

Master Thesis in Development Studies

SIMV-2021

Word count: 21658



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# **Towards tourism sustainability.**

The case of Nusa Lembongan, Indonesia

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## **Abstract**

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. Due to that, many developing world's regions with limited economic activity adapt tourism as a development strategy. The point of departure is a critical consideration why tourism, while producing such immense economic benefits, frequently also perpetuates already existing socio-economic, cultural, and environmental dysfunctions. This thesis explores the phenomenon of mass tourism in a small Indonesian island, Nusa Lembongan. The island of which economy is almost entirely reliant on revenues from the tourism industry. This case study undertakes a bottom-up approach to shed light on insider perspectives about the local reality and get to know alternative suggestions about tourism development on the island. By conducting semi-structured interviews, the study analyses current tourism practices on the island seen through the lenses of the residents and people involved in the tourism industry and environmental protection. The data were analyzed in light of the degrowth framework, which is believed to have the potential to supplement the local approach to sustainable tourism development. The results suggest that the most significant barrier to sustainable tourism locally is the growth-oriented approach to tourism development which prioritizes economic growth over all the other values of sustainable tourism development. The study offers locally-based insights on how to overcome the barriers to sustainability.

**Keywords:** development, sustainable tourism, mass tourism, Nusa Lembongan, Indonesia

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## **List of Abbreviations**

LLDCs	Landlocked Developing Countries
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LC	Lembongan Cleaning
ZPL	Zero Plastic Lembongan
UNWTO	The United Nation World Tourism Organization
ITF	Indonesian Throughflow

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# 1.Introduction

## 1.1 Background

*“Tourism can be a force for good in the world, playing a part in protecting our planet and its biodiversity, and celebrating what makes us human: from discovering new places and cultures to connecting with new people and experiences.” (António Guterres, UNWTO 2020)*

In the contemporary world, tourism has become a widespread social activity and is one of the largest and most dynamically growing economic sectors globally (UNWTO 2017: 2). Over the past six decades, the expansion and diversification of tourism have been almost uninterrupted (UNWTO 2017: 2). According to The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), since 1950, international tourist arrivals have increased from 25 million globally to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, and 1,235 million in 2016 (UNWTO 2017: 2). In 2019 the tourism sector accounted for 10,3 percent of the world’s GDP (WTTC 2020). While the economic potential of the tourism industry is undoubted, both for developed and developing countries, there is an ongoing debate regarding its sustainability (Mika 2015; Andriotis 2018; Cole and Browne 2015; Howe 2005).

António Guterres (2020), the UN Secretary-General, presents the vision of tourism as an integral part of sustainable development, harmonizing the relationships between environmental, social, cultural, and economic values. In his definition, tourism can make the world a better place by becoming a tool in raising socio-economic, cultural, and environmental opportunities and advancement without compromising the tourism experiences.

However, so far, the reality of tourism is different. The impact of the global tourism industry on climate is destructive, and that is difficult to change. The continuous expansion of the worldwide tourism industry, as well as rapidly increasing global demand for tourism consumption, puts enormous stress on the environment, especially in the world’s most favorable tourist destinations and most vulnerable world’s regions, such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), e.x. Nusa Lembongan (Chowdhury 2002). With the number of international tourist arrivals expected to increase to 1.8 billion by the year 2030 (UNWTO 2011),

sustainability of tourism development has become an urgent matter to protect the natural environment from the harmful effects of the global tourism industry. It is also significant to more inclusive socio-economic development, especially for the most vulnerable countries.

The inspiration for this project arrived from my personal experience when I first visited Nusa Lembongan (Province of Bali) in 2018. From a Northern European tourist perspective who has never before traveled to Southeast Asia, my experiences during that journey were thoroughly unusual. Three aspects that I encountered mainly stuck in my memory—first, the beauty of a natural environment. I was amazed by the exotic nature, greenery landscapes, rice terraces, spectacular ocean tides, monkeys on the streets, manta rays in the ocean. Second, I genuinely admired Balinese cultural heritage and religious commitment. It was inspiring to explore Indonesian architecture and temples. I also cherished how the locals worship Hindu Gods and Goddesses through daily ceremonies, rituals, and artwork. When I recall my journey to Bali and Nusa Lembongan, I can still smell the scent of burning incense from canang sari offerings that spread all over the island every day. And I can still hear the sound of Gamelan music played first thing in the morning, in the afternoon, and the evenings, strengthening a feeling of belonging to a place and participation in the unique local rituals.

The third aspect concerns an unbelievable amount of garbage pollution and masses of tourists present in every island corner. One of the first things I noticed immediately after arriving at the island was omnipresent plastic pollution. After that, the longer I stayed on the island, the more I realized the scale of the problem. The trash was lying everywhere, and observing it throughout the stay aroused various doubts and concerns in me. In addition, I became confused about my positionality as a tourist, questioning whether my presence on the island supports or harms the locals and the environment.

On the one hand, I knew that tourism is an essential driver for development. It is a significant element of the economy as it offers an excellent opportunity for generating economic activity in destinations with a few alternative sources of economic diversification (Andriotis 2018: 3). Not only does it provide a livelihood to most inhabitants, generates new employment and personal development opportunities, but it also leads to the development of more advanced infrastructure, the increase of investments, and the promotion of national, regional, and local development. On the other hand, finding oneself among the crowds of tourists on the island overloaded with garbage pollution calls for reflection about the environmental footprint that every individual leaves behind. And on a broader scale about the sustainability of the global

tourism industry. Although my experience is reflected from the tourist perspective, the time I spend on the island has opened my eyes to the various issues the unsustainable tourism industry entails for such small and vulnerable island destinations like Nusa Lembongan.

## 1.2 Relevance to the field

This research has relevance to both development studies and social studies. Tourism has a considerable impact on many countries' national and international development in socio-economic, cultural, and environmental contexts. Thus the development of sustainable tourism constitutes a significant part of social life as the quality of tourism, directly or indirectly, translates into the quality of people's life.

Addressing mass tourism is significant as tourism has been recognized for its economic potential to become a strategy in contributing to sustainable development by boosting local and national economic and socio-cultural development (Henama, Mangope, Strydom 2019: 2). As a result, sustainable tourism has been firmly positioned among the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals. In particular, sustainable tourism development is defined as a target in goal eight on inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Thus, tourism aims at improving livelihoods through generating decent work and professional development opportunities for the local communities, with particular consideration for youth and women (UNWTO 2020). Furthermore, goal twelve targets sustainable consumption and production by supporting regional development that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products with respect for the community's natural resources and socio-cultural authenticity (UNWTO 2020).

Last but not least, goal fourteen targets sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, which will increase the economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs while preserving fragile marine ecosystems (UNWTO 2020). UNWTO (2020) stressed that sustainable tourism could contribute to advancement in all 17 goals. "Harnessing tourism's benefits will be critical to achieving the sustainable development goals and implementing the post-2015 development agenda." (UNWTO 2020)

Due to the economic success of the tourism sector on a global scale, tourism has become a significant economic driver for many developing world regions. However, the way the tourism industry has developed deviates significantly from sustainable tourism's assumptions.

The global tourism sector is often driven by a short-sighted approach to planning and development, focusing mainly on continued growth and profit-seeking (Suja 2018). This approach reflects in mass tourism which enables fast accumulations of a high profit. However, for developing nations where the primary source of income comes from tourism, mass tourism often has an exceptional value. “Mass tourism generates the kind of revenue which developing countries often require, and which more sustainable variants simply cannot provide” (Bishop 2014: 377). Thus, the tourism industry’s conflicting issue concerns that the destinations that are the most ecologically fragile and economically vulnerable to the negative impacts of unsustainable tourism are often the ones that rely on it the most. Thus striving for sustainable tourism development is essential to facilitate sustainable development in those regions.

### 1.3 Statement of purpose

This thesis aims to spread understanding of the implications of mass tourism practices in Nusa Lembongan, seen through the lenses of its population and people involved in the tourism industry and environmental protection on the island. Furthermore, the thesis will shed light on the underlying processes inherent to the tourism industry and developing countries' economies where tourism is promoted as a highly ambiguous development strategy. The study highlights the importance of reconsidering current mass tourism practices in Nusa Lembongan. Doing so points out the issues of power and privilege and pro-growth ideology in tourism derived from neoliberal capitalism, which is argued to be a driving force for increasing social, environmental, and economic injustices resulting from the dominant global tourism industry.

The study allocates the phenomenon of mass tourism within a dialogue of degrowth, which is believed to have a great potential to facilitate sustainable tourism on the island. Based on a deeper understanding of the dysfunctionalities of the current tourism practices on the island, more sustainable approaches to tourism development could be undertaken to reconcile economic, socio-cultural, and environmental consequences. On a broader scale, this study extends a current debate on the effects of a rapid expansion of the global tourism industry and potential solutions to sustaining tourism-led development.

## 1.4 Research questions

The study will be guided by two research questions relating to opinions about current mass tourism practices and the potential for sustainable tourism on the island. The interviews were conducted to answer the research questions, allowing access to first-hand perspectives of local communities and people involved with the island's tourism industry and environmental protection.

*1) How do the study participants relate to the mass tourism practices in Nusa Lembongan and their impact on the environment?*

*2) How can, according to participants, the concept of sustainable tourism be turned into reality in Nusa Lembongan?*

## 1.5 Thesis outline

The thesis consists of eight chapters, and it is outlined as follow:

Chapters 1 and 2 present the background of the study and its relevance in the field, aims, and questions. Also, the chapters offer a broader historical overview describing the context of the development of tourism in Bali and Nusa Lembongan.

Chapter 3 dives into the previous research analysis. In this section, the study is being placed in the broader context of academic knowledge addressing the impact of the tourism industry on environmental sustainability caused by prioritizing economic growth over ecology and unequal power relations imposed by the global tourism industry.

Chapter 4 introduces the theoretical context of the study by approaching the issue of mass tourism in Nusa Lembongan through the conceptualization of the degrowth framework. Also, in this section, degrowth is being proposed as an approach to supplement sustainable tourism development on the island.

Chapter 5 describes the methodological approach used to conduct this study. The section begins with a presentation of the research design. It is followed by an explanation of the reasons for the selection of this case study. Then I explain the process of sample collection.

Subsequently, the method of data coding in the NVivo qualitative analysis program is presented. The chapter is finalized by a discussion on ethical reflectivity, which has been of critical value while conducting this study at every stage, during data collection, analysis and writing process, and presentation of limitations of the study.

Chapter 6 presents the data gathered through the interviews. In this chapter, participant's perspectives are being analyzed. The chapter is divided into four main sections describing the interviewee's standpoint regarding the local tourism industry, reflections on the impact on the local economy, thoughts after a pandemic outbreak about the island's economy and society, and the perspectives for the future of tourism.

Chapter 7 delves into the findings' meaning, significance, and relevance in relation to the theoretical approach, literature review, and research questions.

Chapter 8 presents contextually and theoretically informed final remarks and recommendations for future research on the topic.

## **2. Setting the Scene**

### **2.1 "The last paradise"**

Indonesia has become famous throughout the world due to its islands and beautiful landscapes (Embassy of Indonesia 2017). The country is the largest archipelago globally. It consists of 17,508 islands, of which about 6000 are inhabited (Embassy of Indonesia 2017). One of the most globally known and popular Indonesian tourist destinations is Bali (Statista 2021; Antara and Sumarniasih 2017). It is a small island of size 5,636 square kilometers. It has a population of around 4,5 million people (Knoema 2020).

Over decades of tourism promotion, Bali's reputation as a tropical paradise was sketched by the cultural imagination created at first through Western colonial powers. Bali's paradise image took hold in the 1920s and 1930s due to the Dutch promoting the island as a tourist destination. Since then, Bali has become associated as a utopian respite and an extension of the salons of Paris, Berlin, and New York where the rich could run away from everyday Western reality in the search for spiritual harmony (Vickers 2013). After the traumas and

destruction of the Second World War and the Indonesian Revolution in the 1950s in independent Bali, the development of the economy based on the tourism industry has continually been prioritized for a new emerging nation by local and national authorities (Vickers 2011:460). Since then, Bali was rediscovered again. However, this time not by Europeans (Vickers 2013). When Pandit Nehru, the first prime minister of India and hero of the newly emerging post-colonial nations, visited the island in the 1950s, he called it “the morning of the world” (Allon 2004:25). These words, in some way, freed the island from the burden of over 300 years of colonization by strengthening the sense of Balinese national identity. As a result, Bali’s image was no longer invested by the Western powers, Europe and America, but instead, Bali became an “international property” (Allon 2004:25).

After independence, Bali’s image-making was also continued by anthropological exploration, travel agencies, popular culture, travel, and academic writings (Allon 2004; Vickers 2013; Vickers 2011). As a result, Bali’s “desirable image” has become entrenched as the real one. Thus, the island has become universally recognized as “The Island of Gods,” “The Island of Thousand Temples” (Antara and Sumarniasih 2017) and “Garden of Eden,” “touristic Shangri-La,” “the enchanted isle,” “the last paradise,” and “one of the world’s great romantic dreams” (Allon 2004: 25).

Bali’s hyperbolic reputation appeared to grow proportionally to the risk of its overexposure and collapse (Allon 2004: 25). In the early 1970s, the number of tourist arrivals a year was 50000. Until 1990 more than half a million tourists a year visited the island (Allon 2004: 25). In 2019 the number of foreign tourist visits exceeded the number of people inhabiting the island, reaching almost 6.3 million (Statista 2021).

The continued growth of tourist arrivals was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The pandemic caused a dramatic decrease in international tourists arrivals which led to negative quarterly growth of tourism receipts in Indonesia (Statista 2021). Bali bears harsh consequences of the pandemic outbreak as the foreign tourist arrivals there decreased by almost 100 percent, affecting the island’s hospitality, food and beverage, and cultural sectors the most (Statista 2021).

## 2.2 The case of Nusa Lembongan

### 2.2.1 The study site

Nusa Lembongan (province of Bali) is a small island located just twelve kilometers southeast of Bali. The small island has become a besieged tourist attraction due to its mainland's rapid touristic development. The case of Nusa Lembongan is much less discussed in the literature. Still, it is of equal importance as the case of Bali mainland because of the disproportion of the rapidly developing tourism industry to the petite size of the island (Map 1, p. 65). Nusa Lembongan covers about eight square kilometers. It has a population of around 5,000 people (Lehmann and Rungby 2017: 20). At the same time, the tourist influx on the island follows the increasing tourism statistics of the Bali mainland (Andréfouët et al. 2021: 7). Thus, this disproportion underlines the rapid structural changes of local conditions to fit the global tourism industry (Lehmann and Rungby 2017: 20). It also emphasizes the future challenges for the island in the development of sustainable tourism.

Nusa Lembongan is composed of two villages: Desa Jungut Batu and Desa Lembongan, and 12 banjar dinas (sub-villages) (Andréfouët et al. 2021). The island is semi-arid, surrounded by coral reefs and slopes covering 7.54 square kilometers, while the terrestrial and mangrove area covers 9.14 square kilometers (Andréfouët et al. 2021: 2). The weather in Bali and Nusa Lembongan has two seasons: the dry and the wet season.

### 2.2.2 Tourism in Nusa Lembongan

Before the tourism industry developed in Nusa Lembongan, the residents were mainly engaged in dryland agriculture, fishing, sea salt farming in barter exchanges with Bali and the neighboring islands (Nusa Penida and Nusa Ceningan), and seaweed farming (Lehmann and Rungby 2017: 20). The commercial cultivation of seaweed gradually became a significant source of livelihood for most people living on the island since its first introduction in 1984 (Long and Wall 1996: 45). Until 2012, seaweed farming was practiced almost all around Nusa Lembongan. The space for its cultivation was legally reserved around the three islands in the Marine Conservation Area (Andréfouët et al. 2021: 3). However, the rapidly expanding tourism sector locally created new, often more profitable employment alternatives in the tourism sector. For example, with increasing numbers of tourists visiting the island, the demand for accommodation and tourism infrastructure has also increased. Thus, looking for

new ways of economic income, many residents have turned their homes into resorts or homestays or found other ways to enter the new tourist industry (Lehmann and Rungby 2017: 20).

Over time, the tourism industry has dominated the island's economy and become the mainstream income for most people, replacing previous livelihood sources (Lehmann and Rungby 2017), such as seaweed farming. However, unstable and declining seaweed prices have encouraged residents to search for supplementary or other means of income. Moreover, the cultivation occupied the space of coastal areas and was not attractive for recreational purposes needed to develop the tourism industry (Long and Wall 1996: 45).

Tourism in Nusa Lembongan began already in the 1970s with low-budget visitors camping or staying at residents' homes (Long and Wall 1996: 45). The first "losman" (guest house) was built in 1980, which initiated the construction of the new bungalows shortly after (Long and Wall 1996: 45). In 1990 the first boat operated by Bali Hai Cruises arrived on the island, and since then, the daily cruises with tourists have begun. At first, the voyages were held in a one-day excursion to Desa Jungut Batu, of which four hours were destined to spend on the island. During the time, tourists were mainly engaged in various water activities and a village tour (Long and Wall 1996: 45). The activities were operated by the staff from the Bali Hai Cruise, but they were based on paid cooperation with the residents. Around 200 passengers were arriving at the island daily (Long and Wall 1996: 45). Overnight stays were rare due to undeveloped tourist infrastructure and lack of accommodation alternatives.

Drawing from Veronica Long's and Geoffrey Wall's observations during their fieldwork in Nusa Lembongan in 1993, there was little garbage pollution on the island due to the low consumption (Long and Wall 1996: 49). Furthermore, the only touristic business on the island was highly engaged in environmental preservation by monitoring the reef, preventing it from harmful tourist behaviors, and bringing in marine biologists to do the annual inventories (Long and Wall 1996: 49). Also, beach clean-ups were organized and education programs for villagers to spread awareness about environmentally sensitive behaviors (Long and Wall 1996: 49). The situation on the island in 1993 is described by the authors as follow:

*"Compared with most of Bali, the people of Jungut Batu are poor and uneducated. Public schools exist only at the elementary level. A junior high school exists for those who can afford it. The village has two health clinics, one police station, a village office and six temples (...)*

*Most households use wells for their water supplies and electricity is supplied by a diesel generator. There are no cars or telephones but the police station. Village chief and at least 16 residents own short-wave radios which provide communication to Bali. Boats provide daily links to Sanur Klungkung and Nusa Penida.” (Long and Wall 1996: 45)*

Over the last three decades, tourism in Nusa Lembongan has changed dramatically. Above all, it became mass-oriented, and the tourism infrastructure has dominated the island. In 2019 the reported number of places offering lodging and tourism services (homestays, hotels, resorts, and villas) in Nusa Lembongan was 330, corresponding to a density of 53.6 touristic lodging alternatives per square kilometer (Andréfouët et al. 2021: 2).

Although it is difficult to acquire information on the average number of tourists on the island, it was estimated by local tour operators and hotels that there are about 1000 visitors per day (Andréfouët et al. 2021: 7). In 2017, Nusa Lembongan recorded a remarkable number of visitors. Near the date of the Chinese New Year, around 3000 Chinese tourists visited the island per day (Andréfouët et al. 2021: 7). This unusual influx has its drawbacks by generating mass tourism on the island, leading to overexploitation of the island’s natural resources and society without significant economic gains. Chinese tourists often travel by buying “package trips” organized and paid for outside Nusa Lembongan. Moreover, during such trips, Chinese tourists are mass-channeled on just a few hours long trips to the island to grasp the main attractions and leave (Andréfouët et al. 2021: 7), putting enormous pressure on the environment. Such a form of tourism is unsustainable as it supports neither the island’s economy and society nor the environment.

### **3. Previous research**

This research aims to reconsider tourism in Nusa Lembongan in relation to the degrowth framework and sustainable tourism development assumptions. The focus on revisiting tourism practices on the island in such a context derives from the academic hypothesis that while the tourism industry is a leading contributor to local revenue, it is also a primary cause of environmental degradation and growing regional inequalities (Suja 2018; Harmini 2017). Across previous studies, the most commonly raised contexts referred to the conflicting nature of tourism and power relations imbalances. Building up the analysis on previous research constitutes a foundation to the methodological approach of this study, as the research on the impact of tourism on the everyday reality of the people in Nusa Lembongan through their

perspective is still highly unexplored. Thus, this study contributes to previously gathered knowledge by incorporating local perspectives into the analysis, supplementing it into real-life experiences. Furthermore, the study explores new threads and standpoints on current tourism practices in Nusa Lembongan through understanding the local perspectives. This approach aims at building a platform to create a sustainable tourism industry on the island through a bottom-up approach.

### 3.1 Contradictory nature of tourism

In an academic debate about sustainable tourism development, much tension concerns the inherent conflicting nature of the concept. For example, tourism is fundamentally dependent on a pristine environment, yet the development of the industry often involves its degradation (Bishop 2014: 375). “Unless the environment is safeguarded, tourism is in danger of being a self-destructive process, destroying the very resources upon which it is based” (Cater 1995: 22 in Bishop 2014: 375).

According to Chaudhry and Perelman (2013) and Andriotis (2018), the contradictory nature of tourism that links tourism development, economic growth, and environmental degradation lies in understanding tourism development through the prism of economic progress whose fundamental metric is Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This approach relates to the case of Nusa Lembongan because, as described in previous scholarly works, today’s increasingly complex socio-environmental problems on the island originate from tourism planning and management that prioritize local revenues over ecology (Suja 2018; Henama, Mangope and Strydom 2019; Harmini 2017; Lehmann and Rungby 2017).

Focusing economic development primarily on the tourism industry in Nusa Lembongan is considered beneficial because the inflow of foreign capital can improve the living standards of the locals (Lehmann and Rungby 2017). However, Lehmann and Rungby (2017) point out that appearances can be deceptive. Thus a closer look into the effects of tourism is needed to assess its sustainability. The authors explain that a superficial glance at tourism development on the island gives an impression of definite progress in local living conditions. For example, the roads have become better, electricity is more reliable, and the roofs are made of solid ceramics. However, the distribution of benefits from tourism development is not proportional across the industry and residents, and the environment (Lehmann and Rungby 2017). For

example, the new, more solid houses built from concrete are destined for tourists, and the roads are mainly used by tourists' transportation trucks. Also, everyday high tourist boat activity exploits nature, pollutes the water, and disturbs the local wildlife (Lehmann and Rungby 2017). Thus the study indicates that a tourism development strategy to maximize economic gain made Nusa Lembongan become an island dedicated to tourists, less so for the locals and the environment (Lehmann and Rungby 2017).

Additionally, the other significant point highlighted in the previous scholarly works is that Bali's profit-oriented approach to tourism development led to tourism that has come out of control. Such tourism is defined as mass tourism or conventional tourism (Harmini 2016). According to Chaudhry and Perelman (2013), focusing on erroneous measurements leads to the implementation of faulty policy. Thus, if Balinese tourism development planning aimed mainly at the tourism-related economic expansion, rising GDP has met its development expectations as it indicated that the economy was growing and led to some increases in human development. However, Chaudhry and Perelman (2013) argue that GDP often develops at the cost of sustainability. "Is withdrawing money from a bank account a sign of affluence? Extending years of education is also worthwhile, but the quality of education needs to be taken into account." (Chaudhry and Perelman 2013: 816). Similarly, as Lehmann and Rungby (2017), they claim that a purely quantitative approach to tourism development may create the illusion of improving local conditions due to increasing indices and lead to the omission of a thorough analysis of sustainability aspects of development, resulting in accumulation of disadvantageous consequences in the future.

The consequences of a growth-oriented approach to tourism development are already taking their toll on the island's environment, translating, among others, into the accumulation of pollution, both in water and land (Suja 2018). In the Nusa Penida district consisting of three islands, Nusa Penida Island, Nusa Lembongan Island, and Nusa Ceningan Island, the waste reduction is minimal compared to the amount generated. "55.14% (8.82 tonnes/day) of waste is processed in landfills with inadequate operations and facilities. The remaining 42.08% (6.73 tonnes/day) of waste is disposed of improperly and around 2.78% (0.45 tonnes/day) can be reduced and sold to large collectors outside Nusa Penida District" (Widyarsana, Agustina 2019: 5).

However, according to Widyarsana and Agustina (2019), increasing waste pollution in the region is not only caused by high tourist activity. Instead, the authors point out a much more systematic problem caused by a lack of proper guidance from the government, which led to a disproportion in handling waste management to the rapid pace of tourism development (Widyadana, Agustina 2019). Thus, while the island is developing to attract more tourists, its waste disposal system is still undeveloped (Widyarsana, Agustina 2019). Consequently, the pollution problem at a local level is aggravated, as the island also has to manage the waste produced by the masses of visitors every day (Widyarsana, Agustina 2019). Moreover, as Widyarsana and Agustina (2019) described, on small islands, like Nusa Lembongan, the lack of proper waste disposal systems lies in limited land, making it difficult to create suitable infrastructure for such purposes (Widyarsana, Agustina 2019). Also, it requires many additional costs, which many small islands in Indonesia can not afford as they rely on limited regional financing destined for waste management (Widyadana, Agustina 2019).

In sum, previous scholarly work shows that in sustainable tourism development planning, economic growth cannot be considered as a versatile remedy in itself (Sen 2001; Chaudhry and Perelman 2013; Lehmann and Rungby 2017; Harmini 2016). Such an approach to tourism development in Nusa Lembongan led to uncontrolled inflows of tourists, so-called mass tourism. Although the island became richer and most of its inhabitants are employed within the tourism sector, current tourism practices put enormous pressure on the local society and natural environment. So far, the tourism development on the island aimed at satisfying and facilitating the stay of tourists, which led to the negligence of the environmental concern and basic needs of the residents, such as the creation of proper waste management systems. Thus, a tourism management strategy that considers economic growth a development path leads to an imbalance in prioritizing economic expansion, human development, and environmental protection, hindering the achievement of sustainable tourism development.

### 3.2 Power imbalance in the global tourism industry

Parallel to the issues related to growth-oriented tourism development, academic research points out the inherent power relationships between the host regions and guests imposed by the global world systems (Faarborg and Rungby 2017; Britton 1991; Lehmann and Rungby 2017;). Previous scholarly work indicates that although there is no doubt that the tourism

industry brings significant economic benefits to developing countries, prevailing power relations deepen structural inequalities between locals and tourists and between foreign and local elites and the rest of the local society.

To take a closer look at the issue of unbalanced power relations on the island, a number of previous scholarly works emphasize the importance of analyzing how tourism impacts the ordinary life of locals and how local life is lived within the transforming structures (Lehmann and Rungby 2017). In their ethnographic fieldwork, Lehmann and Rungby (2017) claim that the asymmetry in the social hierarchy between tourists and hosts is a central aspect of life in Nusa Lembongan. The authors explain that people's different economic conditions shape their interactions with one another. As stated by Dewa, a surfing instructor from Nusa Lembongan: "Tourists aren't privileged because they can come here and enjoy life, they are privileged because they can leave." (interview in Lehmann and Rungby 2017: 20) In the study, the authors discover that the significance of tourist privilege lies not in the tourism services itself, but instead in the individual's positionality within those relationships. Thus in such a social hierarchy, tourist privilege lies in the ability of choice, which is often limited for most locals but inscribed in the idea of tourism.

Furthermore, hosts often depend on the tourists' spendings for their livelihood. Thus despite the appearance of increasing professional opportunities on the island, their professional choice is often highly limited to tourism as it is the most profitable way to earn money. Consequently, they often need to dedicate their lives to providing the best services to tourists to convince them to return and attract new tourists to come. Also, the growing competition for tourist patronage on the island increases pressure for the locals. It often leads them to take loans which enable them to upgrade their homes, homestays, or villas accordingly with tourist sensibilities (Lehmann and Rungby 2017). Then, they are under constant pressure to host as many tourists as possible to pay back the loans. In this view, tourists are privileged as they have the economic means to decide whether they want to stay or leave and opt-out of tourism services relationships (Lehmann and Rungby 2017: 20).

On the other hand, Cheong and Miller (2000) present another perspective on power in tourism which transcends the common idea of imperialistic relations between First World tourists and Third and Fourth World locals and one-sided exploitation of the locals by the privileged class. According to the authors, power in tourism is omnipresent in a "tripartite system" of tourists, locals, and brokers (Cheong and Miller 2000). They oppose the common

understanding of tourism as a careless and greedy industry that contributes to creating thoughtless and materialistic consumers (Cheong and Miller 2000). According to the authors, such interpretations often lead to misinterpretation of the position of tourists across power relationships (Cheong and Miller 2000: 372). Instead, Cheong and Miller (2000) draw attention to agents who dominate and control tourism development and tourist conduct. They present a power relationship in which tourists are a primary target of the “touristic gaze” constructed by brokers, such as travel agents and guides, and some privileged locals. In their view, tourists’ perception of “destination reality” is driven by the tourist gaze created using various techniques and strategies by the agents to shape and instruct tourists' views, interpretations, and decisions.

*“And this gaze is as socially organized and systematized as is the gaze of the medic. Of course it is of a different order in that it is not confined to professionals' supported and justified by an institution.’ And yet even in the production of 'unnecessary pleasure' there are in fact many professional experts who help to construct and develop our gaze as tourists.”* (Urry 1990 in Cheong and Miller 2000: 382)

In the case of Bali, the tourist gaze reflects in its timeless and traditional paradise image. That image has emerged already during the colonial period and was maintained and perpetuated over the years, among others, for economic reasons to continue attracting tourists to come (Howe 2005). Thus, the image of Bali has been globally branded by agents as a paradise and a spiritual oasis. At the same time, Nusa Lembongan was globally branded for its coral reef and manta ray point and became known as a surfer paradise.

Thus, tourists are most often introduced only to the touristically commercialized aspects of the local reality. Their perception is usually limited to what the tourist gaze presents to them. They are allured with the unspoiled and pristine Balinese nature, experiences of temple ceremonies, sounds of “gamelan” orchestra, and often the “legong” dance performances. However, as Howe (2005) explained, the tourist gaze presents only a partial truth regardless of what guidebooks say. It is “the truth” that will allow meeting the needs of tourists, which often collides with the authentic, everyday local reality: “the commodification of Balinese culture leads to accusations of immorality and cosmic imbalance; and the smiling face is often a mask hiding turbulent emotions.” (Wikan 1990 in Howe 2005: 5) The tourist gaze of Bali creates a false impression that throughout its history, Balinese were an isolated society characterized by unchanging and uninfluenced by external interference tradition (Howe

2005). But, the truth is that a hundred years of colonialism, war, Indonesian independence, and the emergence of the tourism industry have had a significant impact on a modernizing change that over the years took place on the island and the creation of current “traditional” Balinese culture (Howe 2005). “One can see more ‘traditional’ rites and dances on Bali now than could have been observed in the nineteenth century” (Vickers 1996 as quoted in Howe 2005: 2). The Balinese tourist gaze redefined the culture, making the new become “traditionalised” (Howe 2005: 2). As explained by Howe (2005: 5), although the emergence of mass tourism in Bali has contributed to the creation of new ideas about Balinese culture as well as new ways of its advertisement and presentation, it has also had a significant economic, political and environmental impact such as increasing inequalities, water deficiency, overwhelmed with traffic infrastructure, replacement of agricultural lands with hotels, gift shops, recreation spaces as well as accumulation of vast amounts of plastic rubbish which has sparked resistance movements across Balinese society against Jakartan and other foreign capitalists and investors who play a prominent role in local tourism development.

Moreover, scholarly research calls attention to the organization of economic and political power within the developing countries and commercial structures of the tourism industry in the context of the authority and dominance of specific activity components and ownership groups. Such an approach allows to place the case of Nusa Lembongan in the discussion of inequality within the worldwide tourism industry and to understand how the tourism industry grew and who benefits most from its development (Britton 1996; Cheong and Miller 2000; Howe 2005; Urry 2001). Research shows that due to the predominance of foreign ownership, the tourism industry imposes on developing destinations, especially tiny Pacific Islands economies like Nusa Lembongan, development approaches that strengthen characteristics of structural dependency on and vulnerability to developed countries (Britton 1996). Such order of things results in tourists being channeled through a commercial apparatus steered by large-scale foreign and national enterprises with massive resources to dominate the global tourism industry (Britton 1996). Consequently, this leads to foreign and local elites attaining the most commercial gains.

In contrast, most locals can only engage in tourism through wage labor employment or small enterprises, which due to high and much more powerful competition, have limited income-generating potential (Britton 1996). As a result, peripheral destinations like Nusa

Lembongan provide a suitable location for the development of tourism. Still, the power to distribute and control the tourist experience and gain the highest profits often lies in the hands of metropolitan enterprises that aim to earn fast income through mass tourism rather than to maintain a healthy environment and support small, local entrepreneurs.

From this perspective, unsustainable tourism is not solely an outcome of the individual decisions of tourists, nor the locals, but to a great extent, it is controlled by powerful multinational companies and elites (Cheong and Miller 2000; Howe 2005; Urry 2001). Previous research shows that in the current globalized world, the qualities and ambiance of destinations have become a central instrument of the encouragement of consumption and the selling of experiences and commodities (Cheong and Miller 2000; Howe 2005; Urry 2001). ‘Tourism has become a major internationalised component of Western capitalist economies: it is one of the quintessential features of mass consumer culture and modern life.’ (Britton 1991: 451) Moreover, the prevailing power imbalances in the global tourism industry deepen ecological injustice as environmental destruction aggravates inequality through adverse impacts on already disadvantaged people. At the same time, inequalities in human development raise environmental degradation (Chaudhry and Perelman 2013: 813).

## **4. Theoretical framework**

### **4.1 Degrowing tourism**

Degrowth is a critique of growth that, despite its long history, entered the English academic journals only after 2008, drawing from critical scholarship and activist, social movements (Andriotis 2021; D’Alisa et al. 2014). The idea of degrowth arose as an ideology of opposition to economism’s doctrines and discourses that dominate the public debate positing growth as an ultimate good and social objective (D’Alisa et al. 2014). Degrowth prioritizes social and environmental well-being over corporate profits, overproduction, and overconsumption (R&D 2021). It criticizes capitalism as a social phenomenon requiring and upholding growth (D’Alisa et al., 2014). It contradicts the development planning and management within the global capitalist system, where success is measured through economic progress (GDP). It is also against the most significant players who set the rules and gain the most financial benefits, such as global corporations and influential elites. Furthermore, degrowth criticizes commodification for turning social products and

socio-ecological services and relations into commodities with a monetary value (D'Alisa et al., 2014).

Beyond the criticism, degrowth aims at leading the way to a change in which societies will use less natural resources and organize lives differently than presently (D'Alisa et al. 2014). Not only does it imply doing less of the same, but the emphasis is to do things differently. Degrowth aims at changing society into one with a “smaller metabolism” featured by a different structure and serving new functions. “The objective is not to make an elephant leaner, but to turn an elephant into a snail” (D'Alisa et al. 2014: 4). As stated by Hardin in Hall (2009: 53), such a change “requires a fundamental extension in morality,” meaning a shift in common global values towards increased care and solidarity reflected in self-reflexive and conscious consumption considerations and encouragement for cooperation for mutual benefit.

Across tourism studies, degrowth emerged as an alternative to the “inappropriate” or/and unwanted tourism development due to the changes it induced on destinations since the beginning of industrial tourism and perhaps even longer (Hall 2009). The approach derives from a broader concept of degrowth and found its application in tourism studies to answer conventional mass tourism's existing environmental, social, and economic afflictions. Thereby degrowth opposes the exploitation of local societies and their cultural and ecological resources (Andriotis 2021: 2).

Within the context of tourism development, degrowth strives to achieve a steady-state economy which will, in turn, lead to steady-state tourism defined as “a tourism system that encourages qualitative development but not aggregate quantitative growth that unsustainably reduces natural capital” (Hall 2009: 46). From a degrowth perspective, the transformation to a steady-state economy which is “a constant flow of throughput at a sustainable (low) level, with population and capital stock free to adjust to whatever size can be maintained by the constant throughput beginning with depletion and ending with pollution” (Daly 2008 in Hall 2009: 58) requires, first and foremost, wider public recognition of positive and negative impacts of tourism and acknowledging tourism, by industry and governments, as an integral element of the more extensive socio-economic and biophysical system (Hall 2009: 53). Also, in practice, implementing the ideas in the concept of degrowth into tourism development involves fundamental reorganization of the industry directed at its intentional downsizing. In

other words, reduction in the actual size of current consumption and production patterns. Thus tourism should become a part of a circular economy instead of a linear one so that inputs of virgin raw material and energy and outputs as emissions and disposable waste were decreased (Hall 2009: 53). It should result in rightsizing and lead to a steady-state economy and a no-growth society with a steady throughput of natural resources (Daly 1991 in Andriotis 2021: 6).

Degrowth supports a belief that endless economic growth is impossible on a finite planet (Andriotis 2021: 6). Nevertheless, sustainable tourism consumption does not equal fewer holidays and travels as ‘degrowth is not against tourism itself’ (Andriotis 2021: 6). Instead, along with the degrowth thought, people will be encouraged to travel more locally. Also, in long-haul travel, the degrowth approach to tourism will aim to decrease the environmental consequences of emissions, energy consumption, and ecological damage (Hall 2009).

Also, in light of the current COVID-19 global crisis, it is essential to be aware that there is a significant difference in “economic slowdown” between degrowth and the recent recession in tourism caused by the outbreak of COVID-19. The pandemic contributed to a reduction in pollution and emissions. Still, such unplanned and involuntary downscaling of social and economic activity caused dramatically negative socio-economic consequences, and it should not be confused with degrowth. Instead, it should be considered a recession or, if it continues, depression (Andriotis 2021). In contrast, degrowth involves a planned, voluntary and democratic transformation.

In summary, locating the case of Nusa Lembongan into a framework of degrowth offers a way for the island to make a step towards a steady-state tourism industry by changing the current growth-oriented approach into one that is characterized by sufficient and efficient planning and management of tourism (Hall 2009: 57).

## 4.2 Degrowth contribution to sustainable tourism

The paradigm of sustainable tourism originated in the early 1990s among tourism academics and organizations in response to rapid internal and external developments of the tourism sector over the past few decades (Weaver 2006). It derives from a broader concept of

sustainable development. The idea has become institutionalized and formally recognized by global multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) after the publication of Agenda 21 during the 1992 Earth Summit (Weaver 2006). UNWTO (2020) defines sustainable tourism as:

*“Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”* (UNWTO 2020)

Due to the rapid expansion of tourism globally and the growth potential it generates, the industry has been recognized by UNWTO (2020) as a “social and economic phenomenon.” Current sustainable planning aims for the tourism sector to contribute to global poverty alleviation by ensuring long-term economic development and fairly distributed socio-economic benefits, including stable livelihood opportunities and social services to host communities (UNWTO 2020). Also, sustainable tourism development addresses the optimization of natural resource usage, preservation of natural heritage and biodiversity, and mitigation of climate change. Following the sustainability approach, all of the above should be done with respect to the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, maintaining their cultural heritage and traditional values while contributing to intercultural understanding and tolerance.

Yet, despite decades of global attempts to achieve sustainable tourism, today’s reality is that tourism’s negative consequences are somewhat aggravating than reversing, considering inequality and socioecological conflicts including resource use, land-use change, biodiversity loss, and pollution (Hall 2009: 47; Andriotis 2021). In the degrowth view, it is because the current sustainability approach does not consider how the marginal benefits of economic growth relate to the marginal costs. Consequently, this led to overexploitation of natural and human resources of destinations and increasing emissions which further contributes to global warming and depletion of natural capital (Hall 2009). Thus, degrowth criticizes the growth orientation of the sustainability approach for being inconsistent with sustainability goals by assisting hegemonic and capitalist relationships and by shoring up neoliberalism through the promotion of medium and long-haul tourism. Furthermore, the current sustainability approach has been criticized for not challenging unrestrained consumerism but focusing on

technological improvement and better management as solutions to harmonize tourism development (Andriotis 2021: 2).

Although both concepts, sustainability, and degrowth, seem to share a common goal to preserve the natural resources and planetary ecosystems for future generations, their approach differs significantly. Sustainability does not oppose growth but uses it to make a change. It believes that solving environmental and social issues can only be achieved through economic development and progressing productive potential (Andriotis 2021: 7). Also, organizations such as UNWTO or the World Bank promote a sustainability approach according to which developed and newly industrialized countries should continue growing as fast as possible to provide markets and accumulate capital to invest in the less developed world (Daly 2008 in Hall 2009: 58). In contrast, degrowth suggests that human and environmental well-being can be achieved only by making an end to growth, meaning decreasing the volume of production and consumption to lower the overall throughput of energy and material in proportion with ecological limits (Andriotis 2021: 7). Moreover, steady-state tourism advocates an approach within which the developed world should downsize their throughput growth to liberate resources and ecological space for the underdeveloped and developing countries to evolve accordingly with their domestic needs. While more developed regions should direct their focus on technical and social progressions, which later can be shared with the most impoverished areas (Daly 2008 in Hall 2009: 58).

In summary, degrowth's contribution to sustainable tourism development relies on challenging the economic discourse. In this view, to be truly sustainable, the tourism industry cannot allow human capital to grow at the cost of natural capital (Hall 2009). "Questioning tourism development is tantamount to challenging the current capitalist productive model and its growth imperative" (Fletcher et al., 2019 in Andriotis 2021: 178) that contributes to rising prices of land and housing, constrain the rights of the local communities as well as causes environmental degradation and climate change. Thus, degrowth insight in sustainable tourism development is based on shifting away from "imperialistic" mass tourism based on endless expansion and top-down models of "tourism growth." Instead, it proposes to begin the fundamental sociopolitical and environmental transformation into a steady-state from a bottom-up approach giving equal opportunities to benefit from tourism to the local population, safeguarding ecological limits, and contributing to the preservation of the uniqueness, authenticity, and identity of destinations.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Research design

This research is descriptive as it aims to create a platform for better understanding the issues related to the mass tourism industry on the small Indonesian island, Nusa Lembongan. Initially, the study was designed as ethnographic fieldwork in Nusa Lembongan, allowing me to engage in observations and interactions with people in their natural settings to thoroughly understand how the tourism industry impacts social life and everyday local reality from participants' perspectives (Leavy 2017: 134). However, I could not pursue my idea due to the global and Indonesian government safety guidelines and restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. So instead, I modified the qualitative research approach to be entirely remote.

Thus, this thesis is a remote-qualitative case study of Nusa Lembongan, exploring how the degrowth framework can be applied to current tourism practices on the island presented through the perspectives of the participants of the study. Calling for the concept of degrowth in this study allows exploration of the mechanisms that rule the local tourism industry and is believed to supplement the already operating in practice approach of sustainability. At the same time, establishing contacts with individuals associated with the tourism industry on the island aims to obtain insider knowledge about the local reality. In conjunction, gaining understanding about the local reality from the local sources, and comprehending how the locals identify themselves with tourism today and how they wish tourism to look like in the future, enables the application of the bottom-up approach in transforming the tourism industry, which is proposed within the framework of degrowth.

The data for this research consists of eight semi-structured interviews collected over two months. However, the initial preparations, including writing the first "field notes" of my online observations and first document and literature recognition, began in September 2020 when I started my remote internship in Zero Plastic Lembongan (ZPL). An organization and educational initiative targeting making a positive environmental change in Nusa Lembongan. Although the research was conducted remotely, I tried to apply the insights of ethnographic fieldwork as much as possible (considering the remote character of the study) throughout the processes of data collection and analysis, trying to dive into local reality to grasp an insider perspective.

## 5.2 Selection of the case

As previously described, the interest in analyzing the case of Nusa Lembongan in this study has arrived during my holiday on Nusa Lembongan in 2018. My observations during that holiday have led me to tackle the topic of unsustainable tourism and later to finding an internship in Nusa Lembongan.

When I first began searching for information about Nusa Lembongan in the context of tourism sustainability, I found it hard to trace relevant literature and documentation, at least in English. However, I believe that the situation on the island caused by the development of tourism aimed purely at a quick inflow of money and endless growth should be more transparent on a global scale. Not only to provide and share knowledge across academia but also to reach ordinary tourists, who later could contribute to the sustainability of tourism with their travel-related choices and behaviors.

Nusa Lembongan is a perfect example of a destination that is vulnerable to global mass tourism practices. The whole infrastructure and life on the island are adjusted to the tourism industry. The island is so small that its beauty and uniqueness focus on its exotic and pristine nature, which will be completely deteriorated if nothing will change. And at the same time, it will become not interesting for tourists anymore. Thus, the motivation to choose Nusa Lembongan as a case for this study was inspired by the will to gain a deeper understanding of residents' perspective on how they relate to tourism as it currently operates on the island. Also, to get to know their hopes and ideas for the future development of tourism, and second of all, to spread awareness about the socio-environmental and socio-economic impacts of tourism development focused purely on growth.

## 5.3 Collecting the interview data

A total of eight interviews were conducted remotely between mid-February and mid-March 2021. The remote character of the interviews conditioned the time of data collection. The process of looking for participants for my interviews consumed a significant amount of time due to communication dependent on internet access and online sources and different time zones dividing all my participants and me. During the interviews, I was in Sweden, while my participants were located in other parts of the world, including Spain, Australia, Netherlands, Indonesia.

Since I could not obtain access to the local population in person, I reached out to people remotely in two ways. The first method I used was purposive sampling. I decided to use this method to ensure my study will incorporate the various tourism trajectories, including the resident's perspectives, environmental and human rights activists, and foreign and local investors (O'Reilly 2009). This way, I could gather the data in which all of the previously mentioned groups were represented to make comparisons between their perceptions. To do so, I contacted the potential interviewees through online sources based on their visibility and input on tourism and environmental protection on online platforms such as Facebook, personal blogs, tourism and NGOs websites. Second, I relied on the snowball method based on the recommendations from the participants that I have already interviewed. The method was used to gain access to a broader group of potential interviewees. However, the limitation of the snowball method is that it creates a tendency in research towards homogeneity and overlooking relevant yet isolated parts of society (O'Reilly 2009). I tried to avoid this issue by purposely selecting an initial, representative sample for the study in the first place.

The discussions of tourism sustainability on the island raise conflicting opinions across the local population because the topic concerns livelihoods to a great extent. Some of my participants during the interviews mentioned that they could not share their honest opinions with some of their friends and family members as they would not like to offend anyone. Therefore, to ensure freedom of expression to my participants, their anonymity has been assured. The sample group for the study consists of eight people between the ages of 26 and 70. Four women and four men representatives were chosen as a sample for this study. The sample group is composed of two environmental activists. One focuses on the waste problem in Indonesia, and the other specifically on waste management and ecological initiatives in Nusa Lembongan. The sample also includes two entrepreneurs, one local and one foreign. Also, it contains one former environmental educator in an organization aiming at empowering the local population, targeting especially women. And finally, three residents who work in the tourism sector in Nusa Lembongan. The selection of participants for the study was conditioned by their experience with the tourism industry on the island. It is believed that comparing perspectives from different backgrounds will allow obtaining reliable information on current tourism reality from a local perspective.

The interviews were constructed using a semi-structured method, allowing me and the respondents to open up for in-depth conversation. It also enabled me to explore and focus on

the context of interest for this research. Although the interview questions were formulated in a semi-structured format, they performed as the links and topics I wanted to tackle. Thus, the questions were not asked in the same order. Instead, I followed the fluency of the conversation, using them to shift from one theme to another. Also, the method enabled introducing new threads to the discussion, allowed me to ask follow-up questions and dive into the most intriguing topics. Direct questioning was applied only to acquire standard information from participants, such as their age, profession, and current place of residence (O'Reilly 2009). Thus the interviewing process took the form of an informal and relaxed conversation rather than a formal interview (O'Reilly 2009). Because of that, I did not limit my discussions to any specific time frames. Some interviews were two hours long. Others were about an hour-long, depending on the individual personal qualities of each participant. Some of them gave relatively brief answers, and some elaborated longer on the questions asked, referring to more contexts, exciting facts, and real-life stories. The length of the interviews was also dependent on the time participants had at their disposal for our discussion. As this study aims to understand the participant's perspective of the local reality, I intended to create space for participants to reflect on the events and their beliefs freely. Also, to allow them to express their true feelings, opinions, and experiences and even expose their anger and ambivalences (O'Reilly 2009: 125).

As mentioned earlier, the interviews were conducted remotely. For this research, this means that they were held through the video call via messenger or WhatsApp. Before proceeding with data collection, I was uncertain about the efficiency of conducting interviews remotely. I thought that maybe it would create a barrier for me to access the people I interviewed, meaning a barrier to establishing a trustworthy relationship between us (O'Reilly 2009). Surprisingly, a video call turned out to be a very convenient method. Not only it allowed me to enter the private sphere of my interviewees, throughout its duration, my participants were in intimate surroundings, such as their home, office, or garden, which made them feel comfortable and relaxed. But also, I believe that because the conversations were conducted remotely, the participants were less intimidated. So every conversation felt fluent and easy-going immediately from the beginning. Also, to facilitate gaining access and establishing a positive relationship with my interviewees, I explained the idea behind my study overtly at the beginning of the interviews. Thus, I openly presented myself, the intentions behind the research, and how I will use the findings from the data I collected

(O'Reilly 2009). Then, I tried to settle in a semi-overt role to reduce the impact of my researcher positionality during the interviews (O'Reilly 2009).

The interviews were recorded using a phone application, "dictaphone." Before turning on the dictaphone during the interview, all participants were asked if they would allow me to record. The transcription was made in a detailed manner by exactly rewriting the conversation, including speech elisions, pauses, vocalizations, unfinished sentences, laughter, punctuation, slang. Additionally to recording data, notes were taken during the interviews to capture the visual information such as facial expressions or gestures.

#### 5.4 Coding the interview data in NVivo

The data gathered during the interviews was analyzed in NVivo, Qualitative Data Analysis Software. I used the NVivo program to analyze data collected for three reasons. First, the program facilitates the organization and labeling of large amounts of text. It also facilitates creating specific codes, nodes, categories, and themes, enabling me to acquire a comprehensive view of the data. Second, using the program helps to reduce errors resulting from own interpretations through automatization of the analysis process, which increases the study's validity and reliability. Third, using the program allows performing different types of queries that direct attention to details, essential concepts, and identification of particular data features. To me, queries were helpful throughout the entire analytical process. For example, to get acquainted with the data, I used "text search" and "word frequency" queries to find where in text and in what context particular words appear and explore certain words' repetitiveness and regularities. Such an approach often led to discovering interesting associations between the opinions of the interviewees. Further, during the analytical process, I found "coding query," "matrix coding," and "cross-tabs" very helpful to identify coding intersections and explore relationships between the opinions of the participants.

The data was analyzed by combining deductive and inductive approaches to coding. First, I began the analysis by formulating a codebook with an initial set of codes based on the study's theoretical framework and research questions. Then based on a reflective reading of the transcripts and relationships in data discovered by doing queries, I inductively developed new codes. The application of both methods in this study allowed me to focus on testing whether the degrowth approach will supplement the sustainable tourism development strategy for

Nusa Lembongan. At the same it allowed me to uncover new ideas and insights, thanks to which my analysis remained open for new perspectives and directions.

To ensure the study's trustworthiness, I tried to carefully code the responses from interviewees to classify valid codes into themes and subthemes that guided the analysis and discussion of the results. Then the themes were analyzed, including the perspectives of all participants. The more repeats there were for each theme, the more it enhanced its reliability. This approach allowed me to test if all participants have the same views about issues assigned to the themes or how their opinions differ. Frequently repeated differences in participants' responses were also qualified as themes to enable a more comprehensive view of the issue. Correlations between the codes, themes, and categories were conducted in the NVivo program.

## 5.5 Ethical reflexivity

While conducting this study, I tried to reflect on the ethical implications that could affect the social world in predictable and unpredictable ways, the people involved in the study, including myself, and the people not directly involved (O'Reilly 2009). One of the first dilemmas that I considered in conducting this research was the impact of power; one's positionality and representation. An integral part of conducting research is gaining access and establishing trustworthy relationships with the study participants, which requires creating honest and open interactions, respecting privacy, and preventing misrepresentations. Being reflexive and recognizing our powerfulness throughout the research in relation to the extent to which we have control over the data collected and how our interpretations can impact the results is essential for scientific and ethical reasons. "Awareness of the potential for exploitation and the role of representation is a first step in trying to avoid it." (O'Reilly 2009: 60)

Thus, throughout the data collection and analysis process, I tried to be reflexive, considering my positionality as a researcher and an outsider. My background in the topic was based on my tourist experience on the island, and the remote internship in the Zero Plastic Lembongan organization, which had to some extent shaped my perception of the issue by the time I proceeded with writing this thesis. However, as a researcher with ideas and understanding arriving from a foreign land and intention to explore and familiarise with Lembongan's local perspective, I aimed to create a broader view on the issues related to tourism on the island.

“We need to view the “intrusive self” as a resource; one that constrains the temptation to generalise and simplify other people's lives.” (O’Reilly 2009: 191) Reflexivity has helped me balance my understanding by separating my thoughts, the knowledge I gained during an internship, the information I acquired from participants, and the literature I read over the past six months. Recognition of one’s interpretations from the perceptions acquired in the duration of the study as well as a critical reflection on how the knowledge in the research was generated, facilitates ethical use of different sources for the advantage of the research and construction of a broad, sociologically informed perspective (O’Reilly 2009).

Also, constructing a representation is followed by responsibility. For a researcher, it is a responsibility not only for one’s actions, thoughts, and interpretations but also for others that impact the research and its results (O’Reilly 2009). Therefore, to avoid my false interpretations of the participants’ perceptions which could lead to biased representation, I informed each participant of the possibility of authorization fragments of our conversations used in the study and the context in which they were used.

Another significant ethical aspect I considered during the research process was confidentiality and to ensure that interviewees’ private comments, feelings, and experiences will be kept as confidences (O’Reilly 2009). The subject of tourism sustainability raises conflicting opinions on the island because it is to a great extent, economically dependent on the industry. Therefore, to increase speech comfort and encourage sincere discussions, I guaranteed anonymity to all the participants. Doing so involves anonymizing the personal details and backgrounds of all the interviewees, including their names, age, exact description of their profession, to prevent their identification in the places they work or around their friends and family. Thus, in the study, I refer to the participants and their statements numerically, e.g., “interviewee 1”, “interviewee 2”, etc. Not all participants expressed a desire to remain fully anonymous; thus, a broader description could be employed for some.

## 5.6 Limitations

A few significant limitations have impacted the results of the study and could be addressed in future research. The first one refers to the remote design of the study. The traveling restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak prevented me from doing ethnographic fieldwork in Nusa Lembongan. Therefore, I could not physically explore the

case under the study that significantly influenced the initial idea for the research design and the scope of the study. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population of Nusa Lembongan as the sample size consisting of eight participants does not represent the perceptions of all the residents. Nevertheless, the research focuses on analyzing the interviewees' perspectives, which offer insights into the tourism-related issues on the island and encourage further research on the topic. The increase of scholarly interest is of great importance as, to my knowledge, there are no previous studies available on sustainable tourism in Nusa Lembongan, at least in English.

Furthermore, due to the remote design of the study, the empirical results acquired should also be considered in light of some limitations. These involve limited access to the local society being studied as the data collection depended on an internet connection. As not all island residents could be contacted remotely due to lack of access to the internet, many isolated or lonesome residents were excluded as potential samples. The participants chosen for the study are people who were accessible through online sources. More focus on the most marginalized residents would have increased the insight into their struggles and needs to lessen their vulnerabilities to the tourism industry.

Also, the inability to travel to Nusa Lembongan has prevented the possibility to perform participant observation, which is learning about the everyday reality of the residents through the first-hand experience in their daily lives. As tourism has contributed significantly to the local economy, a conversation about the industry's future evokes highly conflicting emotions across respondents. Thus it would be beneficial for future research to spend time in the field and carry out an ethnographic approach to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the community, include more marginalized people in the study, and integrate more practical considerations about the impacts of tourism.

Another limitation that has influenced the results of the study is the language barrier. The fact that I cannot communicate in the Balinese language or Bahasa Indonesia has created various challenges while conducting the research. First of all, my access to literature was highly limited as many valuable and local literature, such as academic and newspaper articles, personal blogs, and essential documentation, are not translated into English. Second of all, I could not get acquainted with the perspectives of locals who speak only their mother tongue. Thus my sample was limited to people who can communicate in English. All these challenges

deprive the research of the ability to capture the full context of local reality. Overcoming this limitation would require, e.g., cooperation with a qualified translator who can professionally translate the conversations to keep their context. Moreover, cooperation in constructing the research with local academics who communicate both in English and Balinese (or Bahasa Indonesia) could decrease language barriers and increase the scope of the study into insider and outsider dialogue throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Another limitation concerns the external validity of the study. Thus, the results do not offer transferability to other most visited Indonesian regions nor different world's tourist destinations. In order to increase the generalisability of the study, more case studies would have to be included in the analysis, acknowledging specific characteristics of each destination to establish relationships between them. Moreover, the representativeness would have profited from a look beyond Nusa Lembongan. A comparative study would be beneficial to analyze different ways of tourism management, with countries such as Bhutan or Costa Rica, which are considered the most sustainable in the context of tourism development.

## **6. Analysis**

In this part of the study, I will present the results of the interviews conducted with residents, local and foreign environmental and human rights activists, and entrepreneurs. The analysis will describe and compare participants' opinions and interpret them based on the theoretical framework. The analysis aims to enhance understanding of tourism in Nusa Lembongan directly from the perspectives of the people who are involved with it or have connection to it on a daily basis. It also aims to take into account the diversity of standpoints on the current tourism development and the prospects of tourism in the future. The analysis is divided into four main themes: 1) attitudes towards tourism, 2) opinions on current mass tourism practices on the island, 3) post-covid-19 reflections on tourism industry, 4) vision on the future of tourism on the island. The themes were selected based on the issues that were the most frequently mentioned by participants during the interviews. Quotes are incorporated in the running text and constitute a significant part of the analysis presenting direct examples of participants' statements and thoughts.

## 6.1 Interviewee's attitudes towards tourism

The interviewed residents of Nusa Lembongan and local and foreign entrepreneurs and activists have a positive attitude towards tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon that has arrived on the island, bringing other alternative sources of income. In the gathered opinions, participants present tourism on the island as a significant source of income for all residents and an essential contributor to socio-economic growth. As explained by one of the business owners in Nusa Lembongan:

*“Before covid-19 everyone was working in the tourism industry. I mean really everyone on the island, directly or indirectly. By being a driver and having a little truck and renting the truck or working in hotels, or whatever. We had to bring staff from Bali, from Lombok, from Java, from everywhere because there was not enough local staff to hire.”*

To understand the significance of tourism across the local population, the interviewees highlight the importance of considering the economic difficulties faced by the local people before the development of the tourism industry on the island. As mentioned by most participants, not only did the tourism industry give people financial satisfaction and security, but also it enabled them to organize their lives differently. It does not mean that thanks to tourism, locals work less or that the work is more relaxed, but it means their work became much more profitable and allowed them to break away from activities that have brought little income in exchange for vast amounts of work. As stated by one of the participants who did a story about the seaweed industry before tourism arrived in Lembongan, and currently also owns a business there:

*“Tourism has been good for the island, it has lifted the average income dramatically. People were extremely poor before. Before, a family, not an individual, but a family would earn 70 dollars a month, working with seaweed day and night in the salt water. Sometimes they would even have to work in the middle of the night depending on the tides. And carrying very heavy loads and so on. So it is very, very hard work. And they were living miserably from it. So tourism allowed them to become rich. Suddenly they could reach another standard of living.”*

Some of the participants highlighted that tourism has a very significant and special meaning for the local population as the origination of the industry has led people on the island out of

extreme poverty and provided financial income that they have never experienced before. In addition, tourism provided jobs, enrichment, a variety of new socio-economic opportunities and enabled opening up to the world and people from different places worldwide. From the opinions gathered, it can be seen that people see potential in tourism and would like to maintain it to earn money and live on the island. It can be illustrated with the following quote from a local man when asked how does he feel about Nusa Lembongan being such a tourist-oriented island:

*“Very happy, in my opinion and maybe the people of Nusa Lembongan too, tourism is like the heart of our economy. In my opinion it is certain, on this small and dry island, it is only tourism that can support the continuation of the economy.”*

Moreover, as explained by some participants, the development of the tourism industry in Nusa Lembongan has shaped the specific ways of living, thinking, and being across society. From that perspective, the development of the tourism industry created a prevailing norm in understanding, across the local community, that tourism is an inscribed characteristic of Bali and Nusa Lembongan. In that view, working in the industry is not always led by a goal for personal, professional satisfaction, but rather a will for increasing financial well-being. An example of this is the following quote from a young local woman who reflects on the meaning of tourism in Bali and Nusa Lembongan:

*“It is kind of complicated for me because this kind of tourism has kind of already set our mindset that Bali is about tourism, and about hospitality industry, but we don’t really do it for ourselves. What I can say is..when we talk about hospitality we just need more people coming and more money coming so we don’t think of the quality of tourism or the industry that we want. We don’t think of the quality of the industry, the people, the art that we offer. The kind of hospitality that we offer to the people because we also have this kind of mindset that whoever comes here as a visitor, especially the foreign...they are the ones that have more money.”*

Many respondents have expressed that although tourism has acquired an iconic significance on the islands, the industry's quality of services and expectations are not a priority. Instead, the tourism industry focuses on continuous expansion, welcoming increasing numbers of tourists and developing tourism infrastructure to become wealthier, often at the cost of the quality of tourism.

## 6.2 Interviewee's opinions on current mass tourism practices on the island

Although the interviewees spoke rather positively about tourism itself, the attitudes mainly were negative when talking about mass tourism practices in Nusa Lembongan. As explained by the local business owner:

*“The problem is not the fact that tourism arrives but that it hasn't been managed at all.”*

When asked how tourism developed on the island over the years, the majority responded that tourism expansion was very rapid and sudden within the last few years. They related to this phenomenon often as “tourist boom” or “mass tourism wave,” which expresses the dramatic pace of tourism growth locally. However, some emphasized that before mass tourism arrived, tourism on the island was quite selective. It was primarily based on Australian families renting villas, surfers attracted by massive waves that Lembongan is known for, and other independent tourists wanting to explore the culture and nature. Also, as pointed out by one of the locals, the tourism infrastructure on the island developed at a dramatic pace very recently, adjusting to the growing demand from the tourism industry:

*“When I was growing up there weren't very many accommodations, restaurants and diving centers. People that came to Lembongan were people just coming to Bali and then only some people knew about the magical island of Bali - Lembongan, where they could go surfing, snorkeling, visit beautiful beaches and all those things. Not many people were aware of it. But the last, before covid, three to four years it's significantly boomed. The amount of infrastructure on the island is insane.”*

One of the most frequently raised complaints about mass tourism was the sudden increase of pre-organized Chinese daytrippers, which began about four years ago. As explained by the participants, Chinese-run tour groups come as an organized program with an exact script. So Chinese tourists are not buying their day trips independently from the local companies. Instead, they buy from tour operators in China who first used to purchase in bulk from the operators in Bali. They now developed their own boat companies with local partners, landing places on the beach with swimming pools and restaurants where people can have lunch on their platforms. Most participants explained that this kind of tourism is not welcomed in Nusa Lembongan as it does not help the local economy. Such organized mass tourism hinders the development of small-scale local businesses and stretches the island's natural resources

beyond its limits. Moreover, it generates increased traffic, and more trash is left behind as all food and beverage is brought from Bali. The quote below presents an obvious point of view of one of the businessmen in Nusa Lembongan:

*“I believe that the day trippers should not be allowed to land on the island without paying the high tax, a landing tax. So that’s really it. Day trippers are a catastrophe. They come, they don’t spend money, they create traffic jams, and they ruin the environment. So we don’t want day trippers. We don’t want these 2000 or 3000 Chinese tourists coming over in the morning, standing on the platforms, running engines on the sea, making noise, throwing the rubbish through the window and then going home at night and leaving all that rubbish behind without any profit for the locals. We don’t want that.”*

Most participants of the study declared that they do not want mass tourism on the island. However, they also explained that the perceptions about mass tourism are highly conflicting across the local community: “The issue of tourism has always been a hot topic for a lot of people here, whether we want mass tourism or sustainable tourism.” Many people on the island support the development of mass tourism as they see economic potential in it. Also, a lot of locals are now involved in business partnerships with Chinese investors. Nevertheless, some participants claim that they have been in contact with an increasing number of locals who generally support mass tourism but are becoming increasingly upset that mass tourism is operated not from the island itself but by Chinese investors. They would like to change that because even though many do not worry about environmental sustainability and waste pollution, they would still prefer tourism to be operated locally so that the money would support the island’s local economy.

Furthermore, many participants also explained that regulation of the mass tourism industry in Nusa Lembongan is complex as the local community is small, everyone knows each other, and nobody wants to offend anyone by acting against their financial interests. Also, a few of the participants emphasized that it is challenging to make changes across Balinese society due to the strict social organization across the castes. It causes a lot of social pressure on individuals, as standing out or opposing the practices that the rest agree on is not well considered. The following quote from a local person illustrates the difficulty in reconciling one’s views with caring for others living situations:

*“It is quite complicated, because...if I say that I am not into mass tourism, but I can't really say that because there are a lot of families here that depend on tourism and exactly mass tourism.”*

### 6.2.1 Problem with excess garbage

When talking about the environment in Nusa Lembongan, the most common concern among respondents relates to environmental pollution. In particular, they point out the massive amount of unmanaged waste. To all the respondents, excessive waste was the motivation to begin fighting against the problem. As stated by most interviewees, the amount of waste pollution is very high inland and in the water, and waste is dumped everywhere on the island. One of the respondents, who is a founder of a cleaning initiative that currently operate in Nusa Lembongan, described her experience when she first arrived on the island in 2018 as follow:

*“I went as a tourist to dive with mantas and when I saw what was happening I couldn't stop crying....I just saw this big amount of plastic around manta rays....And then I saw the village. In the village both sides on the street were just rubbish. The rubbish was accumulated everywhere. I mean, for me it was a shock..... And then when I went to the beach it was the same problem. It was rubbish everywhere. When I went to the mangrove or to the jungle, it was the same.”*

When asked to what extent they think that the mass tourism industry aggravates the pollution problem on the island, all participants declared that they do not blame tourism for the excessive amount of waste. However, they acknowledge that mass tourism contributes significantly to the increased amount of waste produced on the island. Furthermore, they claim that although there is a significant drop in the amount of waste when tourist activity is limited, the problem persists as there is still a lot of garbage dumped on the streets. Also, almost all the debris is not recycled but burned on the landfill or individually by the locals elsewhere.

Most respondents' concerns relate to how the waste is handled on the island, both by the local council and the locals themselves. Most claimed that the current system of garbage collection, run by private companies under the oversight of the local board, is ineffective. It only focuses on collecting the garbage around the main street on Jungut Batu and overlooks other crucial areas such as all the other streets, beaches, mangroves, etc. Also, as stated by

some participants, not everyone wants to pay about 50 000 IDR (3 Euros) a month to get their rubbish collected. Instead, many locals manage their garbage on their own, usually by burning it in the backyard, throwing it into the landfill, or making giant landfills in isolated areas, such as in the middle of the jungle and then burning it. They do so even though the government in Bali forbade people from burning trash under the fine of one million IDR as it contributes to releasing highly toxic fumes. The quote below presents the local perspective on the issue according to which current waste issues on the island are caused by a lack of waste management that leads tourists and the local community to throw away their garbage carelessly. The local women highlights that the creation of proper waste management systems would facilitate waste awareness and practices on the island:

*“I think that is about the system. That’s about the lack of waste management. Because if only the waste management is better than now I think people in the villages also will do the same. Because there are a lot of people here, especially locals who still are littering waste to the river or just throw away their waste on the road. So it is not only the habit or the thing that the tourists do, but also the locals do so.”*

Participants also mentioned that they experienced ambivalence and lack of engagement from the majority of the locals to clean the island from the garbage. Sometimes even reluctance. One of the participants explained that it was challenging for her to hang up the posters from an initiative called “refill my bottle.” It is an initiative encouraging tourists and locals to use reusable water bottles instead of single-use plastic bottles. She explained that many people forbid her to put the posters in the tourist-centered areas or near their shops, claiming that they earn more money selling the single-use water.

As the founder of the Lembongan Cleaning (LC) initiative explained, the local community considers the garbage issue a government problem. Some interviewees also complained that they encountered barriers in implementing cleaning and educational initiatives on the island. One of the participants explained that he tried to implement environmental education in schools, but the teachers refused his idea. Other participants explained that the lord mayor of the island was reluctant about the LC initiative in the beginning. Furthermore, as described by the founder of LC, it was difficult to reach out to politicians to get permission to clean the island: “I was sending them photos of me picking the rubbish on the beach, in the jungle. Photos of landfills, but the photos of landfills in the most beautiful places you can imagine. Then they finally accepted to receive me”. However, as further explained, once she received

the permission, she invited all politicians to the inauguration of the initiative. All of them did arrive to show their support in the eyes of the rest of the community. Nevertheless, most of the local community was unwilling to participate. As stated by one of the participants who lives and owns a business in Bali for twenty years and is a part of the LC project:

*“We have this association to clean the beach, Lembongan Cleaning. Before covid, it was working well but it was from money of owners of the hotels and restaurants. And at the max we had about 36 participants paying each month about 50 euro or 500000 rupiah or a bit more if they could. Out of 36 participants, there were only 3 locals contributing. Even though in Lembongan about half the locals own the business, and the other half is owned by the foreigners. Because in most cases they just don't care.”*

Many interviewees claimed that tourism could contribute to cleaning the island and contribute to solutions against waste pollution. The interviewees see tourism as a tool that can lead to positive change. But as claimed by most, the policies of tourism management must change. One of the participants explained that she believes that tourists can be easily educated to bring their water tumblers or to use less plastic. She explained that many tourists want to contribute to solutions by cleaning, donating, etc. On the other hand, the hotel owners and restaurant owners can inform tourists and provide them with tools to be more eco-friendly once they arrive on the island. As explained by one of the business owners in Nusa Lembongan:

*“So it is not tourism that is creating the problem, on the contrary, tourism want to clean the island and that's why we created Lembongan cleaning because we couldn't dare to have our customers arrive and have to cross a bare piece of land which was turning into a rubbish dump to reach the villas, the luxury villas that they have rented.”*

Throughout conversations about the waste problem on the island, the interviewees, both local and foreign, repeatedly highlighted a significant problem in how waste is managed across the local community. Many interviewees explained that careless disposal and burning of trash result from habits learned in the past when there was not so much plastic packaging arriving on the island, but there was primarily organic waste. These are habits that did not change along with the very rapid development of the island. Also, many interviewees highlight that these behaviors are caused by a lack of awareness and knowledge about proper ways of waste

disposal and a lack of available waste management systems. As explained by one of the locals:

*“Waste management system in Nusa Lembongan is definitely not prepared for mass tourism, but also there is no education behind that. So no one is being taught that they need to recycle. I mean that they need to separate the plastic bottles and the aluminium cans from the little packages and all those things. So no one is being taught that at all. So it is not that they are ignorant, it is just that they are not aware.”*

Moreover, one of the participants emphasized that the waste problem in Indonesia is complicated as it is a vast area to reach. Indonesia is a massive country with seventeen thousand islands located in the distance from one another. Adding up all the coastlines from all the islands, the total length of the coastline will be very long, and there are many fishing communities and tourism communities there. Moreover, many islands characterize by underdeveloped infrastructure, and not all villages have access to the road. Some can only be reached by boat, like Nusa Lembongan. But they also have waste that has to be managed somehow. The environmental activist from Indonesia explained:

*“The packaging reaches them. In such a small community there are small shops who sell for the community, not like supermarkets but like they call it a small toko or warung. And then so the stuff reaches the villages but then they don’t have the infrastructure to get it out again. So you can imagine how this contributes to ocean waste for example.”*

Also, some interviewees pointed out that Nusa Lembongan is located on the way to the narrowest point of the Indonesian Throughflow (ITF). Thus, there are powerful ocean currents where the water exchanges between the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, which escalates the garbage pollution problem even more due to the accumulation of garbage flow from both oceans around the island area.

### 6.2.2 Concern about environmental wellbeing

As was the case for the previous parts of the study, most participants expressed concern by the mass characteristic of tourism that causes environmental exploitation than by tourism itself. As argued by most interviewees, mass tourism generates irresponsible behaviors focused mainly on gaining fast profit with no consideration for the environment. From the

perspective of one of the participants explained current tourism practices on the island are as follow:

*“Most are not responsible businesses and most are not responsible tourists. I am not telling 100%, but I am telling most. Because they think they have to make as much money as possible, as soon as possible.”*

One of the issues raised by participants is that while an increasing number of tourists arrive on the island, nobody is educating them on how to behave respectfully towards the environment. Many participants have been worried about the local marine life, which is particularly vulnerable to the mass tourism industry as Nusa Lembongan is famous for its water sports. Those participants feel highly disturbed by how coral reefs and marine animals are disrespected. They look for an explanation of careless tourist" behaviors in their lack of knowledge of protecting marine life during water activities. As explained by one of the locals:

*“I know that when people were taken out snorkeling, they weren't really told that they shouldn't touch the corals or step on them. For us living on the island it is engraved into our brains. But for someone that has never even been in the ocean or seen marine animals, it's pretty much like...they don't know those things. So if they weren't told, they don't know. So I have seen first hand a lot of people walking on the reefs, or breaking the reefs, or engraving their names into the reefs and all those things which is really sad.”*

Many of the participants explained that mass tourism does not respect marine life. One of the participants explained that she saw tourists with local guides on the boats fishing in the coral reef, which is not allowed. Another participant saw tourists taking out starfishes from water and putting them in their pockets. She explained that when she approached them to say it was wrong, they just laughed at her. Most participants noticed that residents do not react to careless behaviors. They believe it is because they do not want to discourage tourists from coming back to the island in the future or recommending the island to other potential tourists.

Another important point made by participants refers to the careless treatment of manta rays. Manta rays are a symbol for all Nusa islands. Therefore most tourists arriving on the island chose to snorkel with them and often unskillfully try to interact with them. Because of that, manta rays have often been highly disturbed by large numbers of tourists entering their

territories, such as Manta Bay. The following quote of the local women illustrates the critique towards the way water attractions for mass tourists were organized before the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak:

*“Most of the people that come to Lembongan all want to snorkel and all want to dive with mantas. And when you go to these spots where mantas or any other marine animals are, the boats are parked like in the bay, on top of the mantas and everybody is not even taught how to interact with these marine animals. When you go snorkeling now there are maybe like one or two boats there with maybe about 20 people, but not what it used to be, 20 boats in the bay with maybe 20 or 30 people on each boat. And you can just imagine all the marine life. It is shocking, all the people that are surrounding them, looking at them and trying to touch them. So now that has significantly decreased which is great but so I am just a little bit afraid that when tourism comes back, that's just gonna start up again.”*

The quote above is interesting as it reflects a recurring concern of most participants that mass tourism will come back after lockdown with all its environmental drawbacks. This concern outlined two central conflicting attitudes that were assisting participants throughout the conversations: hope and hopelessness. Most participants referred to tourism returning throughout the discussions, hoping that it will bring new, more cautious ways of creating a touristic experience on the island led by the local governors and local community. Some wondered that maybe the global pandemic experience had taught people to be more humble and appreciate the planet and its natural resources more. Yet, most participants mentioned feeling hopeless that unsustainable tourism practices on the island will change. They believe that mass tourism on the island is led by greed and an endless need for enrichment that does not leave space for sustainable tourism development. Thus, they suspect that the downturn of the economy on the island may eventually contribute to its even greater unsustainable development when the virus situation calms down. As stated by one of the local environmental activists and people in business:

*“Yeah..but anyway..I never stopped fighting. I carry on, but really I don't hope for anything. I hope that the community of patriote in Lembongan will one day make change.”*

### 6.2.3 Government approach to tourism development

The Indonesian government, as well as local politicians, are accused of incompetence. Thus, most participants perceive the government's actions as the primary reason why today's mass tourism practices are allowed to continue. The following quote demonstrates the perception of a local young woman on the government's approach to tourism development:

*“If anything, the government contributes to making people not really think about the impact on the environment (...). It is always about trying to make more tourists come here, but not trying to conserve our island or our environment (...). So I believe that no, the government is not doing anything to make tourism more sustainable.”*

In the view of most participants, the government focuses purely on developing the tourism industry and encouraging increasing numbers of people to visit the island without consideration of the environment. It involves the continuous expansion of the tourist infrastructure for broader terrains. Some complained that instead of sustaining what they already have and can not control, the government is planning to expand the touristic area into all Bali, so that tourism will not be centralized in the south but will be expanded into the north part of the island as well. In regards to that, the participants explained that most infrastructural changes are done at the cost of the environment.

Some participants were also troubled by the government's approach to the reactivation of the tourism industry after the pandemic outbreak by opening green zones in Nusa Dua, Ubud, and Jimbaran areas. Those participants clarified that they want tourism to come back so that the economy could stand back on its feet, but they feel disturbed that the government always prioritizes tourists. They explained that the green zones are created to make tourists feel safe when visiting Bali. However, in their view, the government does not undertake any effort to make the local population feel safe, considering living in such a fragile environment. Furthermore, they were disappointed that the government did not induce any regulations to conserve the island during the pandemic lockdown. As they claimed, the post-crisis recovery would be a great time to begin sustainability changes.

Moreover, many participants mentioned that they often felt like their actions to protect the environment were done against the government's will. As claimed by many participants,

there are people on the island who want a change. These people want to promote sustainable tourism and do sustainable businesses that benefit the community and the environment. However, it is challenging for them because they have no support from the local government and society. As explained by one of the business owners:

*“We have got some operators who are settling up with very clean operations, sustainable operations which leave very little footprint on the island, but they don't do it with the support of the local population or with the support of local government. They do it against them (...). They do it against the local authorities who want to have mass tourism because they know they're gonna make a lot of money. The more money flows and the more corruption there is and the more the public service is gonna grab money.”*

Likewise, the businessmen who do not get support when creating sustainable businesses, locally based environmental activists are also most often left on their own. As stated by the local businessmen: “It’s good people doing very good things. And otherwise, it’s nothing”. Many other participants confirmed that statement without me even asking. They explained that everything they did for the environment in Nusa Lembongan was done entirely on their own or with the help of other people involved in environmental protection, but without any significant support from the local governors. The quote below presents one of the examples of a person who works to clean the island and at the same time provide job opportunity for people who are very poor, but do not get any help to keep this initiative going:

*“In Lembongan, I have a good friend of mine and he did a very good job with people who are very poor on the island. He collects and sorts out plastic and then sends it to Bali. From Bali it is sent to Surabaya, a big town in Java, and then it is recycled. It’s an important job, but he doesn't get financial support to do that from the village and administration. He only gets money from selling the plastic. And that is a problem, because he is on his own and works hard and he has maybe 6 employees. So there are people doing good things. It is not all dark. But mostly there is not a wish from local government and local society to change something,”*

Many participants also complained that the laws and regulations that the government introduces in Indonesia are most often not implemented in practice. The given example of that was a ban on using plastic. In the view of most participants, most residents “don’t care” and continue using plastic. Moreover, the industries such as supermarkets are still handing out plastic bags. Another example given was the giant mountain of rubbish near the Harbour

of Benoa in Bali, which is illegal. As explained by one of the participants, it is unlawful because there has been a law set up already three years ago that it is not allowed to make mountains of rubbish. But, people are still doing them, and nobody does anything about it.

Some participants highlighted the complexity in the implementation of the policies due to the decentralization of the government. As explained by one of the environmental activists in Indonesia:

*“That’s a problem everywhere in Indonesia. One reason is decentralisation of the government. So for example if there is a law made in Jakarta by the central government, it has to go to 34 provinces to the governors offices and then the governors needs to pass it on the districts. Because in every province you have several districts, for example in my province we have 23 districts, like regencies with a regent and every regiency has its own parliament and its own department for environment, education, health, forestry, etc. And so from the district government it needs to trickle down to the sub district and from sub district to the village level and then to sub village level. So if anywhere in the long chain somebody does not pick up it is just not implemented. That’s the biggest problem.”*

However, as mentioned by most participants, increasing mass tourism, overdeveloped tourist infrastructure, and lack of environmental awareness across local populations are caused by a government that does not care for sustainability and promotes looking at short-term solutions than long-term perspectives. The quote below presents a view of a local entrepreneur who many times tried to negotiate with and proposed to provincial governors alternative solutions to care for the environment more, but he was rejected every time:

*“With Lembongan it is so evident, because it would be so easy to make one place protected, not from all pollution but to try... to try to make something more respectful, but no. Not at all.”*

#### 6.2.4 Corruption

As explained by most participants, one of the central problems in achieving sustainable tourism and achieving environmental sustainability in general in Bali and Nusa Lembongan is corruption. Most participants explained that many conservation areas are already or are planned to be under construction due to corruption. Especially for continued infrastructural

development of the tourism industry. One of the examples given by a local entrepreneur in Nusa Lembongan presents how corruption operates on the island:

*“The reefs all around the island are protected normally. It is classified as protected. You are not allowed to run an industry on it. You go to Lembongan, the island is surrounded by private platforms that receive 2000 Chinese per day in a normal day operation. 2000 a day, ok? How has this happened?”*

The participants repeatedly complained that in Nusa Lembongan, money is a solution for all kinds of business inaccuracies. Thus, money opens up all the business possibilities in Bali and Nusa Lembongan. Regardless of the areas are protected, regardless if it involves the resettlement of local communities, and regardless of environmental consequences: “If you pay, you get your way out.”

Additionally, one of the most disturbing for some participants, “corrupted cases,” is a reclamation of Benoa Bay in Bali mainland. The Government of Indonesia itself does not propose the project, but the area has become a target of very influential investors. They want to clear out seven hundred hectares of a mangrove conservation area, healthy marine ecosystems, and oceanfront to build a luxury artificial island destined specifically under the needs of the tourism industry with hotels, golf courses, exclusive shops, etc. As explained by participants, the plan raised criticism among local communities and environmental activists who argue that the reclamation will cause environmental degradation and affect traditional and cultural sites. Although the permits allowing reclamation were granted to the investors by the government, the physical development of the area has not begun. The fragment of the conversation with a local young woman shows the struggle that she and many other residents go through over the last eight years to save Benoa Bay:

*“Bali is quite big, but they anyway want to do reclamation in the conservation area (...). Our struggle, our rejection, our protest is still happening here in Bali up until now since 2013. We do a demonstration monthly to get the government to be more strict with this, because this is a conservation area but...yeah.. I think it is a money talk.”*

### 6.3 Interviewee’s post COVID-19 reflections on tourism industry

With no exception, all participants declared that the COVID-19 outbreak had devastating consequences for the Balinese economy and population. However, the implications for the

people of Nusa Lembongan were even worse due to its isolation from Bali. Since March last year, the island has been in lockdown, and now it's slowly reopening but still focuses mainly on domestic tourism. As explained by the participants, tourism was the primary source of income on the island before the pandemic hit. Over 90% of the local economy was tourism-related. Therefore, when international tourism stopped utterly, many people lost their jobs and livelihoods practically overnight. As most local families lived hand-to-mouth without any financial reserves, many were left with nothing, and the island was at a very high risk of famine.

In the face of this economic crisis and the threat of famine, many local and foreign activists and entrepreneurs organized fundraisings to make food supplies and feed the villages for the first three months after lockdown. They also explained to the locals that those three months were the time to plant, start fishing, and go back to seaweed because this crisis would last long. According to participants, at the beginning of the pandemic, the locals were left with almost no information from the government about what was going to happen, so they did not know what to do. Moreover, it has been claimed that the government help during the lockdown was marginal. They helped by sending rice, giving a little money to people with social security numbers and some hotel owners in April last year, but there was no further assistance provided after that.

As stated by participants, after the first critical three months, the locals managed to open a local barter market where usually there is no money exchange, but people exchange goods for goods. The locals started growing food and fishing. Also, they returned to growing seaweed. Although the famine was averted, the economic situation on the island is still very difficult. The quote below illustrates the island's struggle from a local man who dedicated his life to tourism. He majored in tourism in school and then worked in the tourism industry all his life until the pandemic hit. Like many other local people, he lost all his income very rapidly:

*“I can say it is very sad...without tourism which is the main source of people's income, and now I am only trying to survive so I can get food by trying to get food donations from Darmawan people or tourism entrepreneurs in Lembongan...it is very difficult.”*

As stated by most of the participants of the study, the traumatic pandemic experience has shifted the perception among the local population into thinking that they can not entirely rely

on tourism and base their economy mainly on developing their industry. As stated by one of the locals: “Covid-19 pandemic shows that this industry really is not as strong as we thought..it can not give us the security that we thought we have.”

Many participants reflected on the events that shook the tourism industry before the pandemic, like volcanic eruptions or earthquakes. They now perceive those events as warnings reminding them how fragile the tourism industry is. Pandemic made people realize that things can change very rapidly from being very good to being very bad in the tourism industry. Although all of the participants hope for the tourism industry to return, they explained that covid-19 made them realize that for the same situation never to repeat, they have to focus on finding alternative ways to earn money. Most participants mentioned that the local economy should partially go back to its roots. Thus even when tourism resumes, they should simultaneously focus on doing things they used to before tourism developed on the island, such as fishing and seaweed farming. The quote below presents the perspective of one of the business owners in Lembongan who explained why tourism should not be the only source of income on the island:

*“Well that was a catastrophe waiting to happen. Of course when all the economy is depending on one industry that means that the situation is very, very volatile. And that’s what happened. We had several warnings. First warning was when Mount Agung started fuming and that stopped tourism for a couple of months. Then we had a tsunami, then we had a series of earthquakes in Lombok that affected tourism. So we had a few warnings there telling us guys, something is going to happen here. And when it will happen you are fully relying on tourism and you’re gonna die from it.”*

Some participants also reflected on how their personal life had changed over last year when fewer tourists visited the island. One of the most prevalent things mentioned was the rediscovery of the beauty and potential of the island and the opportunity to once again experience activities that used to be the “norm,” such as simply being lonely on the beach or surfing without disturbance which became very unusual when mass tourism developed. Generally, the sight of an empty island evokes mixed feelings among participants. On the one hand, they are happy to have the island back for themselves. However, on the other hand, they know that tourism is significant to the island’s economy, and many people have experienced a completely different, better life due to its development. Therefore they are also

worried about seeing empty hotels, restaurants, and other tourist spots. As explained by one of the locals:

*“It has definitely shifted my work life. But in my personal life, I absolutely love the empty streets and no traffic and the number of people in the water, so it's a bit of a balance (...). It was a little bit of a getaway for us. To experience empty beaches and empty surf lineups...so that was really beautiful (...). But it is also really sad to see it now when there is not much tourism because everyone has just changed their lifestyles as they have gained all this income from the industry. But it is really cool to see that a lot of people have actually gone back and now seaweed farming has started again and a lot of people are fishing for their own food and it's really, really interesting to see that shift.”*

Furthermore, as most of the participants stated, the pandemic outbreak has provoked some awareness among the local population. They realized that they can not entirely rely on tourism and that their natural resources were being destroyed. It is because now the water in Nusa Lembongan is clearer than ever, and the island is getting cleaner from pollution than before. The following quote presents the insights shared by one of the locals on how the island's environment has changed since the start of the pandemic:

*“Since the beginning of the lockdown we have seen many more marine animals in the ocean. So for example there was a point that we have seen dolphins every single day in the ocean and that was because there was much less boat traffic in the area. That was really, really beautiful. Also the water was much clearer, and much less trash in there and less gas, and the sky is clearer. Yeah, that was really beautiful to see. So now we know that this is how it should be.”*

#### 6.4 Interviewee's vision on the future of tourism on the island

When discussing the future with participants of the study and how they envision their favorite version of tourism in the future, the participants offered various interesting ideas and answers. Still, one that has been significantly repeated was that they all want to be heard.

*“If I could imagine or think of sustainable tourism that I want, it should be the tourism that listens to the needs of the local people too.”*

The majority of participants explained that there is a tendency on the island that tourism development is planned by the government mainly with consideration of short-term benefits rather than the impacts that specific actions will have in the future. Instead, most participants want tourism planning to undertake a more holistic approach that will consider long-term consequences. They want tourism that will enable their kids and grandkids to live on the island, feel at home and enjoy the beauty of the environment. Furthermore, they want tourism to be planned by people who understand Nusa Lembongan and incorporate perspectives from all social classes in tourism development so that nobody is left behind.

Also, many participants explained that the development of the sustainable tourism industry in Nusa Lembongan is, to a great extent, a matter of stopping corruption and good collaboration between the local community, local governors, and business owners. Such partnership would facilitate joint efforts to sustain the environment, establish sustainable rules for watersports, restaurants, and hotels, and help reduce unsustainable behaviors of tourists and locals. According to participants, the hotel owners could also educate their guests. For example, they could inform tourists to bring their tumble bottles and reusable shopping bags for holidays. They could also provide tourists with such equipment in the form of rental included in the price of the rooms. Also, people working in the industry could educate tourists on how to respectfully treat coral reefs and marine life and snorkel with mantas without disturbing them.

Also, participants have highlighted that sustainable tourism development includes developing proper waste infrastructure and a solid waste collection system supported by the local government. Therefore, it would contribute to making the island cleaner and, at the same time, to the improvement of the quality of the environment, living conditions of the locals, and increased satisfaction of tourists arriving at the island. Furthermore, some participants also suggested that the local communities could make a living through waste as many tourists want to be engaged in environmental sustainability on the island so the locals could organize different kinds of clean-ups.

In the opinion of some participants, sustaining tourism would also require the Indonesian government to develop new tourism destinations across Indonesian islands to spread the number of tourists arriving in Indonesia. It is claimed that this approach would take off the mass tourism pressure from already existing popular destinations, such as Nusa Lembongan. Participants also highlighted that the government should provide different solutions besides

tourism on the island, such as livestock. Moreover, many participants highlighted that relying entirely on tourism in developing the local economy has already proven plenty of times not to be a sustainable and safe solution. Thus, in their view, the island should encourage locals to do seaweed farming instead of allowing the continued development of tourism infrastructure. As explained by one of the locals:

*“Seaweed farming need to be the focus of sustainable tourism in my opinion, just because who knows there might be another pandemic, but the seaweed farming will forever be here so that is something we should focus on, as opposed to building more accommodation, building more cafes, building more restaurants and all those things.”*

## **7. Discussion**

In this section, I will introduce the main research findings through interpretation of different statements gathered during data collection in relation to the theoretical framework and the research questions that guide this study. As the aim of the study is to thoroughly understand the perceptions on tourism practices in Nusa Lembongan, seen through the lenses of local residents as well as people involved in the tourism industry and environmental protection on the island, the research questions are as follow: 1) How do the participants relate to the current tourism practices in Nusa Lembongan and their impact on the environment? and 2) How can, according to participants, the concept of sustainable tourism be turned into reality in Nusa Lembongan?

### **7.1 RQ 1: rethinking growth**

The analysis results build on existing evidence of previous research that tourism development is being commonly understood through the prism of economic progress measured by rising GDP. As can be interpreted from the data acquired, this is also a case for Nusa Lembongan. In the view of the participants, the development of the tourism industry on the island prioritizes mainly economic growth and continuous expansion. As ironically but humorously explained by one of the participants: “the money is king.” Moreover, the government is considered to play a significant role in promoting mass tourism. Not only by supporting endless pursuit for economic enrichment but also by encouraging the island destinations to compete with one another for the highest number of visitors to “always be at the top.”

Among the participants, tourism in Nusa Lembongan is considered a positive phenomenon. In their view, tourism has significantly contributed to the local economy and improved local living opportunities. Participants see the industry's potential to continually boost the socio-economic development of the island and its residents. However, they consider current tourism practices unsustainable, explaining that the problem lies in how tourism is managed in Indonesia. Or, as stated by some, "not managed at all."

The study results build on existing evidence that mass tourism is a strategy for economic development in Nusa Lembongan. According to participants, this approach is guided by the thought that the more tourists arrive on the island and the more tourist facilities will be built, the more economic gains will be accumulated. At the same time, increasing capital is considered a path to improve the island's socio-economic and environmental well-being. But, paradoxically, the study results indicate that the growth strategy has the opposite effects in practice. Moreover, the economic growth in Nusa Lembongan does not go parallel with efforts to improve environmental well-being and increased equity across the local society. On the contrary, the participants argued that the provincial government does not take the initiative to induce socio-environmental improvements such as developing community-based tourism, finding solutions to help the locals clean their island, and educating the residents about environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, among study participants, the two most often mentioned environmental concerns refer to systematic marine overexploitation and garbage pollution on the island. The former was explained as Nusa Lembongan has been recognized for and attracts tourists with its water activities. Thus the most endangered and the most significant damage is done to marine life. Furthermore, it has been claimed that lack of education aggravates the ways people interact with marine life and increases careless behaviors among locals and tourists. Regarding the latter, participants argued that although mass tourism exacerbates the waste issue on the island, it is not the leading cause. In addition to unsustainable tourism, the problem is magnified by an influx of garbage caused by ITF and Indonesia's specificity of being the world's largest island country, making it challenging to manage the waste systems on all islands. However, the general perception seems that the leading causes of ubiquitous litter in Nusa Lembongan are; lack of recyclability, lack of waste management systems, lack of awareness and education across the local community about waste management, and lack of real engagement to fix the problem from the authorities. Moreover, according to participants,

a well-planned and managed tourism industry can contribute to solutions in fighting for environmental well-being on the island.

Thus, the results of this analysis support the assumptions of the degrowth framework that growth-driven development of the industry leads to tourism beyond the sustainable barriers. However, although tourism is promoted within a sustainable development approach as an economic strategy to increase the local environmental and socio-economic well-being, the growth-oriented approach to tourism development has proved in practice to be uneconomic at the pace it is currently occurring. Thus, as the industry grows, the environment is being proportionally deteriorated, and the social inequality gap increases.

## 7.2 RQ 2: creating sustainability without growth

When discussing with participants what sustainable tourism on the island should be like, most declared they would like tourism for the residents, not the opposite. The study results demonstrate a strong correlation between the development of the tourism industry focused on economic growth and increasing power imbalances. Moreover, the data further contributes to a clearer understanding of how those inequalities hinder the pursuit of the objectives of tourism sustainability.

The problem of inequality caused by the growth orientation to tourism development has been repeatedly emphasized throughout the interviews. As stated by the participants, the power and privilege across the tourism industry in Nusa Lembongan belong to the richest. In consequence, the gap between the richest and the poorest is continually increasing. The richest own most of the tourist facilities, while the others are just working for them. The participants explained that it is difficult for a lower and middle-class Balinese to compete with rich investors who have the budget to build more exclusive tourist facilities and host more guests.

Moreover, the participants shed light on different perspectives on foreign investment on the island. There are about half of Balinese and half of foreign investors owning the tourism facilities in Lembongan. The research shows that in the eyes of Balinese foreign investment is a strong competitor for the locals. Not only because of the higher amount of money that foreigners can afford to invest but also because foreign investors tend to know better what

foreign tourists want to experience during their stay on the island and adjust their businesses accordingly. However, many times during the interviews, it has also been pointed out that it is important to recognize different types of foreign enterprises when discussing the impact of foreign investments on the island. From a foreign investor's perspective, foreign investments tend to be accused of being the cause of most sustainability problems on the island. They argue that all foreign investors cannot be "lump together" and treated as they all have the same intentions to overexploit the island and leave. On the contrary, it has been argued that some foreign investors started their businesses on the island long before mass tourism arrived on the island, precisely because of the lack of mass tourism and intending to create sustainable tourism that will respect the pristine beauty of the environment.

With this in mind, it has been explained that there are foreign-owned businesses on the island that invest in the island's internal development and fight for sustainable tourism locally. That means that; they hire only local employees, offer fair job opportunities, including different types of life insurances, offer personal development opportunities, invest some of the company's revenues in cleaning the island, and develop various sustainable tourism initiatives. And, there are also foreign, affluent investors who aim purely at boosting mass tourism. For those investors, only the short-term effects of tourism matter. Thus, the more tourists will arrive and will be hosted, the more money they will acquire.

However, with this said, it has been noted that since 2018 it was primarily foreign business owners that contributed to the Lembongan Cleaning initiative to assure that the island will be cleaned monthly by the local team. Only three out of thirty-six contributors were local business owners. The participants have explained this as a result of a lack of education across the local community about environmental sustainability, recycling, and waste management in general. Thus, even when the rich, local business owners have very successful businesses, they do not want to invest their revenues in environmental cleaning. Instead, it has been claimed that most locals believe that it is the government's responsibility to clean the island.

Furthermore, as explained by the participants, the irony is that while the government claims to strive for sustainable tourism, it continually turns a blind eye to corruption and supports the development of mass tourism. The growth approach to tourism development supports corruption making it a significant issue on the island. The neverending pursuit for money has led to the fact that if paid, the wealthiest can, with no consequences, operate their businesses

on the island outside the laws, or the regulations will adjust accordingly. Thus, the richest can buy themselves a permit to build even in the protected areas or lands, requiring resettlement of the whole families living there for generations. This way, even the most fragile and conservation areas are being transformed into tourist facilities. At the same time, the participants claim that people who oppose the endless expansion and propose sustainable initiatives for tourism development are being ignored.

According to participants, uncontrolled growth has borne uncontrolled greed. It has been claimed that massive economic inflow caused by the rapid development of the tourism industry aroused a relentless desire for a constant increase in material gain across the local society and the governing authorities. It has led to the development of mass tourism, whose approach is never to stop growing. As stated by one of the participants: “The only thing that tourism has done to Bali and Nusa Lembongan is to make greed more acute.” According to interviewees, greed constitutes a barrier to creating sustainable tourism. It contributes to the displacement of the priorities from environmental and social wellbeing to economic growth. It also creates an illusion that economic growth per se can be an answer to all other existing problems in the long run. However, as claimed by the participants, in practice, tourism-driven by growth is a self-destructing industry.

During the conversations, participants many times explained that they feel powerless in fighting for sustainable tourism. Moreover, they claimed that they feel as if they are fighting against the government. And that all sustainable initiatives they do, are also against the government. In their struggle, they do not get support from the government or the local governors. Instead, most attempts to negotiate changes are rejected, remain unlistened, or sometimes even sabotaged. As explained, the residents, the entrepreneurs, and the activists who engage in sustainable initiatives on the island by, e.g., doing sustainable businesses or cleaning the island, must do everything independently. It means that they cannot count on receiving more assistance except getting some permission from the governors. Thus, as explained by the participants, people who care for the environment often pay from their pocket or sometimes by organizing different sustainability initiatives or crowd-funds. As described, these are people determined to fight for a sustainable environment and tourism. However, in challenging the growth, they are on their own.

Furthermore, as claimed by the participants, although pandemic experiences were very traumatic for the local population, they have also opened people's eyes to many issues related to mass tourism. Above all, it has made more people realize that if they want to build resilience to unexpected events that could downturn the income from tourism once again in the future, then tourism cannot be the only source of income for all residents. Moreover, observing how the environment regenerates in the absence of tourists raised awareness about the fragility of the local environment. Nevertheless, some participants mentioned that they are afraid that all the old unsustainable habits will come back along with tourism. "I fear that as soon as tourism is gonna resume, greed is gonna come back galloping."

These aspects of the local reality should be considered when analyzing how to plan and manage tourism development differently in Nusa Lembongan. Thus, in participants' view, the development of such tourism requires a significant change of priorities in local tourism planning and management. Among others, the main ideas highlighted by participants involve government engagement in including alternative ways of earning money on the island so that the economy is no longer dependent solely on income from tourism. In the participant's view, the change into sustainable tourism requires primarily; creating proper waste management facilities, creating safe port facilities, introducing sustainability and waste management education, counteracting corruption, cooperation between the local governors and hotel and restaurants owners, and supporting people who take sustainability initiatives.

## **8. Conclusions**

Referring back to the quote of António Guterres, in the view of the participants, tourism can undoubtedly be a force for good in the world. However, as indicated by the study results, it can not be tourism that prioritizes growth. Growth-oriented tourism development leads to mass tourism which entails a number of destructive socio-economic and environmental consequences. The degrowth framework proposes a bottom-up approach to tourism development. It encourages sustainable tourism development planning that answers the needs of the local population based on their experiences of everyday reality. Thus in response to the interviewees' will of change and variety of the effects of mass tourism, the degrowth framework offers an alternative path to tourism development in Nusa Lembongan. It is a path that prioritizes the preservation of the local environment and the local community's well-being. From the degrowth perspective, achieving real change in Nusa Lembongan in

which tourism contributes to sustainable well-being and developing a more balanced economic, social and environmental relationships requires looking beyond GDP and the commercial touristic slogans. Instead, degrowth proposes shifting the current growth-centered global approach into a steady-state economy.

Furthermore, the study indicated that the sustainability of tourism is a controversial topic across the local population of Nusa Lembongan. It seems that the general perception is that the sustainability of tourism foreshadows the end of socio-economic development. Thus, changing the island requires the local authorities and population to understand that the degrowth approach to sustainability is not about the end of development. It is precisely the opposite. It is about making economic development more stable, long-lasting, and equal. It focuses on balancing the overall throughput proportionally to local ecological limits ensuring more sustainable production and consumption patterns within the tourism industry. In other words, it is about the development of an industry that will be flourishing because it will not use environmental resources over its regenerative capacities. Therefore the industry will sustain economic income and provide security for the local inhabitants for the years to come. Thus, degrowth contribution to sustainability is about creating economic development without growth. Such tourism that answers the needs of the study participants and sees sustainability through the lenses of degrowth is tourism that focuses on quality, not quantity.

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## Appendix

Map: Nusa Lembongan on a scale of Bali



## Interview guide

PART 1: Introduction to the interview
Do you live in Nusa Lembongan? If not, what is your connection to the island?
In which ways are you engaged with the tourism industry on the island?
Are you cooperating or volunteering with any organization that has in the agenda any environmental or tourism oriented tasks?
PART 2: Perspectives on tourism
How has the tourism industry influenced your life?
How do you feel about Nusa Lembongan being such a tourist-oriented island?
How do you think sustainable tourism should look on the island?
PART 3: Tourism in a broad context
How has the tourism industry developed and transformed on the island over the years?
How has the tourism industry changed the life of people living on the island?
How Balinese are reacting to mass tourism?
What in your opinion is causing such immense garbage pollution on the island?
What impact does current tourism practices have on the island's environment?
Is the tourism industry particularly impacting any of the environmental spheres on the island?
What measures have been taken by the government in order to reduce the impact of mass tourism on the environment on the island?
Can you relate to the problem of water shortages on the island caused by the tourism industry?
Can you relate to the issue of increased foreign ownership in Balinese tourism industry?
How is it in Nusa Lembongan now, during a pandemic crisis?
What measures have been taken to facilitate life of Nusa Lembongan's residents during a pandemic crisis?