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PROXIMITY TOURISM WITHIN SOCIAL SOLIDARITY  
ECONOMY: SPANISH EXPERIENCES\*

*Premise. SSE potential and proximity tourism values are key to develop in-context adequate tourism under fair and sustainable guiding principles.* – Proximity tourism has gained momentum with the COVID-19 pandemic (Romagosa, 2020). Nevertheless, proximity has always been a part of tourism and leisure experiences, whether the most visited destinations are those located near home or because the tourist experience includes everyday practices and involves a certain degree of familiarity. For rural regions located near densely populated urban areas, proximity tourism seems to be an opportunity to consolidate tourism flows in undertourism contexts. For urban areas, it represents an opportunity to strengthen the links between people and their cities in a global reality. It can work as a tool to reinforce resilient and rooted local communities. In both cases, proximity tourism has also raised some challenges.

Quoting Kalisch & Cole, social and solidarity economy (SSE) is «an umbrella term for a non-patriarchal alternative to neoliberal capitalism, embracing values of humanism, ethics, democracy, diversity, solidarity, inclusiveness, equality and justice» (2023, p. 2702). It contributes significantly to the European economy with 13M jobs and 6-8% of EU's GDP. In Spain it is responsible for 10% of the GDP and 12,5% of the employment, 80% of it being indefinite contracts (CEPES, 2020). With the RD 2/2020 (12 January), the Spanish Ministry of Labor became the Ministry of Labor and Social Economy and promoting SSE was one of the priorities of the Spanish presidency of the EU in 2023. It can be argued that SSE is important for Spain in economic and political terms. However, despite the importance of tourism in this country (around 12% of the GDP), SSE is still exceptional in this sector.

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This paper focuses on proximity tourism and SSE by exploring experiences and networks that promote SSE within the tourism industry in several regions in Spain and encourage SSE's stakeholders to undertake tourism ventures. The aim is to provide visibility to tourism initiatives based on SSE principles and to reflect on the values provided by proximity tourism to these initiatives and to tourism in general in a context of socioecological transition.

*Introducing proximity tourism.* – Tourism is a complex issue. UNWTO defines it as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon rather than as an economic activity since it has become a cultural practice, and leisure mobility a question of social status (Cousin & Réau 2016). It is at the same time driver and concerned party of the time-space compression, strengthening the links between geographically distant places and people and contributing to the distortion in the way distances and the usual environment are perceived. In this context, *proximity* is not exclusively a spatial concept, but it can be understood as a relative notion where emotions, perceptions, familiarity and culture intertwine in the tourism experience (Jeuring, Diaz-Soria, 2018).

By decoupling travel and distance, proximity tourism has emerged as a legitimate notion in a globalized context. Because of *proximity*'s relative nature, proximity tourism can refer to a myriad of practices. In 2015, the French Tourism Agency conducted one of the few official studies specifically focused on this tourism approach (Atout France, 2015). This report shows that proximity tourists understand these practices from a multidimensional perspective: spatial, temporal, affective, cultural & identity. In this study, proximity tourism is essentially associated with positive values. From the perspective of tourism professionals, proximity tourism is seen as a market strategy, especially for destinations close to a main outbound region. For the administration and social actors, this tourism approach facilitates accessibility to the tourism practice and is strategic to reduce the environmental footprint of the tourism sector. This is consistent with the National Commitment for Responsible Tourism engaged by the administration in Catalonia (Spain) in 2023 (Gencat, 2023). From the visitors' perspective, proximity tourism represents an opportunity to (re)discover their own regions and spend quality time with their relatives and friends (Atout France, 2015). Moreover, visitors highlight the experiential nature of this approach and the added value of supporting the local economy.

The multidimensional nature of proximity tourism and the main concepts associated with this approach are summarized in Table 1. The associated concepts can connect with more than one dimension. In this complexity, we understand proximity tourism as an approach on the tourism phenomenon with specific ecological, socio-economic and cultural values. In other words, it promotes travelling close to home, rediscovering and engaging with familiar places and reinforcing local economies, communities, cultures and natures.

Table 1 – *Proximity tourism dimensions and connected concepts*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Examples of associated concepts</b>
<b>Spatial</b>	Spatial distance measured in km/miles	Excursions, Staycation, Nearcation, Slow Tourism, Agritourism, Inland / Rural tourism, Residential Tourism
<b>Familiar</b>	Based on visitor’s perception and previous experiences	Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR), Visiting Home & Familiar Places (VHFP), Residential Tourism
<b>Temporal</b>	Measured in time (hours)	City Breaks (by plane) Same concepts as spatial dimension (land transport-based/slow travel)
<b>Cultural</b>	Depends on cultural background (language, identity, etc.)	Ancestry Tourism, Memorial Tourism
<b>Ecological</b>	Bottom-up tourism development (based on endogenous agents and resources)	Local Tourism, Responsible Tourism, Community Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Ecotourism

Source: Own elaboration

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, proximity tourism was a rare concept, mostly used in terms of ecological trends within tourism and alternatives to an unsustainable status quo (Prats, and others, 2017). The mobility restrictions resulting from the responses to the pandemic interrupted the global tourism flows. In this context, proximity tourism became a temporary solution for the sector in times of economic crisis (Cañada, 2020). It was also one of the ideas involved in the process to rethink tourism with the aim of increasing resilience for destinations in times of climate and social crisis (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2023).

The pandemic situation made it clear that proximity tourism is not innocuous. Developed under capitalist basis, it generates more of the same: overtourism, conflicts in the use of resources and public spaces, commodification of the commons, banalization of the heritage and the local economies, etc. Cañada (2020) argues that proximity tourism is in fact a contested plural (proximity tourisms) where opposed interests clash. Following this idea, it is argued that proximity tourism can only be transformative if it is developed within a postcapitalist pathway (Fletcher, and others, 2023).

Rantala (2020) go even further with a post-anthropocentric and feminist approach on proximity tourism. They argue that it is not enough to understand the positions and attitudes of human beings towards proximity tourism, but it is necessary to adopt a more holistic perspective that would include proximate natures. They rely on the feminist materialist concepts of rhythmicity, vitality and care to explore the complexity and values of proximity. Their approach is consistent with recent ideas such as *the local turn in tourism* (Higgins-Desbiolles, Bigby, 2022) that places the local communities (with their human and non-human members) at the center of tourism development processes, or the convivial conservation (Büscher, Fletcher, 2019), that revindicate an evolution from saving nature to celebrating human and non-human nature. In this paradigm, proximity tourism is featured as a tool for engaged visitation and everyday *ecologism* (Müller, Blázquez-Salom, 2023) that would lead to a scenario of conviviality where human beings do not act separated from nature, but fully realize their embedment and interdependence within it. This argument is also consistent with the research on the socioecological transition, that «seeks to move from a contemporary situation marked by unsustainable trajectories to societies on a state characterized by sustainability and equity, with respect to present and future generations» (Renouard and others, 2020, p. 22).

*SSE: A grounded and fair economy where tourism is (almost) absent.* – The social and solidarity economy (SSE) is a hybrid concept resulting from joining the concepts of Social Economy and Solidarity Economy. While social economy is a well-documented and institutionalized system based on specific juridic forms like cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations, and social enterprises, solidarity economy is a more abstract notion with deeper and more inclusive theoretical significance that makes

it a powerful tool for political and social transformation (Pérez de Mendiguren, Etxezarreta, 2015). These two currents result in the idea of SSE as an alternative to capitalism (Coraggio, 2011).

In this hybrid concept, the emphasis on the solidarity dimension addresses some of the social economy's contradictions and limitations (Laville, 2013). This way, the SSE challenges the traditional concept of the market as an autonomous entity, fully embedding the economy within the society (Pérez de Mendiguren, Etxezarreta, 2015). The solidarity economy is grounded on a specific place and society and must answer to their needs. Moreover, SSE is a complex system that hybridizes commercial and non-commercial logics, objecting to the idea that everything is subject to commodification.

Despite the relevance of SSE principles and the weight of tourism as a global activity, there seems to be a gap between the tourism phenomenon and the SSE approach in both academic literature and reality. Undoubtedly, the most direct connection lies in the social tourism policies. Social tourism arises from public strategies that aim at guaranteeing the access to tourism and leisure to vulnerable populations (young, senior, persons with disabilities, people in a situation of socioeconomic exclusion, etc.). According to the International Social Tourism Organization (ISTO), social tourism places the people at the center of the action, the professionals involved provide tourism in the most inclusive possible way, and there is public participation, often in terms of funding. A diversity of experiences can be found all around the world (Bélanger, Jolin, 2011; Schenkel, Vilela de Almeida, 2020). Social tourism is clearly an SSE strategy, although it only covers a very reduced part of the tourism phenomenon. To fully take advantage of the transformative potential of SSE, the transformation should concern tourism in all its forms, since it is a key phenomenon at the global and regional scales (Izcara, Valls, 2024).

Beyond social tourism, SSE principles can be found in alternative tourism forms, especially on community-based tourism (CBT). Giampiccoli & Saayman define CBT as «a form of tourism development that can counteract the forces of neoliberalism and is more inclined to facilitate socially just, equitable and redistributive (of power/resources/benefits) tourism development» (2014, p. 1673). Although these authors identify risks for CBT of reconceptualizing to become more «neoliberal-friendly» (*ibidem*, p. 1674), it is obvious that SSE and CBT share similar guiding principles (Conti, Antunes, 2020). Despite these similarities, SSE and CBT develop

separately and are concerned by different policies (*ibidem*). It can be argued that more synergies are needed to fully use SSE potential to develop fairer and more adequate tourism.

In this sense, Mosedale (2011) reflects on Ying & Zhou's work (2007) to illustrate forms of tourism «organized around an ethic of solidarity, as some of the labor surplus is distributed to individuals that are not engaged in the production process» (Mosedale, 2011, p. 199). The conditions of the participation of the different members of a community, or the community itself, on the tourism development from a bottom-up approach has been addressed more recently by Bigby (2022), providing inspiring examples on how tourism can be organized to empower local communities. This idea is consistent with the SSE principle of placing people (or life, if we adopt a post-anthropocentric approach) at the center of economic (and, in our case, tourism) development processes.

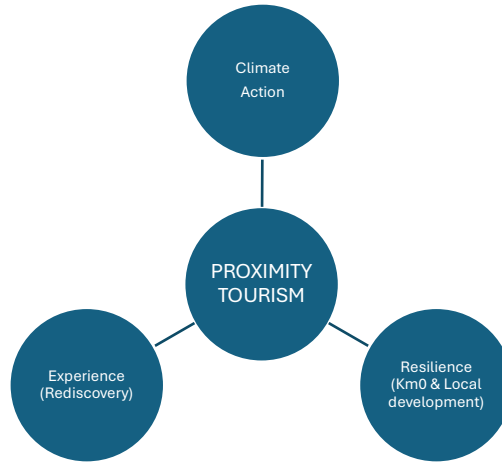
Kalisch & Cole (2023) remind us that the UN promotes SSE as a path towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included in the UN2030 Agenda, without challenging the neoliberal capitalist growth paradigm in which sustainable development is embedded. They review several alternative economic paradigms to identify their transformative potential for the tourism system. They highlight SSE values of collective action and mobilization, decent work, the importance of trade unions and workers ownership, as well as social entrepreneurship, purpose economy and cooperatives. They believe that SSE can preciously contribute to a human rights-based economy, where *care* would be the core concept, and contribute to the transformation of tourism into a driver for justice-based economies and societies. Our two case studies illustrate this position.

*Methodology.* – There is consensus in the reviewed literature that further studies are needed to explore in-depth the opportunities that SSE represents for tourism (Edaoudi and others, 2021; Izcara, Valls, 2024). We aim at addressing this gap by providing a critical understanding of proximity tourism as a tool for regional development consistent with recent paradigms, such as the aforementioned local turn in tourism or the socioecological transition (Laurent, Pochet, 2015), in which tourism, because of its global nature and cultural consolidation, plays an important role.

The literature review and the works conducted by this research team

since 2011 in Spain have resulted in the Proximity Tourism Values Modelling (PTVM) (Fig. 1), an analytical framework that emphasizes proximity tourism’s geographical values. PTVM is structured in three axes: proximity tourism as a tool for 1) climate action, 2) experience, and 3) resilience. It can be adapted to specific places and realities.

Fig. 1 – *Proximity tourism values model (PTVM)*



Source: Own elaboration

Our case study focuses on two networks that provide online tools and marketplaces for agents involved in SSE and tourism in Spain: la Xarxa (LX) and El Camino ESS (EC). LX (<https://laxarxaethnic.org/>) is an initiative created in 2021 by Aethnic, an association specialized in responsible and ethic tourism. LX involves more than 30 experiences offered by SSE tourism professionals located all around Catalonia (Fig. 2).

EC (<https://elcaminoess.com/>) was created in 2023 by members of different cooperatives and movements: L’Olivera (Catalonia), Reas Aragón, El Colletero (La Rioja), Carrión de los Condes Rural Development Center (Castilla y León), and Reas Galicia. It benefits from Next Generation funding and agglutinates more than 100 experiences in five autonomous communities in Northern Spain (Fig. 3). Both initiatives are relevant to our study because they provide the opportunity to analyze diverse experiences and apply PTVM to different geographical areas. The main differences between them are their size and geographical scope. Moreover, EC is organized horizontally, while LX relies on a steering committee.

Fig. 2 – Map of family experiences (La Xarxa)



Source: La Xarxa (#XW)

Fig. 3 – Map of experiences included in El Camino ESS



Source: El Camino ESS (2024)



Data has been collected from participant observation and informal interviews conducted on nine events organized by SSE organizations between 2022 and 2024 (Table 2). These events have been chosen because they were closely related with the studied networks: LX and EC.

Table 2. – *Observed events, attendance and codes*

Code	Event	Attendance (persons)
#E1	Responsible Tourism Seminar (LX). In-person, Barcelona, 06/10/22 (6 hours)	50+
#E2	Training: “Tourism: challenges & trends-Part 1” (EC). Online, 21/09/23 (1.5 hours)	6
#E3	Network’s dynamization session (EC/LX). Online, 22/09/2023 (1.5 hours)	7
#E4	Training: “Tourism: challenges & trends-Part 2” (EC). Online, 26/09/23 (1.5 hours)	5
#E5	Training: “Tourism & SSE: a transformative proposal-Part 1” (EC). Online, 26/09/23 (1.5 hours)	6
#E6	Training: “Tourism & SSE: a transformative proposal-Part 2” (EC). Online, 28/09/23 (1.5 hours)	4
#E7	“Sustainable Tourism & SSE” workshop (EC/LX). In-person, Pina de Ebro, 24/10/23 (4 hours)	20+
#E8	Official presentation of El Camino ESS (EC). Hybrid, Allariz/online, 26/01/24 (3 hours)	50+
#E9	XXIX Meeting SSE Reas Aragón. Round table on sustainable tourism (EC). Hybrid, Zaragoza/online, 4/06/24 (1.5 hours)	30+

Source: Own elaboration. Green: In-person; Grey: Online; Blue: Hybrid

Participant observation is a qualitative method used in human geography in which the researcher aims at becoming as close to the spatial phenomenon being studied as possible (Laurier, 2010) to capture the actions, reactions and attitudes of people and environmental aspects of the events by becoming a subject in their own research, a player in the studied object. The events observed in this study belong to three categories: in-person,

online events and hybrid. Both networks have a regional scope and agglutinate initiatives from urban and rural areas, including mountainous areas with accessibility issues. Therefore, they rely on online tools to organize themselves, to share content, to meet, to promote participation within the network. That is why most of the events are online or hybrid. The in-person and hybrid events (#E1, #E7, #E8, #E9) were special gatherings for each of the networks where their members were invited to strengthen personal relations and encourage friendship.

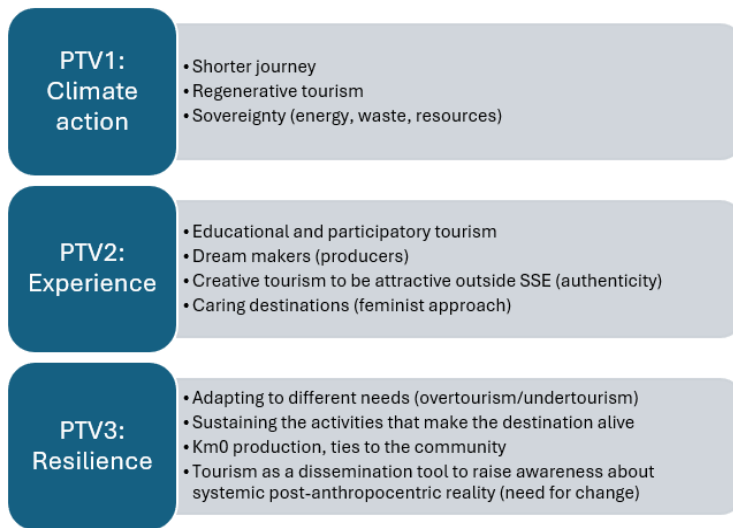
For EC, this is one of the differentiation key features of their project, should not be forgotten that SSE promotes reciprocity and intercooperation rather than competition. Defining themselves as a group of friends (#E8) instead of competitors concretize these principles. Nevertheless, for practical and inclusive reasons, most of the events are held online. Therefore, to observe this phenomenon it is unavoidable to attend online events and observe the dynamics and messages exchanged in these virtual meetings. It is a methodological challenge that has required adapting the participant observation method, but it was a necessary step to achieve the goals of this research.

The author has actively participated in all the observed events with different intensity degrees: from mere attendant to guest speaker, or even trainer, member of a round table or workshop's facilitator. These positions have provided access to other participants' contributions and informal conversations (Andriotis, 2009).

The notes taken in all this process have been transcribed and the information retrieved from LX (#XW) and EC (#CW) websites downloaded to undergone thematic analysis, a qualitative method based on the definition of themes or codes that facilitate the obtention of relevant and organized results (Naeem et al., 2023). For this publication, four main themes have been considered for coding (based on PTVM's axes, Fig. 1): "Climate action", "Rediscovery and engagement", "Resilience" and "Other". Coding was conducted in two rounds: first, an automatic search to identify these concepts; second, a manual coding process to filter only meaningful fragments. This process resulted in 97 fragments finally considered for the results. The verbatim used in this paper has been collected and analyzed in the original language (Catalan, Galician or Spanish) and translated into English by the author.

*Proximity tourism values for SSE tourism initiatives.* – Our results are summarized in Fig. 4. They are not homogenous in all the PTVM axes. Although climate action is the theoretical entry to proximity tourism –since it promotes closer destinations, slow mobility and it might be an option in times of petrol-apocalypse (Callot, 2013)–, this first analytical axis (PTV1) is not the most explicitly mentioned in our observations.

Fig. 4. – *PTVM applied to LX and EC networks*



Source: Own elaboration

Proximity tourism is more often associated with the chance to rediscover and connect with places (PTV2: experience) and to reinforce resilience (PTV3). This third axis revolve basically around the promotion of local products (#E1, #E5, #E7, #E8, #XW), connecting initiatives or «network weaving, because you don't often meet those people near you» (#E8), and repopulating rural areas (#E4, #E9, #CW): «Is tourism going to have the capacity to repopulate villages? That is the question » (#E8).

The environmental values of proximity tourism (PTV1) appear in our results related to regenerative tourism (#E3), energetic transition and waste issues (#E4). Regenerative tourism is LX's paradigm. They explain their project as an ensemble of initiatives aiming at improving the territories' quality of life and ecological conditions, distancing their approach from the concept of *sustainable tourism*, since they believe that “sustaining”

is not enough. The energetic transition towards renewable energies (especially solar) and responsible waste and resources management (reduction, reuse, shared use) are mentioned as sustainable strategies that these initiatives practice, promote or have joined in their communities (#E1, #E4, #E8). These actions rely on proximity as a value for sovereignty (energy, food) and as a requirement to articulate local tools of waste and resources management.

Moreover, proximity tourism is perceived as valuable since it is considered as less pollutant because it avoids flying, but our results show that the initiatives, especially those in rural areas where public transportation is missing, struggle with the contradiction of being dependent on visitors coming by car. Travelling by car is undoubtedly the first option for proximity tourists on regional trips, especially travelling to rural or natural areas (Gencat, 2023), although public strategies aligned with the European Green Deal or UN2030 SDGs aim at promoting active mobility (hiking, cycling) and train travel (*ibid.*). One of the solutions discussed in the observed events has been to promote tourism consumption among those visitors that are already in the area (residents, relatives, people involved in projects in the region, etc.) (#E7, E8, #E9). Others mentioned strategies like car sharing or specializing in groups that would travel by bus. These measures are consistent with the degrowth paradigm. They illustrate the idea that destinations in undertourism can grow but they still need to control this growth to guarantee an adequate development (Fletcher and others, 2019).

The results obtained in relation to rediscovery and engagement (PTV2) highlight the experiential nature of these tourism initiatives. It has been noted that «travelling actively (doing things) and not only in a passive way (seeing things)» (#E8) means a cultural shift and contributes to the transition in tourism. Following with this idea, the analyzed initiatives provide «educational content, [they activate] educational and social processes» (#E8) and art plays a role in many of them (#E6). LX adopts a creative method in the design of their initiatives (#XW), co-creating meaningful experiences (not products), with what they call the *dream makers* (#E7), the local actors that make «an endogenous tourism connected to already existing activities» possible (#E1, #E9).

EC searches for this same approach (#E3) because they realize that they must provide attractive experiences for tourists that otherwise would consume outside of the SSE, «we must be creative» (#E8). To do this,

they design «tourism experiences based on real lives and resilient territories» (#E8). One of EC's founders, a rural initiative created in 2000 that offers «*agrotransformative* experiences with biocultural content» (#CW) nuances that *experiential* does not mean «playing theater» (#E9). Their visitors stay at a «caring community for people and everything surrounding us» (#E9), which aligns with the feminist approach of proximity tourism developed by Rantala et al. (2020).

In urban areas in situation of overtourism, even the most educational tourism experiences organized under SSE guiding principles can be rejected by part of the communities (#E1) since their priority is quantitative degrowth (Izcara, Valls, 2024). In rural areas, they understand that any tourism experience that they design is dependent on the conditions of rural life itself: «first, we build the territories, then tourism can come to visit this rurality (it will be difficult to have tourism without people living and producing it)» (#E8). This concern is connected to the resilience dimension on PTVM (PTV3).

PTV3 focuses on the territorial strengths that make a territory able to deal with crises and changes (Chien-yu, Chin-cheng, 2016). It has been argued that SSE companies are more resilient because they are embedded in their local contexts and their activities respond to real needs (#E1, #E8). Some members of the analyzed networks declare to develop their initiatives «with the local population, to promote the local consumption, as well as the self-esteem and the ties to the community» (#5). The production and promotion of local products is indeed one of the key aspects of SSE tourism ventures. This is undoubtedly the most highlighted value, not only for the sales but especially for the intercooperation, that is the combination of efforts to provide authentic and high-quality experiences (E1, #E7). Following previous ideas, tourism under the principles of SSE means relying on *dream makers*, on local actors that produce at the destination, regardless of the tourism activity. From the SSE perspective, tourism is an additional opportunity, but it should not threaten the activities that are essential to sustain life in these territories (#E1, #CW). If anything, its function is to broadcast the SSE model (#E8).

These agents perceive themselves beyond embedment. They feel interdependent with others in a broad sense: their community, nature, humanity (#E4, #E8). They realize they are part of a metabolism (Pauliuk & Hertwich, 2015) in which proximity is one of the forces. This is consistent

with convivial conservation (Büscher & Fletcher, 2019) and the global localization movement (Norberg-Hodge, 2020). With their projects, these entrepreneurs aim at transmitting this awareness through memorable, educational experiences (#E8). However, they admit that this is not easy. Some have tried and failed and shut down their tourism branch because it was not transformative enough:

A participant explains that her restaurant was successful in terms of incomes, but visitors did not seem to be learning. Her initiative was not achieving its educational goal. Moreover, they were creating competition, causing harm to the local bar, held by a Romanian girl. That was not what they wanted, so they closed the restaurant and continued with other activities (#E8).

SSE agents face a number of problems when developing tourism: to compete with the neoliberal market, to provide affordable and at the same time high-quality products based on decent jobs, to conciliate working and personal life in a seasonal sector based on other people's free time, to maintain the productive activities and their lifestyles and identities, etc. However, the greatest struggle they face are the unavoidable contradictions between what they do and what the context allows them to do. In the observed events, this has led to deep debates without unanimous agreement. Sometimes participants decided that going step-by-step and slowly changing practices and consumption patterns is already a positive outcome and the beginning of a societal and economic transformation (#E7). Some other times, they highlighted their success in having obtained public funding to develop this kind of networks and initiatives. «This could be considered a first victory» (#E8). Some other times, someone would just say: «we don't need to die from coherence», meaning that they should try their best, but recognizing that it will be impossible to be fully consistent (#E9).

*SSE networks in tourism: a positive step in the socioecological transition.* – Both LX and EC serve as meeting points for local agents, public organizations, companies, associations, SSE initiatives and the society to give visibility to «experiences that inspire, educate, impact and promote the common good» (#XW). Both entities explicitly state that responsible and sustaina-

ble tourism is key to make SSE grow. They also agree on SSE's transformative effects: «SSE is a fundamental tool because it goes beyond sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism is theoretical, SSE is pragmatic» (#E8). Both networks argue that tourism, organized from SSE, represents a step forward in the socioecological transition (#E1, #CW). They follow the path initiated by previous experiences like TurismESS (#E1).

While these networks' goals could be classified as *deep transitions in tourism* (Magnusson and others, 2024) –and in the socioeconomic system in general since they aim at generalizing an economic model where people and life are located at the center of all processes–, they are in fact performing *transitions in practice* (*ibidem*), a micro-level approach that shows that other methods and solutions, more resilient and more inclusive, are possible. They are showing the way in this transition, step-by-step, with proximity as one of the main values. In words of one of the entrepreneurs, «we are the economy, the tourism, the others should bear the labels of being non-social and non-solidarity economy, irresponsible and unsustainable tourism» (#E8).

*Conclusions.* – These pages have delved into the SSE worldview in which the main principle is that people (and life) must lie at the center of any development process or activity. The opportunities of this approach for tourism in a context of socioecological transition have been reviewed and the values of proximity tourism have been explored in the cases of two networks of SSE tourism initiatives: La Xarxa and El Camino ESS, both in Spain.

Proximity Tourism Values Modelling (PTVM) unfolds in three analytical axes: climate action, experience and resilience. Even though the proximity tourism concept has developed simultaneously to the climate crisis, and it is defined by most authors in spatial terms, this is not the most highlighted dimension in the studied cases. Our results show that the experiential nature of SSE-based tourism, its educational potential, its contribution to generating engagement and broadcasting SSE values are perceived as the most meaningful outputs of developing proximity tourism. The proximity experience-based tourism strengthens the connections between visitors and places, but also among local agents. This is one of the main values identified in our research and belongs to the third dimension, resilience, in which proximity is a key factor. The results regarding resilience and local development go from micro-level to macro-level approaches: from the central role

of km0 production to the awareness of belonging to an interconnected system and using tourism as a tool to raise awareness.

This work provides new insights on how proximity tourism unfolds in real practices and deepens on the scope, the opportunities and contradictions of SSE tourism initiatives developed in both urban and rural areas. In addition, our literature review on SSE and tourism contributes to updating the theoretical corpus about this topic. There are some limitations in this research, like its exclusively qualitative approach, which limits the analyzed data and thus the results. Nevertheless, we expect that it might be an exciting contribution for those academic and professionals interested in tourism as a transformative tool or searching for a better understanding of the SSE as an alternative fairer greener path for our societies in times of much needed change.

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*Keywords.* – Experiential Tourism, Network, Socioecological Transition

*Turismo di prossimità ed economia sociale e solidale: esperienze spagnole.* – Il turismo di prossimità ha guadagnato terreno dall’inizio della pandemia di Covid-19. Tuttavia, questa espressione era già stata sviluppata in precedenza, come un’esperienza di viaggio e di svago più ecologica e significativa in un contesto di compressione dello spazio-tempo e di emergenza climatica. Inoltre, la prossimità è molto apprezzata nell’economia sociale e solidale (ESS), sebbene il turismo debba ancora essere generalizzato secondo i principi dell’ESS. Questo articolo analizza le iniziative sviluppate e promosse all’interno di due reti turistiche dell’ESS in Spagna, El Camino ESS e La Xarxa. L’obiettivo è di far riflettere sul turismo di prossimità come strumento per lo sviluppo locale nella transizione socio-ecologica.

*Keywords.* – Turismo esperienziale, Rete, Transizione socio-ecologica

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