

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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and the degradation of the urban environment, the increase in uncivil behaviors, congestion problems around tourist attractions, the expulsion of residents of tourist zones due to increasing rents, occupation of public spaces by businesses serving tourists, changes to the identities of cities, and integration of housing into an informal economy sustained by illegal tourist housing (promoted by P2P platforms). This brings about impacts including the loss of quality of life for permanent residents and proliferation of business activities linked to fiscal fraud, and therefore, not appropriate for modern societies (Álvarez-Sousa, 2018; Briggs, 2013; Cabrerizo, 2016; Cañada, 2018; Milano, Cheer, & Novelli, 2019; Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019).

Great social changes manifest themselves in different ways and provoke very diverse reactions, especially in a world in which tourism penetrates both small rural communities and global cities. In this sense, tourism becomes an excellent means through which international networks of power and money recompose the spaces in which millions of human beings live their daily lives. The protests of the most affected citizens are often diluted, because their demands do not reach those responsible for the changes that transform their lives. After all, some of these changes do not depend as much on specific localized individuals in local political and economic institutions as on, perhaps, an investment fund registered in Qatar (Sennett, 2018).

THE USUAL SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY FOCUS

The studies that analyze the effects of tourism on the host society have been articulated from various theoretical approaches, although the Social Exchange Theory (SET) is the main approach that has guided most of the research (Harrill, 2004; Sharpley, 2014; Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Kock, & Ramayah, 2015). The central idea of this theory suggests that residents will support tourism development as long as they perceive that the expected benefits will outweigh the costs. A review of the studies inspired more or less by the SET allows us to recognize a wide variety of contradictory and little connected explanations:

a) Pizam (1978) believed that workers in the tourism sector express more positive opinions about tourism development than those who do not. His research gave way to a series of studies that confirmed his finding. However, the need to enrich the interpretation of the data has also been suggested when discrepant results are observed (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Marrero & Huete, 2013). Teye, Sönmez and Sirakaya (2002) suggest that people employed in jobs related to tourism have a more negative attitude.

b) In terms of the degree of interaction with tourists, some researchers point out that a smaller distance between the homes of residents and the places most frequented by tourists implies more positive attitudes, because these locations tend to be inhabited by those more economically dependent on tourism (Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Mansfeld, 1992). However, other research seems to demonstrate the opposite, and argues that a negative attitude is derived from greater proximity: residents would see tourists as a source of competition for the consumption of scarce resources. In addition, they would consider the influx of tourists to be the cause of the discomforts that they tolerate in their daily lives (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004).

c) Some experts conclude that the longer a person lives in a tourist location the more critical their attitude towards tourism and, therefore, the less time has passed the more favorable their attitude would be (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Cavus & Tanrisevdi, 2003; Ryan & Montgomery, 1994). However, other studies explain that newly arrived residents are the most critical (Brougham & Butler, 1981) towards

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tourism, perhaps because they feel it endangers the tranquility they sought when changing their residence (Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997).

d) The researchers who study the relationship between effects of tourism according to the residents and the usual sociodemographic and socioeconomic variables (gender, age, income, occupation, educational level, rural or urban area) have not reached conclusive results (Liu & Var, 1986 Williams & Lawson, 2001), or the findings are discordant (Harrill & Potts, 2003; Jackson & Inbakaran, 2006; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015).

e) Those who have tried to elucidate this issue by looking at the stage of development of the tourist destination also have not reached an agreement (Vargas-Sánchez, Oom-do-Valle, da-Costa-Mendes, & Silva, 2015). It might seem reasonable to think that a moderate development of tourism would tend to be perceived positively and that as this development intensifies public opinion would become more negative (Harrill, 2004, Diedrich & García-Buades, 2009), but this argument has also been questioned (Liu & Var, 1986, Faulkner & Tideswall, 1997, Royo & Ruiz, 2009).

In fact, this line of research has not produced relevant empirical generalizations, apart from confirming the evident fact that in opinion studies on the effects of tourism, there is a greater concentration of positive attitudes around the economic effects and more critical attitudes related to tourism's environmental and socio-cultural impacts. Beyond the accumulation of case studies carried out according to the predominant (and not very innovative) logic of gap-spotting (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013), the truth is that the application of SET to understanding social perceptions of tourism shows symptoms of exhaustion. The inertia observed in its use has long promoted a sort of “theoretical isomorphism” (Pfeffer, 2007, p.1341) that under-problematizes the existing literature, reduces risk and facilitates the existence of those who live under the law of “publish or perish”.

The overconfidence that SET places in individual rationality, its underestimation of the emotional aspects, and the scant attention paid to social change are problematic. Also, its difficulty in orienting qualitative methodological designs and its disinterest in explaining the influence that power relations exert on the formation of public opinion invites us to explore alternative ways to help us understand the ways people experience tourism (Mantecón, 2016).

A NEW FRAMEWORK BASED ON MERTON'S CLASSIC STRAIN THEORY

The recent increase in public rejection of tourism is modifying the social perception of a phenomenon that, until recently, had managed to avoid major controversies. Criticism of certain effects of tourism is being incorporated into the demands of different social movements and neighborhood associations affected by the impacts of excessive tourism (Milano & Mansilla, 2018). Tourism has become problematized and today is part of the political and social agenda of dozens of cities around the world (UNWTO, 2019). The new conflictive image that surrounds tourism originated in the summer of 2017, when the media spread the use of the expression “tourismphobia” (coined in 2008 by the geographer José Antonio Donaire), resulting in a media earthquake whose epicenter was in Spain and had repercussions in different countries. However, rather than helping to better understand the origin and characteristics of anti-tourism attitudes, the media dimension acquired by this term resulted in politicization, ultimately hindering the success of any comprehensive effort to address the problem (Huete & Mantecón, 2018). In any case, the media pathologization of public expressions of criticism or rejection of certain types of tourism seems a more appropriate way to stoke political confrontation than the analysis of social problems.

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Here we present a theoretical model that aims to clarify the defining features of different attitudes towards tourism. It consists of a novel adaptation of the classic typology developed by the sociologist Robert K. Merton to study the modes of adaptation by individuals within the culture-bearing society. Merton's proposal distinguishes between five distinctive patterns of relations between cultural goals and institutionalized means: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. The author's intention was to explain the ways in which people manage the strain and the anomic risk produced by social demands and pressures (Merton, 1938).

Here Merton's model is adapted to analyze a new relationship between ends and means. In this case, the end is economic growth under the logic of capitalism, understood as a system of division of labor based on the incessant accumulation of capital through the commoditization of more and more elements in more and more places. This objective is inserted into a neoliberal cultural, political and economic context characterized by the enthusiastic exaltation of the consumer society and a scarcely regulated free market economy. The medium is tourism, conceived as a massive social phenomenon that causes very different effects in different but related areas. The relationship between goals and means generates tensions. Its management is based on adaptation strategies that include different modes of identification or questioning, both with respect to the majority tourist behavior and to the values of the capitalist culture. These strategies are presented schematically in Table 1, where, in a generic sense, (+) represents acceptance, (-) represents non-identification and (- / +) represents non-identification with existing reality and substitution of reality with new proposals.

This typology is useful for studying subject positions, social discourses or attitudinal dispositions towards tourism. It can guide the collection and analysis of data in quantitative, qualitative or mixed methodological designs, and be integrated into exploratory, descriptive, and causal approaches, etc. It also allows for carrying out critical and diachronic approaches to investigate the historical configuration of the different positions and the power relations established between the social actors that represent them. With the intention of illustrating this typology, and without any pretense of statistical generalization, we carried out a purposive sampling of news that reflects the constitutive elements of each of the types. The origin of the news are newspapers, radio broadcasts and Spanish digital publications, because, as previously noted, Spain is the epicenter of the earthquake that popularized the term tourismphobia. That is why, in media discourses, there are evaluations and diagnoses laden with emotional connotations. In a practical sense, this situation helps to establish relationships in our theoretical model:

Table 1. Patterns of Relationships Between Capitalism and Tourism

	Culture Goal: Capitalist Development	Institutionalized Mean: Known Tourist Dynamics
I. Legitimization	+	+
II. Innovative criticism	+	-
III. Resignation	-	+
IV. Radical criticism	-	-
V. Subversive utopia	-/+	-/+

Source: own construction based on Merton (1938).

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Legitimization

This type of adaptation supposes high acceptance of means and goals. It is the most common strategy and also the most conservative one: it guarantees the reproduction of the social order and the stability of the existing system of relationships and favors the development and intensification of already established guidelines of action. Here, it is represented by news in which arguments are developed that extol the value of traditional tourism (along the lines of Fordist or mass tourism) as a legitimate means to guarantee the production of wealth and the progress of society. This type seeks to persist with known dynamics because they are perceived as the best option. It denies the existence of significant problems caused by tourism. The moral commitment acquired by those who most identify with legitimization implies vehement action aimed at discrediting any questioning. They are the guardians of the status quo. The following excerpts exemplify this position:

A substantial reduction in tourist flows from abroad or from among Spanish citizens would have a very negative economic and social effect [...] The hypothesis known as Venice Syndrome, according to which excessive tourism, for example in urban or historical centers of certain cities, it is harmful to those who live in those habitats, is incorrect. On the contrary, the tourist flows in these areas have resulted in an improvement of their general endowment -infrastructure, security, etc.- in order to satisfy and adapt to the demands of a greater demand. (Turismofobia, El Mundo, September 3, 2017)

Tourismphobia does not exist, and in fact it is an insulting term for societies that have lived and worked successfully with tourism for decades, and now do not deserve in any way be considered suspicious of anything because of a few idiots” (Ja ens han colat la turismofòbia, ara.cat, 2 August 2017)

Remember that Spain has more than fifty years of perfect coexistence with tourism and that the income earned from the sector exceeds what Saudi Arabia can get for the exploitation of oil. It's something that we cannot let go of, nor can we damage it. (Abrazos y claveles a visitantes para combatir la turismofobia, Cadena SER, 15 August 2017)

Innovative Criticism

This corresponds with a high identification and acceptance of the goals and a questioning of the means. This includes news in which traditional tourism strategies are questioned or criticized as legitimate means to achieve the desired goal: wealth generation and progress. This position can be bifurcated in two:

1) On one hand, this includes those frequent speeches of social democratic inspiration, which, despite defending the economic activities that produce material wealth and generate social progress within the framework of a free market economy, doubt the effectiveness of the practices of dominant tourist destinations as a means to achieve that end. This implies a proposal to adopt other types of tourism practices that are more sustainable and typical of a post-Fordist capitalist context. Post-Fordism is reflected in the area of tourism in terms of the proliferation of new attitudes and typologies that overlap and coexist with mass tourism. Post-Fordist tourism is characterized by the diversification of products, which are integrated into more segmented markets, with more demanding and experienced consumers who are less prone to repeat experiences and interested in alternative typologies to mass tourism. The context of restructuring in which today hundreds of territories with a significant industrial past are inserted, together with the incorporation of new spaces in the global exchange system, motivates many distant cities and regions to compete for future development by relying on the tourist economy, far from deep crises. This competition is determined by the possibilities that all regions have in facing the challenges

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posed by tourism markets in a post-Fordist scenario. These include the difficulties and challenges faced by specialized destinations for decades in the management of mass tourism. Some illustrative fragments include the following:

We must move from a model of mass tourism towards a model of qualified tourism. A tourism model that allows its own economic and social reproduction, without devastating territories socially and environmentally. Emerging tourism markets do not demand anonymous destinations and infinite skyscrapers. They seek differentiation, distinction, traditions, authenticity. The new tourist is willing to pay more in order to enjoy a respectful natural environment [...] That is why it is necessary to govern tourism. Direct it to ethical and community objectives that allow us to redistribute the benefits of industry without renouncing competitiveness margins. (Gobernar el turismo, Diario El Salto, 5 December 2017)

The debate is on the street [...] over the issue of the damage that illegal lodging is doing to historic districts, which causes inconveniences to the neighbors. But the answer is to persecute them, not to end tourism [...] You do not have to criminalize, you have to regulate, and control, which is not the same thing. (Granada es turismoadicta, Ideal, 10 September 2017)

The problem is not to say yes or no to tourism but to rethink the way in which the city offers itself to tourists to avoid the dynamics of 'copy and paste' between cities that simplify and banalize the local culture and make it such that, in the long run, the tourist loses interest. (El desafío del turismo masivo, El País, 9 August 2015)

2) On the other hand, there are also those who, from less moderate approaches, rely on the capitalist end of production of material wealth and progress but consider that the loss of legitimacy of hegemonic tourist practices in the past must give step to a new era. This new era considers the path of development through tourism to be exhausted and encourages its replacement by another economic dynamic. This type of reasoning has very low public projection, with an almost anecdotal presence in the media. The following news is echoed by the publication of a report where the issue is raised in this way:

Attitudes contrary to tourism in Barcelona could have to do with a current that is being promoted from the higher-income echelon and biased political orientations, which would support the hypothesis that true economic and social development is only possible with high rates of expansion in the industrial sectors and not through tourism. (Turismofobia se debe a la falta de ordenación del sector, según un estudio, eldiario.es, 18 June 2018)

Resignation

In this case, a relationship is established between tourism and the production of wealth that is not based on convictions about the value of the proposed purposes, although this does not imply abandonment of known tourism practices. This type is illustrated by news that recognizes the importance that traditional tourism activities have had in the generation of wealth and progress, which justifies the convenience of continuing to bet on them. A blind faith in these practices is not argued here, but the need to persist in these practices is justified, because there is no other remedy. It is not the best option; it is simply the only viable one. This profile is not based on trust but on resignation. Therefore, there are doubts and skepticism about the repercussions of hegemonic patterns, but they are insisted upon because it is not possible to imagine other reliable alternatives. This is a very common position, and together with Type I (Legitimization), it contributes effectively to the reproduction of established models, drowning at the same time the formulation of options different from those already known:

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Surely, it would have been better if jobs had been created with high technological qualifications, but with the de-industrialization that we have suffered, tourism has been a lifeline for the economy. Those who protest tourism will have to say what they plan to replace it with. Do they have any alternatives? (Corregir la turismofòbia, La Vanguardia, 20 May 2017)

To the group of friends that comes five days to play golf in Benidorm, or to the English bachelorette party that gets off the plane drunk in Malaga, we will not be able to teach anything of Cervantes, of Galician music or of the different grape varieties while they are drinking beers on the beach. The offer is what it is, the Spanish brand sells what it sells -and tens of millions of foreigners buy it willingly year after year- and the national value chain is set up to serve that clientele in that way. (Cuatro pintadas anti-turistas no van a cambiar el turismo en España, Vozpopuli, 15 August 2017)

If they stopped coming, what would we live off of? [...] Let's try to think with our heads before doing something with our hearts [...] let's stop demonstrating against the hand that feeds us. (Turismofobia en el Mediterráneo, MallorcaDiario.com, 26 July 2018)

Radical Criticism

Here the absence of identification acquires a sense of rejection that comes to question the validity of both predominant tourism practices and the capitalist purposes of wealth production. This profile is expressed in attitudes of direct criticism towards tourism and capitalism that emerged in the journalistic discourse as of 2017. Tourism is recognized as another instrument of the capitalist system directed toward economic exploitation, to the accumulation of wealth, to the decline of social justice and the destruction of the environment. This type includes positions that are not identified neither for the purpose (development of the capitalist society) nor with the means destined to the conquest of that end (the economic activities that are configured around the business of tourism and real estate). The practical consequences derived from this type of diagnosis do not necessarily lead to significant changes, and they sometimes even contribute to the perpetuation of existing realities. It usually happens when, after criticism, all that is observed is a mixture of discomfort and passivity that, at most, crystallizes in a kind of retreatism at touristic places, that is, in daily behaviors that try to avoid contact with tourists. The following fragment is a good example of this type of approach:

The 2008 post-bubble cycle makes it even more evident that the accumulation of benefits of the tourism industry is due to the degradation of life in the city and the dispossession of the neighbors of their communities, which are fundamental for maintaining reproduction [...] The most touristic cities are those that suffer greatest real estate pressure; more evictions and mobbing, making the right to housing of their neighbors inaccessible [...] The beast of tourism, as we understand it, is a false solution that makes work precarious, revives urban speculative economies and destroys the natural and social environments needed for the reproduction of life, especially in neighborhoods where the activity of this industry is concentrated [...] the real estate and holiday rental lobbies at both the state and European level to stop any public initiative that aims to act in the direction of de-commodifying housing, land, or protect the rights of workers [...] It is not viable to build marketable urban environments, or adapt the territory to the consumption needs of those who do not live in the city. (El municipalismo contra la falsa solución turística: hacia una sociedad urbana vivible, Diario El Salto, 27 February 2019).

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This strategy is very similar to the previous one. In fact, it is normal for the arguments to overlap. However, there is a key element that gives it its own identity: in this case the criticism is linked to the formulation of concrete actions (not explicit in type IV). The proposals for action reveal more or less latent social conflicts and produce political controversies that drive social changes, even if only by incorporating new issues and arguments into public discussion. The rejection of both the means and the known goals is associated with proposing substitution by new ones. The objective is to subvert the social order. Following the classic terminology of Mannheim (1929), we would speak of a utopian attitude when the analysis of reality is oriented towards the explanation of situations that do not exist and whose hypothetical existence is incompatible with the perpetuation of social order; the resulting diagnoses and forecasts are linked to therapies that require a total or partial elimination of the existing order. Thus, power structures often use the utopian adjective as a mechanism of social control. They do it every time they label as ridiculous, naive, unrealistic, absurd or disproportionate the proposals that challenge the stability of their positions of power, thus discrediting those who propose them. However, history teaches us that the definition of what is absurd and what is reasonable often has more to do with the power that some social actors have over others, and not so much with the soundness of the arguments put forward (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Here the lack of identification with the means (tourism) and the deep questioning of the goals (capitalist) is accompanied by a proposal for social transformation: the substitution of the political-economic order that regulates the cities affected by overtourism by another type of order where social justice replaces economic interest as a vital leitmotiv. In the new order, tourism would be managed according to decreasing growth principles or would be replaced by other types of economic activities that do not generate such aggressive social and environmental impacts. A social actor that produces a discourse along this line of argument is the Network of Southern European Cities against Touristification, known as SetNet:

SetNet warns that local populations are organizing themselves to defend their social rights, especially the right to decent and affordable housing and the right to the city. To achieve a change of model and fight against the problems derived from tourism, they propose the establishment of limits to the tourist industry, the adoption of different fiscal policies for housing and tourist accommodation, the delinking of tourism from the economy of the city, or the decrease in tourism, accompanied by policies to promote just social and environmental economics. (Ciudades del sur de Europa se unen ante la turistización, Diario El Salto, 25 April 2018)

More social support is needed to put a brake on this model and also to move in another direction in which we disengage the development of the increase in consumption of materials and energy, the increase in the number of tourists, the increase in urbanization and cement [...] There is no lack of proposals or pathways to move towards greater territorial sovereignty, such as renewable energy, agroecology and responsible consumption, to move towards a new energy model. (¿Quién le pone puertas al turismo?, eldiario.es, 22 April 2018)

CONCLUSION

This chapter has proposed a theoretical and analytical framework from which to investigate attitudes towards tourism. More specifically, this work (supported by a selection of news reports) is not intended

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to develop a detailed analysis of discursive positions, but to explain how a classic theory model of Sociology can be valuable to understand attitudes towards tourism. The adaptation of the model of Merton is compatible with a plurality of methodological options and allows taking into account the political and conflictive dimensions that surround tourist activity. It also offers the possibility of tracing the genesis of public opinion, the actors that produce it, the links that are established and the evolution of discourses about the repercussions of tourism. This perspective surpasses the usual approaches influenced by the Social Exchange Theory.

The five basic positions or attitudes shown here (legitimization, innovative criticism, resignation, radical criticism and subversive utopia) are only a simplified representation of reality. They should not be understood as closed concepts, but as dynamic and connected categories that capture a part of the complexity of tourism within the framework of capitalist societies. Beyond its technical operation, this argument has sought, on one hand, to better understand the ways in which people think about tourism and organize their opinions regarding its effects, and, second, to transcend both media approaches that affect the antagonistic nature of discourses (situation already criticized and illustrated in detail by Huete and Mantecón, 2018) as well as some research perspectives articulated from dichotomous approaches (see, for example, Zerva, Palou, Blasco, & Donaire, 2019).

The recent increase in expressions of opposition to tourism has loaded the image of tourism with certain negative connotations. Critical evaluations of tourism's impacts have a long history in research (especially in anthropological and sociological studies), but the social visibility of disagreement have not gone beyond exceptional and restricted situations. The perceived economic benefits have tended to eclipse, or at least compensate, the costs suffered. This situation would have favored the propagation of attitudes similar to legitimation (position I) and resignation (position III), with a marginal presence of radical criticism (position IV). Being coherent with the characterization of the types explained above, the result would reflect an ideological context that sustains the statu quo (in line with what was pointed out by Mantecón, 2010, Mantecón & Huete, 2011). In turn, this would help explain why the profound changes experienced by the Spanish political system have not triggered significant changes in the evolution of the tourism policy (Velasco, 2016). However, the proliferation of public complaints regarding tourist saturation and the problems it produces has complicated the aforementioned context. As a result, other types of discourses have emerged with force, referred to here as innovative criticism (position II) and subversive utopia (position V), whose most important common denominator is the justification of more or less disruptive processes of change.

The last wave of explanations suggests the existence of a correlation between overtourism and the increase in public expressions of rejection of tourism. But the empirical reality refutes this hypothesis. For a long time, there have been situations of overcrowding caused by the influx of tourists, which are accompanied by problems of very different intensity that have not materialized in collective protests. It could also be that these protests have not been so relevant as to have resonance in the media and be dealt with by political institutions. In fact, there is nothing specifically new in overtourism, beyond being accompanied by an increase in social protest movements. So, what is really new is not so much the overcoming of tourism capacity (since the thresholds of tolerance have been redefined again and again in each concrete case) as the citizens' actions of response (and their communication through the media). To advance in the understanding of this phenomenon, other factors must be explored (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018). It is important to underline that the existence of objective problems motivated by mass tourism is not being denied here. What is argued is that the verification of these problems is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the emergence of rebellious expressions.

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In this regard, one of those intervening factors that is usually stressed is the application of different tourism management policies. Thus, the relationship between the number of tourists and the number of residents would not have an important explanatory value, but rather the proper management of tourism in each destination. Undoubtedly, this is an essential line of work and of great practical interest for those who must make decisions regarding planning. However, there are two issues that are often overlooked. In addition, research in this area requires the application of mixed methods, approaches that address historical-social change and perspectives that give decisive weight to the analysis of power relations:

The first issue refers to the role that tourism has played in the political, economic and social history of those cities in which the most intense expressions of criticism and rejection have been identified. Regardless of the objective conditions that explain the current economic situation, it is likely that in those cities where the resident population relies on alternative routes of development besides tourism, they also have a greater predisposition to claim different proposals. The memory of a happy past without tourism (although it is about what Bauman called “retrotopia”) makes it easier to imagine an acceptable future without it. Similarly, in those cities where tourism is perceived as the primary (or only) means by which the population has been able to modernize its socio-economic structures and produce material well-being and wealth, protest is perhaps more unlikely. At the same time there is an increase in the degree of tolerance for the inconveniences that the influx of tourists can generate. Thus, the analysis of the processes of social construction of collective memory is an interesting analytical point.

The second question refers to the presence of a previous network of organizations and citizen groups committed to political struggle and social demands. In regions where socio-political activity is concentrated around a dense citizen network, it is easier for the problems linked to overtourism to be incorporated into the civil society’s agenda at a given moment. In those cases in which, despite lack of awareness of previous political activity, there have been manifestations of criticism of the impacts of tourism, it is crucial to investigate the configuration of the group dynamics that have articulated these critical expressions (origins, components, objectives, values, proposed actions). The study of the political instrumentalization of social unrest is presented here as a line of relevant research.

The debates about the unexpected effects of tourism are ramifications of major polemics about the benefits and perversions of capitalism, about its exploitative or prosperity-generating character, and about the greater or lesser convenience of subjecting it to regulation. The discussion, then, would have to face the dilemma of whether tourism is configured by a set of activities that sooner or later will produce tensions and conflicts or whether, instead, the problems are more related to inadequate management. Perhaps, reflection on the functioning of tourism cannot and should not be removed from a broader reflection about the type of society in which we live. Ultimately, it is through tourism that conflicts and contradictions inserted in the social, political, cultural, economic and environmental arenas are expressed in our daily lives.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Capitalism: A system of organization of social and economic relations based on the commoditization of the greatest number of elements in the greatest number of places.

Commoditization: Process by which something or someone is converted into a commodity, into an object available in a market.

Fordist Tourism: Forms of organization of the tourist industry that emerged after the Second World War characterized by the large-scale commercialization of standardized products, based on a basic offer of “sun, sand and sea”, aimed at homogeneous and undemanding markets.

Overtourism: A buzzword that refers to issues similar to the established concept of “tourism carrying capacity”. This neologism is often used to allude to problems caused by tourist saturation with regard to the emergence of public expressions of criticism or rejection of tourism or any of its effects.

Post-Fordist Tourism: Form of organization of the tourism industry that emerged in the 1990s, characterized by the diversification of products and their integration into more segmented markets, with more demanding, experienced consumers who are less likely to repeat experiences and interested in alternative typologies to mass or Fordist tourism.

Strain Theory: A theory proposed by R.K. Merton in 1938 in order to explain the types of adaptation of individuals to a society that defines success in terms of accumulation of wealth and that typifies the acceptable and unacceptable means of achieving it.

Tourismphobia: An expression used mainly by the media with the aim of stigmatizing public expressions of rejection of tourism or any of its effects.