



The cruise shorescape as contested tourism space: Evidence from the warm-water pleasure periphery



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ABSTRACT

Ocean cruising is an increasingly influential form of tourism generating each year tens of millions of excursionist visits to ports-of-call. This inductive multi-methods research presents the ideal type mature “cruise shorescape” that emerges in ports-of-call within warm water pleasure periphery regions such as the Caribbean where the sector is concentrated. Amalgamating and building on foundational studies of the tourist bubble effect and Caribbean urban tourism space, the shorescape innovates further by recognizing the role of the non-urban hinterland in the cruise system, incorporating semi-core and semi-periphery gradations to the basic core and periphery components, and positioning this space as an arena of stakeholder contestation. Specialized cruise spaces and nomenclature are introduced accordingly. Toward maximizing the beneficial outcomes for local port communities, the cruise shorescape contributes to the literature by providing a framework for investigating more systematically the localized economic impacts and spatial dynamics of destination-based cruise activity.

1. Introduction

The cruise industry has enjoyed an average annual passenger growth rate of 7.2% since 1980 (FCCA, 2014), expanding from 5.67 million in 1995 to 9.61 million in 2000 (Dowling, 2006), 17.8 million in 2009, and 22.0 million in 2014 (CLIA, 2016). A better sense of the attendant destination impacts, however, is gained through quantification by cruise passenger *arrivals*, since visits to ports-of-call are a core element of the contemporary ocean cruise experience. About 85% of cruise ship passengers and 38% of crew, on average, disembark at ports-of-call (FCCA, 2014), resulting in over 63 million cruise excursionists hosted worldwide in 2013 by the 100 main ports-of-call (Cruise Industry News, 2014). Small island-states are especially implicated, with the 50 reporting visitation data to the UNWTO accounting for 0.36% of world population and 4.2% of international stayover arrivals in 2014, but 55% of cruise arrivals from foreign home ports (UNWTO, 2016). Ports in the Caribbean region alone received almost 17 million cruise excursionists in 2013, while Mexican ports added another 3.5 million (Cruise Industry News, 2014).

Most of these cruise arrivals are received by small coastal port cities and towns that are becoming increasingly dependent on tourism-based revenue and whose managers expect substantial economic benefits from the presence of these excursionists along with sustainable social and environmental outcomes. The magnitude of these benefits, however, may be limited by the social and environmental stresses

associated with cruise ship visits as well as the desire of cruise corporations to maximize *their* own economic benefits by capturing as much of the passenger spend as possible for themselves. Such competing stakeholder agendas and expectations are played out at the macro level within the contested spatial context of a globalized “pleasure periphery” where inequitable core-periphery relationships are alleged to pertain. According to Bresson and Logossah (2011), ports in the Caribbean and similar regions have particular cause for concern due to an alleged shift from hotel-based stayover tourism to excursionist-based cruise tourism, and concomitant cruise sector peculiarities unfavorable to port-of-call communities. These include asset hyper-mobility (that is, the ability of cruise corporations to redirect their ships to new ports-of-call as warranted), an oligopolistic corporate structure (Carnival and Royal Caribbean together provide about 75% of global passenger capacity (CLIA, 2016)), low exposure to destination taxation, and the lack of a regional port-of-call association to negotiate collectively and more effectively for better terms from the cruise lines.

At the local level, the interactions between the ports-of-call and the increasingly frequent periodic influxes of cruise ship excursionists give rise to distinctive patterns of land and sea use that both reflect and accommodate these interactions. The first purpose of this research is to inductively describe the ideal type mature “cruise shorescape” that develops within the ports-of-call of small island-states and other littoral destinations warm-water pleasure periphery regions such as the Caribbean. An “ideal type” is an undistorted model of a phenomenon

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against which any real-world examples of that phenomenon can be compared (Harrison, 1995) and subsequently contextualized and analysed within an emerging constellation of subtypes. An ideal type, as such, is an attempt to impose order over the apparent chaos of social reality by reducing the target phenomenon to its main core elements, and by using those as a basis for further systematic deductive investigation and clarification within different geographic and structural contexts. The second purpose of this research, accordingly, is to use this proposed ideal type cruise shorescape as a basis for investigating the dynamics and implications of on-shore cruise-related activity, especially for local port communities so that the latter can derive maximum benefit from their exposure to the cruise sector despite the systemic disadvantages of the broader core-periphery relationships. The research, in this sense, can be positioned as “community-centric”.

The following literature review focuses on the relevant themes of pleasure periphery as contested space, the cruise literature as a reflection of this contestation, and the cognate literature on cruise and tourism space in ports-of-call that inform the articulation of the proposed cruise shorescape. Subsequently, the integrated mixed methods approach for achieving this articulation is presented. As per the first research objective, the constituent components of the cruise shorescape, which array in intensity from the cruise core to semi-core, semi-periphery, and periphery are then described, based primarily on the activities of cruise ship excursionists within the port-of-call. Finally, as per the second objective, the implications of this spatial model for community well-being are discussed, with related discussions of economic impact, globalization and spatial systems.

2. Literature review

The emergence of an international mass leisure tourism industry since 1950 has spawned a pan-global warm-water “pleasure periphery” focused on the Caribbean and Mediterranean littoral, with outliers in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Indian Ocean, coastal Brazil and elsewhere (Weaver & Lawton, 2014). This pleasure periphery is ideologically contested space. As conceived by Turner and Ash (1975), it is exploited territory that accommodates concurrently the recreational needs of consumers in core regions and the complementary profitability imperatives of the multi-national companies who develop affiliated products and services. This idea of the pleasure periphery is ideologically affiliated with Dependency theorists such as Beckford (1972) and Rodney (1972) who described the incorporation of small islands and mainland littorals into global core-periphery systems centuries earlier through the establishment of colonies and their plantation economies; the “periphery” as such is regarded as an outcome of this process rather than a pre-colonial space. Modernization theorists such as Rostow (1959), in contrast, have associated the integration of these places into the global economic system with economic development and gradually improved quality of life through new infrastructure, formal employment, education and other “trickle-down” benefits, especially when induced through concerted growth pole or growth center strategies that rely on robust propulsive industries (Darwent, 1969; Parr, 1999). In a contemporary tourism context, the “critical” camp inspired by the Dependency theorists regards such benefits as illusory and focuses on the association, especially in the Caribbean and South Pacific, between tourism and low wages, profit repatriation and increased imports, while the “capitalist” camp with its Modernization foundations emphasizes job creation, articulation of local supply chains, and government incentives to attract propulsive tourism activity (Weaver & Lawton, 2014).

The cruise industry, as illustrated above, is an important and growing component in the warm-water pleasure periphery’s development (Lawton & Butler, 1987; Rodrigue & Notteboom, 2013). This has attracted increased attention from researchers, and ideological contestation is also evident in this niche literature. Little of this research, however, has considered the spatial patterns of cruise activity within

ports-of-call or their socio-economic implications despite the magnitude of cruise excursionist arrivals and the growing dependency of such destinations on cruising (Ferrante, De Cantis, & Shoval, 2016). Indeed, there is no mention of cruise-related activity in either of two recent comprehensive urban tourism literature reviews (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Edwards, Griffin, & Hayllar, 2008). Emphasized instead has been passenger origin regions and the transit component of the cruise experience. Dominating the former are investigations into marketing and market segmentation (e.g. Hung & Petrick, 2010, 2011; Hur & Adler, 2013; Hwang & Han, 2014; Park, Ok, & Chae, 2016) while the latter includes foci on on-board consumer experiences (e.g. Kwortnik, 2008; Teye & Leclerc, 1998; Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005), risk management (e.g. Bowen, Fidgeon, & Page, 2014; Liu, Pennington-Gray, & Krieger, 2016; Lois, Wang, Wall, & Ruxton, 2004), optimal asset deployment and efficiency (Chang, Lee, & Park, 2017; Rodrigue & Notteboom, 2013) and supply chain logistics (e.g. Véronneau & Roy, 2009). With their emphasis on knowledge development for purposes of improved business performance, these studies indicate a specialized capitalist camp of cruise research. A smaller but growing critical perspective, however, is also evident in parallel transit themes on the (mis)treatment of employees (e.g. Terry, 2009) as well as characterizations of cruise ships as ever larger “mobile exclaves” of revenue capture (e.g. A. Weaver, 2005), sources of water and air pollutants (Klein, 2011), and worthy subjects of corporate sustainability reporting (Bonilla-Priego, Font, & Pacheco-Olivares, 2014; de Grosbois, 2016; Font, Guix, & Bonilla-Priego, 2016; Jones, Comfort, & Hillier, 2016). The industry more broadly has also been interpreted as an exemplar of predatory globalization, abetted by the hyper-mobility of cruise ships, and resort to flags of convenience to reduce taxation and evade stringent labor and environmental regulations (Wood, 2000).

On-shore components of cruising are not as well represented in the capitalist camp perhaps because cruise line revenues mostly occur in transit and because erroneous perceptions persist that cruise ships are “floating hotels” (Biehn, 2006). Analyses of site factors, passenger satisfaction with their port experience, port facility adequacy, and socio-political stability of cruise destinations (Chang, Liu, Park, & Roh, 2016; Chen, 2016; Larsen & Wolff, 2016; Marti, 1990; McCalla, 1998; Wang, Jung, Yeo, & Chou, 2014) account for most of this literature. More critical by contrast are attempts to quantify excursionist expenditures (e.g. Brida, Pulina, Riaño, & Zapata, 2013; Henthorne, 2000; Hritz & Cecil, 2008; Seidl, Guiliano, & Pratt, 2007; Wilkinson, 1999), or segment excursionists accordingly (Andriotis & Agiomirgianakis, 2010; Brida et al., 2013), thereby at least implicitly prioritizing residents over cruise lines as recipients of economic benefits. More explicitly critical are onshore themes of congestion and other negative environmental impacts (Brida & Zapata Aguirre, 2010; Duval, 2004), ecologically-informed port infrastructure planning (Korbee, Mol, & van Tatenhove, 2015), community perceptions of impacts (Brida, Del Chiappa, Meleddu, & Pulina, 2012; Del Chiappa, Lorenzo-Romero, & Gallarza, 2016; Dredge, 2010; Litvin, Luce, & Smith, 2013), activism politics (Klein & Sitter, 2016), strategies for prioritizing environmentally and culturally sustainable outcomes in the management of shore excursions (Scherrer, Smith, & Dowling, 2011), and “private islands” critiqued for their role in diverting excursionist expenditures to cruise lines (Wilkinson, 1999).

Affiliated with this latter revenue diversion theme and especially relevant to the current study is Jaakson (2004), who invokes Cohen’s (1972) “environmental bubble” in his empirical examination of excursionist activity in a Mexican port-of-call. Here, a derivative cruise excursionist “tourist bubble” denotes spaces close to the pier where excursionists congregate and from where activity sharply declines as the bubble gives way to more peripheral commercial urban spaces. A shore-side promenade and adjacent retail streets constitute the core of this bubble, which serves essentially as a more open extension of the on-ship “closed” tourist bubble, while surrounding downtown streets – still visited by excursionists but in far smaller numbers – are designated as

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