

The geographical space as a basis of tourist excellence

Opinion

The actions of the issues related to the services sector presents us with the so-called “tourist geographic spaces”. These require, at the time of being defined, a task that goes beyond the mere description of what in common language is known as “tourist activity” (issues that have been identified as an ambiguous, confusing socioeconomic phenomenon, and on many occasions, totally incoherent, even more so when it comes to sustainability).

The relationship of the space with the tourist activity is usually accompanied by a series of geographical findings of diverse nature such as, the location of the flows of tourism, the different ways and peculiarities of practicing that tourism, or the contrast between the places of origin of tourism with those that will eventually be its destination areas (all of them questions that, without a doubt, make up a perception of space as a context, a foundation on which the complex socio-economic mentioned processes are developed and sustained, that take place in spaces in which issues related to tourism, and the human activities inherent to it, unfold.

However, when referring to the existing relationships between the spatial field and the phenomena that originate around the tourist activity, it must be assessed how this relationship acquires a reciprocal character, in the sense that if we conceive the tourist activity as an economic exercise of social occupations, this activity necessarily requires some spaces in which we have to be able to carry out and develop the above mentioned activities; that is, a cause-effect relationship which is appreciated when a link connects both the space and the tourist activity, when each other concur for the wellbeing of tourist, mainly through the production and transformation processes that are carried out around the areas related to the space of leisure.

In this way, understanding the tourism space, as a space that is continuously produced and reproduced by the social group, requires an analysis that extends itself beyond the mere description of the environments understood as touristic, since the location itself, if studied outside the historical and geographical constructivism, gives rise to a certain arrangements being considered as touristic. It would simply give way to an incomplete and obscure investigation of the touristic space. In the same way, for being possible to speak of an activity as having a tourist character, it must be considered that said qualification granted to a place in question must meet a series of characteristics on its own to which a series of estimates are added. Social organizations that will finally be in charge of assessing and determining which of these characteristics may come to be considered of interest for tourist uses and activities (hence, it is common for a place to be conceptualized as touristic, according to a series of social evaluations, primarily subjective, later as lines of procedures that combine interests, estimations, and perceptions of historical content of social groups, classified as touristic, together with the particularities and singularities inherent to each area or location considered as appealing.

In relation to all these issues, if the estimation of a certain space or specific activity as a touristic is subordinated to a series of processes

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of an essentially social nature, it is necessary to incorporate each and every one of these processes in the ideas concerning sustainability, mainly referred as environmental. The introductory aspects within the analysis of the tourism space around the concept of sustainability is very important for the achievement of tourism excellence, since, when configuring the development of the tourism activities, the development of tourism in a sustainable way, and in short, to guide territorial development, it is obvious that in order to achieve authentic operability, the spatial tourist contexts must be treated and adapted with the current dynamics of the so-called sustainability.

The pattern of the aforementioned sustainability is due, on the one hand, to the expansion of tourist activities, which necessarily derives from the large number of impacts, of diverse significance, that are generated on the territories in which they are developed. They oblige to produce effective guidelines for the management of the touristic space, and of the mentioned territories in which these activities are carried out, so that in this way the negative effects that the tourist activity may cause in the various territories are minimized as much as possible. On the other hand, the dynamics of sustainability (if you prefer the achievement of so-called sustainable development), is due to the close dependence that exists between the proper functioning of the touristic activity in pursuit of touristic excellence, with the conditions related to the natural environments which are intended to be exploited (used, or employed) and presented for the functioning of the leisure activity (since from this perspective it is essential for the tourism sectors to have high quality spaces, both natural and, of course, cultural.¹⁻³

The requirements able to harmonize the tourism sector, the activities inherent to it, and the conservation and prevention of spaces intended for such tourism purposes has led to the practice of tourism planning on the territory, thereby involving social agents, the feelings of citizenship, institutions of varying degrees, in short, the incorporation in any type of policy oriented towards

the transformation of markets, or in general linked to the pursuit of touristic excellence and quality development perspectives, following the criteria concerning the implementation of a symmetry between the social justice, the economic progress, and the conservation and preservation of natural environments.

In summary, when analyzing the tourist space, we are faced with the need to conceptualize a series of elements, which even today, despite the fact that some have been raised more than several decades ago, have not yet found a well-defined response to the inherent concept. When dealing with what we should understand for example as “Sustainable Tourism”, we intend “those activities corresponding to the tourism sectors”, like “avoiding impacts”, “leisure activities developed in physical spaces, corresponding to natural settings”, “ecotourism”, etc.,...; still it is not possible to speak in many of the enumerated cases, of a single applicable and concrete definition for its correct and effective practical application. Issues as significant as that of assimilating notions corresponding to the tourism sectors, as analogous to concepts such as “Sustainable Tourism”, are little more than useless and sterile, because while tourism is an activity, the tourism sector is a subsector of an economic sector (the tertiary sector, or services sector), and one of its aspects called “Sustainable Tourism” is nothing more than a purpose (a goal to achieve), for all the organizations that in one way or another are linked to the various activities of the sectors that comprise tourism.^{4,5}

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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