survey also asked the owners of the enterprises to estimate how many of their local customers were employed in tourism. Even if these figures are not very precise they permit the employment effect in each region to be estimated as about 300 jobs (taking into account the proportion of enterprises questioned in Ouarzazate). Although the number of jobs created by indirect effects as a whole is difficult to calculate as precisely as in those fields directly dependent on tourism, we can surmise that there have been few integrative relationships formed up to now. Including the production of souvenirs and agricultural products there probably is a number of about 700 jobs related to the tourism activities. As a rough generalisation, we can say that for every two jobs in the tourism branch, there is one more created by linkage effects. This means that the indirect employment effects (usually estimated as about 1.5 jobs per bed) were only partially achieved in the study region, so one can suppose that the linkage effects are still directed to the core regions of Morocco and Tunisia. Even if a certain proportion of the employment effect is not opera-

tive in the tourism region because some of the products and services are produced or performed in other parts of the country, the regional effectiveness of the development of tourism is still very low in both examples studied.

It must be emphasised that, overall, the development of tourism in both areas studied provided a definite economic impulse. As a result of faults in the planning and implementation of these tourism projects, demand is below the intended level when expressed in purely quantitative terms. Furthermore, the regional economic effects as a whole have achieved only a fraction of the forecast potential.

4 Subjective Perception of the Tourism Development by the Local Population

Thus far it has been demonstrated that the measurable economic effects of tourism development on both the national and regional levels represent an important factor in both Morocco and Tunisia. However, a distinction would have to be made in terms of the significance of the purely economic point of view if reservations regarding tourism development become apparent among the local population. Even though this aspect was considered less comprehensively by the project, it has not been completely ignored.

The survey questioned traders about possible positive and negative effects of the development of tourism, asking them to give their opinion on whether such effects were present in Ouarzazate or Tabarka. The results are shown in Fig. 4. The mean values for each statement are shown, differentiated according to informant with or without significant income from tourism. Overall, it emerges that the overwhelming majority of informants in both case study areas agree with the arguments in favour of tourism development frequently mentioned in books and articles, namely that it is a significant source of income and creates jobs.

The effect that development of tourism has on infrastructure was also judged very positively, although it was felt considerably stronger in Tabarka than in Ouarzazate. This difference reflects the concrete differences between the two localities in the level of infrastructure resulting from the development of tourism.

The existence of conflicts between tourists and locals is universally denied, and the statement that the environment is increasingly damaged as a result of tourism was virtually unanimously rejected. In fact, in conversation it was frequently mentioned that quite the opposite was the case, that tourists might make the local authorities apply stricter standards with regard to the environment.

More marked differences between the Moroccan and Tunisian cases revealed themselves in the analysis of the effects of tourism in the socio-cultural sphere. Although some informants in Tabarka (especially older ones) did mention a loss of tradition, customs,

and practices, and an increase in prostitution, these effects tended to be rated on the whole as slight. In contrast, informants in Ouarzazate discern these signs of degradation much more clearly. A study carried out in the neighbouring oasis region of *Tafilaleet* showed similar effects in the socio-cultural sphere to those found in Ouarzazate, and the basis for a possible interpretation might thus be found in the differences between the Moroccan and Tunisian societies. Official Tunisian policy has been primarily secular in character for several years and is in many aspects more open towards Europe than its Moroccan counterpart. In addition, the area south of the High Atlas Mountains in Morocco has historically been less closely connected with the rest of the Mediterranean than the north Tunisian coast. It is also possible that the high proportion of internal tourists in Tabarka contributes to a greater acceptance of tourism. With over a third of officially registered overnight visitors being Tunisian, it is likely that tourism is much less seen as something alien.

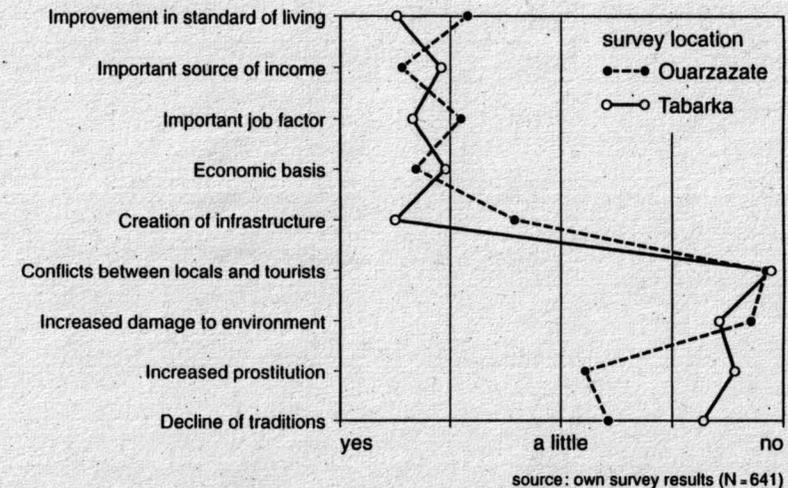


Fig. 4: Estimation of the mean effects of the development of tourism

It might be anticipated that those informants who profited directly from tourism would tend to emphasise the positive effects and to play down the negative. But only minimal differences were found between the sample surveys in both areas studied. However, despite all the positive assessments of the value of tourism development, the opinion was expressed in a number of intensive non-standardised interviews that a higher material standard of living should not necessarily be equated with a better quality of life and that contact with tourists can sometimes have a negative effect on self-esteem. An analysis of this aspect would have overstepped the limits of a study primarily orient-

ed to economic geography, however, and so was not taken any further. The aim of this element in the study was to investigate whether serious fundamental objections to the development of tourism were to be found, as these would have grave consequences for its further development.

5 Conclusion

Noteworthy partial successes were achieved in the development of tourist areas in Morocco and Tunisia. The substantial expansion of the accommodation capacity has created a significant number of jobs in the region, and these have been largely filled by labour from the region.

However, the development of tourism in peripheral regions is by definition not autonomous. If conditions had been more favourable for economic development in the past, the region would have already started to develop on its own. A planned development therefore requires intensive external regulation and management. A limitation of the supply of land and financial incentives on a national level alone will not be sufficient. This study identified in the two cases a range of factors which reduce the effectiveness of tourism as a means for the development of a region:

1. Wrong estimation of international demand: the feasibility studies for both projects were only carried out very superficially, and for this reason potential international demand was wrongly estimated. The large majority of the hotels built in Ouarzazate in the last few years have been in the 4 or 5 star categories, are directed at a foreign clientele who expect comfort and are only partially suited to the adventure and experience tourism that has grown up in the region in the last few years. The accommodation in Tabarka was also originally aimed at a mostly foreign clientele but is affordable for the local middle and upper classes because of the lower prices.
2. Neglect of local demand: because the expansion of tourism in Morocco and Tunisia was motivated by the foreign currency that can be earned, both projects failed to take into consideration and plan for the local demand which should not be neglected when focusing on the development of peripheral regions.
3. Inadequate involvement of foreign investors: although the involvement of foreign investors is linked to problems of profit skimming, they may have a positive role to play, especially in the initial phase up to take-off, both due to their access to the market and because international private sector economic involvement can send out positive signals to national investors. Whilst Morocco has taken a sceptical stance toward foreign investors in the past, the Tunisian example illustrates that international involvement in the development of tourism in peripheral regions does not happen of its own accord.

4. Scant support of regional investment potential: the promotion of investment from outside the region works against attracting investment from within the region. Private developers, such as the one active in Tabarka, find it difficult to strike a balance between raising investment from outside the region and stimulating regional involvement because they are mainly interested in the overall commercial success of the project.
5. Insufficient marketing: in addition to the role already mentioned that international tour operators can play in mobilising demand, all other marketing and advertising activities of course influence the size of demand. The state promotes the entire country as a tourist destination and is only incidentally concerned with the individual regions, and, even though some attempts at more directly regional marketing are discernible in both areas studied, these activities have thus far been very limited in scope. That both small local investors and investors from outside the region have shown little interest in being involved in these activities has proved, however, to be a handicap, and so the local authorities are left to take on an active role in marketing the region. And, although they do indeed recognise the value of such activity, local officials have been reluctant and hesitant in taking on the work necessary.
6. Shortcomings in traffic links: Neither region has optimal land links to the central regions of its country (and thus to the international airports), and so airfields have been built to allow a direct connection to European tourist airports. The relatively small size of the projects means, however, that scheduled flights to Europe cannot be profitably maintained. Whereas the Tunisian state compensates for this and subsidises a few direct flights to Tabarka, Ouarzazate could only be reached by indirect connection for a long time.

The planning and execution of tourism development projects make considerable demands on the co-ordinating institutions, particularly with reference to the involvement of regional potential when there is a fundamental conflict between the need for stimulative and regulative intervention, as well as compensatory elements. This should not be understood in any way as an argument for the dominance of the state in such matters; it is important to find a balance between state and private sector protagonists in which both partners cooperate. The lack of a mediator to manage and oversee the entire project, from the planning stages, via execution and continual assessment, up to and including the marketing of the resort led, at least in both the regions examined in this study, to less than ideal results in the development of tourism areas in peripheral regions.

Literature

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Area-Studies, Business and Culture

As the level of globalization in business relationships rises, the importance of questions and problems pertaining to intercultural communication increases more and more. This gives rise to new tasks for the social sciences, which can only be successfully performed through interdisciplinary cooperation in the sense of area-studies.

Between 1995 and 2002 **forarea[®]**, the Bavarian research network for area-studies, drew together numerous members of the scientific community who are specialized in the social sciences to pursue previously unresearched topics in areas of overlap of business and culture as exemplified in non-European regions. The most important results are collated here.