

BOOK REVIEW

Tourism: between otium and nec-otium. Cultural identity and Economic Development in Latin America and Mercosur.

Octavio Getino, editor (2002). Ciccus-La cujja, Buenos Aires.

Indeed, Octavio Getino is a well-known and neo-Marxist cineaste socially compromised with material imbalances in Third World. His trajectory is determined by numerous films intended to denounce political corruption as well as the negative aftermaths of capitalist accumulation processes. In this case, a harsh overview about tourism is synthesized by a sociological-related book that merits be reviewing and further discussing. No need to say, his concerns have been spread out and appreciated in the erudite circles in and beyond tourism fields in almost all continent. The tourist science –if we can call them that way- owes an immense gratitude to Osvaldo Getino and his contributions.

In the introductory chapter, Getino examines the importance of tourism throughout the globe after the Second War World. Under that context, he combines WTO statistics displaying a projection at 700 millions of travelers for 2050 years. For other hand, tourism has been turned in the most important contributor to the PBI representing more than 10.7% in some cases.

The second chapter is aimed at analyzing the leisure in ancient Rome and Greece establishing a comparison with modern societies. Getino acknowledges that leisure time can be deemed as the difference between working, biologic and familiar time. First type is characterized by all duties and tasks one needs for issues at work while biologic is intended to feed, sleep and resting. Finally, emotional liaison with familiars take place inside third typology. From this turn of mind, he assesses that as much as the social rights in a society has on working time, there would be a much more time-frame for citizens can emancipate them-selves.

Sociologically to prove this, Getino analyzes leisure in Ancient Greece and Rome under the figure of ashkóle and otium respectively. In fact, civilizations like these accepted the work only under a figure of an unsuitable right reserved for slaves. Greeks and Romans deposited the



working force on slavery gaining for them more portion of free time designated to leisure and other pleasures respectively. For that reason, Greek but above all Roman elites consider *ashkôle/otium* as an attribute that reinforce a supposed superiority over the rest of citizens excluded from such a benefit.

Once collapsed Rome, medieval Europe continued with this tradition and saw in the Work as improper and bad. The philosophical justification has been related to religion and divine wishes. Not only “Free human beings - aristocracy” but also the King are instituted by God to govern the destiny of societies and expressing their superiority by means of politics, arts, education, rationality and philosophy. A particular part of this thought was imported to America and applied on this new paradise giving as a result the notion of “Grand Tour”.

Many decades later, to be more exact, Industrial Revolution in England and Europe change the Image of Work radically extending long working days in children and women. This process allowed people to deem the work as virtuous legitimating modern capitalism and consumption. Once and once again throughout this chapter, Getino emphasizes tourism is considered as an industry proper of mass consumption which more negative effects consist in creating a bridge between accumulation and poverty. At the same time, industrialized societies (tourism-generating countries) promote tourism as a form of social emancipation while peripheral or tourism-receiving countries find several problems in accessing to economic benefits in adopting such a activity as a mainstream economy.

That way, third chapter Getino classifies tourism threefold: a) national, b) regional or c) international. National tourism denotes the activity is accomplished by local residents inside their territory. These kinds of tourism are one of more important than others since it generates a large volume of economical benefits for hosts. The case of regional tourism encourages the movements of citizens of neighbor countries such as Argentina and Brazil while last type, international tourism focuses on cross-national and international long-distance travelers. Furthermore, Getino contends demand motivation comprises a combination of conscientious and subliminal aspects. These needs are expressed in form of desires which are channelized by motivations and re-elaborated in specific aims. For example, *“I am tired and need to rest (need). I would be more than happy to go to beach this week-end or on holidays (desire). I will make a booking for next week-end (aim)”* (Getino, 2002: 63).

Taking its cue from a study carried out in Germany through 1970 over more than 100 tourists, Getino argues that motivations varied on

substantially depending upon destination at hand. The “Studienkreis für Tourismus of Starnberg” specified that 70 of 100 German consultants preferred to rest in their stay in Europe while only 24 inclined by a similar motivation in other region. Besides, a 55% of consulted travelers manifested that tourist experience has been “a memorable instance forever” when they are situated beyond the Europeans boundaries. For that reason, whenever tourism is guided by economic motivations, “stick depictions and stereotypes” in hosts and guests who participate inadvertently in the entropy of such reciprocal experiences, shape the image and identity of visited place. This arbitrariness constructions follow some standard quality measures by the end of manipulating the leisure and free time into other more evolved form. Hence, it is not surprising that Getino sees tourism as a vehicle towards alienation and inequalities but this is a much more surface expression of a deep-seated issue.

In fourth and fifth chapter, author realizes that underdeveloped countries circumscribe to tourism to alleviate poverty, pauperism and generating a wealthy distribution but without any result. Based on dataset as of 1996, Getino advises that Third World countries receive only 7.8% while north industrialized countries monopolizing roughly 93.2% of entire demand in the world. This incongruence is associated to foreign investments and financial aids which contribute to create dependence between developed and under-developed countries under the promises of well-being and prosperity.

Even though, he admits that cross-cultural interaction has been one of instrument of historical understanding among people, unlike Indo-European men, Latin-Americans have been deprived to recognize their proper history and customs. Today, population has been educated in order not to valorize their own ancestral past. That way, socio-cultural resources are undermined by the constructions of “outsider archetypes”. Under such a context, tourism has been functional to Latin-American aristocracy’s interests as a mechanist to generate hegemony and domination in a more classical Marxian meaning. In such, tourism is not good or evil but work together ideology and other instrument to be applied in some or other manner depending upon the circumstances.

Finally, in successive chapters compiled in second part, Getino demonstrates convincingly that international tourism is being increasing in all world and position as one of more pivotal industries for industrialized and under-industrialized countries. As a result of this, local strategies must be adopted by Latin-American governments for contributing to a sustainable tourism for all strata that conforms the society. Even though numerous studies has been devoted to stress the

importance of international cross-national tourism, less attention has been given to local or regional tourism as a vehicle to understanding, communications and national cohesion for involved countries. In regards to this, Getino outlines that a community aspires to be developed needs to give to all stakeholders an appropriate grade of information and education about the social circumstances wherein its own existence makes sense. If this happens, tourism as emancipator and communication instrument may be complemented in association with industries of other nature. In recognition to this, a key role plays tourism in national life not only looking for authenticity but also in a process of introspection.

As a whole, we tried to summarize and describe as more objective as possible all Getino ideas expressed in his book. In accordance to his profile as cineaste, he considers capital pursues logically its own reproduction provoking a serious material and social incongruence among stakeholders. From this point of view, it is imperative a policy which contributes to re-construct Latin-American identity. As the previous argument given, the reading of J. Norrild about the same work is more than benevolent arguing that Getino applies a particular Marxian approach in studying how leisure is legitimated under other form of production like tourism. By providing a numerous statistics as well as quantitative tables, this author provides a critical analysis of tourist industry in Latin America (Norrild, 2005). Nevertheless, the position of Getino, – which Norrild does not take into account-, showed some academic limitations that should be re-considered.

First of all, a conceptual revision between *ashkóle* and *otium* should be done. In part, roman leisure (*otium*) had few to do with Greek's, since it has been intended to emphasize the body sensualist pleasures in detriment of emancipation idea of leisure characterized Greek realm. Moreover, ancient leisure had a sacral component that obliged citizens to take part of them quite aside from their wishes or intentions instead of modern tourism which takes place in an individual idiosyncrasy. As Korstanje (2008) have been highlighted in Ancient Rome, *otium* has been practiced in a divine atmosphere. Since all games, literature, races or banquets are offered in the honor of a certain Divinity; human who refuses to participate in them would be subject to an imminent revenge or curse in their business. This is a key aspect to make a conceptual differentiation between modern tourism and ancient leisure.

Secondly, influenced by Darwinian as well as eugenicist theory, Karl Mordejai Marx Lévy considered the history as a continuum line where the grade of civilization and material accumulation shape the practices of each society. That way, he classified four types such as savages, agrarian,

feudal and industrialized communities. This posture promptly will be accompanied by political support to United States in a war with Mexico. For Marx, the triumph of United States over Mexico (1854) signified irrefutable empirical evidence about the superiority of industrialized forms of production over agrarians which will lead to the end of history (Fillipi, 1988). Assertively, professor Fillipi assumes that Marx was enthroned in Latin American scholars because of Cuba's or URSS's revolutions. Both countries have adopted a fragmented image about economic forces of capitalism and applied such a superficial notion to political arena.

The underlying issue is that Getino's interpretation of Marx looks to be incorrect for two main reasons; material reproductions are associated very well to ideology which not only alienate the citizen minds but also create a false-conscience. In opposition to Getino's treatment, For Marx Nation States in Europe and elsewhere have been founded on an historical and economy background, these process are inevitably embedded with capitalism logic. For that reason, the honorific status of gentleman in aristocrat order has been bestowed upon mass consumption in modern times wherein tourism stands. In consequences, not only ideology but also nationalism are functional of aristocracy and First World which Getino deplores in his treatment. A cure for a supposed illness like capitalism (following Getino's overview) will consist in returning to re-value a lost national tradition and heritage. Prophetically, just upon folks assume their role in the line of history, emancipation would be possible.

Basically, the problem is that author disregards the importance of nation in capitalism inception. In this point, it is often assumed that tourism did not help to better the social conditions in peripheral communities but reinforcing historical and economic dependence between groups. However, it is related to other deeper causes than capitalism in such like colonialism. Lastly, this work stimulates the discussion in a body of research that has been underestimated in last years in Latin America but slowly begin to play a protagonist role aside the position of tourism in Latin American development dreams.

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Maximiliano E. Korstanje

Maximiliano E. Korstanje (maxikorstanje@hotmail.com) is a Lecturer at Palermo University, Department of Economics, Mario Bravo, 1050, Buenos Aires, Argentina.