

THE OVERLOOKED ISSUE IN TOURISM CODES OF ETHICS: MAKING MORAL PRINCIPLES EXPLICIT

Loredana Cornelia BOȘCA^{a*}, Ionuț Emilian ANASTASIU^b, Corina MARINESCU^c

^{a, b, c} Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania

ABSTRACT

This paper is part of a series of analyses dedicated to the ethics management in tourism, using theoretical tools of philosophical and applied ethics. It aims: (a) to clarify the meaning of 'practical' ethics in tourism, taking into account the challenges inherent in the field; (b) to examine ethics practical approaches in organisational contexts (with a focus on ethics management); c) to clarify the importance of codes of ethics at the organizational level, their typology and content (values, principles, moral norms); d) to propose a moral theoretical framework for grounding ethics in tourism on four fundamental principles (principle of human dignity, principle of integrity, principle of reciprocity, and principle of precaution); e) to analyse the content of the Global Code of Ethics in Tourism (GCET) in the light of these clarifications. The authors argue in favour of explicitly specifying moral values and principles in codes of ethics, as they play an essential role in building moral organisations, providing their ethical "content" and encouraging the effective practice of virtues by employees.

KEYWORDS: *codes of ethics, ethics management, ethical standards, GCET, tourism ethics.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ethical concerns in a specific field of activity are characterised by the identification of sets of principles that determine what is good and bad, right and wrong in individual, social, or institutional relationships. Prioritisation of interests, the desire to maximise profit, toxic leadership, legal loopholes, and lack of ethics education are some of the reasons why not all tourism organisations are orientated towards the practical implementation of ethics in their day-to-day activities. Over time, tourism had a social, cultural, economic and political impact of a magnitude that cannot be ignored, with issues related to encouraging its positive effects and preventing its negative effects rapidly coming to the fore. As one of the fastest growing industries in the world, tourism directly and potentially irreversibly affects infrastructure, the environment, and local communities.

Why do we need (practical) ethics of tourism? First, in tourism, unlike other sectors, there are additional factors that enhance unethical activities, such as the simultaneous production and consumption, the intangibility of the tourism 'product', the impossibility to 'test' the product in advance, the constantly changing customer and employee profile, etc. On the other hand, the responsibility of investors, public and administrative authorities, managers, and employees to respect ethical standards, even if the source of unethical practices may be different (exogenous organisations, local population, social framework, or political context), is a widely debated topic. Moreover, in

* Corresponding author. E-mail address: loredana.bosca@man.ase.ro

tourism, the beneficiaries of hospitality services, tourists, are also obliged to respect moral values and principles. Secondly, because sustainability has not been a mere desideratum over the last decade, but has effectively become an obligation, the need has emerged to provide workers, managers and investors in the tourism industry with concrete and systematic levers to carry out activities that meet the criteria of sustainable development. Sustainability requirements have become increasingly stringent, and the debate on ethical challenges has brought new issues and phrases to the spotlight: environmentally friendly economic development, technological progress without damaging local cultures, 'lifecycle carbon footprint', 'positivity toward nature', etc. Even continued efforts to promote sustainable tourism no longer seem sufficient in a natural environment that is almost destroyed, after alternative tourism appeared to have definitively introduced 'morality' into the concerns of decision-makers in the industry. The last imperative is to move towards renewable tourism. All this leaves the impression that the practical ethics of tourism nowadays needs to be shaped more as an environmental ethic, in the broader context of the sustainable development debate. Third, the emergence of new technologies and artificial intelligence has further refined discourses, making room for concerns and curiosities, transforming not only the way we travel (Gupta et al., 2024) or how we understand tourism organisations as 'virtual enterprises' within 'smart tourism,' but also the way we access and 'consume' tourism industry products (Provenzano & Baggio, 2019).

The starting point for all these developments has been a series of philosophical questions about the values and moral principles that must be respected to shape a practical tourism ethic and a guideline for its future development. The literature on tourism ethics is relatively recent and thematically widely fragmented. In this regard, building on the major studies (Fennell 2006; Fennell & Malloy, 2007; Kazimierczak, 2006; MacCannell, 2011; Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013; Jamal, 2019), we have undertaken a series of reflections on the possibility of a practical ethics of tourism, its content, and the challenges such an enquiry may raise at societal and organisational levels. Second, we analysed how the acquisitions of philosophical ethics can be used in the ethics management of tourism organisations. The pressure of interactions between consumers, employees, and other stakeholders in tourism, as well as between all these categories and the natural or sociocultural environment, imposes a pressing need to build a "practical" ethics of tourism at the organisational level.

Ethical codes in organisations cannot guarantee the actual practice of moral virtues, but they are certainly meant to favour their cultivation. That is why we considered it important to clarify the meaning of certain concepts and syntagms that we have identified as essential in the ethics professional's toolkit (values, principles, codes), which are sometimes misinterpreted or incompletely interpreted in the literature on ethics management. In this sense, we have defined and made explicit the content of the moral principles most used in tourism studies, but also in ethical codes. We have also proposed a theoretical framework that we consider relevant in the context of analysing the ethics of practices and policies in the tourism industry/phenomenon, centred on four fundamental principles (principle of human dignity, principle of integrity, principle of reciprocity, and principle of precaution).

As an element of novelty, we discussed the pertinence of introducing the principle of reciprocity into this framework, despite the criticisms articulated by sociologists and anthropologists about its "non-universality". Finally, considering the clarifications made, we analyse the content of the Global Code of Ethics in Tourism (GCET) and conclude that it cannot constitute an adequate prototype for the implementation of codes of ethics in tourism organisations. We advocate the reintroduction and explicit specification of moral values and principles in tourism codes of ethics, which are often ignored in favour of efficiency values, since we are convinced that there can be no organisations of integrity without employees who effectively practice moral virtues.

2. PRACTICAL ETHICS OF TOURISM

Although ethicists have not always found the most harmonious ways of matching theoretical foundations to their practical function (Bok, 2000) and they have not always removed all the challenges raised by the relationship between ethics and action (Elizondo, 2013), practical ethics remains for the moment the only way in which ordinary people or professionals try to apply moral principles to real-life contexts, aiming at solving ethical dilemmas or making "right" decisions in the struggle with the "messiness of moral life" (Winston, 2008, p. 6; Săvulescu & Protopapadakis, 2019). On the other hand, although practical ethics always bears the mark of contextual strategy and reflective equilibrium, it still needs moral theories, but in an approach that avoids, in Toulmin's expression, "the tyranny of principles", especially when "we choose our "value systems" as freely as we choose our clothes (Toulmin, 1981, p. 31). Principles only guide, and this is, in fact, their moral character.

But what is practical ethics? Brenda Almond believes that practical ethics cannot remain confined to particular and specific concerns but must include reflections on law, sanctions, social arrangements, policy directions, and international order. In the author's view, practical ethical research cannot be divorced from the assumptions embedded in the major ethical theories, and she must pursue "the traditional task of moral philosophy" of grounding in reason "values which transcend the immediate whim and preference of the individual" (Almond, 1998, p. 275). Beauchamp (2007) expands the definition, referring mainly to the necessary methodological framework: 'Applied *ethics* is now used to refer broadly to any use of methods of reasoning to critically examine practical moral decisions and to treat fundamentally moral problems in professions, technology, public policy, and the like. The applied term *generally* refers to the use of philosophical methods - including conceptual analysis, reflective equilibrium, phenomenology, casuistry (or case-based reasoning), and the like - to critically examine moral problems, practices, and policies. (Beauchamp, 2007, p. 56).

The constitution of a practical ethics in tourism (as an industry or a phenomenon?) is made significantly more difficult by the existence of distinct constraints. One of these is the unique complexity of the field (many industries, processes, and agents are involved, each with different objectives and interests). The second constraint is the existence of atypical situations (where general business ethics is not applicable), and the third difficulty is the lack of clarity about the potential status of such ethics. Should it be a business ethic applied to tourism as a hospitality industry? Should it be a normative ethic that underpins codes of conduct to which all actors involved in the tourism industry must voluntarily adhere? Should it be exclusively an environmental ethic? This is a difficult problem, but what is certain is that many sectors have expressed the need for the tourism industry to address much more carefully the ethical challenges derived from tourism practices and policies, in terms of individual and collective responsibility, social equity, consumption, or investment sustainability.

However, although many academic societies have been established and research has been continuously multidisciplinary, we have a relatively small number of key publications with stand-alone sections on (applied) tourism ethics or dedicated to the responsibilities of tourists as *moral consumers* (Georgescu & Boşca, 2013a; 2013b). This segment of the scientific literature is still underdeveloped. It is clear that ethics has not been positioned in tourism studies as an essential field. There are ad hoc case studies on the impact of tourism on culture, environment, and people's lives, but research should still provide adequate criteria to generally judge the morality of actions in the tourism industry/phenomenon. Cohen (1979, p. 31) had warned that the heterogeneity and complexity of the field of tourism preclude a theoretical approach to tourism as well as the conceptualisation of the tourist, advocating rather pluralistic, preferably eclectic, research. The idea of approaching the study of tourism from the perspective of a multiplicity of paradigms also appears in *Tourism Research Paradigms: Critical and Emergent Knowledges*. The authors believe that only „an inter- or

postdisciplinary matrix - a space where the dynamic negotiation between paradigms (and the different processes and practices of knowledge" can provide an appropriate framework for 'mature' tourism research. (Munar and Jamal, 2016, p. 6).

The emergence of the *Global Code of Ethics in Tourism* (GCET) has played an important role in increasing interest in academic circles in research that brings tourism ethics to the forefront, such as Fennell (2006) and Kazimierczak (2006). MacCannell (2011) is credited with having orientated ethical research toward the tourist, or rather the experiences and perceptions of individual tourists. It was not until Lovelock and Lovelock (2013) that the importance of ethics was fully recognised not only in the tourism industry but also in the education of tourists. Tazim Jamal (2019) in turn created a framework consisting of five key principles for promoting 'good' tourism: equity and justice, diversity and recognition, responsibility and care, sustainability and conservation, democracy and governance.

An abundant literature has emerged from the analysis of tourism codes of ethics and rules of conduct for tourists, operators, and residents alike (Fennell, 2007; Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013). Mick Smith (2009, p. 614) argues that more complex than the heterogeneity of tourism purposes and practices is the identification of the appropriate definition of the phrase 'ethical relationship'. Certainly, the topic is interesting in terms of professional relationships. However, in his view, even if morality has the role of encompassing, promoting, and enforcing acceptable or unacceptable social norms of behaviour, it should not be reduced to the mechanical observance of generally accepted principles and rules or only to the rigorous fulfilment of obligations to others. Smith argues, therefore, that ethics should not be limited to 'uncritical' compliance with current standards in tourism, while Butcher (2002, p. 139) takes a more radical position, even advocating the elimination of research of concerns about moral tourism, which he sees as a form of 'guilt-tripping' of the tourist. Are moral principles ever imposed uncritically? For example, respect, responsibility, or integrity have often been subjected to critical scrutiny, at least in terms of their relevance and effectiveness at the organisational level and in real life.

3. INSTITUTIONALISING ETHICS: ETHICS MANAGEMENT IN TOURISM

Implementing ethics at the organisational level is to institutionalise it. The role of ethics in all types of decision (social, professional, and individual) has been known for a long time (Jones, 1991; Powell, 1993), and ethical decision-making processes always involve comparing different ethical positions: utilitarian, deontological, intuitionist, etc. Ethical standards proposed to individuals who have to solve ethical dilemmas are never considered without careful analysis of the rationales behind them. Ethics is legitimised at the organisational level precisely by the realisation that there *is a hard core of values and moral principles* that unquestionably influence our preferences and actions, along with other psychosocial factors (Anastasiu & Bîgu, 2018). The most important component of ethical institutionalisation is undoubtedly ethics management, the primary purpose of which is to provide services that meet public expectations, to secure and protect the interests or rights of beneficiaries and service providers. To achieve these objectives in tourism, the principles of ethical management must be based on (universally) accepted ethical values, aiming at honest and equitable services and activities, efficient use of public resources and fulfilment of responsibilities.

In his article *Moral complexity in organisations*, Ronald Jeurissen (2005, p. 11) argues that the application of ethics can take two forms, both *practical* but distinct in approach: *organisational ethics* and *ethics management*. Organisational ethics consists of the analysis of certain types of ethical issues arising in specific organisational contexts, with the aim of providing clarification and normative guidance using standard ethical theories (deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, justice theory, etc.). According to Valentin Mureşan (2009, pp. 32-33), ethics management, although using methods of philosophical ethics, focusses equally on the body of knowledge from *organisation theory* and

management science. The Romanian author believes that the purpose of ethics management should be to foster the creation of *organisations of integrity* by managing all the activities that shape their moral profile. To achieve this, it should use all kinds of tools and structures to assess the ethical status of the organisation: ethics councils and committees offering moral advisory services, ethics training, ethics auditing, codes of ethics, and the application of ethical decision-making methods to specific cases. Finally, according to Mureşan (2009, pp. 33-35), *ethics management* must be distinguished from *management ethics* (or *ethics of management*), identified by some specialists with *business ethics*, the latter being strictly concerned with the ethics of forms of management in tourism (operational, financial, human resources, project, risk, quality, etc.).

Jeurissen (2005, pp. 15-18) has identified four standard models of ethics management, which can also be observed in the tourism industry. The models can be centred on: a) compliance with *the rules* contained in codes of conduct, b) creative formulation of *new ethical values* on the basis of an already established normative framework, c) *dialogue with external beneficiaries* (stakeholders: customers, suppliers, and tourists), and 4) *social dialogue* on highly sensitive or disputed issues (such as, for example, debates on sex tourism and 'dark' tourism or the violation of children's rights in tourism activities, etc.). Stakeholder and social dialogue facilitate the incorporation of pre-existing CSR (*corporate social responsibility*) and SM (*stakeholder management*) concerns and institutional structures into the sphere of ethics management. Therefore, we should not confuse, as happens in some of the tourism studies, ethics management with the processes integrated under the heading of CSR or MS (much less with organisational ethics). CSR is more concerned with PR, and thus with the issue of public relations, and its purpose is to minimise reputational (image or integrity) risk. Reputational risk, considered by Soprano et al. (2012, p. 159) as the surest route through which seriousness, credibility, or service quality can be negatively affected, is the nightmare of any organisation in tourism. Therefore, the focus in CSR is on the voluntary action of organisations to integrate economic, social and environmental issues that are considered imperative in their business and their interactions with stakeholders (Boşca & Georgescu, 2015). Morrison Paul and Siegel include in the CSR category those "actions on the part of a firm that appear to advance the promotion of some social good *beyond the immediate interests* of the firm/shareholders and *beyond legal requirements*. That is, CSR activities of companies are those that exceed compliance with respect to, e.g., environmental or social regulations, in order to create the *perception* or *reality* that these firms are advancing a social goal" (Morrison Paul & Siegel, 2001, p. 207). Because CSR is a synthesis of what is legitimate, cost effective, and beneficial at the same time (Boşca & Georgescu, 2015, p. 742), specific practices in tourism today emphasise sustainable activities but also impactful social programmes (charity tourism, for example).

4. ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR THE TOURISM ETHICS MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL

Having delimited ethics management from the other ways of institutionalising ethics, it is necessary to specify the meaning of some essential concepts and phrases that should, in fact, make up the *essential concept and tools* of the professional in tourism ethics management: *values, value statements, principles, standards, codes of ethics, codes of conduct, codes of good practice*, etc. We will not analyse others concept of ethics management, but we will restrict our analysis to the content of *ethical standards* (values and moral principles) used in *codes of ethics*.

4.1 Nomenclature of ethical standards (moral values and principles)

Let us begin with *moral values*, as they are at the heart of any ethical approach in the field of tourism, regardless of the type of organisation concerned (organising or intermediary travel agency, accommodation or catering establishments, destination management organisations (DMOs), tourist offices or associations, transport companies, tourist information centres, etc.). It should be

emphasised that ethical values are not innate moral prescriptions and are not based on individual authority. They emerge within communities through inter-societal relationships. Values maintain their validity to the extent that they are internalised, becoming part of a society's culture over time. Moral value is more like a motivationally driven desire (Fennell & Malloy, 2007, p. 156), an abstract concept of an evaluative nature (Ogien, 2001, pp. 1052-1064) that can manifest itself in personal conscience, culture, and professional environment. Bozeman (2007, p. 117) constructs a much more complex definition of value: 'A value is a complex broad-based assessment of an object or set of objects (where the objects may be concrete, psychological, socially constructed, or a combination of all three) characterised by both cognitive and emotive elements, arrived at after some deliberation, and because a value is part of the individual's definition of self, it is not easily changed and has the potential to elicit action'. Because they may be different from one society to another, the ethical values assumed in tourism activities should be identical to the core ethical values of Western society that are recognisable in other cultures: respect, justice, equality, fairness, impartiality, reciprocity, cooperation, honesty, responsibility, openness, love, tolerance, hospitality, care, compassion, etc.

In tourism organisations, moral values are the foundation on which *the credo / vision statement* and *mission statement* and *value statements* are elaborated. While *vision statements* signify the organisation's set of beliefs (in a moral sense), *mission statements* are somewhat more explicit about the organization's objectives or goals. *Value statements* instead reflect the set of beliefs about the motivational power behind moral behaviours (Fennell & Malloy, 2007, pp. 13-16). Typically, a value statement takes the form of "a formal written document intended to capture an organisation's unique and enduring purpose, practices, and core values" (Fennell & Malloy, 2007, p. 15). Thus, value statements distinguish one tourism organisation from any other, i.e., they particularise it. The Travel Agency TAROM, for example, notes in section "Mission, Vision, Values" the following: "(...) We have chosen to offer a different interpretation of what is meaningful in life. ... We are our journeys. ... Our mission is *to inspire people to spread their wings*. Because in human life, every journey counts... We keep up with the latest cultural and social trends and *respect* to the highest standards of safety and comfort. ... We are *honest* with our passengers, and we want to show them every day that great service can only be done in style" (<https://www.tarom.ro/misiune-viziune-valori/>). Another example: the ecotourism agency Tread Softly Travel. It has chosen a quote from W.B. Yeats as its *credo*: "I have spread my dreams under your feet; Tread softly because you tread on my dreams..." (<https://treadsoftlytravel.com/>), and the value statement (which has been reworked several times) is described as follows: „To delight our guests. We promote *environmentally and socially responsible* travel that *respects* our natural and cultural resources and *educates* our participants during a first-hand nature experience" (Herremans & Welsh, 2001, p. 78). The explicit ethical values that Tread Softly Travel refers to are therefore respect for the environment and culture, cooperation, caring for the protection and conservation of the environment, etc.

Another important concept in the ethics of tourism and ethics management is that of *moral principle*. In contrast to ethical values, ethical principles are *rules of action* that actualise one or more values: they specify what we must do to act correctly. Ontologically speaking, values always precede principles, but it is principles that allow values to "materialise" in our decisions and actions. Valentin Mureşan (2009, p. 104) clarifies the relationship between values, principles, and moral rules: "*Moral values* are ideals or ideal aspirations, never completely tangible, such as justice, happiness, or dignity. *Moral principles* are very general prescriptions or interdictions that require us to aspire towards these ideals. A *particular moral rule* is an obligation or interdiction that norms a set of actions within a particular domain. Ethical principles are norms that *defend* ethical values, and particular moral rules are *specifications* of principles for a particular domain of activity" (emphasis added). *Moral rules* are not inspirational like ethical values but are imposed at the societal level through specific sanctions (Mureşan, 2009, p. 106). Violation of moral rules is accompanied, in a healthy society or organisation, by negative feelings: guilt, shame, contempt. However, ethical principles should not be confused with

the specific moral rules they impose. Moreover, the principles are indicators of our option for a particular set of rules, providing the coordinates for the elaboration of a new set if the situation requires so. The comprehensive list of fundamental ethical principles that can form the basis of codes of ethics in tourism organisations is taken from bioethics: *respect for autonomy*, the principle of *beneficence*, the principle of *nonmaleficence* or *abstention from harm*, the principle of *vulnerability*, the principle of *integrity*, the principle of *respect for dignity*, the principle of *justice*, the principle of *precaution*, the principle of *solidarity*, the principle of *equality*, etc. Although the most widely applied and studied principles in the field of tourism are those of responsibility (towards people/other living systems, the environment and local traditions), social justice and respect for one's own or exogenous culture, it is important to define those moral principles whose content may be presented ambiguously in the literature.

The positioning of the principle of autonomy in the hierarchy may vary outside the Western world (for example, in East Asia, a "harmonious dependence" on the family is preferred) (Anastasiu, 2012). A wide range of moral duties and rights can be placed in the category of the principle of respect for autonomy: self-determination, freedom or freedom from external constraints, the right to decide according to one's own will, beliefs and convictions, confidentiality, honesty, informed consent, etc., Compliance with this principle prevents, for example, an agent from ignoring a tourist's beliefs, choices, and lifestyle. In other words, a tourist cannot be subjected to "experiences" about which he or she has not been properly informed, or which violate his or her right to privacy. However, although tourism itself is seen as a form of personal freedom in which, according to some, 'anything is allowed', there must be explicit moral rules to sanction infringement of others' autonomy. The so-called 'hedonistic tourist', for whom tourism is a privileged, unencumbered activity in which he no longer feels burdened by coercive structures and therefore considers himself 'entitled' to engage in all sorts of (otherwise proscribed) adventures, is not a moral tourist if his freedom infringes on the freedoms of others (Diken & Laustsen, 2004, p. 102; Caruana and Crane, 2011, p. 1504). Another formulation of the principle in tourism may concern respect for the 'autonomy' and dignity of animals, even if they are considered to lack reason. The anthropocentric approach, which has allowed humans to subject animals to morally unacceptable treatment, has begun to fade into western consciousness. The 'trophy hunting', the animal deprivation of freedom and the continued destruction of flora continue to raise serious moral issues and fall into the segment of *destructive tourism* (Ghasemi, 2021; Ghasemi et al., 2023).

The *principle of beneficence*, which can also be called the principle of compassion, generosity, or charity, refers to the willingness of humans to do good to other human and nonhuman beings. It defines situations in which we act in the interest of others, sometimes at the expense of our own. The principle of beneficence is not to be confused with the *principle of non-maleficence* or *abstention from harm* (which is not about doing good voluntarily and intentionally). Alongside the *principle of benevolence*, beneficence occupies a privileged place in shaping the moral profile of the volunteer tourism practitioner (Wearing, 2003; Benson, 2010). Dubbed "the new poster-child of alternative tourism" (Lyons & Wearing 2008, p. 6), volunteer tourism has seen explosive growth in recent years (Sin et al., 2015) and is now one of the most widely recognised manifestations of "ethical tourism". There are authors who place the unusual interest in this type of tourism more on the recent obsession with sustainability issues, generously stuffed with prosocial messages (Mostafanezhad, 2014), rather than on the need to 'give something back' or share what we have in abundance: 'This ethic is entirely in keeping with the individualism of consumer capitalism, which is predicated upon what Hall et al. (2008) describe as *amour-propre*—a particular kind of egoism in which the elevation of the self is contingent upon the distinction from and denigration of others. In a society of competitive individualists, distinguishing oneself from the masses is a key cultural drive, 'especially if you consider yourself 'morally superior', says Jo Large (2019, p. 331). However, we believe that

charitable tourism is based on the principle of benevolence and beneficence, and not on the perverted principle of "social responsibility", as philanthropic actions in tourism are often supererogatory.

Borrowed in European bioethics from research ethics and recognised by UNESCO in 2005, the moral *principle of vulnerability* expressly requires us to recognise and protect the rights of those exposed to specific risks, limitations, or threats: people with disabilities, the defenceless, or those in obvious danger (women, children), etc. All these categories are also found in tourism. Concerns about the application of the moral principle of vulnerability should not be confused with analyses dedicated to 'vulnerabilities' in tourism, which focus on threats or disadvantages that may disrupt or harm tourism experiences, the natural environment, or the prosperity of local communities (Kusune, 2020; Scott et al., 2019). Typically, expressions of the moral principle of vulnerability appear in the tourism literature with reference to another moral principle: the principle of integrity.

The *integrity principle*, in turn, can take the form of *socioeconomic integrity* and *moral integrity*. For example, under the umbrella of "accessible tourism" ("tourism for all"), on 24 September 2024, on the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) website, "a set of strategic recommendations" for tourism operators, agencies, and travel agents was launched on 24 September 2024, with the aim of implementing the ISO 21902: 2021 standard (WTO et al., 2024). The stated aim of these guidelines is to make tourism experiences accessible to everyone, including older or disabled people who may face sensory, cognitive, or cultural difficulties. But there is not only socioeconomic integrity but also *moral integrity*. Philosophically speaking, this refers to the idea of the 'wholeness' of the human person who possesses an 'integrated self' in which responsibilities, convictions, beliefs and aspirations are non-conflictual, ensuring inner coherence regardless of context. But if we talk about the "integrity system" of tourism organisations, the principle of integrity can take the form of *respect for the rules and moral norms assumed* by all parties involved, or, in a narrower sense, it can take the form of *opposition to the phenomena of corruption* in totality. In tourism, corruption can effectively take any form: bribery, rigged public contracts, illegally obtained visas and authorisations, illegal exploitation of natural resources, unjustified promotion of destinations to the detriment of heritage destinations, false advertising, embezzlement of investment funds, investments that harm the natural environment, etc.

The *principle of respect for human dignity* imposes the requirement to respect all the *fundamental rights* recognised to the human being as a unique entity (endowed with body and soul) or, as Ricoeur said, to know that 'the human being is owed something by the mere fact of being human' (Ricoeur, 1988, pp. 235-237): civil, economic, social, cultural, and political rights. Moral rules penalising exploitation in the workplace or sexual exploitation, for example, may fall under this principle. From the Dominican Republic (where the sex tourism industry exploits at least 30,000 children and young people each year) to Europe, sex workers are victims of human trafficking, extortion, or physical and psychological violence (Hall & Ryan, 2001; Seidman et al., 2006; Kyriazi, 2020; Bianchi, 2009). According to the International Organisation Against Child Sex Tourism (ECPAT), more than one million children are sexually exploited every year (not by paedophiles, but by tourists, "serious" businessmen or diplomats). Buying sexual services is justified on the grounds that it is part of local culture or that it would financially help the poor (ECPAT, 2024). One example is La Jonquera, on the Spanish-French border, a veritable Mecca for sex tourism, where over 7 million tourists visit this type of "adventure" every year. However, several studies show that a moral tourist will prefer to pay more for tourist services in another location than to go to destinations where the rights of women and children are blatantly violated, where forced labour is used, or where sex tourism is rampant (Weeden, 2013). Another expression of the principle of human dignity can take the form of the respect to be accorded to "traces", objects, or memories linked to persons, moments, or past historical events. Such concerns arise in academic debates about how 'black tourism' financially exploits tragic events by 'commercialising' disasters or deaths as 'spectacle'. (Chen & Xu, 2020; Zuelow, 2011; Stone, 2013.)

As a niche tourism of very recent date 1996, *thanatourism* requires a very serious analysis by tourism ethicists.

Two other principles that have recently come to the attention of ethicists, especially bioethicists, are the *principle of precaution* and the *principle of solidarity*. Probabilistic risk calculation, a method used predominantly by utilitarian ethicists, has presumably led to the idea that precaution is necessary in relation to potential future harms, even if these are not obvious at present. This general ethical principle is especially valuable in the field of tourism investment and consists in avoiding or minimising significant risks, harms, and damages to human beings, the environment, or communities as a whole. Tourism has never placed as much emphasis on concepts such as sustainable, durable, or renewable in terms of environmental protection. Valentin Mureşan (2009, p. 245) considers precaution a 'principle that imposes responsibility on present generations for the fate of future generations'.

The *principle of solidarity*, often ignored in the European context, is now embedded in the discourse on tourism ethics (Rastegar et al., 2023). Although it has its roots in Roman Catholic and socialist ideas, it is nowadays approached from a manifestly liberal point of view: as a *principle of justice* and/or *equity*. This principle is closely related to the concept of justice in law. The themes of equity and social justice are highly relevant when discussing responsible tourism practices that do not exploit resources irrationally. For example, tourist consumption practices can have significant implications for social equity in tourist destinations (Jamal & Higham, 2021; Gill, 2019; Joppe, 2019). The principle of justice also emerges in analysing the contribution of governments, NGOs, and the private sector in promoting equitable tourism. Paradoxically, there is literature arguing for the massive contribution of tourism (as a form of neocolonialism) to the perpetuation of social and economic inequalities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2022), especially in marginalised communities. Sometimes, the social, economic, political, and environmental consequences of inequitable practices in tourism are found to outweigh its benefits.

The last principle that has not, in our view, received the due attention in studies of tourism ethics is the *principle of reciprocity*. The homogenisation of moralities brought about by globalisation has raised a pressing problem: the harmonisation of values and ethical norms in such diverse cultural spaces. Is it possible to build a universal code of ethics? If the answer were positive (for the moment, this is not the case), the principle of reciprocity would be the most appropriate common thread of existing plural morals (Boşca, 2021, p. 340). It is believed that the ethics of reciprocity in the West was based on the principle: "Behave towards others as you would want them to behave towards you". 'Reciprocity' (from the Latin *reciprocare*) refers to attitudes or actions that are based on mutuality and aim either to obtain certain benefits or to fulfil certain social obligations or duties as a result of receiving 'gifts'. Although anthropologists do not consider it a universal explanatory factor of social cohesion, it can be found in almost all societies as a disposition to "voluntarily (not involuntarily) treat others as you would like to be treated yourself, and not necessarily in response to a binding exchange agreement. There is no society that does not need mutual respect among its members to function peacefully and efficiently, just as there is no market or organisation that does not require a modicum of trust, honesty, fairness, respect for promises made, and mutual help among its actors" (Boşca, 2021, p. 341).

All the above moral principles are, in the final analysis, an assumption of *personal responsibility*, which also finds expression at the social and organisational level. Therefore, together with values, moral principles play a vital role in building a moral organisation, because they provide its so-called 'ethical content'. Kaptein has compiled a list of virtues (criteria, qualities, organisational dispositions), which are intended to give expression to the various responsibilities of the organisation: clarity, consistency, sanctionability, achievability, supportability, visibility, and criticizability (Kaptein, 2008, p. 71). Moral principles, however, are 'dead' unless the effective functioning of the *integrity system* is ensured, which involves, among many other tools, codes and regulations.

4.2 Codes of ethics in the tourism industry

Since the 1980s, following international scandals due to unethical practices, especially corruption at the organisational level, the need for *codes of ethics* has been recognised. Although the distinction between *codes of ethics*, *codes of conduct*, and *codes of rules and regulations* is operational in the EU, they are often confused or mixed up, which is detrimental to the clear specification of an organisation's values and principles. In the tourism industry we sometimes find the same situation. For example, Timo Moilanen and Ari Salminen (2006, p. 1) have set up an ethical framework for the public sector in the form of a voluntary, nonlegally binding European code of ethics, with the aim of providing a model, a general guide for the development of national codes of ethics. The authors assert that general codes of ethics, branch-specific codes of ethics, and agency-specific codes of ethics can exist side by side, but that general codes of ethics are preferred. The two authors have identified eight core values, reflected in EU legislation, government resolutions, and codes of ethics, which should be 'imposed' on all Member States, not just 'recognised' by them: supremacy of law/respect for law, impartiality/objectivity, transparency/openness, accountability, professionalism, duty of care/caution, reliability/trustworthiness/credibility, hospitality/ politeness/courtesy. It is incomprehensible that, for example, the principle of integrity, such an important moral principle, is not found in the list of values drawn up by the two, being categorised as 'implicit'. But Valentin Mureşan rightly criticises this approach: "The strategy outlined above by Timo Moilanen of the University of Helsinki seems to me... self-destructive. If encouraged in this way, codes of conduct will regulate not the ethical aspects of organisational life but the professional aspects of efficiency and quality assurance. It continues the older strategy of CSR and E&C of mimicking concern about ethical issues by focussing, in reality, on other types of issues: image, legal compliance, efficiency, professional issues, etc. These are, of course, also important issues. But by focussing on them we have totally forgotten the moral rules" (Mureşan, 2009, p. 106).

Codes of ethics have been introduced in organisations to guide practices and to guide professional relationships between employers and employees, with other internal and external stakeholders, including the market/sector/environment in which they operate. According to Constantinescu and Mureşan (2009, p. 76), a code of ethics should be a formal, independent, and enduring document that sets out *moral values, principles, rules, rights, and personal moral virtues*. Such a code functions as a guide and regulates the activities of managers and employees, but it is obligatory to be based on *a moral theory or framework*. The authors note that moral behaviour does not only imply mechanical obedience to rules; it implies responsibility, willingness, and full awareness in the impartial and equitable treatment of all persons involved in the organisation, including stakeholders, with the aim of *educating ethical virtues*. In addition, the code must expressly specify the *respect for the dignity, integrity, and autonomy of the person*. It must also have the vocation of developing what Korsgaard called 'moral identity' (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 132). However, along the lines of Moilanen and Salminen (2006), we are proposed to call a 'code of ethics' a construct that no longer revolves around a declaration of moral values and principles but is strictly limited to the enunciation of concrete regulations arising from or derived from those values. The failure to expressly specify ethical values and principles nullifies the explicitly aspirational dimension of the code, leaving only the (possibly) punitive dimension. On the other hand, in a code of ethics, moral duties defend certain rights (Mureşan, 2009, p. 104), but should not be confused with them.

Codes can be *ethical*, i.e. strongly aspirational, that anchor values and moral principles at the organisational level (if ethics management is integrity-focused) or *codes of rules and regulations* that specify morally desirable actions and disciplinary sanctions for violations (if ethics management is compliance-focused). Codes of ethics can also be purely educational if the focus is on individual conscience. In addition to codes of ethics or rules and regulations, there are also *codes of good practice*. They are aimed solely at professional efficiency and quality in a particular field and contain

specific rules that serve this sole purpose. They do not contain ethical values, principles, or rules to educate the virtues of those practising a particular profession.

The most widely used codes are *codes of conduct*, which have the merit of including the organisation's moral values as well as expectations of moral behaviour. However, there are also hybrid forms of codes, which are a mixture of codes of conduct and codes of good practice, which mention ethical rules and rules for efficiency. Therefore, well-drafted codes of conduct should provide clear rules on how the values set out in the value statement are to be applied in practice. To develop ethical codes and prevent noncompliance with the rules, qualified and well-trained personnel, able to apply ethical principles and standards to specific contexts, should also be employed in tourism, where possible, to create a strong ethical culture. To develop a strong ethical culture, tourism managers must consider several dimensions: maintaining and making explicit sets of moral principles and values within ethics codes, providing guidance for policy-making and decision-making procedures, and ensuring continuous ethics training. However, at least two dimensions are usually missing: a) continuing education on these issues is very limited or even non-existent, and b) moral principles are not explicitly formulated, and remain to be "intuited" by those who have not received a minimal ethical training. We are then left with policies and decision-making procedures - good ones, of course - but which stand outside the moral discourse proper. Thus, we end up practising ethics management on the periphery of morality, even though morality is its foundation. It is true that ethical standards in tourism guide (not 'force'), but knowing their essence can help those involved in the tourism industry or phenomenon to understand why formal rules and laws become binding and lead to sanctions. There is a huge gap between the amount of literature produced on current ethical issues in tourism (dominated to saturation point by environmental care, social justice, respect for local cultures, and sustainable investments for durable development) and the actual level of awareness of those involved (read: problem culture).

5. THE GLOBAL CODE OF ETHICS IN TOURISM: A CODE OF CONDUCT OR A CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE?

In 1980, the UNWTO brought to the forefront the recognition of tourism as an essential factor for global development through the *Declaration on World Tourism*. Eight years earlier, in Paris, UNESCO had adopted the *Convention on the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage* (UNESCO, 1972), which concerns tourism from the perspective of protecting and conserving the natural and cultural heritage of exceptional value. The study of ethics in tourism thus gained momentum in the early 1990s. International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (IATEST) in Paris proposed the creation of a commission to address ethical issues in tourism, and the Rio Earth Summit (1992) resulted in the Agenda 21 action plan (UNCED, 1992) to protect the environment at global, national, and local levels. In 1995, the *UN Global Charter for Sustainable Tourism* (Charter for Sustainable Tourism, 1995) jointly with UNESCO, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNWTO, and the Government of Spain. Previously, the *AITR Sustainable Travel Charter* had been adopted in Italy (1994). The first steps toward the Global Code of Ethics in Tourism were taken in Turkey in 1997 at the UNWTO General Assembly in Istanbul. It was only in 1998 that the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) developed the *Code of Conduct on the Prevention and Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Tourism*, and in 1999 it developed the *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism* for the interpretation, implementation, and evaluation of which the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE) was established in 2004. At the UNWTO General Assembly in September 2017, the *Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics A/RES/707(XXII)* (Thomsen, 2017) was approved, which creates duties and obligations for States Parties, including the obligation to reflect the ethical principles mentioned in their domestic legislation and relevant policies.

However, the *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism* (GCET) (UNWTO, 2020) is a *voluntary* code. It contains 9 general "principles" under the heading of "articles". Article 1 ("Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies") tells us about the ethical values "common to humanity", with an emphasis on tolerance, respect, and recognition of the diversity of sociocultural beliefs, traditions, and practices. Ethical values are mentioned as the foundation of 'responsible' and 'harmonious' tourism activities that, according to Article 1.2, should respect the characteristics, laws, practices and customs of the host countries. Article 1.3 indicates the relationship between good practices and ethical education of tourism professionals, whose hospitality services must respect the principle of autonomy. Although it is not explicitly formulated, respect for tourists (lifestyle, tastes, and expectations) refers to the principle. Article 1.4 is addressed to the public authorities, in which we identify an indirect expression of respect for the principle of vulnerability (the foreign tourist is *ab initio* vulnerable and needs protection and assistance), respect for autonomy (the tourist's right to adequate information), and the announcement of sanctions for those who intentionally engage in destructive tourism (severe penalties in accordance with the host country's legislation). We note that the recommendations in Article 1.4 implicitly circumscribe the principle of personal and social responsibility of the tourist. Article 1.5 specifies acts by tourists that are considered immoral and/or illegal: criminal acts, behaviour offensive to the local community or harmful to the environment, illicit trafficking in drugs or other prohibited substances, antiquities, protected species, etc. Article 1.6 sets out several moral obligations of the tourist with regard to correct information, but also contains a weak formulation of the principle of precaution (the tourist's conduct must minimise potential risks).

Article 2 ("Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfilment") discusses personal and collective "fulfilment" and "self-education" through tourism (as a recreational or cultural activity), in line with: the principle of tolerance (recognising diversity), the principle of respect for human dignity (promoting human rights, gender equality, prohibition of exploitation of human beings), the principle of vulnerability (especially children, seniors, disabled people, etc.) and social equity. It also encourages certain forms of tourism (religious tourism, wellness tourism and cultural tourism), as well as the study of the economic and socio-cultural importance of tourism. Articles 3 ("Tourism, a factor of sustainable development") and Article 4 ("Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and a contributor to its enhancement") refer to tourism as a "form of sustainable development" and address all stakeholders in its growth. Sustainable economic growth is fostered in particular by nature-based tourism and ecotourism, which are aimed at: preserving the environment, rationing precious resources, recycling waste, avoiding overtourism, protecting the natural heritage by limiting activities in protected areas, reinvesting funds to restore the cultural heritage, and avoiding the "standardisation" of handicrafts and folk traditions.

Article 5 ("Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities") brings into discussion the principle of social equity by affirming the right of local populations to share equitably the economic, social and cultural benefits that tourism generates, in particular through the creation of new jobs. Tourism is seen as a 'rare opportunity' in remote or poor areas where normal economic activities are declining. We also identify here recommendations of good practice for investors in tourism, who must comply with the regulations issued by the public authorities, carry out impact studies and provide correct and transparent information, especially in social dialogue with the populations affected. Article 6 ("Obligations of stakeholders in tourism development") sets out the moral duties of governments and public authorities (honest information, without unduly damaging tourism), the obligations of tourism professionals (clear information, compliance with contractual clauses and financial compensation), and the obligations of the media (promotion of 'moral' forms of tourism).

Articles 7 ("Right to tourism") and Article 8 ("Liberty of tourist movements") refer to the idea of inclusive, associative tourism, accessible to all, as well as to freedom of movement (without

unnecessary or discriminatory formalities), in line with the fundamental right to rest in Article 7.d of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* and Article 13 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. This introduces the controversial issue of the "right to tourism", which will be analysed later. Special attention is again paid to respect for the principle of tourist autonomy (confidentiality regarding the storage of personal data, correct information on fees and penalties, etc.). Article 9 ('Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry') affirms the guarantee of the fundamental rights of workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry under the supervision of national and local administrations (social protection, recognised status, minimum legal or administrative restrictions, etc.), while respecting the principle of solidarity. Finally, Article 10 ("Implementation of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism") discusses the need for cooperation between the public and private sectors in putting into practice and monitoring the application of the "principles" contained in the GCET.

We note, therefore, that the GCET is a hybrid between a code of conduct and a code of good practice, containing superficial references to (some) ethical values, but also to values relating to efficiency. It is not a code of ethics as such, as it does not make a clear reference to moral values and principles, in the sense that they can only be understood by someone who has a solid ethical background. Second, ethical standards are confused with rights. Third, it is not clear whether the GCET has an aspirational or a compliance-based profile, since it is voluntary in nature, but creates, as we have seen, obligations and duties. The GCET was conceived precisely with the intention of clarifying the values, ethical principles, and good practices that should guide the moral conduct of actors or organisations in tourism. However, its content and effectiveness have not received the expected approval, with numerous criticisms expressed by specialists in various fields that intersect with tourism. Objections have sometimes focused on the very relevance of establishing such a 'global' code aimed at 'practising' ethics in the tourism industry or 'phenomenon'. Fennel (2006) deplored the nonexistence of his moral theoretical framework, openly expressing scepticism about the actual possibility of such a project due to the unavoidable plurality of themes. Xia Zan-Cai (2007), for his part, wryly remarks that it is totally unrealistic to expect that a document prepared in less than a year (paradoxically!) unanimously voted on could successfully unravel the problems of global tourism.

There are also authors who complain about the inability of the GCET to provide adequate guiding principles for sustainable tourism, considering the endless panoply of economic, social, cultural and environmental issues that tourism itself generates. Other authors have condemned the document's overt anthropocentrism: Fennel considers that animal welfare issues are completely ignored; Queirós (2019) also considers it ethnocentric, as it promotes, in a Benthamian key, the image of a hedonistic tourist, intoxicated by the idea of individual freedom and self-pleasure in an environment that he has 'consumed' to the point of near dissolution. The criticisms formulated, from a philosophical or legal perspective, amend the incorrect way in which the GCET has introduced and overemphasised the theme of the 'right' to tourism. Xia Zan-Cai (2007, p. 48), for example, considers the construction of the GCET on the basis of fundamental human rights to be utterly uninspired, as it not only inadmissibly mixes individual rights and freedoms with collective rights and freedoms, but also indisputably favours rights over the moral obligations that tourists and stakeholders should have. Jordi Gascón (2019, pp. 6-7) is baffled that, in the face of all kinds of evidence pleading for an immediate decrease in tourism, the GCET is promoting tourism as a fundamental human "right" without explaining its choice, only to skilfully evade denouncing concrete situations in which tourism causes gentrification of the population, increased inflation, or impoverishment. From this point of view, Quetzil Castañeda (2012, pp. 48-49) also demonstrates that the GCET, which emerged because of a massive process of "ethicization" of tourism after 1990, contains such significant rhetorical and textual slippages that the responsibilities of tourists end up becoming rights, which, in turn, end up legalising and imposing the neoliberal *laissez-faire* expansion of tourism development. As far as we are concerned, we can understand the code's creators' choice of the title 'rights'. In the absence of a

universal code of ethics and under the pressure to avoid cultural relativism, the concept of "right" takes on an axiomatic hypernorm status: "Hypernorms are principles so fundamental that, by definition, they serve to evaluate lower-order norms, reaching to the root of what is ethical for humanity. They represent norms by which all others are to be judged." (Scherer, 2015, p. 491). The most important observation is that the GCET cannot constitute a model for the elaboration of any particular code of ethics in tourism, limiting itself to the explanation of some rights and obligations for the categories involved (the list is not complete here either, the category of tourists being almost not even mentioned), as well as some directions towards which ethical research in tourism should aim. The general impression that emerges from reading the document is that juxtaposing the idea of a 'right to tourism' (mass tourism being predominant) and the idea of 'sustainable tourism' is somewhat oxymoronic.

6. CONCLUSIONS

So far, the configuration of a practical ethics of tourism, at least at the level of academic discourse, is still pending, although significant case studies have been conducted that can be categorised as applied business ethics. Nor has the rather abundant literature, which has attempted to clarify for practitioners the moral prescriptions in existing charters, guidelines, or codes of conduct, fully articulated normative tourism ethics, i.e., to coherently answer the question: "What should we do and how should we behave" to be sure that our actions are moral? This means having recourse to certain ethical standards, i.e., values and principles, to guide our actions and behaviour. At the organisational level, it is the management of ethics that institutionalises ethics in the strongest sense, in particular, by the constitution of ethical codes. These should not only set ethical standards, but also act as a catalyst which, together with common morality, should lead to the actual practice of virtues, to the real shaping of a moral identity of the person who relates to it. As many ethical codes of ethics in organisations are composed, their central components, i.e. values and principles, are either incorrectly or incompletely specified, or misidentified with professional norms of efficiency. The CGET cannot be, because of its 'global' character, the prototype for codes of ethics in the tourism industry.

On the other hand, the lack of ethical culture and the absence of a professional's expertise in philosophical ethics determine that these codes, usually poorly formulated, tick only the 'on-paper' realisation under the 'integrity system'. In tourism, however, we find "organisations" with two, perhaps three employees. Beyond the importance of complying with legislation and environmental plans or labels, in this case, it is very important to look at the morals of individuals, the way their values and principles are put to work. Much has been written about principles, especially in the context of globalisation. Cultural diversity has made us aware of the plurality of moralities and sometimes their contrasting character; historical experience has shown us that principles and values can be changeable; complicated social and individual circumstances often remind us that we cannot always resolve the conflict of values. But nobody doubts the need to respect the essence of the human being. As in morality, there are *no prima facie* principles, all of them being important, we nevertheless believe that four principles are of particular relevance to the field of tourism: the principle of human dignity, the principle of socioeconomic and moral integrity, the principle of reciprocity, and the principle of precaution.

In our view, there cannot be upright societies or organisations without *upright people*. The "moral" is the real person, whether an investor, manager, employee, arriving tourist, or host. But internalising the principles and practising the virtues means going beyond the logic of the "office" or the logic of "home", and establishing an individual moral identity, i.e. recognising the humanity in "others" by valuing the humanity in ourselves.

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