Narrations and Imaginaries in Tourism

Imaginaries in Tourism

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Topics of the lecture:

- Imaginaries in Tourism
- Imagining Spaces in Tourism
- Imagining People in Tourism
Stage for Tourism

Where does the world of travel take place:

Outside of familiar, known, experienced

In spaces yet to be discovered
(discovering is not on/off switch but process. We discover by means of travel, food tasted, people met, by experiencing logging, climate, etc)
Stage for Tourism

Stage for Tourism is the stage of the unknown

Unknown → Perceived known

Imaginaries

Tourism is based on a promise as it is a projected future activity at the time of the payment.

TRUST AND IMAGINED
Imagining throughout the ages
Imagining throughout the ages

Placing the unknown in the binaries

Distance from "US" in space and civilization

Faraway lands and peoples as the deviation from the norm
Imagining throughout the ages
Imagining throughout the ages

Spatial component meant deviation from the „imagined“ norm.

The greater the distance, the better/worse the lands and peoples were.

Underworld, Islands, Sea shores etc. were the locations where Greeks placed monsters, horrendous deities and other semi-human creatures, dividing them spatially with the norm.
Imagining throughout the ages
Real people – Persians

Same as mythical creatures – Centaurs and Amazons

The image of Persians as enemies, but also feeble, prone to dictatorships, irresponsible, lustful and cowardly helped not only firm the opposites that were described to the Greeks, but to firm the imaginaries of spatially distant lands and peoples that endure until this day.
Imagining throughout the ages
Real people – Persians

Rich in material wealth
Lazy
Lacking the virtues of civilized men and women

The lands of East → older societies and wisdom accumulation
Imagining throughout the ages
Not only Greeks

Envisioning the strange, unseen, unknown and attributing it with our own desires, conflicts, unresolved tensions and other internal personal or group characteristics is inherent to humans of the western thought, and not only.

El Dorado – City of Gold

The lands of the Holy Grail

Biblical lands

Utopia
Imaginaries always come from the lack of information / knowledge

Imaginations always reflect those who imagine than the imagined.

It reveals hidden tensions, conflicts, fabrics of society or a person imagining.

Imagination impact in real worlds.

Knowing the genealogy of imaginations enhances the strenghts to confront them.
Imagining throughout the ages

Middle age

Lack of knowledge

Dominance of master narrative
Imaginaries in tourism

Imaginaries of Spaces

Imaginaries of People

↓

Imaginaries of processes, activities, material culture
Imaginaries in tourism

Importance of space in tourism:

1) Inherited properties of space (Mountain – SKI)

2) Constructed properties of space (Eating, Drinking, Walking, Bicycle-riding)

Tourist imaginaries represent a specific sector of the overall worldview of individuals or social groups concerning places outside their primary residence where certain types of leisure activities could take place.
Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE

Spatial imaginaries - the potential of a place as a tourist destination

Process of relating meaning to certain spaces, rendering them suitable or not for personal/group touristic participation.

Create desire

Render the place attractive

Make travel plans concrete (selection of the place & activities on site)

Reduce the „distance“ to the destination
Imaginaries in tourism

SPACE

Make transition between:

1) Here and there
2) Familiar and Exotic
3) Known and Unknown

Without a tourist imaginary to select among the whole range of desirable, attractive or challenging destinations, there can be no travel plans.
Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE

Imaginaries are not homogeneous:
Class, Gender, Background, Religion, Bodily abilities...

Master-narratives → Imaginaries
Adaptation for appropriate audiences
'Nightmare. My holiday is ruined': Western tourists complain that death of Thai king has spoilt their holidays as all nightlife is shut down for a month and full moon parties cancelled

Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE – expectations vs. reality

Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE

Destination in 3 categories:

1) Terra cognita – known spaces

2) Terra intimidus – known, but avoided (except for niche tourists, who do it for thrill and risk)

3) Terra incognita – places and regions unknown to tourists. Some may be potentially attractive and some become big attractions. It is the potentiality of these sites for tourist consumption that oftentimes leads tourists into certain destinations.
Imaginaries in tourism

SPACE – Terra cognita – known spaces

Spaces exclusively for tourists

Known by all participants in tourism

1) Hotels
2) Central squares
3) Theme-Parks
4) Shopping-malls

These are the places most often featured in book guides and included in all guided tours and package holidays.
Imaginaries in tourism

SPACE - Terra intimidus – avoided spaces

Spaces known by travellers, but often avoided

1) Risk
2) Harm
3) Bodily or physical discomfort

Small number of tourists flock to such places in search of thrill, excitement and risk.
Imaginaries in tourism

**SPACE** - Terra incognita – (yet) unknown

Places and regions not yet discovered by travellers

Carry potential for becoming tourist attractions

Such a potential is crucial to destination making process

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_eUoFMCeA8
Imaginaries in tourism

SPACE

All-inclusive package - Terra cognita is dominant

Tailor-made travel packages - Terra incognita is dominant
Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE – Invented places

Network of imaginations → invention of places

Sourced in imaginaries shared on a larger scale

Existence based in group/cultural imagination
Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE – Invented places

Sherlock Holmes Museum in London

Address modified to suit the needs of an imagination

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ME09Rq1dmGM

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FH4X0u56wk
Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE – Invented places

Zhongdian → „Shangri-La“

Shangri-La is fictional land from 1933 novel Lost Horizon by James Hilton

Officials did it in order to enhance the tourism in the area.
Imaginaries in tourism

SPACE – activities

To imagine a space is to imagine what could be done there. No imagination is free of activities.

Seaside resort – desireable and forbidden activities

Imaginaries of a place go beyond the empty neutral space, space that is in vacuum. It also stretches further to include the practices that are associated with such spaces in imaginaries that always come from certain cultural ethos. This is why we imagine the countryside or the mountainside or the seaside also by imagining activities associated with these spaces.

Imagining space is imagining possibilities and constraints
Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE – cities as museums

Much of the imaginaries in tourism revolve around "old"

Cities are becoming museums to themselves.

Kyoto, Bruges, Bergamo.

Architecture and Ambience – remaining old.
Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE – cities as museums
Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE – cities as museums

Michael Herzfeld - A Place in History: Social and Monumental Time in a Cretan Town
Imaginaries in tourism
SPACE – Wilderness

The absence of humans means purity.

Mathematical distance vs. Cultural distance

Wilderness in vicinity vs. Far away familiarity

Human influences often include cellular phone coverage, paved roads, renovated or contemporary architecture, sounds of motor vehicles, and above all presence of other tourists.

Paradox situation in which travellers require safety and accessibility without wanting to sense any of the integral parts of such requirements.
Imaginaries in tourism
PEOPLE

Imaginaries are not made up in thin air

They are products of everyday individual experiences and globally circulated images in which upbringing, education and class/gender/race identities account for much of the formation.

Tourism imaginaries: shared representations + tangible and intangible images (souvenirs and dances for example)
# Imaginaries in tourism

## PEOPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>False divisions: tourists and locals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>investors</td>
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<td>travel industry staff</td>
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<td>sellers and purveyors</td>
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<td>technical &amp; business experts</td>
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<td>gastronomy</td>
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<td>workers in tourism</td>
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<td>owners</td>
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<td>uninvolved residents</td>
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<td>religious officials</td>
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Imaginaries in tourism

PEOPLE

Duality does not come in groups Tourists and Locals but between each members of diversified stakeholders on the destination.

Tourist guides aligning themselves with tourists and not locals.
Imaginaries in tourism

PEOPLE - Korowai

Imaginaries about the other is always communicated by language – problem of interpreters.

Encounter is again in the field of imaginative
Imaginaries in tourism

PEOPLE – Imagining Korowai

1) Primitive humanity – civilization vs „primitive“ values

2) Archaic people – travel in time

3) Labeling them – chief, hunter-gatherers, village

Meeting with them has the significance of meeting with fundamentally different kind of humans
Imaginaries in tourism

PEOPLE – Korowai imagining tourists

Imaginations are formed out of available concepts of group/cultural imaginarium

1) Tourists as race/nationality – as a type.

2) Unlimited wealth (idea that their food and equipment is not product of labor, but is just there). Same as vice versa – tourists have the very same imagination that living off the produce of the forest is an imagined state of exclusion from the monetary economy.
Gilles Nicolet’s photograph of Barabaig people with tusks borrowed from the museum. NG issued an apology.
Characteristics underlying tourist fantasies

1) Overcoming of monotony
(overcoming meaninglessness of everyday life with more satisfying experiences—escapism and the desire for exoticism or difference)

1) Boosting of personality
(ego-enhancement, leading to the accumulation of symbolic capital)

Desires are not internalized personal wishes but part of widely shared imaginaries that are articulated through constellations of social practice and media.