
Book Review

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Cinematic Tourist Mobilities and the Plight of Development

by: Tzanelli Rodanthi

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In his earlier works, Paul Virilio widely acknowledged that our senses are constantly over-stimulated by the culture of immediacy. The hegemony of cultural entertainment industry, as well as the expansion of tourism, in day-to-day life leads us to question the nature of the human experience (Virilio, 1995). As this backdrop, the term over-tourism, which was recently coined to denote the saturation of destinations, exhibits a paradoxical situation which merits to be interdisciplinarily discussed. While further efforts are devoted to promoting tourism as an instrument towards development, paradoxically no less true is that stronger reactionary anti-tourist manifestations inevitably arise (tourismophobia).

In her recently-released book *Cinematic Tourist Mobilities and the Plight of Development*, Rodanthi Tzanelli explores the role of cinematic tourism as a complex network which is formed by narratives, sensations, technologies, expertise and biographies openly oriented towards the global mobilities. In the introductory chapter, she dissociates two important conceptions readers must follow to understand the common-thread argument of the text: the mobilities design and the mobilities justice. While the former signals to the fabrication of destinations through the cinematically-inspired stimulation, the latter refers to its real or imagined consequences and effects. To some extent, mobilities justice may be understood as the possibilities each citizen to reach 'an appropriate mobility capital'. As the first entry in this philosophical debate, she introduces the neologism 'atmospheric attunement' to frame not only the scholars' cosmologies which lead them to multisensory interpretations of reality (scientific paradigm) but the countless ways subjects move through their affective world (subjectivity). This begs a thorny question, to what extent these derived emotions can be artificially constructed or even politically manipulated?

In the second chapter, Tzanelli toys with the idea originally epitomised in Benjamin's thesis: each time we dream a world or a landscape, others are silenced or what is worse, effaced. Cinematic tourism starts a ritualised trip towards an imagined landscape while at the bottom, its standardisation leads very well to the destruction of the real visited space. This tension can be applied to the problems of pollution and territorial degradation. While we want the material benefits of tourism, less tolerant we are to the produced shifts in our

local environment. It is important not to lose the sight of the fact that cities concentrate human and capital factors in a form of '*phantasmagoric factory*' at the time the countryside is symbolically re-elaborated as a romantic form of sublimation which helps the alienated citizen to redeem itself through consumption. As Tzanelli puts it, the efforts put to avoid the environmental degradation, says little on how the beautiness as a concept is culturally constructed. In consequence, beyond the paternalist narratives which emphasise the urgency of protection lies a value of exchange which is conferred by the market. This happens because the attraction and curiosity that cinematic tourism mobilise are reified and commoditised – through the capitalist system – in forms of 'schematisations'. Tzanelli alludes to the term: *schematisation* as the cinematographic style that determines the individual consciousness as well as the selection of pictures, stories and experiences oriented to stage a fabricated and mutually-negotiated sense of reality. This materialisation not only forgets history but also needs from technology to be widely replicated. Each time we consume heritage, we notably distance ourselves from real history, as Tzanelli adheres.

The third chapter reserves to a methodological discussion which looks to decipher the world-making process of tourism. Tourism not only acts as a toolkit that provides interpretation to the surrounding world (from a structuralist viewpoint) but also allows subject to produce actively their own cosmologies revolving around their own particular and structured biographies. The fourth chapter, complementarily, dissects the I Ching theosophy and eco-feminism as valid instruments to understand the nature of atmospheric productions. She introduces the idea of eco-aesthetics as a field that alternates perception and appreciation of the environment from a phenomenological and materialist viewpoint. She evokes the example of dark tourism, a new emergent tendency where visitors are moved by the others' death. She argues convincingly that the needs of visiting spaces of destruction to feel empathy with victims and the commoditisation of the other's pain are twinned in a genealogical rationale. The chapter reflects the old tension between Apollonian and Dionysian orders originally formulated in the Nietzschean legacy. While paradoxically more hostility is showed against tourists more cinematic energy is disposed to keep the system working. Tzanelli's account not only inscribes in the core of the anthropology study of rituals but also her main thesis is that through the cinematic (tourist) screen the subject virtually moves to create new senses, discursivities and knowledge which escape to the classic Marxist position about ideology. The subject transcends the hegemony of the 'manufactured atmospheres' insofar as it elaborates a transformative dissidence which seems to be orchestrated in specific-context claims that often interrogate the stereotyped host-guest relationship.

Rather, the fifth chapter centres how local stakeholders and actors often react negatively against cinematic tourism. Based on a critical reading of the post-colonial literature as the main theoretical framework, Tzanelli calls the attention that the expression of discontent (against tourism) should be reclassified in three distinguishable forms:

- a Epistemic misalignment, which mainly located in post-colonial territories, combines an adaptive behaviour with a combative attitude.
- b Hostipitality which connotes a hostile position against strangers ritualising a type of new ethno-nationalism.

- c Post-industrial disobedience which redeems differences and rivalries in the cinematic screen.

Last but not least, the rest of the book focuses on the challenges and problems of cinematic tourism in a world which debates between collective identity transformations and serious global risk as the climate change. As she eloquently observes,

“The chapter highlights that, in addition to any generic capitalist imperatives, conflicts between business and local, national and global activist networks are based on the urge to smash and replace the opponent’s image (perspective and prestige). This propensity to iconoclasm reduces the possibility to find common ground so as to press ahead with changes that will secure a trouble-free future for humanity and its natural home, earth.” [Tzanelli, (2019), p.7]

Based on a notable erudition (since Tzanelli handles terms expressed in various languages like Greek, Japanese and Chinese), as well as by the deepness of her argumentation, the book is highly recommendable for sociologists and anthropologists interested by the tourism and its new emergent forms. In a nutshell, Tzanelli shows once again why she is one of the leading cultural analysts in tourism fields.

References

Virilio, P. (1995) *The Art of the Motor*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.