Panel ASA'07: F3-Tourism, ethnography and the patrimonialization of culture.

Title:

An anthropological dilemma: facing the patrimonialization of culture in tourism contexts[1].

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Abstract
Based upon many years of fieldwork in tourism contexts I reflect upon the theoretical and methodological problem of studying 'culture' in tourism environments. Though tourism has been Spain's most important source of incomes, very few social scientists have paid close attention to it. The cultural, developmental and research policies were not especially fond of promoting the study of tourism. However, once tourism trends moved from heliothalasotropism into culturalism and ruralism during the eighties, 'culture' has been perceived as a resource. From then on, development planning in rural areas and research projects started focusing on what was labelled as 'cultural heritage/*patrimonio cultural*', and dozens of "*expertos en patrimonio*", articles, books, congresses, seminars appeared in the market. Regarding anthropology, this sudden interest in 'cultural heritage', much on the contrary, interfered and conditioned many of the anthropological interests; what bring us back to the relation between power, knowledge and critical social thinking. I conclude that in order to face this dilemma, anthropologists must pay closer attention to cultural heritage/*patrimonio cultural* as a 'meta-cultural product', and should deeply analyse the mediation role of tourism space in order to understand the production and reproduction of meanings both among tourists and neighbours. I exemplify my arguments on this process with some case-studies I have carried out in different parts of Spain.

Introduction: some premises to read this paper

(1)   In plain terms, social anthropology is a scientific discipline that studies the diversity of human groups in all the spheres of the social life: their expressive and rational manifestations, the transformation of and their adaptation to territories, the modes of social relations, what is said (sayings) and what is done (doings). It analyses, in short, the compound of social practices, contexts, realities and facts that *gives sense* to the process of life in society. Culture, thus, is that compound of manifestations, modes, what is said, what is made, circumstances and contexts that

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[1] This is a draft version. Suggestions, critics and comments are encouraged and most welcomed. Some parts of this paper have been submitted to *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*. Please do not quote without author's permission.

acquires its sense within a specific group and *gives sense* to the social life (either traditional or fluid identities).

(2)   A glance over any tourist brochures and booklets confirms that the tourism industry is nowadays mostly based upon the usage of words such as authenticity, tradition, culture and cultural patrimony, to name just a few. Furthermore, the slovenliness usage of terms such as culture, development, space, sustainable, or cultural heritage/*patrimonio cultural* by scholars does not help to deepen in our understanding of the ongoing social and cultural processes in tourism contexts. Probably because many key terms are at once categories of social and political *practice* and *analysis.* For instance, identity is used by social and political groups to persuade people that they are 'identical' with one another (Brubaker y Cooper, 2000:4-5).

(3)   Most of current anthropological studies on tourism focus on cultural heritage and/or development. In tourism contexts the so-called 'cultural heritage' has become a compelling reality. However, does this mean that anthropology should transform cultural heritage into a central category of analysis of tourism contexts? The immediate consequence of this usual identification is that ethnographies report essentialist arguments; what, at the same time, tends to legitimate the reification of both issues: cultural heritage and development.

(4)   Particularly among classic anthropologists who dealt with tourism, the idea of clashing societies or cultures in conflicts is still prevalent. Acculturation theory ontologically conceives cultures mainly in its territorial (spatial) dimension and, consequently, also as mere recipients where tourists land for 'grazing'[2] and tourism industry, poured by capitalist forces to foster and preserve underdevelopment, creates 'peripheral enclaves'. This reductive

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[2] Zygmunt Bauman updates Boorstin's classical view and coined the term 'tourist syndrome' as being characterised by 'looseness of attachment' with the place visited, the 'grazing behaviour' of the consumption of 'pure relationships', and the 'frailty of relationships' into wherever they go (Franklin, 2003).

vision of what a culture is has made tourism research to be theorised in terms of static models (Meethan, 2003) and has kept tourism researchers focusing on dialectics rather than on dialogics; in so doing, both the anthropological understanding of socio-cultural processes in tourism contexts and the production of knowledge itself reduce.

(5) Contrary to dialectics, many ethnographic accounts demonstrate how tourism-receiving societies daily structure their interaction with outsiders and cope with tourism and tourists in many diverse ways (Boissevain, 1996). At this point it is interesting to note that, somehow, the differences in the implementation of tourism development programmes at the central Western countries (i.e. Europe) and those at the periphery, resemble and reflect the interiorizing of the roles of the 'colonised' and of the 'coloniser'. Destinations in Europe show how, for instance, at the Stockfish festival in Norway (Puijk, 1996:219) locals attend the festival as something vivid because "most of them also have holidays and are regularly tourists in other places". In The Netherlands the construction of a local narrative "closely intertwined with their own experience of being a citizen of Amsterdam it is not the detached narrative of the tourist industry, but one linked to the popular culture of the city" (Dahles, 1996:244). Also in Europe, Odermatt (1996) demonstrates that locals may agree with the commercialisation of culture ('cultural heritage') as being a question of pride, but many may not accept outsider management of the same heritage.

(6) Up to certain extent, tourism studies have yielded to words such as authenticity or commoditisation: R. Williams would call them *keywords*. Everyone recognises and quotes MacCannell's suggestive usage of Goffman's frames (front/back stages) and Berger's notion of authenticity, and Greenwood's fortunate expression of 'culture by the pound'. However, all those notions are based upon an essentialist standpoint, since both authors assume the existence of a cultural state prior to contact.

(7) And the labelling of certain features as 'cultural heritage' is based upon this idea. I agree with García García (1998:9-10) when he states (a) that '*patrimonio cultural*' only refers to a selection of certain aspects of culture as a whole (i.e., synecdochical product), and (b) that the '*patrimonio cultural*' is an historical product that must be explained too. Consequently anthropology must make an effort to avoid adopting uncritically categories of social and political practice (*cultural heritage*) as categories of anthropological analysis (*culture*).

(8) Since we cannot invent words everyday, and the "use gives the meaning of the words", scholars in tourism studies should be most cautious when writing about culture, patrimony, cultural heritage and the likes. Up to what extent are our ethnographies on social and cultural diversity being used by tourism marketing strategies to legitimate the product (cultural heritage)? Many actors may wonder whose discourse is the *lay* one: is it the industries' or is it the scholars' one? To solve this dilemma, we must turn upside down Bourdieu's recommendation "of taking as object [of study] the social operations of *naming*" (1985:65) and face the challenge of differentiating the categories of social and political *practice* from those of social and political *analysis* either by creating new terms or by sharply defining them.

(9) One way to achieve this would be to make use of the theoretical differentiation between the realm of the linguistic/discoursive production "the world *on* which we talk" from that of the expressive realm of "the world *from* which we talk". Methodologically the differentiation of the two "worlds of significance" allows to arrange the data observed and collected during the fieldwork (actions, practices), and to analyse them in their proper context. Shouldn't we re-name some spheres in order to clarify our understanding of the socio-cultural processes and to differentiate both 'worlds' in tourism contexts? I contend that through this, critic social science will be able to provide perspectives distinct to those derived from the *expert*'s administration of the desirable.

(10) This paper gives salience to the dilemma that bring *too* close culture (as 'the' anthropological object of study), ethnography (as 'the' anthropological technique), power, knowledge, critical thinking and cultural heritage in tourism context.

A theoretical model to discuss: the dialogics of tourism space

The scheme I propose helps to understand socio-cultural processes (and patrimonialization is a very important one) in tourism contexts and to differentiate both worlds of significance. It analyses the dialogic relations that exist between (1) on the one hand, the macro-social conditions imposed (a) by the physical presence of the tourism industry in form of lodgements (hotels, apartments, urbanizations), restaurants, leisure enterprises or transport companies, and (b) by the symbolic presence of the devices of ideological dominance that condition the desirable, and (c) the instruments of institutional power (governments, city councils, mass-media, entrepreneur associations, etc.) that condition the feasible, and (2) on the other hand, the possibilities generated from the microsocial as shown in what is said and what is done by the people. *Tourism space* is the outcome of the relationship between these macro-social structures, theorised as constrictive, and the microsocial practices, considered as capable. This reminds Chadefaud's (1987) for whom tourism space represents in time and space the projection of the ideals and myths of global society, and converts goods into tourist products and territories. Therefore, it appears a referential frame, furnished by those images and values that *give sense* to everyday life, through which social practices are understood.

Understanding this dialogical model requires to partially overcome the centrality of the equation 'culture equals territory' (derived from the acculturative perspective and the *hic et nunc* functionalist axiom), and to distinguish the spatial --locative-- dimension (the "tourism environment") of a society from that of the expressive dimension of culture (Bakhtin, 1965). Consequently, social theorists ought to methodologically differentiate (therefore, name) both dimensions, to arrange the data (actions, practices) observed and collected during the fieldwork, and to analyse them in their proper context. Only by doing

this, critic social science will be able to provide perspectives distinct to those derived from the *expert*'s administration of the desirable.
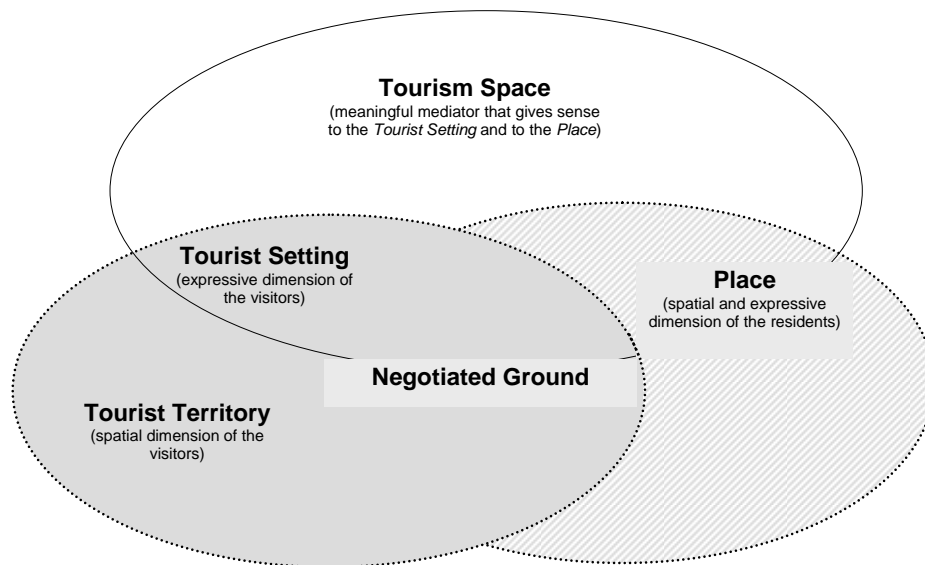

Diagram 1. Theoretical model of the 'conversion of place *through* tourism space'.

Diagram 1 charts the model: imagine a dynamic graph progressing from left to right. Imagine that visitors land in a place where there is already an existing society. Imagine now that the place shrinks as tourists gradually consumes "quality space" by means of services and accommodations facilities for visitors. Then, in the spatial dimension appear (1) a 'tourist territory' where to locate these premises on a map, and (2) a 'place', that indicates where insiders dwell. But tourism also consumes local culture; therefore, in that Bakhtinian expressive dimension of culture we might distinguish (1) a 'tourist setting' from where tourists are seduced to find their motivation to travel; and (2) a 'place' through which locals express themselves as a meaningful group (i.e. community). The resulting 'negotiated ground' in both spatial and expressive dimensions suggests both the dialogics and the diachronics of the model. The corollary of the conversion --neither simple transformation nor occupation-- of the place through the mediation of tourism space occurs when the 'place' is perceived, experienced, interpreted and understood through the perceptual and expressive world of the visitors. When, progressively, tradition vanishes as cultural amalgamation and it is managed for residents in the same way as it is for visitors. When, in the end, the 'place' converts through 'tourism space' and

the profitable meanings of the tourism industry appear as the hegemonic discourse in the most diverse cultural, social, and economic daily activities and locations (Nogués, 2002:161, 2006:62).

To approach the study of cultural processes within tourism contexts from this model is different to what Selwyn calls the study of the *transformation processes*. He is interested in the way that the 'raw materials' of tourism (particularly land, labour, raw materials themselves and the body) are transformed within the processes which are either or both politico-economic and ideological in character (Leengkeek and Swain, 2006). As it is to what Duim (2005) expresses with his analysis of *tourismscapes*: the complex processes of association and ordering people and things. The conversion model would explain even those cases where "a state characterised by an axiological confusion between what belongs to culture and what pertains to tourism" as Balinese authorities themselves call '*kebudayaan parawisata*' (tourist culture) (Picard, 1995:57).

I argue that the generation of *tourism space* cannot be analysed as a mechanical reflect of any infrastructural or discursive determination, nor as a dialectical synthesis of the inner contradictions of the tourism system, but as a dialogical process. My working hypothesis states that tourism space is neither a product directed against the native population of a certain destination defined as peripheral by the neo-colonial ideology of capitalism; nor the resistance soil of imagined communities that reacts against the invasion of their homeland and *their* culture; nor the space created by Frankfurtian-like contrivances that alienate hyper-industrialised societies through leisure time management. To understand the transformative capabilities (hence, regenerative) of the dialogical processes of meaning that gives content to tourism space, we must attend to the reception. This is, to deeply comprehend the cultural dynamics in tourism contexts (if we are to approach tourism as a social development mean and the agent of patrimonialization) we cannot analyse only the tourism process as coming from the *outside* (be tourist agents, neo-colonial capital, hotel chains, or cultural tourism experts) and thought of it only as something addressed *towards the outside* (be tourists or incomes). Much on the contrary,

anthropologists must look at how the residents of the destinations *make sense* of their own processes in society by paying close attention, for instance, to 'popular culture', or to the recovery of the different pasts by the diverse actors involve in the production of heritage.

Conclusions

During the oral presentation of this paper, I will illustrate with pictures how the above scheme allows the anthropological understanding of patrimonialization in tourism contexts.

Anthropologists must pay closer attention to cultural heritage/*patrimonio cultural* as a 'meta-cultural product', and should deeply analyse the mediation role of tourism space in order to understand the production and reproduction of meanings both among tourists and neighbours.

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