

Is “cluster” A Relevant Concept For Tourism?

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Abstract

This research is a conceptual reflection around tourism clusters. Cluster is a concept that originates in industrial organization theories. It has to be revisited in order to understand geographical tourist development. Three axes are investigated: the service nature of tourism, the specific proximity processes it activates, and the nature of tourism's embeddedness in the regional socio-economic context. We show that tourism clusters cannot be conceived nor created without tourists, that must be seen as active actors of the cluster. Tourism clusters must also take into account the intermediaries who stimulate proximities and especially supra-local organizations. They finally cannot be understood without taking into account the specific socio-economic context of each destination.

Key words: Tourism Clusters, Regional Development, Proximities.

Introduction

Following the direction taken by industrial policies, tourism is getting to grips with the regional competitiveness issue and, in the spirit of cluster theory, increasingly relying on geographical proximity and inter-relationships to develop policies for destination development. The concept of clusters (Porter 1998) is based on industrial and in geographical economics research and has served as a model in a great number of industrial development policies in both Europe and North America. This has been a major stream in contemporary tourism research (Nordin, 2003 ; Van der Yeught, 2010 ; Kim & Wicks, 2010) and has given rise to experiments into the development of tourist destinations throughout the world.

However, the transfer of a concept developed for manufacturing economics to a pure service industry such as tourism requires some clarification. Porter (1998b, p.199) defines a cluster as “a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities.” His work is mainly focused on the geographical organization of a value chain, or a segment of a value chain, aimed at producing consumer goods sold through a local or non-local market and consumed at a later date without the consumer participating in their conception or production. The production of a tourist experience is another thing altogether: it is the tourists themselves who mobilize the resources and services, co-invented and co-produced *in loco*, to create their experience in their chosen destination. In order to take into account the particularities of tourism, research must address this co-creative and co-productive dimension of tourism, and as a result, enhance the cluster concept. More specifically, any research must make allowance for patterns of unusual proximities, tourism, by its nature, being mobile and often marked by a sense of *otherness*. Nor can we avoid taking into account the local socio-economic organizations which generate any pattern of growth, in other worlds the modes of embeddedness of tourist activities in the geographical area under study.

The conceptual reflection around the notion of tourism clusters we propose recalls, in the first part of the paper, its origin in the study of manufacturing. We show that this describes a local production process, triggered by proximities, geographic and organizational, often intermediated. Finally, we show that the concept of a cluster is not able to describe every socio-economic situation and that its use in local development policies involves the need for the specification of the particularities of the local industry and of the sector under study. Parting from these three standpoints (production process, proximity and socio-economic organization) an improvement of the concept of clusters is proposed in the second part of the paper. We also emphasize that the involvement of the tourist in the co-creation of resources and the co-production of the tourist experience requires their inclusion, at least in part, in the network of actors who make up the cluster. Looking at the proximities process at work, we demonstrate that the question of organized and geographical proximities poses itself in a particular manner: the otherness with which the tourist might be confronted calls for a differentiated intermediation according to their needs and what they have learnt through previous experiences. Finally we look at the diversity of tourist activity. This calls for the consideration of different type of clusters, depending on whether the destination was created through tourism (holiday club or resort) or if tourism has been developed during its history (a historic town/city); on the structure of the market; and on the tourist's perception of the destination.

1. Tourism Clusters: limits to the application of local manufacturing processes to local tourism processes

The geographical aspect of economic development has been the subject of numerous studies which have been categorized in order to understand local processes of growth and innovation no matter what the industry or what the socio-economic organization of the territory is. In a recent article Torre (2006, p. 2) states that “today clusters are considered the basis for local, and even national, policy-making in numerous countries” and asks the question “are we all Porterian?” In order to investigate the challenges and limits of a Porterian tourism, we propose to reconsider the concept of cluster, reducing it to its simple elements which make up its basis, but which also limit it as a tool for the analysis of tourist activity. To recap, a cluster describes a productive process linked to network externalities, to the local diffusion of knowledge, and to the partial integration of firms (Torre, 2006) brought about, in particular, by primary, non-profit relationships. While these elements make it suitable for the analysis of tourism, we note that it perceives economic activity from a manufacturing viewpoint: a logic of demand and of sequenced value chains. Following this we bring to the forefront the proximities at play in this pattern of economic development. Research into proximity economics concerns tourism greatly: while tourism is mobile, it is characterized by a temporary co-localization and a confrontation with *otherness*, which poses questions for the proximities and any intermediaries. Finally we highlight the socio-economic malleability of the concept of a cluster, used, as it is, to study very diverse manufacturing organizations, from networks of Small and Medium Businesses to local systems centering around a major company, with no real frontiers. A malleability that we feel needs further definition when we analyze tourist regions that have very different socio-economic configurations while being contained in very fixed administrative areas.

1.1. A geographically anchored production process

The emergence of localized production processes has given rise to an extensive literature over the past thirty years. Based on Alfred Marshall's work (1920) on agglomeration economics and industrial districts, the additions provided by the convergence of reflections in industrial economics and geographical economics let us envision synergies brought about by the proximity of mainly small and medium businesses. This research has brought to light different forms of spatial organization of industrial production, giving rise to concepts as varied as the forms analyzed: local production systems (Storper & Harrison, 1991), industrial districts (Asheim, 1996), innovative milieus (Camagni, 1991; Maillat, 1995) and clusters (Porter, 1998).

Marshall's work had been overlooked by a science of economics which excluded geography, but was resurrected in the 70s by Becattini (Becattini, Bellandi, Dei Ottati, & Sforzi, 2003), who applied the notion of industrial districts to Northern Italy. He defined a district as "a socio-geographical entity characterized by the active co-existence of an open community of individuals and a segmented population of firms. The population of firms is segmented in as much as the different phases of the production process are divided among these firms, each of them specializing in the accomplishment of one or more phases" (Becattini, 1992, p.45). The districts studied were thus characterized by a partial vertical integration of manufacturing activity (Torre, 2006). The Italian literature defines the industrial district as a dense network of small and medium businesses, spatially continuous, and linked together by relationships which depend on competition as much as on cooperation, i.e. *coopetition* (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1995). Non-profit based relationships are sustained by tight social networks (Storper, 1996) and facilitated by shared beliefs, values and history: "the territory is more than a network, it is the creation of an abstract space of cooperation between various actors with geographic roots which engenders specific resources and unforeseen solutions" (Pecquer, 2000, p.15).

The interest of such a conceptual framework, envisioning a description of tourist activity in a given location, is clear and this has led a number of authors to open a discussion on a localized tourist system (Perret, 1992, Marcepoil & François, 2008). Indeed, tourist service providers are interested in such analyses and particularly concerned with the challenge of networking, and the creation of specific and unique resources as described by Denicolai, Cioccarelli & Zucchella. (2010, p.261): "The competitive advantage of the tourism destination as a whole often relies on the overall inter-firm network configuration, more than on a few individual firm competencies [...] A resource-based view highlights that intangible – such as network-specific resources – and human assets are critical dimensions in tourism policy development." The quality of the actors involved in the production and commercialization of the tourist experience is a major challenge of the destination's competitiveness.

The need for a territorial organization of productive activities stems from the complementary observations of the existence of specific local economic dynamics and the fundamentally cumulative and localized character of innovation. The work of evolutionary economists (Nelson & Winter, 1982) shows that innovation develops through clusters, along pathways (Freeman & Soete, 1997), and is encouraged by proximity (Sierra, 1997). As Gaffard (1990, p.245) emphasizes, technological change is "localized". In establishing a new analysis grid based on the notion of *milieu*, French scholars of the Groupe de Recherches Européen sur les Milieux Innovateurs has made a significant contribution to the discussion through highlighting the importance of local context in the development of the process of innovation (Camagni, 1991, Maillat, 1995). The geographical organization of an industry facilitates the exchange of information, cross-fertilization, emulation, and

partnerships between subsidiary industries and specialized subcontractors, but also the creation of a market which benefits from the confidence of early-adopters. The geographical fixing of a manufacturing sector will thus encourage knowledge exchange and innovation-promoting emulation. Research focused on tourism proposes the same hypothesis (Alvarez Gonzalez & Gonzalez Morales, 2006) describing phenomena of transfer and diffusion of knowledge favorable to innovation in tourist areas (Novelli, Schmitz & Spencer, 2006; Shaw & Williams, 2009; Hjalager, 2010).

Porter (1988 a), in an analysis of the basis of competitive advantage, also focuses on the virtues of geographical proximity and the creation of networks of local actors. He affirms that the existence of clusters suggests that much of competitive advantage lies outside a given company or even outside its industry, residing instead in the location of its business units. This advantage is linked to the “rhythm of innovation” supported by proximity, to the influence of localization on “productivity” (ibid, p.218), and also to an intense entrepreneurial dynamic. Porter’s clusters combine firms, education & research institutions and subsidiary industries, all of which are involved with, or are complementary to, the same value chain. The effect of a cluster is particularly linked to the density of the network of collaboration and local supply chains. The logic is one of supply: performance and competitive advantage are rooted in proximity dynamics, cooperative relationships and the territorial integration of the supply chain.

The adoption by tourism research, but also by tourist development policies, of a concept originating in the analysis of manufacturing industries raises the question of the pertinence of a transfer – without change or addition – of such an analysis from manufacturing production processes to those of service production. The evidence that the geographical organization of production improves productivity, competitiveness and innovation rests on the hypothesis that the principal actors in the process are the producers, embedded in a value chain (OECD, 1999, Kim & Wicks, 2010; Haugland, Ness, Grønseth & Aarstad, 2011). However, the majority of the research into the service economy (Gadrey, 1992; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003), including tourism, shows that one of the main actors in the production process is the consumer, co-producer of the service experience. As a result, it is reasonable to investigate the consequences of this co-production on the pertinence of the cluster concept as it relates to tourism, as well as on the implementation of the process of local development that it suggests.

1.2. An intermediated proximity dynamic

Beyond a certain conceptual diversity, work on local production processes looks at the logic of proximity in action. The geographical fixedness of activity and geographic proximity do not seem sufficient to explain the particular economic development processes under study. Some kind of coordination must be envisaged from an “interactionist” perspective (Zimmermann, 2008, p.111) and therefore, we must “acknowledge the idea that though there is geographic proximity, there is not necessarily coordination” (ibid, p.112). Co-localization is not a synonym of interaction. Rallet and Torre (1995) suggest “organized” proximity to address proximity that is not only geographical, but also relational. This distinction between the two forms of proximity gives us an initial typology for the mechanisms of local interaction (table 1).

Table 1: Proximities and local interaction processes Torre et Rallet (2005)

	Geographical proximity	Organized proximity
Geographical proximity	Agglomeration without interaction	Local systems of innovation, production, clusters etc. Geographical proximity activated by organized proximity
Organized proximity	Non-permanent co-localization: long-distance coordination occasional face-to-face	Supra-local organizations: coordination between actors in different locations, supported by rules, routines and IT

Organized proximity can be linked to the fact that economic actors recognize each other in similar or complementary positions, in projects or organizations, in which case we can talk about organizational proximity. Proximity also arises from a sharing of codes, of values or of representations. Torre (2000) specifies: organized proximity follows a logic of affiliation (“two or more actors a part of the same relation graph, or the same network, whether their relationship is direct or intermediated” p.415) and/or can follow a logic of communality (which “corresponds to a mental attachment to shared categories; it results in individuals having minimal cognitive distance between each other” p.416). Organized proximity is sustained by multiple mechanisms. It is not linked to geographical proximity, which has a neutral effect as long as it is not activated. The latter can even, on occasion, limit cooperation (Tremblay & Fontan, 2004) or harm it (Torre, 2006). It is rather exchange, learning, collaboration and competitive behavior that encourage it.

The question of proximity is imposed immediately when we consider tourist activity: tourists prepare for a trip, which involves relationships, at a distance, with local actors. They spend time in the area, and so interact to varying degrees with those actors; and then return back home full of new experiences, new knowledge, which they keep in their memory and which can motivate them to return to the area. These are the three periods of time which pose questions regarding the forms of proximity activated and/or created and which demand particular analytical attention from those who wish to encourage a “clusterization” process in tourism.

Analysis of the local proximity processes in play testifies to the need for intermediation. In the innovation process, the role of intermediation organizations is well documented (Clergeau, Detchessahar & Quinio, 2000). Their role can be summarized in four points: first, network-building, i.e. the circulation of information among actors in the area; second, the organization of the network of actors; third, in a broader view of intermediation, the translation or interpretation of the actors propositions to allow for their adjustment; and finally, the coordination of those involved in common projects, the definition of shared objectives, and the confederation of the means to achieve them. In his tri-polar model, B. Soulage (1994) mentions the fundamental role of intermediation institutions: they constitute one of the three groups of actors which trigger a local economic dynamic. They favor networking, the activation of an organized proximity and the provision of the area with social capital created through social networks (Putman, 1995 ; Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998). While some local destinations are characterized by an autonomous construction of social capital, based on a collective order built up through the interaction of the local residents, other have difficulty in developing a collective dynamic through the generator of geographic proximity as it is not sufficient to encompass all the dimensions of social capital. The intermediation organizations, as network facilitators, represent in the latter case major factors in the success of clusters (Bories-Azeau, Fabre, Faillenet & Loubès, 2008).

Tourism involves a great number of actors as diverse as public authorities, private companies (from microbusinesses to large multi-nationals), local residents and the tourists themselves. These actors bring into play a confrontation with otherness and which is fundamentally linked to mobility. Evidently questions are raised relative to the coordination of the actors and the facilitation of partnerships; to the organization of networks; and to the creation of the social capital. In addition, clusterization in tourist areas naturally invites us to question the proximities processes and the key role of the network facilitators, the intermediation organizations, which trigger them.

1.3. A dynamic linked to the socio-economic configuration of the locality

C. Courlet (2002, p.31) reminds us that the Marshallian district cannot be used as "a genuine paradigm to explain the reality of rapid-growth agglomerations". Based on the work of Markusen (2000), four types of agglomeration with a dynamic of endogenous growth can be identified. The first, called the Marshallian district, or the Italian district, is composed of a dense network of Small and Medium Businesses, and characterized by a flexible labor market. The second is organized around a large corporation, not necessarily originally from the area, which has strong ties with a local network of companies and also outside the region. The third is marked by the presence of a large state organization (administrative centre or military base) which acts as a motor for the region. The fourth constitutes a less dense local network, essentially made up of subsidiary platforms of large companies based outside the region. This type of agglomeration has strong links with the exterior. The effects of proximity, the form that coordination takes, the nature of social conventions and the innovations processes are specific to each form of a local industrial organization and generate specific development paths. In addition, depending on the type of agglomeration, the mode of governance may be very different (Ehlinger, Perret & Chabaud, 2007).

Local manufacturing organizations cannot be analyzed without looking at the particularities of the production activities involved. When referring to clusters, Porter does not mention whether the economic activity is limited to particular industries or certain economic activities. Yet a number of authors have considered that the proximity processes analyzed face various challenges depending on the sector of activity (MacDonald, Huang, Tsagdis & Selmann, 2007). Companies can have similar activities and be in competition, they can also have complementary activities, developing a logic of division of labor, they can work for a local market or a distant one, and finally, the different activities can involve the consumer to a greater or lesser degree. In addition, the strategies of local actors, the modes of interaction and coordination, the agglomeration economies, the knowledge creation processes, and the specific resources and assets show particularities which must be taken into account in an analysis of proximities and which cannot be considered identical for every local configuration. It is also worth mentioning that coordination and economic interaction do not necessarily require long-term co-localization in order to create knowledge (Rychen & Zimmermann, 2008). The reduction in the cost of transporting goods, people and information (ICT) facilitates interaction and coordination from the exterior, which, at the end, can rely on periodic co-localization to generate a form of organized proximity.

The embeddedness of the activity in the area under study and its link to the social context seems to raise questions for tourism research. Erkus-Öztürk (2009), for instance, has shown that, there is a positive relation between large firms and the global level of networking. Based on a study in the Antalya tourism region, his work concluded that the

specialization and agglomeration of firms in a cluster does not determine the level of connectedness, but rather it is the size of the firm in a cluster that determines the level of networking of that cluster. The variety of tourist destinations, of their socio-economic configuration, excludes the hypothesis of a congruent link between of organized and geographical proximities supporting a model of tourism clusters.

2. Tourism Clusters: concept review to identify the particularities of tourist activity.

As we have seen, the concept of the cluster has emerged from research on manufacturing processes (Nordin, 2003), and is oriented around the logic of supply, growth and competitiveness being built on the resources of the region. The concept has also been the subject of extensive research in the field of tourism and has been the catalyst for tourism development experiments throughout the world, from the Basque Country to China (Kim & Wicks, 2010 ; Jackson & Murphy, 2006 ; Jackson 2006).

Whether to promote a destination, increase its brand awareness, develop its capacity for innovation, or develop – or redevelop – it as a tourist destination, the need for links between the actors and networks calls for a local organization of the cluster type (Nordin, 2003 ; Pavlovitch, 2003; Mac Raw- Willams, 2004 ; da Cunha & da Cunha, 2005 ; Alvarez Gonzalez & Gonzalez Morales, 2006). This will allow for cooperation, and the offer of a joined-up tourist experience. In addition, this favors the transformation of local competitive relationships into cooperative ones, the impact of which on international competitiveness has long been recognized “there is also an emerging shift taking in global tourism paradigm that demands greater cooperation and collaboration at the local and regional levels to ensure a quality tourism product that can compete effectively at the global level—what some authors refer to as cooptation” (Crouch & Richie, 1999, p.139). This encourages new destination development processes in response to increasing competition. Using an analysis of an Australian case, Jackson and Murphy (2006) looked at the transition from a development model based on comparative to one based on competitive advantage, in line with Porter's (1998) observations on competition in industry.

The concepts used in the literature to analyze local manufacturing organizations (e.g. Districts, Innovative Milieu, Local Production Systems, Clusters) do not take into account the particularities of service activities and the phenomena of real-time co-production in tourism. An analysis of the tourism industry would not be complete without considering the essential actor -the tourist, co-creator and co-producer of the tourist experience. An experience which, undergone in situ, is not the result of a sequenced chain of events designed to produce a holiday offer for the market (Lanquar, 1994), but instead of a mobilization, instigated by the tourist, at a given time, in a given location; of a constellation - not a chain - of services destined for the co-production of an experience. The tourist experience results from a complicated set of activities, transactions, arrangements, and relations, among which the distinctions between resources, products, intangible services, economic and non economic relations break down. Which leads us to consider that a tourist destination is, in the words of

Normann and Ramirez (1993), a *localized value constellation*, created with and for the tourist.

Any research must, then, re-evaluate the concept of the cluster if it aims to understand the process of endogenous growth in tourist regions. The literature on localized manufacturing organizations shows that the areas studied develop a particular socio-organization of the manufacturing activity. An analysis of the particularities of tourism clusters immediately raises the question of the local organization of the co-production of the tourist experience. This approach can be examined from three viewpoints: The intensity of the co-production and the co-creation; the quality and intensity of the organized proximity; the embeddedness of the tourist activity in the socio-economic space.

2.1. The intensity of the co-production and the co-creation

The participation of the consumer in the production of a service is abundant in the literature of economic and management science. Ironically, however, the concept of co-production is hardly used in the analyses of tourism and, in particular, in approaches to local processes. In the literature on tourism clusters, the tourist appears in a marginal role and uniquely as a consumer. This blinkeredness could be interpreted as a result of a negative view of the tourist as insignificant, lacking in autonomy and sheeplike. However, it has been demonstrated that this reputation is unfounded (Urbain, 1991; Équipe Mit, 2001, first section). Furthermore, research in marketing science assumes that consumption is production, that of an experience. Following Baudrillard (1970), consumption has become an activity of producing signs, sense and symbols; consumers do not consume products but consume the symbolic value of the objects, their sense. The consumer is seen as an emotional individual looking for sensible experiences (Holbrook, Hirschman, 1982. Many researchers (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Carù, Cova, 2003) emphasize the necessary active participation of the consumer in the production of his experience.

In fact, the tourist is, to differing degrees, the actor-producer and the designer of his/her own experience. In "Old and new forms of tourism", Pascal Cuvelier (1998) refutes the use of the idea of consumption when referring to tourism, substituting that with practice, which gives better understanding of the individual's investment in the tourism experience. Other academics, like the French geographers of the Équipe MIT, have put this co-production approach even nearer to the heart of the tourist system. Following historians, sociologists and geographers (Joutard, 1986 ; Corbin, 1988 ; Mac Cannell, 1976 ; Knafou, 1992), they have analyzed the creative role of tourists through the concept of tourist places and objects invention. According to these studies, tourist resources do not exist independently but rather in relation to the representations of individual tourists and societies. A recent illustration is the touristification of the Millau viaduct, affected by tourists against the will of the architect, Sir Norman Foster, of local actors and a proportion of the local inhabitants. A great number of tourist projects failures can be partly explained by the disregard in which tourist are held and by pressures exerted by the elite who wish to control people's free time (Violier, 2009). The role of co-producer manifests itself in three ways. First, it is shown by the existence of a project created by the tourist; Secondly, it appears in the quest for the best concordance between place and project for the initiation of a practice (Équipe Mit, 2001 ; Mondou & Violier, 2009). Finally, the tourist chooses an intermediation mode, under circumstances that will be elaborated below.

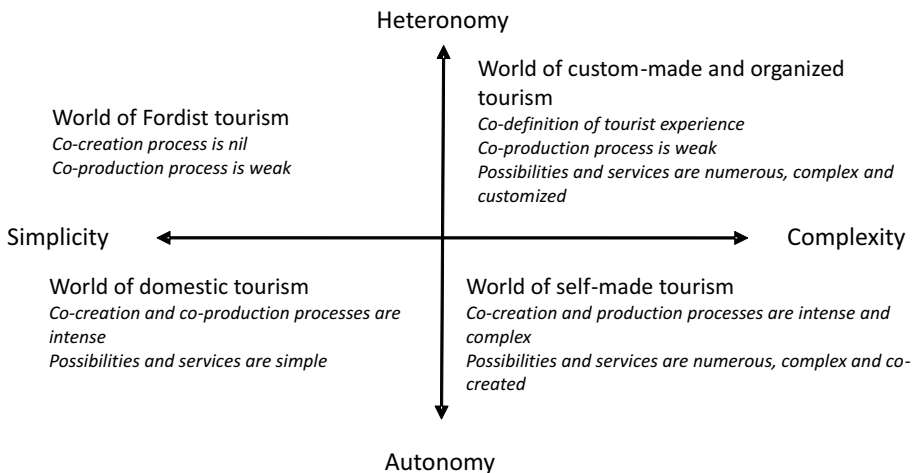
A major finding of this analysis as regards the comprehension of the production process which animates tourism clusters is the emphasis placed on the intentionality of tourists and their capacity to utilize a localized value constellation for the advancement of their project. In contrast to the manufacturing logic, not only are tourism clusters animated by

the relationships (both for- and not-for-profit) the tourist has with local actors, companies, institutions, and objects, but also by those relationships with other tourists during the periods of virtual and actual collocation, during the preparation for the trip and the trip itself respectively. In contrast to value chain analyses, which sometimes totally exclude them, we assume that tourists play a determining role in their relation with other actors. As a consequence, the tourist must be seen as an integral part of the cluster, as an inevitable actor of the cluster. This is a first and very specific feature of tourism clusters, that distinguishes them from manufacturing cluster: they cannot be conceived nor created without tourists.

2.2. The intermediated proximity process

The coproduction process in collides with the range and a diversity of local environments as the tourist ecumene covers a greater area than that of permanent residents. The tourist has been confronted by enormous diversity since new means of transport have allowed us to travel to the four corners of the world and since the end of the Soviet system, which had a great mistrust of tourism. North Korea is one of the exceptional places in the world which is still difficult to access and as such seems something of a throwback. Inspired by Storper and Salais (1997), Cuvelier's model (1998) gives insight into the diversity of tourist “worlds” through examining two continuums: the complexity/simplicity of the intermediaries' offer and the autonomy/heteronomy involved in the implementation (figure 1). The four spheres for tourism thus proposed take into account the different levels of intensity involved in the coproduction of the tourist experience. Autonomy refers to the level of the tourist's involvement in the co-creation and co-production of the holiday, while complexity refers to the variety of possibilities and their interrelation in a custom-made tourist experience. This approach must be followed up and completed to incorporate the idea of otherness defined as “the quality of what is other for the individual, whose personal identity and social identity are familiar referents and unquestioned in comparison to an outside world whose norms, conventions and ways of doing things are radically different” (Stock, 2008, p.147). The world is thus characterized by the diversity of human environments, which are occupied and transformed by those humans; and tourists, when creating their project, are confronted by this diversity.

Figure 1: Co-production processes in Cuvelier's Tourist Worlds



The analyses of Bourdieu (1979 et 1980) and Berque (2000) can be used In order to grasp the components, and the intensity, of this confrontation of the individual with the world. The

former, with his concept of *habitus*, shows that the individual assimilates the social norms and values which constitute the components of their personality through socialization. Berque adds that, in contrast to modernity, which opposes the human and the object, the milieu is incorporated by the individual. This implies that tourist, having changed the environment, is confronted by milieus whose codes are not fully understood, which they are only partially informed about and in which their body will be exposed to non-habitual and grueling environmental conditions.

Depending the degree of otherness brought about by the project, the tourist can be more or less involved on its co-production. Strong otherness severely limits their capacity for autonomy. Neither belonging, nor similitude, supports some proximity between the place and the tourist, which remains merely geographic. Therefore they will tend to orient themselves towards simple offers and/or those proposed by intermediaries charged with limiting the inconveniences of this otherness and with *organizing* a relative proximity between the tourist and the location. As for the intensity of the tourist participation, this also depends on accumulated skills, and thus what they have learnt, during previous experiences and in what way they have built on their knowledge and developed their learning. These skills are learnt through experiencing tourism, but also sometimes outside that experience and reinvested. We could think in particular of linguistic capacities acquired during formal training (Ceriani, Coëffé, Gay, Knafou, Stock & Violier, 2008). They are built up over time; an individual is not subject to a fixed level of otherness according to innate characteristics as in Plog's model (1974). In a similar manner, the quality of intermediation required to access the environment is not fixed over time: as an area opens up to tourism, the need for intermediation changes. When destinations are developed and open to tourism, they are also more accessible.

Intermediaries make up a vast group of actors, among which figures the tour-operator, but also Destination Management Organizations; other residents of the area, some of which will have knowledge that can be activated to favor the realization of the project; and tourists themselves through abundant tourist advice websites which teem with recommendations. Intermediation generates proximity, which ranges from the diffusion of information to the alliance of means and even the guidance of the project. The task of the intermediaries is therefore to reinvent the reality of the host area to make it accessible and compatible with the expectations of the tourist. In addition to offering tangible services giving access to sites (ad hoc management behind the scenes) they must also create a mise-en-scene of the host area, a atricalization of the forestage of the services. In this sense, they facilitate the tourist's interpretation of the site. As for the professional and institutional actors in the tourist industry, they aim to alleviate any difficulties that the tourist might encounter. Thus the infrastructure (international hotels, holiday clubs, transport systems, restaurants) may be interpreted as a technology designed to limit otherness to acceptable levels. It acts as a buffer which protects the tourist from aggression from the different human milieu into which they find themselves thrown. As a result, the tourist from a society of abundance and a temperate climate can better cope with exposure to poverty and the humidity of a tropical climate as the tour provides for a nightly return to the safe haven of international-standard hotels with their calm, happy and air-conditioned atmosphere.

In contrast, in an environment which is more familiar due to regular visitation the otherness is less marked (e.g. when the tourist stays in their own country). The tourist is able to activate his/her own resources, to shape and create their tourist experience themselves. As a result, the level of co-production is greater. With this in mind, it is important to note that long-haul tourism makes up a very small part of overall tourism. The majority of holidays are taken in relative proximity, as 85 to 90% of visitors to major tourist destinations travel from nearby countries with a low level of otherness. This means that the majority of tourists are in

a situation of relative familiarity, which explains the relatively low use of all-in package tours. Looking at the French, for example, in 2009 only 15% of those who took a tourist trip called on the services of a travel agent or tour operator (DGIS, 2009). Situations in which coproduction exists are therefore more frequent. The tourists' proximity with their destination means that they are better able to perceive their surroundings, have a relationship with the area and even share a number of representations with the occupants (locals or other tourists). This organizational proximity could also require a form of intermediation, though in this case just to coordinate the network and to sustain, nurture and promote the social and cultural capital. While it is not a question of starting from scratch to implement a proximity between the tourist and the destination, intermediation is equally crucial in order to maintain and develop links: tourists, ephemeral and mobile residents, in developing greater and greater competencies are able to enlarge their set of what is close or familiar

Clusterization of tourist regions cannot avoid the issue of the quality of intermediation and the intermediaries who stimulate the proximities and their evolution over time. It would be pertinent, for example, to look at the major tour operators and hotel groups, the fundamental intermediaries for long-haul destinations; as well as the actors in the local community for destinations closer to home. We can also question the use made of information and communication technologies to inform the tourist, coordinate the network, and develop their competencies or a shared culture. Finally, we examine the relative strength and influence of these intermediaries over time as the tourist area develops. In any case, the dynamics of tourist proximity seems to rest in a supra-local, multi-scalar organization, aided by the use of technology. The concept of the cluster, perhaps, seems a little limited to explain the supra-local dimension of all these proximity facilitators.

2.3. The embeddedness of the tourist activity in the socio-economic space

The activity of tourism and the relations established with other actors do not occur in a neutral surroundings, they are embedded in an environment within which the actors are temporarily co-present and which influences the course of the co-production process. An analysis of tourism clusters as productive organizations thus leads to taking into account the different contexts which influence its efficiency. Consistent with Granovetter (1985) we consider that economic actors are embedded in social and institutional contexts. Is it possible to account for the diversity of situations in a rational manner?

What arises, first of all, is that different contexts can be identified in order to rationalize the diversity of possible scenarios. Starting from the typology of tourist destination proposed by the Equipe MIT (2001; Stock, 2003), it is possible to develop a table which takes into account the parameters that influence the functioning of the co-presence and thus the tourism cluster process. Secondly each different type of destination has a prevalent market configuration, and finally, the geographical limits and the expanse of the cluster is not established a priori by the professional and institutional actors alone, but co-constructed with the tourists.

Table 2: Tourist destination configurations

Tourism a development	Criteria →	Importance of tourism	State actors	Private actors	Residents	Configuration
	Types ↓					
	Tourist Post	Essential	Withdrawn	Monopoly	Absent or apart	Corporation
	New Tourist Resort	Essential	Involved to shared	Intra –touristic competition	New resort: the majority of inhabitants live through tourism so involved	Resort
	Ancient Tourist Resort	Important	Involved to shared	Intra–touristic competition	Residentialization in process opposition appearing from temporary inhabitants (second home) or permanent	Resort-Town
	Tourist site	Essential	Marginal	Involved	Absent	Corporation
	Tourist city	Minor	Shared	Double competition, Intra–touristic and extra	Indifferent to hostile	Town
	Touristified city	Essential	Involved to shared	Intra–touristic competition	Hostile	Town-Resort
	Stopover city	Minor	Shared	Double competition, Intra–touristic and extra	Indifferent to hostile	Town

Table 2 attempts to synthesize the hypothesized relationships between the actors, and between the actors and the tourism in the identified characteristic categories of tourism. To start with two major contrasting categories are evident: sites created for and by tourism and those that have developed as tourist destinations over time. With the former, nothing, or almost nothing, existed prior to the wave of tourism urbanizing the site. From then on, the tourism actors are in a position to impose their strategies for development. This first category can be subdivided into tourist posts and resorts. The former is characterized by enclosure, in the form of a barrier which isolates the camp from the exterior. This enclosure, like the holiday village, is a space controlled by the main actor, the game master. In contrast, a resort is characterized by open-access and in situ competition between companies, with the greater or lesser intervention of public actors at different levels. Nevertheless, as tourism is the economic driving force of the site, social capital is based on tourism. The local authorities are often controlled or influenced by the interests of tourism. The residents, for the most part are employed in the tourist sector, and have a vested interest in tourism. The creation of organized proximities encourages this process.

The second category, tourist towns, is distinct from those sites created by tourism by its functional diversity. Tourism has established itself at sites with a prior history and where multiple administrative and economic functions exist. Those involved in tourism are in competition for resources with other interests and those involved in other functions may oppose them. The public powers are not a priori linked to tourism. Even the role-call of concerned parties raises the question of who is deeply involved in the tourist system and recognizes it, and who is more marginal in the system or claims other allegiances, such as to the cultural or sporting sphere, without, of course, forgetting any synergies with the world of trade fairs. The creation of organized proximities thus comes up against an increased number

of obstacles.

On top of this, the sites change over time. Holiday camps tend to become resorts and resorts turn into towns the moment non-tourist functions develop, notably the accommodation of permanent or semi-permanent residents. The residentialization process, facilitated by the growing mobility of the individual, changes the nature of the resort, the functions of which start to diversify. This change of context brings a modification in the importance of tourism and its actors, which then presents similarities with the situation of co-presence in tourist towns. Tourist towns themselves can also see change, in the reverse direction with a number becoming touristified. This takes place when changes over time result in the disappearance or weakening of functions that were once dominant, combined with a concomitant increase in the power of tourism. This is the case for Venice and Bruges, to name a few famous examples. Their context approaches that of a resort with a strong social capital from tourism.

However, this key to interpretation must be combined with another one, which emphasizes the typology of the actors that co-present. The way a site functions depends on the balance of power which develops, and notably the presence or absence of organizations which make up part of the sector's major networks. Localized tourist systems can have a number of different market structures: monopolistic or oligopolistic, marked by the domination of a reduced number of participants; or, at the other extreme, perfect competition, characterized by a large number of small companies, where the difficulty of finding a common strategy necessitates the intervention of the public sector. In the former case, one or few actors have a sustained influence on the structure of the site. This situation is more common in major tourist destinations, exclusive resorts and known metropolitan destinations, which underlines the need to cross-reference this typology with that previously mentioned. In contrast, for less famous destinations, tourism relies on regional capital spread thinly between numerous entrepreneurs who are often reluctant associates. These two approaches highlight the different contexts; but they both concern pre-structurations which do not entirely compromise the individual's ability to take the initiative. An objective analysis is needed to understand how, at a particular site, the actors manage to create an organized proximity, despite the numerous discontinuities that separate them, using the leeway they make for themselves (Friedberg, 1993).

Finally, it follows naturally from the tourist participation in the production process that the limits of the tourism cluster are not a priori defined by the local actors or by those organizations looking to harness the productive process for the benefit of a particular region. Rather they are defined by tourists themselves. According to Porter (1998,a, p.79) "A cluster's boundaries are defined by the linkages and complementarities across industries and institutions that are most important to competition [...] they may cross state or even national borders". This is particularly obvious in regard to tourism clusters as the geographic form of a tourist area and its surroundings are uncertain. The former is created by the intentionality of the tourist. It depends on the representation the tourist makes of the space in which they develop their recreative project. For some, their destination is one site in one of the above categories, like a resort or a town; while for others, or in other situations, a broader area is envisaged. Indeed, the tourist becomes mobile once they have arrived at their primary destination, to such an extent that the cluster can include more than one category of site. For example a discovery tour of the Loire Valley could include various sites: isolated chateaus like Chambord, tourist towns (e.g. Amboise), stopover towns (Tours), touristified towns (Chenonceau), etc... Each of these can be visited from a single holiday base, a stopover town such as Tours, well furnished with hotels but which tourists rarely visit for its own sake. Thus the cluster results from the density of links that the tourists create between the sites, in relation with the other actors, in order to put their project into action. Politicians and tourist

professionals can well try to influence secondary mobility, that which takes place once the tourist reaches their destination – primary mobility – (Piriou, 2008). However at the end of the day the tourist has to validate the propositions made. This means that the map of tourist clusters does not necessarily match with that of local administrations despite the geographical restrictions brought into play by the institutional actors. This discrepancy between the space used by the tourists and the administrative territories constitutes a challenge for the governance of tourist areas. In order for the concept of cluster to be applicable to the field of tourism it must therefore, in our opinion, be modified to accommodate equally the social, economic and geographical contexts in which it exists.

Conclusion

The present research has demonstrated that the cluster concept is probably too narrow to be applied to tourism without, at the minimum, being enhanced to take into account the dynamics of tourist areas. Researchers point out the uniqueness of the tourism industry and the need to differentiate it from the manufacturing industry. When considering the very specificity of the tourist network, Erkus-Öztürk and Eraydin (2011, p. 1303), for instance, argued that “networks are different to industrial networks, in that they have unique structural characteristics. In covering complementary products of activities, such as accommodation, transport and catering, which co-exist alongside support activities and infrastructure, a complex system of connections and interrelationships are formed in tourism clusters”. In this research, we have argued that the concept of cluster, based on the manufacturing industry, must be transformed along three major lines. First the co-productive nature of tourism implies the integration of the tourist in the heart of the cluster. Secondly, the collision with otherness inherent in tourism obliges an examination of the link between organizational and geographical proximity, often intermediated by actors as diverse as tour operators, hoteliers, local residents and the tourist themselves. This is a cluster that involves the association of actors who are not necessarily co-present and whose cultures (professional, social, etc.) are not homogenous. The tourism dynamic concerns a supra-local organization, which has a difficult fit with the cluster concept. Thirdly, applying the embeddedness theory, the heterogeneity of the socio-economic-geographical configurations need to be taken into account and questioned on the basis of the cohesion of the systems

This initial work opens various research perspectives vis-à-vis the methods of association of the main actors, temporarily present in the territory, but rarely associated. From this perspective, Information and Communication Technologies offer tools which could favor the creation of an organizational proximity on condition that the virtual networks and spaces open to them (Clergeau, Violier, 2011). However, it is principally the governance of destinations which is called into question by these findings. The cohesion of networking systems for the actors involved is only effective if all stakeholders are involved in the governance, whether those stakeholders be local public administration or private multi-nationals, or even representatives of the tourists or local inhabitants. Finally, these findings raise a question on the future of tourist regions. The sites change, innovate and renew their organization and their resources under the influence of the choices made by the stakeholders and through a process of trial and error. The capacity for change is linked to the influence of these stakeholders and the dance of conflict/cooperation/negotiation in which they take part in the locality they share.

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