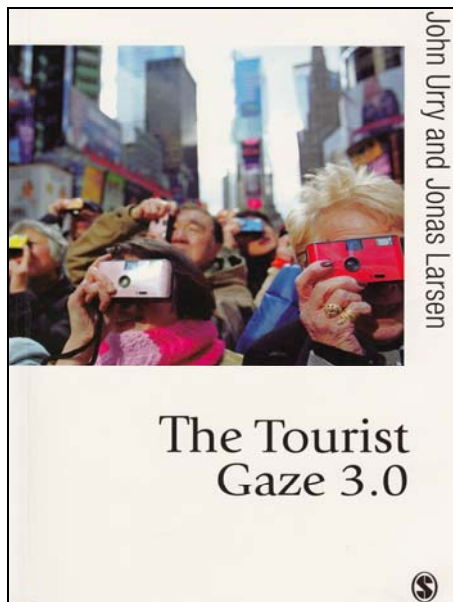


Book review:



John URRY and Jonas LARSEN (2011)

The Tourist Gaze 3.0

SAGE, Los Angeles|London| New

Delhi|Singapore|Washington DC

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The tourist gaze is becoming a very up-to-date issue, being a highly debated, cited and circulated term in the tourism studies and culture research. The book places emphasis on highly actual travel-related issues pinpointing them with relevant examples from the contemporary societies and the emerging trends of the production and consumption of tourist places, the tourist gaze being the main 'exponent' throughout the analysis, debates and critiques. The term 'tourist gaze' from the recently released book, i.e. *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* by John Urry and Jonas Larsen incorporates a wider spectrum of signs, experiences, and practices being rather a reflexive process than the mere static and passive process of sightseeing.

In the present mobile world, both the gazer and the gazed need to be read and interpreted within a time-space compression, translated as "*a shift from a solid, fixed modernity to a more fluid and speeded-up liquid modernity*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:23). Adjusted to these new trends and shifts the tourist gaze emerges as multifold: the romantic gaze; the spectatorial gaze; the anthropological gaze; reverential gaze; the environmental gaze; the mediated gaze; the family gaze, the collective tourist gaze, the photographic gaze. Among these afore-mentioned hypostases the anthropological gaze emerges as an epitome of intrusiveness, since the tourist gaze inherently implies "*an intrusion into the people's lives*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:10). Nonetheless, as the authors further on state "*the observation of physical objects [be it townscape, landscape, a lifestyle] are less intrusive than those that involve observing individuals and groups*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:61).

The book covers a wide range of tourist-gaze interwoven topics such as **theories; mass tourism; economies; working under the gaze; changing tourist cultures; places, buildings and design; vision and photography; performances; risks and futures** which function as distinctive chapters within the book, along with an extremely generous bibliography and an index list. The first chapter entitled **Theories** displays a conceptual framework about the tourist gaze as well as recent literature references to it, highlighting the fact that the tourist gaze is not a unique phenomenon but it engulfs a set of experiences that may vary "*by society, by social group and by historical period*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:2). Furthermore the authors state that the tourist gaze emerges as a way of breaking away from the mundane, "*the established routines and practices*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:3); the term invites to a reverie, some kind of vagabondism, as ascertained by Bauman. The complexities which revolve around **economies** and the tourist gaze are highlighted within the 4th chapter meanwhile referring to the spatial fixity of tourist services, a term mostly associated with producers (whose quality of service is essential for the meting the gaze) and the mobile feature which is assigned to consumers. The quality of services is an extremely important issue in the new globalized world since the "*electronic word of mouth*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:59) within this liquid modernity can have a major either helpful or destructive impact of a tourism-related business. Even the tourist-related stakeholders within the new globalized market have internationalized and transnationalized, mostly based in North America or western Europe, not necessarily to the advantage of the host societies since only between 20-60% of the expenditure remains with the latter, thus tourism as a strategy to boost revenues in developing societies did not turn out the expected results. The same

globalized market triggered new trends in the tastes of the new tourists thus witnessing a shift from the standardized package holiday to independent travel. Furthermore the authors reveal the thin and fragile boundaries between hospitality and hostility, the latter case given by tourists' intrusions into host communities' life.

Within the 5th chapter, i.e. **Changing Tourist Cultures** the authors dwell upon the loss of specificity of tourism as a fully-fledged domain, thus generalizing the tourist gaze by intermingling areas of art, education, photography, television, music, sport, shopping, architecture, low and high cultures all part of the contemporary society. Media also plays a major role into shaping new desires for tourist travel thus constructing new contemporary mediated gazes, therefore new sights, buildings, etc are constructed to shape the gaze. There are different modes of gazing, the same sight can be consumed in a different way according to the "*habitus and dispositions of tourists*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:199). The next debate about **Places, Buildings and Design** (chapter 6) comes as a continuation to the previously stated fact that old and new buildings are redesigned "*for the gaze*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:118), tourist places partly consisting of "*anticipated, designed and remembered places*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 119). Among these tourist places the theme spaces are meant to stimulate the visual sense through spectacular and anticipatory signs. Some examples are provided herewith such as Jorvik Centre in York, the Camelot theme park in Lancashire, the American adventure in the Peak District, the Oxford Story, the Crusades experience in Winchester and the Pilgrim's Way in Canterbury. A subchapter refers to New Museums where new consumption trends have emerged, the fascination with the mundane and the ordinary has come to the forefront and "*a contemporary-isation of history*" has occurred (Urry and Larsen, 2011:150). This new trend is taken even further as distinct boundaries between museums and social institutions are becoming blurry, as "*shops can look like museums*" (as for instance the Prada store Epicentre in New York). On the backdrop of this evolving/involving process even museum brands have appeared, with franchised branches worldwide (e.g. Guggenheim Museum). Places and buildings are thus re-designed to meet the tourist gaze, and a way through which they can be visually consumed is photography. The 7th chapter **Vision and Photography** debates on the fact that "*photographs extended the tourist gaze in time and space*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:180), in a short time lapse the photographs have digitalized opening a new era of the visual and instantaneous consumption. Photographs have become "*performances of the now*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:185) through the popular Flickr and Facebook programmes. The authors stress that the tourist gaze can be seen as a performance, which engulfs an active multi-sensuous experience, nonetheless the visual sense being the organizing sense of this tourist experience. In the 8th chapter **Performances**, Goffman's performance turn is analyzed in close relation to the gaze, which is seen as a psychological, expressive and socialized tourist body. The tourists are not only audience but also performers, in the sense of "*walking, gazing, photographing and remembering*" (Urry and Larsen, 2011:191). An ill-intended performance can easily turn tourists into terrorists. The last chapter of the book, ref. **Risks and Futures** refers to the person-made risks of the industrial society and the way in which tourism itself can be self-destructive.

With an analytical discourse and the power of exemplification, the tacking of up-to-date emerging trends in tourist behavior and the authors' genuine ability to read it, the book invites to a critical observation and meditation on today's "*society of spectacle*" towards which tourism is heading to, meanwhile bringing a great contribution to tourism research and theoretical development.

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