

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

TOURIST SPACES: PRODUCTION, EXPERIENCES AND IMAGINATION. THE CASE OF THE CHILEAN ANDEAN LAKE AREA OF LA ARAUCANÍA, 1900-1940¹

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Tourism is one of the emerging topics for social sciences in general and for geography in particular. In addition, the need to approach the tourism phenomenon scientifically has been a constant challenge to validate it as a subject of study, applying research methodologies and approaches. In order to contribute to the geographic knowledge of tourism, it is suggested in this document that the “production of the tourist space” is a complex process affected by interests, power relationships, material and spatial practices, and spatial representations, where the condition of the place and the way in which it is used are influenced by the capacity for social agency of the actors involved in the touristification of this geographic space.

In recent decades, tourism has been transformed into a relevant phenomenon of the capitalist society, by the number of trips, jobs, resources, infrastructures and by the construction of imagination and experiences, which form the basic merchandise of transaction and exchange by consolidating a business sector: hotel accommodation, air transportation, travel agencies, tour operators; a group of consumers: travellers, tourists and holiday-makers, all of which come together in tourism as a system of actors, practices and spaces that participate in “recreation”, through temporary displacement and habitation outside the everyday place (Knafou and Stock, 2003. In: Hiernaux, 2008: 181).

Within the framework of tourism dynamics, geographic space can be interpreted from a dual dimension: as a produced space and lived-conceived space, which makes it possible to understand nature-society relationships as part of a system of configurations of material and social objects (Santos, 1996a), mediated by social relationships of power, where the space is used, and the work is performed and divided between agents and places, from dissimilar relationships of power and dispute (Silveira, 2009), which gradually give form to the territory as a space that includes varying degrees of appropriation, both symbolic and utilitarian, of cooperation and dispossession.

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The geographic space observed in this dual dimension, produced and conceived, is associated in the former to the practices, the materiality and as a conceived space, to the representations of this materiality, the imagination, as well as to the set of actions of the exercise of power in the space (Soja, 2010). These dimensions are not separate from one another: they interrelate and are those interrelations that afford meaning and configure the space, interactions that are developed on various scales.

In this light, attractive tourist spaces are a material production of attractions, equipment and infrastructures built by various agents (State, businesspeople, local community, others) who are related on scales different to the previous expectations and experience lived by the tourists once they have visited, which implies that it is simultaneously an experiential production. Thus, the tourist space is represented by a conceived and imaginary construction of it, which is communicated and reproduced through various communication and promotion devices.

It is proposed that the production of tourist spaces be recognized on spatiotemporal routes, where the tourist experience, linked to the tourist territorial imagination, is the access point to understanding it. Indeed, the tourist experience is the producer and reproducer of this route as it is the result of the multiscale integration of time and space, which, through practices or routinized actions of the social actors, strategies, actions and tactics are deployed as demonstrated in events.

In this sense, the interaction between tourists, businesspeople or tourism promoters, together with the State and public agents, actions are materialized which tend to generate the “tourist fact”, at points located in space, as tourist attractions; however, these points are not mere geodesic coordinates, they are scenes of practices that make possible the deployment of the imagination as well the social structuring of the tourist space.

The routes, more than representing a linear process of the production of the tourist space, are simultaneously a proposal to analyze the process synchronically and diachronically, where events are transformed into the elements that form the action of the social actors as agents and where tourism is the force that produces them.

According to all of the above, we may state that tourist spaces are in a constant process of production, a process that can be recognized by identifying its spatiotemporal routes. In these, we can recognize its material and symbolic dimension. For the case of the Andean lake area of La Araucanía, two events have been selected that mark this process of tourist space production. First, we address the case of Juan Alfonso (1900), the first trip documented to date for tourist purposes and the policy of the State to build infrastructures and equipment for the development of tourism in Chile and particularly in La Araucanía.

With respect to travellers, the case of José Alfonso (1900) is highly valuable. First, for being the first recorded testimonial of a traveller to La Araucanía as a tourist (the trip was made in 1899); second, because it represents the typical profile of the turn-of-the-century traveller, belonging to the aristocratic and intellectual elite; and third, because these motivations are strictly recreational, and thus different from other travellers who penetrated the south for military, occupation, territorial recognition or economic reasons.

The material production of space is essentially linked, in the case of tourism, to the spatial anchoring of infrastructures, equipment and connectivity. By infrastructures we mean those associated with the generation of spatial connectivity, essentially to railway

lines, highways and airports, the construction of hotels and inns to accommodate tourists and holidaymakers, along with eating establishments and sport and recreational facilities. As has been stated by Cortés (2014), Martínez (2014), Booth and Lavín (2013), Galeno-Ibaceta (2012) and Booth (2010), the State occupied a central role in the touristification process of the territory in both the north and south of Chile, which was framed in processes related to the occupation and territorial control of the south and mining in the north, which was implemented, among other ways, by the extension of the railway lines. In this sense, the railroad, through government-run railways, assumed the task not only of penetration and territorial control by building hotels, creating companies designed for this, but also by promoting them through communication strategies, such as the magazines *Veraneante (Holidaymaker)* and *En Viaje (En Route)* (Cortés, 2014 and Booth, 2010).

In conclusion, it is argued that the role of tourism in modern societies and its influence on the material and immaterial configurations of territories must be observed from a spatiotemporal perspective. Thus, the goal of tourist space production routes is to overcome the notion of “destination” or “attraction” that has prevailed in the geographic studies of tourism, for example in the works about the service lives of tourist destinations. Therefore, we propose the concept of spatiotemporal routes, which proceeds from the particularity of the subject to the tourist space, understanding it as a social, flexible, plastic and mobile product and not separate from the historical time.