Non conventional tourism forms
A critical approach

Valeria Pecorelli
Chiara Rabbiosi

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Something about us

Valeria Pecorelli, Ph.D. in Geography
Research Fellow at the University of Milan-Bicocca, Sociology dept.

☑ political and cultural geography, radical social movements, resistance, fair trade, post colonialism, development, Global South, sustainable and non conventional/alternative tourism.

Chiara Rabbiosi, Ph.D. in Urban and Local European studies
Research Fellow at the University of Bologna (Rimini Campus) Quality of Life dept.

☑ space and the social sciences, economy and culture, consumption, capitalism critique, “dual genre” in urban policies, mass and alternative tourism dialectics, post socialist tourism cultures.
Aim of our talk & contents

1. What’s in a term? Problematizing NCT
2. NCT: common understanding of the term and overview of experiences
3. Focus on a few case-studies
4. Macro or micro solutions?
5. Limits and contradictions
6. Research challenges
Problematising Non Conventional Tourism

Forms of tourism that:
• are more socially and environmentally beneficial to local communities than others forms of tourism
• include and promote a critique to mass/traditional/standard/large scale forms of tourism
• represent alternative pathways to what we may call capitalist tourism

✓ Somehow an “uncomfortable” term...
Problematising Non Conventional Tourism

The contours of alternative tourism are not clear
(Weaver, 2006)
Problematizing Non Conventional Tourism

It is an umbrella term sometimes used as synonym for sustainable, ethical, eco, responsible, reality, political volunteer, justice tourism.
Problematizing Non Conventional Tourism

More recently the term “tourism-off-the-beaten-track” entered literature to pinpoint for:

- sub/peri-urban tourism
- creative tourism
- participative tourism
- slow tourism
- tourism of the everyday
Problematizing Non Conventional Tourism

- Mailand and Newman (2009) – but not capitalism critique
- Novy and Colomb (2013) – relationship with the ‘just city’
- Already coopted by the tourism industry?
Focus on a few case studies

✓ Dr. Pecorelli: political tourism in Chiapas, Mexico

✓ Dr. Rabbiosi: tourism off-the-beaten tracks in Paris, France
Political tourism in Chiapas, Mexico

Mexico is commonly represented by tourism brochures:

• Magic Mexico, Mexico Express, Mexico y Libertad
• Tequila, Tacos and ancient temples
• A mix of authentic indigenous traditions and flourishing nature
• Colourful buildings, blue wide sky, white sand, green jungles, black eyes of the indigenous smiling children
Zapa-Tourism in Chiapas, Mexico

- Zapatista uprising has become an opportunity to develop tourism in Chiapas (Coronado, 2008)
- The zapatista movement has been incorporated in the local tourists offer producing Zapatourism
- “mud, sweat and radical chic” Chiapas as a “fashionable” stop on the “international leftist travel circuit” (Preston, New York Times, 1996)
- Zapa-tourists are attracted by the Zapatista rebellion places and meet the Zapatista performance through symbols, images and gadgets
  ‘revolution is in the air
- Search of the romance and rebellion by the ‘mysterious’ masked members of the EZLN
- The Zapatista Chiapas is often another attractions on top of others in the journey

Performing revolution?
Political tourism is a form of justice-volunteer tourism
(Scheyens, 2001)

Political tourist:

• actively involved in the Zapatista cause and critique to capitalism there and here doing/taking part ‘Zapatismo at home’ as forms of political activism
• works -shoulder to shoulder- with and for the Zapatista cause in the communities, living and respecting rules, times and customs of the locals
• learns and practices alternative political principles of autonomy and mutual solidarity
• needs political credentials by associations ‘trusted’ by the Zapatistas (eg Ya Basta in Italy- www.yabastamilano.it)
• is trained by political subjects* in Europe in political solidarity, zapatista principles, behaviours to be held in Mexico and in the autonomous communities.
Taking part to a piece of revolution?
Tourism off-the-beaten-track in metropolitan Paris, France

✓ A “world tourist city” where heritage and commercial tourism have traditionally met tourism-off-the-beaten-track”

✓ Urban Paris as an hyper-tourist centre – especially certain roads and neighbourhoods
  → In these neighbourhoods, tourists patron local shops, cultural venues, restaurants and cafés, they have increasingly been perceived as a source of nuisance (e.g. litter, overcrowding and noise).
  Conflicts among populations

✓ The urban fringes (in/outside the city) have for long being portrayed as shabby, poor, dangerous and distant. The role of périphérique in marking the urban city and the suburbs is perceived and practiced as limit, not as a border
  → Representation conflicts; local development; space/place conflicts
Tourism off-the-beaten-track in metropolitan Paris, France

Main actors:

✓ Tourist individual
  “creative class” trips / temporary staying to former workers neighbourhood, use of non-classical tourist facilities

✓ Specialised tour operators
  develop “alternative itineraries”, propose “unknown locations”, mediate between tourists and b&b, artisans, etc.

✓ Civic networks
  Tourists meets residents / residents meets tourists based on social work or volunteering

✓ Local administration
  Provide support in participatory tourism, mainly by promotion
Tourism off-the-beaten-track in metropolitan Paris, France

✓ Civic networks
Tourists meets residents / residents meets tourists

www.parisgreeters.fr (accessed 7 Nov 2013)
Tourism off-the-beaten-track in metropolitan Paris, France

✓ Local administrations

The Municipality of Paris (→ within the *peripherique*) supports both civic networks and tourism operators in the frame of supporting creative tourism and participatory tourism
- a way of renew Paris image (city marketing)
- a way of reduce the conflict between tourists and residents in hyper-tourist neighbourhood and balance the carrying capacity of the tourist city
- a way of redistribute wealth coming from tourism by promoting “deprived” neighbourhood
Tourism off-the-beaten-track in metropolitan Paris, France

✔ Local administrations

Tourisme 93 is Seine St. Denis (→ a famous “banlieu”) tourist agency, promoting both participatory walks visits to manufacturers and artisans to housing estate built in the 70s

- a way of feed suburban inhabitants sense of place and belonging (answering a social problem)
- organise local stakeholders
- add tourism to industrial production (in crisis)
- foster regional tourist marketing not to succumb to Paris predominance

www.tourisme93.com to know more
Limits and contradictions of NCT

• Traces of

✓ Neo-colonialism and neo-paternalism (learning the “other” how to solve her problems)
✓ Elitism
✓ Personal empowerment (no macro objective)
✓ Reification of the meaning of participation (performing social bond, temporary involvement – but not always so, instrumental to performing authenticity)
Limits and contradictions of NCT

Eg:

✓ Local community:  - Passive?
    - Real encounter?
    - What about the power relationships within the local community?

✓ Bodies involvement:  - Physical accessibility
    - Danger/ Legal Persecution (e.g political tourism)
Limits and contradictions of NCT

✓ Risk of reproducing socio-economic, gender, ethnic, physical divides that are at the basis of uneven socio-spatial justice

✓ Risk of idealising NCT (researchers, activists) and not critically approaching it
Are there alternatives to capitalism through NCT?

- Macro-solution (Harvey 2005) taking the power, changing the world?

- Micro-tactics (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010) making more possible those anti-capitalist political phenomena that experiment alternative political principles (autonomy and solidarity). These own an “emancipatory potential” (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010) that attempts to launch new possibilities for radical social change despite and beyond the capitalist framework.
Are there alternatives to capitalism through NCT?

Some critical questions:

NCT is really more beneficial or is just a new frontier in the green-economy and recession era? Is it just a way to do virtue out of necessity?

Some very critical points:

✓ Recession: open up to non conventional forms of tourism BUT conventional tourism is still practised.

   In addition, mass tourism is actually something unconventional for tourists that just recently gains access to travelling (BRICS)

✓ Commercial tourism and tourism off-the-beaten-track coexist: an ambiguous realm that we call the ‘dual genre’ in contemporary policy making;
A real social and cultural challenge:
Does NCT commodify 'the other' (e.g. the poor, the banlieu citizen, the native)?
Does it include an effective critique to mass tourism?

A real research challenge:
-Risk of researchers to be patronizing
-Anti-capitalist non conventional research (ex: activists): a privilege of conventional researchers?
-Pro-capitalist non conventional research (private funded research): sword of samocles for younger, precarious researchers?
References


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