

Chapter 4


Beyond Tourismphobia: Conceptualizing a New Framework to Analyze Attitudes Towards Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the factors that have led to the emergence of expressions of criticism toward tourism. This review serves to frame the original contribution of this text: a theoretical model that clarifies the defining features of the main attitudes towards tourism. Merton's model is here adjusted for the analysis of a new relationship between social ends and economic means. In this case, the end is economic progress. The way is the tourism, conceived as a massive social phenomenon. The relation between goals and means generates tensions. Its management derives in strategies of adaptation that include different ways of identification or discussion. The five types of adaptation of the new model are useful for addressing subject positions, political discourses, or attitudinal dispositions towards tourism. To illustrate this typology a purposive sampling of news on the tourismphobia has been selected, with no statistical generalization reflecting the constituent elements of each of the types: legitimization, innovative criticism, resignation, radical criticism, and subversive utopia.

INTRODUCTION

The crises suffered by capitalism during the decade of the 1970s were used by different elite groups to promote the substitution of Keynesian policies, which were influential in the thirty years following the Second World War, by policies adapted to new times, more commonly known as neoliberal and flexibly

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policies (Schoenberger, 1988; Harvey, 2005). Changes to the principles that oriented the management of the most powerful capitalist states affected millions of people, both in periphery countries (Chosudovsky, 2003) and in regions that had been more central (Bauman, 1998).

At the same time, the digitalization of the economy and the application of technological innovations to movement of people and commodities served to extend and intensify historical processes of dislocation of production and transnational consumption. Among these latter processes, we highlight the growth of international tourism, which was limited up to the middle of the 20th Century but has now become a massive industry. In 2018 the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) registered 1.4 billion international tourist movements, such that a great number of cities that were important industrial centers in the Fordist Age (as well as regions of the Global South that aim to better position themselves in the world system) now have opportunities for development thanks to the flow of tourism and leisure-oriented mobility around the planet (Burns & Novelli, 2008). Under this scenario, urban areas thousands of kilometers apart compete to position themselves as consumption spaces capable of attracting the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990). The success of tourism is also accompanied by a very positive public image, that of being a universal social right (UNWTO, 2001).

In the face of this scenario public institutions must restrict their basic functions as defined by the era of welfare capitalism (Esping-Andersen, 1990), by which they had to guarantee to their citizenry (and the cultural and natural patrimony) some level of independence and protection with respect to market ups and downs. Now, they must act as specialized promoters capable of attracting private investment and managing physical and human resources they are in charge of according to efficiency criteria (Cochrane, 2007; Harvey, 1989). In this way, a new order is being constructed which is characterized by the commoditization of urban space. It is conceived above all in terms of a set of opportunities for business.

WHY DO THEY CALL IT OVERTOURISM WHEN THEY MEAN CAPITALISM?

The concept of overtourism has become popular recently and refers to a phenomenon that has been studied for decades: the influence of tourism in the massification of spaces. This term has been defined as “the situation in which the impact of tourism, at certain times and in certain locations, exceeds physical, ecological, social, economic, psychological, and/or political capacity thresholds” (Peeters et al., 2018, p. 15).

However, as explained in detail by Habermas (1973), the saturation limits of a cultural system are much more difficult to determine than the limits that permit survival of a natural system. The increase in the number of people that circulate in the cities that are the primary receivers of tourist flow requires a constant increase in available lodging. It requires the availability of those attracted by new work opportunities, and it requires a reorganization of urban space and restructuring of the business fabric at the same time that it implies resettlement of historical residents and redefines the functions carried out by places. As in many other capitalist processes, the logic of growth gives way to a shock in terms of the ecological capacity of the environment and in terms of existing ways of life which, however, rarely results in unequivocal criticism of the reasons for these changes. On the contrary, space becomes a battle ground in which old and new social actors participate with different interests and unequal strengths (Milano & Mansilla, 2018).

The use of tourism by neoliberal capitalism along with the confluence of the real estate economy has promoted the apparition of social problems that require profound analysis: more precarious labor conditions of workers in the sector, the irresponsible consumption of public resources, noise pollution

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