

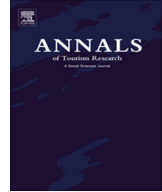


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Reconstructing the globalisation of tourism: A geo-historical perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with methodological problems that emerge when trying to construct the necessary information for the reconstruction of the spatial pattern of tourist places on a global scale. A methodology in order to construct a data set on the globalisation of tourism is put forward. It reflects upon the possibility to date the emergence and reproduction of destinations at different moments since 1800. As a solution, we propose to use tourist guidebooks published since 1800 as a source, from which different elements can be extracted.

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Introduction

From a geographical perspective, tourism is a phenomenon that expresses tensions and contradictions between established places such as central cities, and marginal places such as mountains, seaside resorts or the countryside. Since the beginning of the 19th century, tourism's spatial patterns have dramatically changed: from a system comprising a small number of places to a global system of tourist places. A geo-historical process of an expanding system of tourist places has been going on, where ever-new places enter the system while others exit the tourism system. It raises the question of globalisation as a double process of a "touristification" of the world through the application of the tourist gaze to virtually every object and place, and of the emergence of a global pattern of tourist places. The integration of places and the emergence of spatial arrangements of social realities at a global scale define the process of globalisation: a "the processes by which the world is being made into a single place with systemic properties" (Robertson & Lechner, 1985). Globalisation of tourism is therefore seen as one of the aspects of the general process of globalisation.

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This globalisation as a spatial dimension goes hand in hand with different periods as a temporal dimension, in which tourism takes different forms. Together, they are descriptors of specific forms of tourism, forming a coherent spatial assemblage over a certain time. For instance, historians describe the emergence of modern tourism around 1830 (Spode, 2003), “industrial tourism” from 1870’s on (Tissot, 2000), mass tourism from 1950’s on (Spode, 2003). Yet, those periodisations are thoroughly embedded in national tourism narratives and differ from country to country: the end of *Belle Époque* tourism in 1914 in Europe and/or in the Alps (Bätzing, 2003), the “gilded age” in the USA until 1898 (Cocks, 2001), diffusion of holidays in France in 1936 (Boyer, 2001) etc. are valid descriptions on a national level, but prove difficult to work with on a global scale. With the quite recently established current of “global history” (Osterhammel & Petersson, 2005), there is an interesting link to be drawn between historical research on tourism and geographical research on spatial dimensions of tourism that goes beyond the national scale.

This endeavour encounters a data problem. No estimation exists of the number of tourist places existent in each period of tourism. To understand the process of tourism globalisation through densification, concentration and increased dispersion has proven a difficult task. Unlike research on the global process of urbanization, which is now relatively well documented by historians and geographers (Bairoch, 1985; Moriconi-Ebrard, 1993), research on the world’s touristification is not yet accompanied by quantifications about the number and types of tourist places. We have no idea about the number of tourist places that emerged in the different periods on a global scale. Only partial analyses allow for an understanding of the quantity of tourist places created, such as Walton’s (1983) analysis of the seaside resorts in Great Britain or Spode and Kersten’s (2000) contribution to the *National Atlas* of Germany.

Up to now, only one attempt has been undertaken to provide a geo-history of tourism on a global scale: Equipe MIT (2011) collected approximately 2,000 places in order to understand how, at different periods, tourism places emerge at different moments. Their attempt aims, among others, at overcoming a Eurocentric perspective by emphasizing the non-European world. Yet, it is impossible to draw on quantitative information from their work, owing to the focus only on the *production* (see Fig. 1) and not on the *failure* of destinations. It could therefore be the aim of research to establish a more precise representation of the spread of tourism over the world. Our contribution aims at doing one step into this direction by proposing a methodology that could enable us to produce robust quantitative data on the diffusion of tourism over the last two centuries.

This article deals with some methodological problems that emerge when trying to construct a relatively robust database that contains the necessary information for the reconstruction of the spatial pattern on a global level. How does one implement the reconstruction of tourism globalisation and

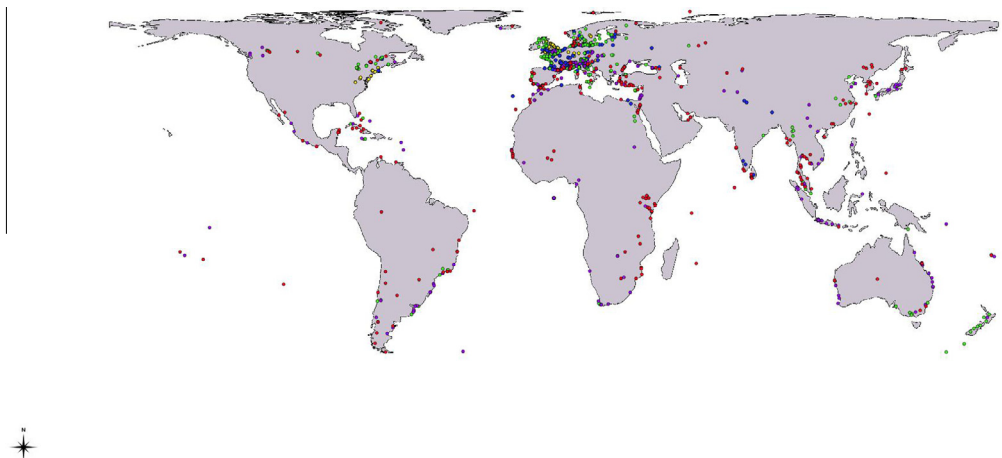


Fig. 1. Production of tourist places between 1800 and 2000.

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