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Tourism and Mobility

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ABSTRACT

Mobility has emerged in recent years as a key concept in the social sciences however its application in tourism studies has been relatively limited. The paper provides a framework for placing tourism within the broader context of mobility, and leisure oriented mobility in particular and argues that concepts of mobility provide an opportunity to connect understandings of broader patterns of tourist flows with individual life trajectories.

Paper Type: Working Paper (Conceptual)

Note: the paper is designed to introduce the special session on tourism and mobility with Hall, Coles, Duval and Bell

INTRODUCTION

Despite the recognition of global movement as an important factor with respect to transnational migration (King 2002); the production and consumption of global labour, goods and services (Hall and Williams 2002); and the development of social relationships and identities that often span multiple localities (e.g., Clifford, 1997; Lee, 2003), Tourism Studies has made surprisingly little connection with broader perspectives on mobility (Coles et al. 2004). Arguably, one of the main reasons for this situation is the gross insularity of many students of tourism from wider accounts of human mobility in that tourism is often been portrayed as being something which exists out of the realm of everyday life rather than a part of the contemporary lifestyle of the wealthy and highly mobile. As Coles et al. (2004) argued:

Research agendas in Tourism that are inherently based within social science enquiries into understanding how travel is positioned within the human condition need to take hold of higher-level theories of mobilities as opposed to the existing structured, middle-range theories of motivation, decision-modelling, and even destination image that, while useful, do little to bridge fairly substantial gaps in our knowledge of tourism as a representation of contemporary social systems (cf. Hall and Williams, 2002).

In order to effectively connect with and contribute to broader debates in the social sciences Tourism Studies must therefore be able, as Coles et al (2004) have observed to formulate a coherent approach to understanding the meaning behind the range of mobilities undertaken by *individuals*, not tourists.

TOURISM AND CONTEMPORARY MOBILITIES

Tourism is still categorised, and its flows still measured, by raw statistical data and reductionist conceptions of travel that serves to divide tourism from other forms of mobility. As a consequence, there is often little statistical or intellectual overlap with other fields concerned with mobility such as transport, retailing, migration or the realms of diaspora and global networks. In one sense, this limitation has already started to be recognised by the World Tourism Organization, who have begun to identify the category of day-tripping as a form of tourism behaviour (United Nations, 1994). Given innovations in transport technology, same-day travel is also becoming increasingly important at widening spatial scales, and is exemplifying space-time compression. This emphasises the need for those interested in tourism to address the arbitrary boundaries between tourism and leisure, and tourism and migration. Tourism therefore constitutes just one form of leisure oriented temporary mobility, and it constitutes part of that mobility, being both shaped by and shaping it within contemporary practices of consumption, production and lifestyle (Hall et al., 2004).

Drawing on geographical understandings of spatial interaction, spatial diffusion and time geography, Hall (2003, 2004a, b) has posited a macro model of temporary mobility that seeks to integrate tourism with other forms of mobility through representing the total number of trips (interactions) over time and space (Figure 1). Tourism is therefore seen as a leisure-oriented component of a continuum of mobilities that stretch from commuting and shopping through to what is usually categorised as migration and diaspora. Such a representation of tourism clearly seeks to explicitly connect tourism not only with other discussions of mobility in the social sciences but also to integrate macro and micro scale understandings of mobility. Moreover, such a conceptualisation

assists in further integrating research on the leisure dimensions of other forms of mobility such as second homes (e.g., Coppock, 1977; Hall and Müller, 2004), mobility of the highly skilled (e.g., OECD, 2002), travel for overseas work experience (e.g., Mason, 2002), return migration (e.g., Baldassar, 2001; Duval 2002, 2004a, b, c; Stephenson, 2002; Duval and Hall 2004), diasporic movement (e.g., Ioannides and Cohen, 2002; Coles and Timothy 2004) and educational travel (e.g., Kraft et al., 1994) with that of tourism mobility.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE - Representing tourism mobilities in time and space (adapted from Hall, 2004a, 2004b in Coles et al. 2004)

The spate-time diffusion of tourism mobility can also be connected to broader empirical research on spatial interaction and diffusion models (Hall, 2004a, 2004b). Spatial interaction models are used to predict spatial choices reflected in flows of goods or people between origins and destinations, expressing trade-offs between the accessibility of alternative destination opportunities and the perceived intrinsic 'attractiveness' of these opportunities. Such models have been heavily utilised in retail shopping planning and predictive capacities with respect to expenditure patterns and can be generated with rather basic data such as population, travel times, and retail floorspace. These gravity models, with respect to human mobility, have been in development since the 1880s, when they were applied to migration behaviour (Ravenstein, 1885, 1889). The friction of distance - the decay of interactions such as trips and communication over space - is well recognised in the social sciences but its implications have only been lightly touched on in tourism studies (Hall, 2004a, b). Arguably, this may be because of some of the issues which arise out of the study of distance-decay curves (Robinson, 1998), alternatively it could be argued that the majority of students in tourism have insufficient training in relatively basic quantitative methods. Moreover, the nature of the relationships between interaction, mass (population size) and accessibility are inherently complex. Nevertheless, they provide useful macro-level descriptions of mobilities and have a substantial predictive component to them, so much so that Hall (2004a) argues that such time-space accessibility lies at the heart of understanding the destination life-cycle with a focus on marketing life-cycles being completely misplaced.

Models of spatial interaction and diffusion are a collective representation of individual mobilities or time-geographies (Figure 2). Time geography examines 'the ways in which the production and reproduction of social life depend upon knowledgeable human subjects tracing out routinised paths over space and through time, fulfilling particular projects whose realisations are bounded by inter-locking capability, coupling and steering constraints' (Gregory, 1985: 297). Based on the work of authors such as Hägerstrand (1967a, b), Carlstein (Carlstein et al. 1978), Thrift (1977) and Pred (1981a, 1981b) time geography has been influential in seeking to understand individual space-time patterns as well as underlying significant developments in social theory such as Giddens' (1984) notion of structuration.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

According to Giddens (1984:116), 'Time-geography is concerned with the constraints that shape the routines of day-to-day life and shares with structuration theory an emphasis upon the significance of the practical character of daily activities, in circumstances of co-presence, for the constitution of social conduct', while also stressing 'the routine character of daily life 'connected with features of the human body, its means of mobility and communication, and its path through the 'life cycle" (1984:

111) or life course. Significantly, however, time geographies are usually not related to tourism, which is seen as being an occurrence outside that of the routine, a perspective which continues to the present day in much tourism writing. For example, Aronsson (2000: 57) argues, '[W]e are prisoners in the present-day time-space structure that we have created for our lives, we often use the free time we have in the evenings, at week ends and during our holidays to change this state of affairs through, for instance, a change of environment or, if you will, a change of time-space'. Similarly, Wang (2000: vii) observes that tourism is 'a kind of social action which distances the paramount reality' both in time and geography and in terms of culture. Yet such perspectives fail to acknowledge the extent to which space-time compression has led to fundamental changes to individual's space-time paths in recent years and, hence, their mobile lifestyles. The routinised space-time paths of those living in 2004 are not the same as those of people in 1984 when Giddens was writing or even more so in the 1960s when Hägerstrand was examining daily space-time trajectories. Instead, because of advances in transport and communication technology, for a substantial proportion of the population being able to travel long-distances to engage in various forms of leisure behaviour (what one would usually describe as tourism) is now a part of their routine activities.

People's travel time budgets have not changed substantially, but the ability to travel further at a lower per unit cost within a given time budget (Schafer, 2000) has led to a new series of social encounters, interactions and patterns of production and reproduction as well as consumption. The locales in which this occurs are sometimes termed destinations, and represent a particular type of lifestyle mobility that, when it occurs away from the 'home environment', is usually termed 'tourism' (Hall 2004b). Just as significantly, space-time distanciation through both tourism and changes in communication technology have provided for the development of often dense sets of social, cultural and economic networks stretching and communicative interaction between the two ends of the mobility spectrum from daily leisure mobility through to migration and thereby promoting the development of communities in which movement is the norm (e.g. Duval 2004a, b, c).

CONCLUSION

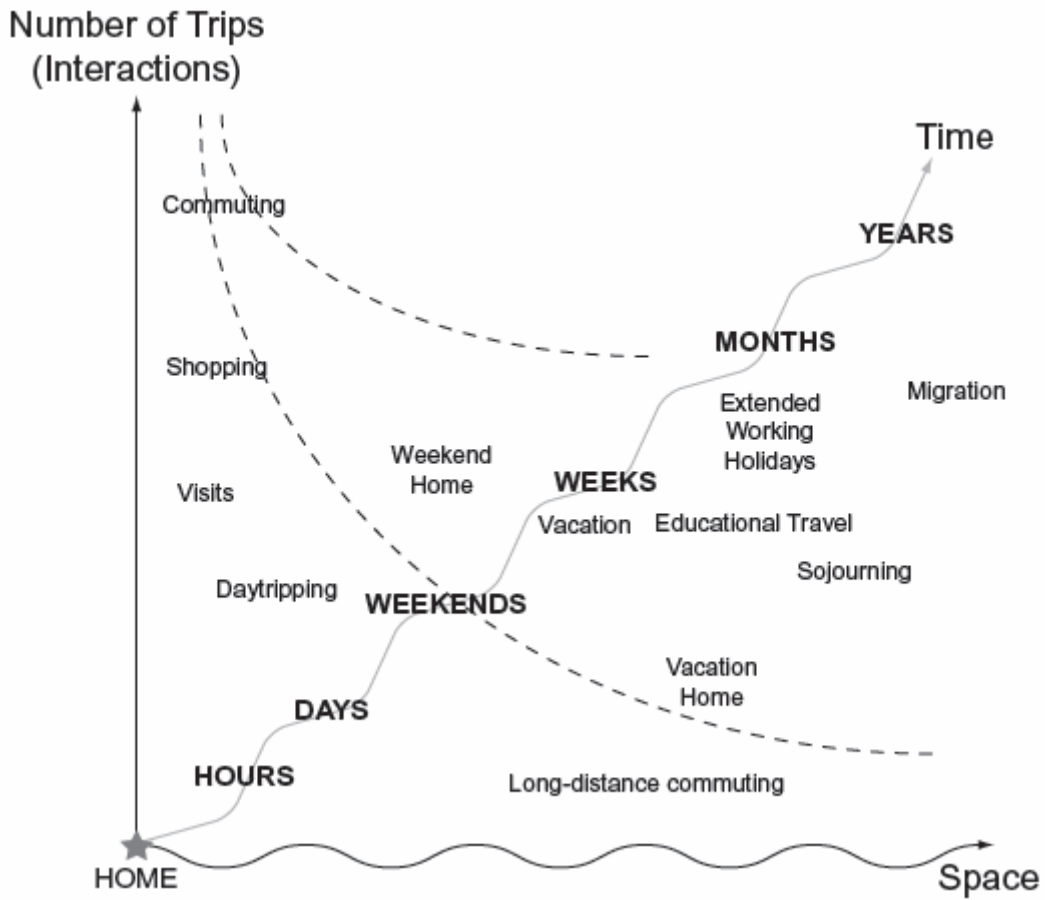
Individual space-time trajectories are shifting, leading to greater social and economic interaction in various, often transnational, domains, or what Giddens (1984: 116) prefers to "call the regionalization of time-space: the movement of life paths through settings of interaction that have various forms of spatial demarcation." Moreover, the potential for individuals to develop close relationships to multiple localities either through migration, second homes or employment not only spawns temporary movement that is inherently culturally-influenced and predicated by previous mobility but also calls into question the notion of home itself. For tourism as a form of temporary mobility, this would also suggest that tourism, or the touristic consumption of space and place, incorporates rather limited periods of movement (as opposed to permanent migration). At the same time, however, temporary mobility in the form of tourism may feature embedded social meanings which are inherently similar to the social process designation which has come to dominate meta-theories of migration as well as new understandings of the routinisation of extended time-space trajectories for those individuals who lead mobile leisured lifestyles.

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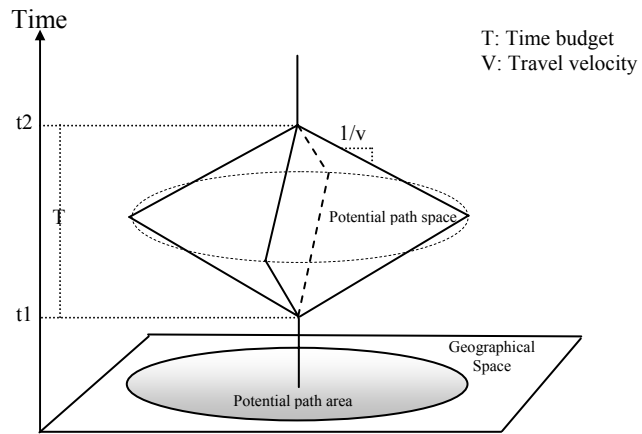


Figure 2: The time-space prism of human mobility

