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**TOURISM: THE RECOVERY OF THE VALUE AND THE MEANING OF THE PLACE IN A
GLOBAL ERA**

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Introduction

Tourism in the way that it is evolving today can help us better understand the emerging paradox introduced by the increasing popular paradigm of globalization and the inherent heterogeneity of the human condition. Increasingly mankind is being challenged in the form of institutions, economic enterprises and places of habitat to navigate a social contract between the economic pressure to subscribe to a homogeneous world on one hand and the biological necessity to be different for survival in the Darwinian sense on the other. In this paper we posit that the city as a tourist destination takes advantages of this contradictions. This means that the value of the urban place is being rediscovered along more humane dimensions.

This article starts by discussing the concept of globalization and its impact on contemporary urban management which include principles of urban productivity and economic development. Following this general outline the concepts of the city as a product to be recreated, managed and offered to both investors and visitors as a way to revitalize the urban economy is explored. The related concepts of place market and city marketing used in this process are introduced as well.

Finally this article tries to explain why eco-sustainable tourism can help a municipality improve its economic performance and face the competition of other urban centers of the same size by taking advantages of unique attributes of a geographic location whether man-made or occurring naturally.

Globalization. Is it a new process?

The word "globalization is a derivation of the word "global" which means "the whole". Having said this, being characterized as "global" depends on the one's adopted point of reference. That is, what is being considered as the "whole"? In this sense the perspective of globalization as an *economic* phenomenon (internationalization) is not a new process.

In terms of the modern business world it is possible to say that the globalization process started when the America was discovered in the 15th century. The discovery of America at the time promoted in a significant way the concept of geo/physical/mankind planet unity (although, the civilizations in that time were not be aware that there would not be more significant land to discover. The emerging philosophy of *commercial* unity was the result of geographic expansion searching for new resources to recover and new markets to sell to. Actually, economists today refer to this as the era of the mercantilism philosophy.

According to BEYHAUT, (1997), during this early period of global commercial capitalism, the attained level of internationalization of the economy was higher than it was thought until recently. It is now widely accepted that the pre-industrial economic cycles of the 15th century really affected the world as a whole. On a smaller scale the economy of the 15th century was transformed and became global. The main difference between these two distinct periods of economic growth is more a matter of the speed of diffusion of technology (ideas) than any fundamental economic philosophy..

Before the telegraph invention (19th century), information and news were basically transmitted person-to-person, at the speed of the existing transportation means, (ranging from pedestrian foot speed through to sailing ships and then later steam ships), none of which presented any revolutionary condition.

As showed by GORENDER(1997), economic globalization and technological revolution are converging and project to the future the possibility of a unique society. This trend leads us to pose some questions. Will the process of globalization be able to harmonize the many cultural differences found in peoples? Perhaps overcoming aggressive responses among nationalities, ethnic groups and races?

Will globalization be responsible for the end of the diversity, differences and idiosyncrasies of these same peoples as a result of losing their local identity?

Searching for the difference

Up to the end of the 19th century, strategic locations in terms of geographical aspects (weather, easy access to natural resources and capital formation), still gave advantages to some places in terms of economic development. The general condition of that moment was the heterogeneity, marked by the capacity of the *place* to respond to the fundamental needs of the production sector. In this way it was possible to observe changes in the importance of products and urban centers according to economic changes. (Vargas, 1992)

At the end of the 19th century the world had entered a new phase known as the II Industrial revolution. The inventions of this new era were not the sole result of improvements in tools and equipment as had happened in the first one. This revolution was more scientific and had an even more pronounced impact over people's lives by introducing automatic machines, mass production and an extreme work division in the fabrication process.

At this moment, the production decision did not come from the "sovereign consumer" any more. Otherwise, the production administration amplified its control field by wielding the use of modern management techniques such as: advertising , marketing , psychology of behaviour in order to help control the market which, it would be presumed to serve. Moreover, they went beyond, by creating new "necessities" and influencing the beliefs and values of an entire generation. (GALBRAITH, 1967)

All management decision were driven by the concept of a "standard man" (mass market). Economies of scale, standardized products; collective movements and model cities, centralized decisions and technocracy; became the bywords of the day.

Following all of these the efforts emphasizing the *production* of goods, an even more pronounced change was occurring as to how people should *consume* and use products. These efforts highlighted health, beauty, social status, sexual prowess and general happiness. On the whole, they emphasized aspects which came from the symbolic properties and the use of specific products.

At the same time of the birth of the consumption society, the locations of the production centers started moving in the same direction. That is, they jointed to the tendency towards the homogeneity of tastes, habits, values, beliefs by the creation of similar territories. The strategic infrastructure factors for the production sector started being constructed (roads, railroads, airports and city as a whole). The strategic locations could now be built .

The increasing process of the production and the market internationalization had as a result the saturation of its own market, during the seventies. Facing this new scenery and trying to maintain the accumulation process, the system invented a new way of producing known as flexible production.

The central element of this new process is the flexibility concerning products, mix, size, designs, work process, equipment and so on. (GATTO, 1989) With microelectronics driving this new process (also known as mass customerization), firms were now able to generate extra advantages from the diversity of goods, without compromising the economic advantages of the mass production. It became also possible to offer customized products in terms of cost, time and quality to the specific and smaller demands. This permitted attention to smaller, highly segmented markets just by making simple (in relative terms) adjustments in equipment or software. (GATTO, 1989)

According to TOFFLER (1970), the imposed homogeneity as a byproduct of industrial society, was to be replaced by an immense diversity of living styles emerging from the post-industrial society. Now it would be easy to find and profitably *serve* an enormous variety of atypical consumer groups: hippies, homosexuals, vegetarians, athletes, and environmentalists economically. During the seventies and the Great Society of President Johnson, America came very close to achieving this Utopian consumer society. Toffler also believed in a great quantity of products that would be seen as enabling the modern consumer, in contrast to Galbraith's more dismal outlook (1967). This point was reiterated by Cross (1980), who made the point that more time could now be acquired only if the free time were spent by commercial amusing activities using sophisticated technologies. In this new way of production some aspects can be highlighted: increasing importance of the tertiary sector with emphasis on tourism; the elimination of the time gap; and the existence of a unique territory with no close substitutes.

Concerning the first aspect, while the industry diminishes its need of jobs, the tertiary sector increases these needs in numbers and in different fields like: education, urbanism, leisure, researches, medicine, arts and tourism. The economy of the services became the synonym of the post-industrial society.

The necessity of introducing diversifying selling formats to segmented markets, added to the newer and higher sophisticated techniques to induce consumers, started arousing latent consumer wishes which were far from being considered essential needs in the traditional economic sense. These wishes were not limited only to the condition of owning goods; they also invaded the field of service activities (doing things) as well. These leisure/service activities took on a life of their own—and now required jointly consumed products and merchandise. In the classic example, the universal appeal of sports participation and active leisure (gave rise to Nike's infamous and universal call to a action—"Just do it") This slogan became the seminal example of our generation. Modern advertising bombards us with the endless search for emotion and pleasure, to take part in events of all sort, the will to improve the cultural level, the necessity of social contacts, gave to tourism the condition to become a motor industry.¹

Regarding the time gap, the evolution of our modern communication system permitted everyone to watch what happens all over the planet and, some times out of it, at the exact moment that it is happening. Individuals start receiving all kind of influence coming from everywhere in the world. But at the same time that this situation potentially interferes with consumers' existence and ways of living, it also promises the possibility to attain better choices by the increase use of information

The future promise of a unique territory is, as mentioned before, the result of the improvement in communication and transportation systems, the development of new, cheaper and sustainable sources of energy coupled with advances in biotechnology and many other technological innovations. That is to say, where the natural condition does not exist, municipalities can help create it.

¹ The concept of motor industry was first mentioned by François Perroux (1961) in his theory about development poles. These studies try to demonstrate the capacity of some industries to generate a strong industrial concentration throughout their backward and forward linkages with so many other industries.

This uniformity of location factors is easily observed by the competition among developed countries and cities around the world to attract companies, events and people. In this sense, we are facing a big paradox: The fact of being unique, global, homogeneous, seen from a different perspective standardization viewed in a negative way (i.e. lacking uniqueness or confronted with many similar possibilities (boring), against the human reality of being unique, exclusive, and different. In the language of modern competition – being different adds value.

This difference does not only concern physical spaces and their attributes but, products and activities offered to different groups of individuals. This condition goes beyond when it considers the existing subjectivity of the individuals who receive, look, feel and offer according to their own repertoire of living. Actually, it must consider all the actors involved in this market game searching for the differences.²

At this unique moment in the world economy, one that is characterized by virtual corporations, flexible production, satisfying highly segmented markets the trend toward homogeneity is replaced by the necessity of being unique, exotic and even eccentric to create a difference. Accompanied by postmodern ideals, plenty of diversity, and communications driven by a multitude of symbols and signs, the *virtual* attributes of a geographic place, coupled with regional conditions and ethnic values may acquire a higher value. Therefore, tourism of the future may be borrowing from their virtual manufacturing counterparts; combining a wide variety of different elements that give an expanded meaning to the simple term "place" This is the new mindset and these are the new tools and precious inputs to city management in the future.

New ways of urban management.

In the eighties, the decrease of public resources, added to the increasing interest demonstrated to other questions, like public budget and public debt, modified the profile of urban research. At the same time, the dramatic changes in urban growth and the composition of urban activities put much of the earlier work out of date. The new questions posed emphasized themes which talk about urban productivity, economic development and the role of the local authorities.

According NIENTIED (1993), it is possible to include the reasons for these changes in two sort of tendencies. One belongs to a macroeconomic scale which links all the small cities to the world market. Then, the competition among countries is complemented by the competition among cities. The impact of all these mega factors on cities are only superficially known at this point in time

The second strong tendency pointed out by NIENTIED (993) makes reference to the new ways of city "Governance" (control). These new questions include the discussion on government as an enabling government, the failure of decentralization, the partnership between government and private sector, as well the issues of efficiency and effectiveness. The discussion about Urban Governance, at least in Brazil, is very embryonic, far from any near term implementation. Perhaps, its political reach, for some, is still imperceptible.

The lesson of the last quarter century is that local governments have discovered that they cannot act as agents of the welfare state. They must adopt pro-active attitudes to improve the performance of the local economy in order to achieve their social goals even though tangible results will be delayed. It is known that for the disadvantaged income and job security become the priority instead of housing and urban services demands. Unfortunately, the local governments have never responded and even were not concerned about job creation, urban productivity and economic development, leaving these questions to the central government. Frequently, when the municipalities prepare their City Planning, they only think of organising

² Concerning tourism URRY, (1996, pg 16), writes that it does not exist a single looking of the tourist. It changes according to the society, the social group and the historical period. These lookings are built throughout the difference. It does not exist a true universal experience for all tourists, in all moments. Actually, the tourist looking, any time, is built with the relationship with their opposite, with non-touristic forms of experience and social conscience.

the physical space for the urban activities by defining the zoning. In the municipalities where the environment is under protection, this added constraint only intensifies an already difficult situation. Retarding even further essential urban and economic development.

The great difficulty facing researchers, the local government and the financial agencies in these new lines of research concerning urban productivity and urban governance is the principle of inertia also known as resistance to change. Facing periods of transition, the first things to be pointed out are what is going to be lost -- even if in a cost-benefit analysis future profits could be higher. The critics to this urban management policy are based in three main premises:

- a) These urban policies intend just to attract new economic activities to the city;
- b) These policies deviate the application of public resources towards new activities leaving "the poor" or disadvantaged on their own once again.
- c) These policies contribute to the environmental degradation.

Nevertheless, we know from experience that these new activities can generate jobs and income. The job and income growth for the "poors" can make themselves enable to solve their housing and urban services problems. The concept of sustainable development is trying to answer the demands of economic and social development with environmental preservation and maintenance of the local identity. Another aspect taken in account is the involvement of all the actors in the city management process, including different interests and improving the knowledge of the reality.³

In this new way of city management, the city is seen as an enterprise, where marketing, advertising and selling techniques reach the urban field throughout the city marketing and place marketing policies. According to Kotler (1995), marketing is a social and administrative process by which the individuals get what they wish throughout the creation, offer and change of products. Marketing does not create human needs which are just linked to basic necessities. Marketing is simply a management tool that helps wishes become needs. This desire is an inherent element of human behavior, enlarged and modified by the social relations. These wishes become effective demand when coupled with purchasing power.

According to MASKULKA (1996), in the period known as the era of mass marketing (1950-1980) it was possible to successfully differentiate or position a product on the basis of heavily-funded mass advertising programs alone. Many examples can be cited which based their sales promotion in the visible or salient product attributes. But perhaps, one of the best known examples capturing the power of "image marketing" was Charles Revson's, founder of Revlon Cosmetics, famous phrase: "In our factory, we made lipstick; in our advertising, we sell hope".

In order to combat the plethora of "parity" products and many media to successfully pursue this strategy, Porter (1980) proposed to utilize strategic market planning in order to help achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (SCA). Nevertheless, according to Maskulka (1996), in a world characterized by increasing competition, the concept of a sustainable advantage is increasingly difficult to achieve and more importantly to maintain. He believes that the SCA-based strategies are still viable for some products as long as they are unique in geographic origin, truly differentiable and directly tied to the tangible quality of the product. Viewed from a tourism perspective, one of the under exploited "positioning" opportunities in business today is geographic place.

Making an analogy to the successful selling based on the specificity of the place of production, it is possible to transfer this concept to the particular field of the sale of the place itself. More specifically as an increasing part of regional and urban management and planning policies (country, region and city). Linking these policies related to physical space it is possible to talk about place marketing and city marketing.

³ The explanation that which actor build from the reality it is not, merely, an amount of data and informations. The explanation presumes a reading of these data which expresses the reality of each actor concerning their background of life. (HUERTAS, 1995)

Ashworth and Voogd (1994) consider that the concept of place marketing comes from the integration of three schools of marketing thought: not-for profit marketing, social marketing and image marketing. As a consequence, place marketing is often the responsibility of public sector, exclusively or in conjunction with private sector organizations. It can also involved other aspects of the behaviour of target groups besides the intention to sell places for tourists, trying to achieve economic, social and political goals.

In this way, it is necessary, firstly, to have a clear definition about the main objectives of the Urban Management. At this moment, planners, politicians and the community should work together to decide a city's future. The use of place marketing concepts as management tools should be employed according to these main goals. Then, the development of tourism using the particular attributes of the place, and incorporating the dimensions of urban tourism as well the eco-tourism assumes crucial importance.

Tourism and the meaning of the place.

Every city needs a economic base to be viable. At this moment in the world economy when natural or man-made location advantages are being diminished, big cities and even the mid-sized areas are aggressively competing to attract investors and "city consumers". According to Harvey (1989), some strategies for cities can be pointed out to counter urban competition or simply to reenergize their economy.

- a) Command and control functions in the field of finance, information and govern;
- b) Cultural innovations, great opportunity for leisure and shopping, and new styles of architecture and urban design.
- c) Exploration of particular advantages for the production of goods and services.

In the first case, a strong connection with the economic and political power can generate many opportunities for business in these tertiary centers (New York, London and São Paulo, considering the relative proportions). In this condition, the convergence of a high volume of people, services, events, contacts and opportunities form the perfect scenario for attracting the businessman. The so-called phenomenon of "business tourism" becomes another activity to be developed.

In the second case, when it is possible to include all the urban activities. Not only the elements for visits and knowledge acquisition, but also the possibility to take part in many activities such as shopping, conducting businesses and meeting people.

Actually, it is not always necessary to create these activities or build these spaces. Most of these cities were being built throughout history by investments (Paris, France), allowing them to achieve "II Differential Income".⁴ Still others can be created (as Curitiba, Brasil), or recreated (as in the case of Barcelona, Spain). In all of these instances it is the unique difference that ensures attractiveness.

The third case encompasses all the well known particular advantages essential for developing a productive activity with difference emphases throughout time (ranging from good places for ports through to the offer of skilled workers). In these advantages it must be included the quality and beauty of the natural landscape (as Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Venice, Italy) for tourism, as well some other places which were historically important throughout time and cannot be reproduced such as Istanbul, Turkey. These places can be viewed/offered? as privileged spaces and sold as rare and non reproducible, capturing the so-called "monopole income".⁵

This situation, despite the tendency of territory homogeneity, gives to that particular space, geographically defined, the condition of being unique. Neither the environment nor the history, that just the place can tell can be duplicated. In this sense, the use of these attributes for city marketing policies could help the urban centers to increase their attractiveness and face the competition among cities, create jobs and

⁴ Regarding "II Diferential Income" see MARX, Karl, (1980)

⁵ Regarding "Monopole Income", see MARK, Karl, (1980)

generate income. Any way, for all these possibilities it is necessary to strengthen the pleasure of consuming this new place, and to inform the market that it exists.

According to Maskulka (1996), the challenge facing marketers today is how to attain quality to the products and how to communicate this message of quality to the consumer. Place marketing and city marketing policies start to be considered, in Brazil, as an important tool for urban management, although the great resistance by the architects and planners who think the space not as a product for consuming but with a social and environmental character.

Concluding comments

Tourism industry which is the first one in the world, concerning financial resources and jobs generation, is strongly addicted of the sustainable management of cultural patrimone and environment. This is particularly true in Brazil, the biggest tropical country in the world, which posses the largest biodiversity of any country on the planet. In this particular context, the ecotourism appears as an important alternative to the appropriate management of natural resources. The lack of use is an invitation for land squatters—clearly an inefficient use of such global treasure.. The concept of ecotourism offers a welcome sustainable option to the long litany of politically expedient development projects of the past..

In Brazil, in April, 1994, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism and the Ministry of Environment and Amazone created an official work group to elaborate and propose a National Ecotourism Policy.

This group presented in 1994 some outlines of a national ecotourism policy and strategies to implement them.

It is important to remark the objectives of this policy:

To conciliate ecotourism activities and environmental preservation;

To strenghten the institutional cooperation

To make possible the involvement and the commitment of all actors engaged in this process, mainly the local population.

To promote the development and the qualification of the human resources

To promote and improve the urban services and facilities

To promote the environmental education.

In this way a product was invented in which the main input was the quality of environment. Far from being a constraint to the development, as in recent past, environmental was repositioned as a great source of permanent wealth. If correctly managed this can be a good way to preserve the environment and achieve sustainability simultaneously. Besides this fact, other policies concerning tourism for municipalities were developed by central government. This policy intend to help the local power to improve tourism if they have vocation and potential for this, expressed in their city plan.

Nevertheless, a few people are aware about the difficulty to implement tourism and the negative impact that it can cause. Concerning ecotourism, the charge capacity put limits to the contacts with the environment. So to whom should ecotourism be profitable? To the city? Including its citizens? For businessmen or just for the owner of the place? For all tourists or just for those who can afford to pay high prices? These and many other questions are possible and remain unanswered—but should not be dismissed because they are difficult.

Ecotourism is an activity that demands an adequate planning to be successfully implemented. Integrating the fundamentally conflicting demands of the urban economy, environmental preservation and local identity preservation typically exceeds the time horizon of those entrusted to manage this concept—typically the politician and government employee. Sustainable development rooted in the fundamentals of ecotourism will be achieved only if all the actors involved work together: the public and private sector and the local community.

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