

Tourist imaginaries and mobility in the United States

International Conference – February 6 and 7, 2020

University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines

(Call for papers)

Organizing committee: Alexandra Boudet-Brugal, Sophie Croisy, Sandrine Ferré-Rode, Elodie Grossi, Frédéric Leriche, Dalila Messaoudi

Scientific committee: Jan Borm, Bertrand Réau, Philippe Duhamel, Edith Fagnoni, Yves Figueiredo, Patrick Schembri, Jean-Marc Zaninetti

As today's most prominent international industry, tourism has been raising interest among researchers in the humanities and social sciences. Geographers, economists, researchers in management, sociologists, anthropologists, jurists, historians as well as cultural studies specialists have been committed to assessing and raising awareness about the main issues – social, cultural, economic, environmental – called into question by the global expansion of that industry. In the research conducted on that subject within these scientific fields, the function of tourist imaginings has not been neglected. As a matter of fact, it is an original and useful, not to say necessary, approach to the study of tourism as it participates in shedding light on the social and cultural stakes as well as the central motivations of tourist mobility.

Tourist imaginaries feed on material images (maps, advertisements, magazines and specialized journals, media reports) as well as immaterial ones (travel stories, speeches, fantasies and prejudices). These imaginaries which people conjure up prior to going on a trip, fully participate in the process of tourist mobility and contribute to the emergence and popularity of top tourist destinations. These tourist imaginings also participate in processes of discarding, marginalizing locations which come to be seen as places of little interest, even repulsive places, whether this assessment is based on facts or not. Indeed, imaginaries draw a contrasted map of tourist mobility, traffic and spaces, which in return fuel neverendingly tourist wanderlust and the need for new tourist spaces.

Tourist imaginaries about the United States highlight some particularly appealing spaces: large cities like New York or San Francisco, "wild" open spaces, notably renowned national parks, and amusement parks -- such as Disneyland or Six Flag -- which epitomize a prominent trend in the development of "tourism bubbles" often backed by capitalist strategies. This list of prominent tourist places indicates that the geography of tourist markets is uneven and segmented. Tourists traveling to the U.S. are more drawn to places that benefit from strong media coverage, whereas U.S. nationals whose geographical interests and temporality are more diffuse and who grow up with stories of the American West and its vibrant wilderness, are inclined to practice leisure activities that favor the outdoor, including outdoor tourism, near or far from home. Moreover, in the United States, the question of tourism is intricately linked to memory and memorial objects, particularly around the issues of slavery and Native American history.

Drawing from these observations, this international conference aims to debate four major themes. First, the conference will explore tourist imaginaries in the U.S. and will reflect upon

the ways these imaginaries shape mobility and produce “empty spaces” and “busy spaces” on the tourist’s map. Next, based on the assumption that both the outdoor and tourism bubbles hold a major place in the practice of leisure and tourism, the conference will assess the postulate that --compared with Europe for instance—American tourist imaginaries and practices in the U.S. remain specific. Then, we will explore whether and how tourist mobility contributes to forging an American identity, in other words the construction or, quite the contrary, the fragmentation of a shared identity. Finally, the conference will welcome contributions on tourist practices that provide a reflection on the ways in which tourist destinations are shaped, as well as their visitors. The point here is to consider how questions of tourist mobility and gender and racial identities intersect as the latter inform major social and historical specificities in the U.S.

Papers may adopt a diversity of research perspectives: historical methodology (archival research), empirical methodology such as that of sociology or geography (quantitative or qualitative surveys, participant observation), a cultural studies approach or a literary studies approach. Since these topics on tourism seek to be interdisciplinary, papers related to all areas of the social sciences and humanities (geography, history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, literature, etc.) are welcomed.

Focusing on the intersections between space and American culture and history, the conference will be structured along, but not limited to, the following topics:

- 1-Urban spaces
- 2-Tourism bubbles
- 3-The West and California
- 4-Racial / ethnic tourism
- 5-Tourism of Memory
- 6-Tourism and gender identity
- 7-National parks and the *Outdoor*

The conference will be held February 6-7, 2020, at the university of Versailles-Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines and the Versailles public library

Please, submit proposals to Sophie Croisy (sophie.croisy@uvsq.fr) and Frédéric Leriche (frederic.leriche@uvsq.fr).

Deadline for proposals: September 10, 2019.

Proposals must include:

NAME, first name

University / department / address

Email / phone number

Position

Proposals should be no longer than 2,000 signs (+ 5 keywords)

Decisions on proposals: October 10, 2019.

