

# Tourism as practice: Humans and non-humans constructing an organizational texture of 'tourisming'

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**Keywords** | Tourisming, Tourist studies, Social practice, Sociomateriality, Organizing, epistemology.

**Objectives** | The main objective of this study is to discuss, theoretically, tourism as a sociomaterial practice generator of an organizational texture of 'tourism(ing)' that emerge from the intertwining of human and non-human social actors as a way of organizing the everyday life.

**Methodology** | This work is an initial effort to reflect about how practice-based approach can contribute to understand tourism phenomena. It is part of a research project entitled 'Tourism as practice in João Pessoa city (Brazil): Mapping the everyday life learning process of social actors' financed by CNPq Brazilian funding. In so doing, this constitutes a theoretical review of the literature in order to understand how practices, in a sociological point of view, improve tourist studies not only theoretically but either empirically.

**Main results and contributions** | The idea of 'tourism(ing)' is based on the main assumptions of social practice theory, especially with the notion of 'in action', ongoing and unfinished (Gherardi, 2006, 2009, 2012; Schatzki, 2001; Nicolini, 2013; Bispo & Godoy, 2012). This word suggests that tourism activities are not fixed and are always in movement according to everyday life. It is possible because the interaction of humans (tourists, locals, trade professionals, other stakeholders), non-human (tourist equipment's, material and non material heritage, tourist places, etc.) and social actors (Law, 1994; Pickering, 1992; Orlikowski, 2007; Van Der Duim, 2007; Ren, 2011; Leonardi, 2012; Cohen & Cohen, 2012), constructing practices that intertwined in a texture of tourism practices. Tourism is seen as an 'in action' phenomenon, through the interaction of the social actors, which are the components of tourism activity, in other words, a way of 'tourism(ing)' (always on motion). In this sense, every social actor is moving together when this phenomenon are occurring, including the non-humans (Van Der Duim, 2007; Ren, 2011; Cohen & Cohen, 2012). For instance, when people are taking pictures of some place at the same time, or not, each picture show different things of the same 'thing'. This offers an opportunity to illustrate how non-humans act and interact with humans causing different feelings and usages of the picture. In this vein, considering the practice-based approach to theorizing tourism as practice, constructing an organizational texture from the interaction of human and non-human social actors, is an effort to contribute to broaden tourism understanding

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as an organizational phenomenon of everyday life. The intertwining activities among humans, non-humans and spaces are connected through the practices that are resulted from the organizing process of all these elements together. Practices are the arena that works as a 'glue' of all social actors, thus it is the main element to create organizations, identities and meanings for tourism everyday life. Pickering (1992, p. 21) says that "practice is where nature and society and the space between them are continually made, un-made, and remade". It is also relevant to say, in this moment of the discussion, that tourisming has close attention to the locals where many activities of tourism occurs. Locals promotes a great number of tourism materialities related to their own culture like language, way of life, etc., as well as tourists that can also bring their own culture and materialities.

This interaction creates a situated way of tourism phenomena, resulting in the intertwining of locals, tourists and trade professionals in their process of organizing, including the non-humans elements. This interaction mentioned before between humans and non-humans creates the sociomaterial texture of practices, or tourisming. In other words, the main thesis is that both, humans and non-humans, have the same importance in the constitution of tourism phenomenon, in a post-human epistemological point of view. The idea of texture is important to explain the 'field of practices', put in another way, it opens the understanding of many practices working together. Gherardi (2006, 2012), points out that this concept is the connection-in-action of humans and non-humans forming an interwoven texture of practices. For the author, the concept of texture fomented the study of organizing as a practical accomplishment and the principal root of Practice-Based Studies (PBS). In this sense, the understanding of organizing activities as connectedness in action implies a sociology of verbs and not of nouns (Law, 1994; Gherardi, 2006). This assumption implies not only on ontological and epistemological ways of understanding tourism, but also on methodological choices to conduct empirical studies.

**Limitations** | As a theoretical work, it shows the idea of tourisming as a possible contribution to tourist studies, however, on the other hand, it was not possible to discuss in depth many other issues related to practice. For instance, the historical and philosophical roots of the concept of practice, the explanation of other approaches of PBS, and how methods like ethnography, ethnomethodology and grounded theory can be conducted in tourism as a practice-based approach. Nevertheless, all of this offers opportunities to develop new studies to discuss these topics offering a broad view of practice theories and their theoretical, methodological and practical contributions to tourist studies.

**Conclusions** | In order to contribute to this new onto-epistemological understanding of tourism, this work enlarges the discussion saying that Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is just one approach of practice-based theories that is current called as 'practice-based studies' together with other approaches like communities of practice, activity cultural and historic theory, cultural and interpretive approach and workplace studies. Thus, the main contribution to tourism is the possibility to understand and doing research using the practice lens. This view is closely tied to the concepts of organizing, organization and texture. This paper is an effort to discuss theoretically tourism as a sociomaterial practice generator of an organizational texture of 'tourism(ing)'. The main contribution of the paper is the theoretical discussion of tourism as a process that includes the movement of all social actors' involved and not only tourists. It is an effort to bring back an ontological and epistemological reflection about tourism as an ongoing practice and organizing. Tourism as practice, or tourisming, is over than a different way to understand the tourist studies, it is also an opportunity to research it in a different way, non-positivist, with a particular attention to the design of the methodology. Therefore, the adoption of this point of view to tourist studies, implies important methodological unfolding like assuming practice as the unit of analysis of tourism phenomenon as well as the adoption of observation techniques as the main relevant to 'gain' the insider point of view. In this vein, ethnography, ethnomethodology and grounded theory emerges as good options in this effort to identify, describe and explain tourism practices in order to understand how they are created, shared, sustained and modified. By the end, this new theoretical understanding of tourism can help to develop and foster tourism studies in a more integrative way considering all social actors involved in order to do a real important economic and social practice in a more integrative way.

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