# Silent Conflict in High-profile Cities Latin America and Beyond

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## Abstract

This anthropological essay provides a meditation on mass tourism while analysing the mechanisms of conflict between the needs of mass tourism and the local urban environment, extraterritorial spaces that fit into the universal heritage of humanity. Historical districts/ entertainment districts in capital cities are discussed as extraterritorial areas treated as ambivalent, bypassed, business bases. The tourists themselves constitute thoroughly ambivalent figures as tame strangers, treated simultaneously as a potential source of maximum earnings and intruders.

**Keywords:** mass tourism, cultural conflict, urban anthropology, hospitality

# Introduction

Transport, sightseeing attractions, housing, hostels, rooms for rent, formatted bars, something special at any time, endless festival, promotions, ideas, fight for attention and fight for ordinary life. With backpacks, in stupid hats, fired by the sun, slightly lost, in pairs, groups, trams, buses, bicycles, trips, museums, maps, routes, facilities, infrastructure. Tourism, economic leverage. Submission to satisfy the expectations of a stranger. Satisfy their cravings, earn. The redistribution of capital in the region. Marketing, building the brand of the region and the city. Micro-politics. From the pavement through the kitchen, the iconosphere, monuments, fancy attractions, spleen, "fresh air": it seems that the imaginative and tourist expansion is reaching the limits of endurance. Residents, citizens, "ordinary" people feel tired, cease to feel "at home", stop learning about their own cities which become more and more difficult to move, more difficult to live; the old relations with space and relationships with people seem to disappear.

This text assumes an essayistic form on purpose. It is a methodological procedure par excellence. It results essentially from the methodological reflection on the ways of describing the world, and thus its interpretation, on the ways of presenting and explaining its dynamics. The world of culture and politics relies on international processes shaping the image of the contemporary world. As we know these processes have eluded the hard scientist framework trying to push the world into simple, clear tables and summaries. The theoretical background behind this type of theoretical formation consists, therefore, of concepts rooted in autoethnographic reflection (Ellis, Chang), the idea of "symbolic interactionism" (Blumer) or a cognitive method aimed at developing a conclusion explaining the problem in dialogue with the reader, ratings and reviews. I am more interested in describing the world, revealing my own experience of reality than in outlining the views of other authors, while presenting my own knowledge of their achievements, and multiplying footnotes. Therefore, the essay attempts – and it is not a new thought – to become a form capable of conveying scientific content, but present it in a new way because of its composition: through its openness to understatement, omission, and even lack of transparency, which so strongly characterises contemporary culture in its broadest sense. Thus, the research problem is hidden in a maze of seemingly disproportionate data, descriptions and terms. What I try to do is to immerse the reader in the metaphor, in the experience of various subjects involved in living together in a city, or cities that are the target of mass tourism.

Noise, stench, overpopulation. Continuous movement that starts at the airport: airplanes land all the time, they start every now and then. Waiting for luggage. Taxi drivers hunting tourists. A queue. One by one. Luggage. Suitcases. Rattling wheels. Kiss and ride. They come up, drive along the road and disappear in the shadow of the flyover. Coming back for more. Departures and arrivals every day. Every day: restaurants, overloaded pubs, tour buses, exotic stays, trams full of distracted

people staring at smartphones or crumpled maps. Backpacks, sandals, travel bags, baseball caps are rubbing against each other, mixing smells, languages, crossing paths, lengthening queues. Traffic lasts the whole year; tension increases in March, falls at the end of October. Young people, old, couples, organised trips. Tourists on the weekend, tourists for a week or two. Erasmus students for half a year, pensioners for the summer. The city is bursting at the seams.

The centre: high street, a square. From the morning after, the passages and the bistro bars; the survivors of the previous night, still singing or in the depths of alcohol-induced melancholy, an organic weakness. City services clean the city, collect trash, paper, paper cups, plastic bottles, containers, foils, cans, unheated fries. Suppliers block the streets. In addition to locals, cafes: espresso and sweets stands are over-crowded. They ask, they choose, they try in English, slowly, loudly, what is it, what it is, whether it is on the app, whether it is in the guide, whether it is worth buying here or is it worth taking a selfie on a stick without asking photographers, bartenders: it is their everyday, public, but also private life. Life is not exactly for the show, but life is almost exclusively for tourists. They pay, so they demand, so you do have to have patience, and answer, give, play a role. This is the theatre for which they come. As needed, in line with the expectations of a global, formatted world. Locality with a pinch of global fashion. Decor, equipment, style, music subject to the trends: how to have a good time; fun and related aesthetics.

When all the indoor and outdoor cafes are already occupied, and the native inhabitants, if they are still in the district, are modestly facing the TV, the staff has a moment's respite and looks away from the next lost and hungry customers. Waiting in the queue to the toilet, I am also queuing into a bar; I stand in the queue at the Indian store to choose something from the shelf to drink. A narrow passage; in front of me a couple of Japanese in full gear with backpacks, bags, umbrellas protecting from the sun, trying to do shopping, rustle bags, cakes falling, someone picks them up, the store is stuffy, hot, somebody blocks me from the other side, sorry, excuse me, the English decides to buy wine, still at the checkout it gets crowded, the man of service methodically weighs and deducts the goods, not even one look at anyone, the face is expressionless, unreadable. The next one looks into the store. I look out the window: see families from Scandinavia: father of about fifty, bright long pants made of material, a light cream shirt with rolled-up sleeves pulled into trousers, an expensive watch, expensive moccasin leather shoes, an elegant brown belt, on the back, thrown sweater in colourful diamonds, hair carefully brushed up, on the nose a good brand of sunglasses, a new iPhone in the front pocket. The son looks similar, in his slightly – deliberately – dirty Vans high-tops and with less coordinated, expressive movements. The woman is an elegant counterpart, a Scandinavian stereotype: delicate jewellery, light shoes on a canvas instep, a shapely handbag, cool bright colours, blond hair, youthful charm despite her forty; kindness, curiosity and subtle distance mark her body language and well-mastered English.

They probably spend their nights in a family apartment on the outskirts of a former working-class district transformed into a zone full of art galleries, Vege shops and playgrounds for dogs and the few children who run local businesses.

Gentryfication shifts places and districts, reconfiguring them into a completely different shape on the city map. Space becomes a commodity. Gentryfication erases the style and character of the former district from the city map, heals the "broken" and usually shameful "tissue" of the city resulting from poverty and neglect. Global capital, global needs, new employment relations, new services, technology and "old urban planning" take on a new life. Local policy towards transnational interest groups, out-of-court mechanisms and planning manifested in part in the form of the spontaneous, bottom-up revitalisation practices.

Outside the window, a pair of young Spaniards in colourful, airy pants and sandals presents themselves in their large pastel blouses, neck beads, beads, wrists, thongs, braids, laced hair, black beards, backpacks, sachets, tobacco, tissue paper, yerba mate. They are slowly wandering the street, looking around as if they should stop but disappear. They are accustomed to the sun, accustomed to street life, accustomed to travelling, to the crowded city and the blazing desert.

The queue moves. It's afternoon. On the street and in the shop only tourists are left. The city falls asleep, protects itself in siesta. Rolled shutters, closed bars and service points. This is the only way you can force tourists to retreat. For a moment, you shut the city down and hide in your own way of life. Reverse the order imposed by the tourist industry.

Shop windows are covered with posters and stickers with card payment options, opening hours (24 hours a day, Indians usually do not give in to siesta), ads of exceptional ice cream, mineral water, beer, snacks, sandwiches, souvenirs, magnets, postcards. Commemorative gadgets flood the city's entertainment quarters. Chinese shells products, badges, patches, pendants, keyrings, trinkets, mugs, gypsum magnets, bands, hats, caps, openers, leashes, lighters vie for our perception, they shout for attention, till the dullness of the senses. Their vividness and numbers render them paradoxically invisible. But do they seem as invisible to the local residents? Are they permanently inscribed in the landscape of old tenement houses, alleys, carved facades, art craft, wooden shutters, often centuries-old ornaments and trinkets shaping the unique idiom of the district?

Leaflets are piling up; from the afternoon hours start ads by beaters, restaurateurs, in several languages at the same time, with local food as a bargaining chip. Only with them you can feel uniqueness, originality, peace, rest. And so every few meters. Among the growing crowd, with banners, uniforms, guides, among street musicians, performers, costumes, parrots, jugglers, soap bubbles, accordions, lotteries, paintings, face paints, balloons, among the meleks, tellers of urban legends and stories. In the zone closed for car traffic, in an endless entertainment zone, in an uninhabitable zone. All-year "carnival". Utopian islands (one-sided) pleasures.

Monuments and museums. The crowd. A few hours to get inside, to take a self-ie, be a figure in the crowd, for a moment positioned in front of the painting or in the church, then you move on to make the crowd outside an hour less. It is a necessity almost ritually inscribed into the script of a trip, a vacation: sightseeing. A ghost of sightseeing, an undefined form of experience. Extremely and superficially. Unhooking next points, as in the game getting more levels. Submission to the imagination, guides that shape our vision of the world before leaving. This symbolic imaginary crashes in contact with the material of travelling, sightseeing, and moving. Body against body. Being among people. Overcoming invisible barriers and ranges of private space. The intertwining of private and public spaces, intensifying contact, renegotiating the use of space, modification of places. For a single person/tourist, it is a temporal change, a suspension of everyday habits. For the inhabitants of the city literally haunted by tourists, not necessarily so. It is more of a permanent suspension of rights to your own, customary way of using the city space. A change that causes discomfort and unspeakable conflicts which become the cause of reflection on the possible development of the situation; the issue of politics, a discussion over the direction of the administration and traffic management. All this provides a huge impact on the city's budget; all this affects the inhabitants: irresponsible behaviours, ignorance and disregard of local habits concerning everyday existence, exceeding norms – noise, unpleasant odours, unjustified claims, dominance resulting in structural transformations in the functioning of the city.

New technologies and online portals are created to allow room rental. Private apartments in historical districts, innumerable hostels, tenements converted into hostels have all caused the outflow of the local population, causing a change in social structure, a change of districts and places into extraterritorial arcades and no man's land. City centres, streets and squares famous for various reasons; whole quarters have begun to turn into a formatted amusement park. Heritage and live urban, local culture are reported on various residents' forums to be pushed to the margins and subjected to the pressure of global pop-cultural content. In addition to a wide and competitive rental offer, the so-called cheap air connections are one of the main factors enabling mass tourism, so intrusive in the face of cities. Low, promotional ticket prices and high frequency of calls; price differences resulting from a different level of economic development and the climatic attractiveness of the countries of the European South complete the list of the main factors causing problems with contemporary mass tourism.

Historical districts/entertainment districts are extraterritorial areas. No-go zones: in Venice, Florence, Barcelona, Rome, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Krakow. These areas are ambivalent, bypassed, treated as business bases. The tourists themselves, the tourist, is a thoroughly ambivalent figure. Tame stranger. Foreign. Treated as a potential source of maximum earnings and as an intruder. The "transparent" figure of the local resident is increasingly ostentatiously ignored. But the limits of tolerance seem to end. Inhabitants

organise themselves and, in various (often unpleasant) ways, begin to express their opposition. Moreover, the number of conflicts arising on the tourism-city line forces the authorities to take countermeasures, seek solutions and compromise.

Hospitality rules are violated. This is a symptom of a serious crisis, not so much on the scale of international as interpersonal cooperation. As we know well, hospitality is one of the basic universal attributes of culture. It introduces people to the circle of basic meanings, understandable without speech and language, possessing a unifying pre-sacred character. Over a linear time, above the physically measured space. Hospitality is revealed in small details. In attitude. Giving slow repetition of phrases, in the postal service at the counter, at the checkout, in the library, in gestures, patience, in an invitation to participate in the event, which becomes a contribution to accelerated and deeper socialisation. Hospitality finally introduces us to the "centre" of culture, to the flesh, at its very core, as it is understood and shared by the local/ indigenous people. It is an exponent of tradition (tradition of living, not solid traditionalism) manifesting itself in the form of a warm, sated, calorific meal (cake, tea, glass), giving pleasure and strength of food, depending on the context and situation.

Cordiality and gentleness of hospitality. Food, safety. Bed, bowl, table. Survival. *Philo-ksenia*. The right to hospitality. The act of hospitality, which reifies what in culture is the primary value, accumulates and embodies abstract ideas. It is a rudimentary attribute of culture, created by Man for man, necessary for his functioning as an individual, as a member of a community, society, species. Guest, hospitality is a well-known figure present in religion and literature. From *Odyssey* to a free place at the Christmas table. And since the topos of hospitality penetrated so deeply into the tradition, canonical books and religious doctrines of the world, this matter must be extremely important from the point of view of the survival of the human species. Religious sanctioning, the revealed, holy, divine status of the Guest, its supernatural protection (whoever he is) serves not only symbolic exaltation of man, but is an expression, consequence, utilitarian necessity, the other face of altruism that assures the group biological survival, existence and dialogue – because in order to survive you had to and must be in motion – once a guest and once a host. Hospitality is not a result of beautifulness, but a pragmatic, essentially custom (normatively sanctioned) occurring under every geographical width. This balance, cooperation of the host and guest is disturbed by mass tourism. What kinds of conflicts occur as a result?. As Antonio Alvarez-Sousa writes:

> Tourism is a sector in which multiple conflicts can play out. They can be generic, or they can arise from a number of more specific areas, such as public interests; residents vs. tourist activities; residents vs. entrepreneurs of the tourist industry; relations among entrepreneurs due to the varying amounts of power they have and the distribution of profits among them; residents vs. those tourist practices that kill local culture in the sole pursuit

of financial gain; symbolic conflicts arising from actions carried out by social movements to spotlight an issue; the conflicts between different interest groups requiring government intervention, largely on the part of local authorities (Alvarez-Sousa 19).

The issue is, as you can see, multi-faceted. Grass-roots protests take on radical forms, from blocking streets to piercing tires. Milder manifest themselves in expressing a protest in the form of banners, graffiti, inscriptions, murals, pickets and performances. These less visible bottom-up practices of opposition are manifest in the form of simply avoiding overpopulated places and areas, closing shutters, raising prices for services, products and prosaic needs. Learning your own city anew. The most active are entities that are not direct beneficiaries of mass tourism. Emotions, conflicting interests, habits are at stake. The employment structure, communication or developed management models are changing.

Like all conflicts, those mentioned above have both destructive and creative consequences. They will force to correct legal structures, space-time structures, infrastructure, economic structures, and finally, mental ones. (Not to mention the conflicts related to the growing emigration crisis). The situation forces the authorities to act. Various proposals and possible options for solving the problem are widely discussed. The mere diagnosis of the causes of the growing conflict and its social functions forces reflection on the management of space and people, control and planning of the flow of social actors, security issues, reconciliation of conflicting interests, restoration of relative equilibrium.

Alvarez-Sousa reflects further:

Among the proposals for change we have to differentiate between those pursuing change from within the system and those seeking to change the system. The anti-system activist groups clearly want a change of system but other groups want to bring about change from within the system[…] Compared with those who want a change of society, most people advocate change from within the system, reached by the consensus of governance. Asocial adjustment is necessary which allows conflict to lead to consensus through governance (Alvarez-Sousa 19).

However, before systemic, transnational and mental changes take place, the city authorities and the residents themselves apply *ad hoc* solutions in the form of visits to the most overpopulated zones, museums, streets and beaches. Additional fees, bans, access restrictions and even entry into the city are imposed. Spontaneous activities, rest, and the use of cultural goods are subject to precise regulations. The flow of people is also subject to a metric control. Increased control and regulation influence more and more the form of the tourist experience.

Travel, vacation and leisure are yet another dimension of organised consumption. The planned scenario, a format that is easier to control, predict and manage.

In response to the problems of mass tourism, it is postulated to use holistic solutions. From top-down, statutory regulations, flow control, transport policy and access to cultural goods to far-reaching educational programs that promote the rational use of the opportunities offered by the freedom of travel and leisure. The question remains whether cultural mechanisms will become active and work, which will soften the conflicts that arise on this ground.

The first steps to solving these problems are the awareness and the conceptualisation of massive, consumeristic tourism threats. The discussion has been going on for years in the press, locally, internationally or on the level of reflection on the methods of managing and controlling the flow of people in the modern world. The arguments and concepts developed in the field of studies on public security are used as attempts to apply preventive strategies for tourism traffic management. One of such concepts is the idea of a ban-optic developed by the French sociologist Didier Bigo, who conducts interdisciplinary research within studies in emigration and security, developing it mainly on the basis of the ideas of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben.

In such publications as *Security, Exception, Ban and Surveillance* and *Globalized (in) Security: the Field and the Ban-opticon*, Bigo discusses the concepts dealing with terrorist threats, but based on a specific way of describing, identifying and controlling social groups. His method alone can be useful in the regulation and management of mass tourism, and of course is associated with surveillance. The control model is based on preventive profiling, identifying groups, units to be controlled or, as in the case of terrorist threats, exclusion. It is based on selective observation, prediction of events based on the acquired diverse data and anticipatory response event. As Bigo writes:

> The Ban-opticon is then characterised by the exceptionalism of power (rules of emergency and their tendency to become permanent), by the way it excludes certain groups in the name of their future potential behaviour (profiling) and by the way it normalises the non-excluded through its production of normative imperatives, the most important of which is free movement (the so-called four freedoms of circulation of the EU: concerning goods, capital, information, services and persons) (Bigo online).

Such control and regulation on the part of authorities at various administrative levels become the basis for public space management, town development, modelling their character, so as to reconcile the economic interests and expectations of ordinary citizens, ensure safety and comfort for city dwellers whose life under the pillory of tourism has become unbearable. However, these strategies are insufficient. The change must take place in the "collective consciousness". It may be enough to use a few simple rules related to maintaining moderation, proportion, and ordinary decency. Our choices of how to spend free time, sightseeing, etc. must be taken

with caution, consciously, taking into account expectations, habits, problems that we potentially generate fulfilling our desires, dreams and needs.

Tourist traffic has collapsed today. It has changed. The changes will be long-lasting. A new form of tourism will probably emerge and the character of historical cities will change. Bigo concepts will acquire a special power to solve complex conflicts of social life, regardless of their form and intensity, local, urban or global. We will face changes that are even more unpredictable than before. Perhaps the conflicting subjects disputed over the accessibility and character of cities are silently longing for the times when life went on in the way I described at the beginning of this essay.

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