

# **THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL ECONOMIES IN TOURISM**

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Individuals are dealt with here only in so far as they are personifications of economic categories, the bearers of particular class-relations and interests

(Marx, 1972: 92).

Today's capitalist economic order is a monstrous cosmos, into which the individual is born and which in practice is for him, at least as an individual, simply a given, an immutable shell, in which he is obliged to live

(Weber, 2002: 13).

As the first quote by Marx demonstrates (although arguably handpicked to fit the purpose of this chapter and not necessarily indicative of Marx's wider writing), structure takes centre stage in historical materialism and individuals are often reduced to being influenced by social structures such as class. Similarly, Weber

likens the capitalist order (or structure) to a fixed outer shell (sometimes referred to as an iron cage) within which individuals are confined. For political economists, structures and the resulting asymmetries of power are the key factors that determine social life. As succinctly outlined by Bianchi in Chapter Two, historical materialism is primarily concerned with the transformation of natural materials by labour, the mode of production (social relationships and organisation which frame production) and the structures that ensure the continued stability of capitalism. Historical materialism therefore involves a combination of the following ingredients: material resources, a particular arrangement of social relations, and economic and political institutions that are set in a specific historical context.

Extreme structural determinism (as used by Marx in the quote above) would theoretically reduce individuals that continually conform to the patterned structures of their lives. While this is obviously an extreme position, structures are often represented as existing separate from agency yet nonetheless with the ability to determine practices and transactions in social life. Yet, both agents and structures are important in shaping social outcomes, as they are mutually constituted (see Giddens 1984 for his structuration theory or Bourdieu 1977 for his concept of habitus), as the reflection of Thompson (1978: 297–98) about class demonstrates:

‘Classes arise because men and women, in determinative productive relations, identify their antagonistic interests, and come to struggle, to

think and to value in class ways: thus the process of class formation is a process of self-making, although under conditions which are “given”.

Structure is therefore not an impersonal force that is inherent in capitalism, but rather the outcome of agency as fashioned and circulated by a dominant mass of individuals. This suggests a multi-layered relationship between agency - structure that needs exploring.

The debate concerning structure and agency is not one that is easily resolved as it depends on differing ontologies of our complex social world rather than epistemological certainties. Researchers differ in terms of the relative importance they assign to structure and agency and their interrelationships in determining social life: ‘... structural theories privilege structural forces, whereas individualist theories reverse this prioritization and favour individual forces’ (Wight, 1999: 115). I am therefore not attempting to solve the ‘problem’ of agency and structure in this chapter, instead, I want to think outside the box and take a look beyond the ‘immutable shell’ or iron cage towards alternative political economies. My motivation stems not from a rejection of historical-materialist political economy or a denial of the influence of structure on agency and everyday life, but rather from a recognition that a conversation across theoretical approaches (e.g., political economy, cultural studies, feminism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism) can only be helpful in representing the frictions of the capitalist economy, recognising the discursive elements which create ‘the economy’, acknowledging the social

practices through which it is (re)produced and highlighting the alternatives to dominant structures.

Critics of Marxian political economy concentrate on two key points: the overemphasis on the superstructure thus further bolstering the dominant discourse ordering social life and the focus on materiality and resulting neglect of cultural factors. With the Cultural Turn, Marxian political economy has had to face its critics.

### **The Cultural Turn**

The Cultural Turn encompasses a multitude of different approaches to research which are all based on the realisation that the cultural dimension has been neglected in the political economy approach to the study of social, economic and political processes. The Cultural Turn has its roots in the emergence of cultural studies and the realisation that culture is an integral part of everyday life as it transcends all social processes, including – but not limited to – the economic:

‘economic and symbolic processes are more than ever interlaced and interarticulated; that is, ... the economy is increasingly culturally inflected and ... culture is more and more economically inflected. Thus the boundaries between the two become more and more blurred and the economy and culture no longer

function in regard to one another as system and environment' (Lash and Urry 1994: 64).

The Cultural Turn has confronted previous conceptions of the economy and what constitutes the economic as the incorporation of cultural viewpoints offer multiple and fluctuating understandings. Following the Cultural Turn, researchers have been compelled to reconsider the artificial boundaries of 'the economic', thus opening up new avenues for research: 'Then a whole new world moves into view' (Thrift and Olds, 1996: 311).

### ***Production, circulation and consumption of cultural materials***

In the classical political economy approach to economic geography, production and distribution were the main focus of attention, with consumption taking a lesser role. With the Cultural Turn, consumption has become more prominent within the 'new' economic geography and especially sociology. Tourism research has also been quick in realising the importance of the links between production and consumption, due to their spatial and temporal fixity (Urry, 1990). Tourism is different to manufacturing in the fact that consumption and production are not only linked but occur simultaneously and at the same place; they are spatially and temporally fixed. 'Why, what and how tourists consume?' now seems an important part of explaining and analysing economic processes.

The main criticism that Urry (1994) levies against the sociology of consumption is its focus on the material as the object of consumption. Instead he focuses his attention on the analysis of the consumption of services and more specifically tourism, as these are gaining importance in Western economies and raise challenging questions of 'interpretation and explanation'. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, consumption has been one of the areas in which the Cultural Turn has managed to influence tourism research due to the close links (spatial and temporal) with production (see the following for reviews: Aitchison, 1999; Ateljevic, 2000; Shaw et al., 2000; Shaw and Williams, 2002 and 2004).

Lash and Urry (1994) build on Marx's (1971) circuits of capital (Marx identifies four types of capital: money, commodities, the means of production and labour), but contend that the objects involved in these circuits of capital are increasingly becoming immaterial as signs and symbols gain importance in consumption. While they recognise that material objects are still in circulation, these objects possess an 'increasing component of sign-value or image embodied in material objects' (Lash and Urry, 1994: 4, emphasis original). MacCannell (1976) suggests that the tourism product attains significance beyond the importance of labour by embodying a symbol, life style or other symbolic significance to the consumer (Shaw and Williams, 2004). The tourist (consumer) turns the services and

experiences into signs 'by doing semiotic work of transformation' (Lash and Urry, 1994: 15).

The economic then becomes the production and circulation of signs, which are closely linked to the cultural. Sign-value is usually conferred to material objects via 'branding', this however does not merely involve yet another production process, but the successful act of infusing an object with sign-value involves the participation of producer and consumer (Lash and Urry, 1994). This represents a point of contact between production and consumption, thus reducing the dichotomy between the two processes. Instead, production and consumption are seen as counterparts that are being reworked in a Circuit of Culture which covers stages of production, representation, and consumption (Johnson, 1986). There is a need for feedback or implicit dialogue between production and consumption in order for material objects and, in the case of tourism, services (experiences) to represent the desired sign-value. To analyse the cultural meaning of texts, objects, ideas, products etc. one needs to take the cultural processes into account that influence the abstract significance society attributes to it (Du Gay et al., 1997), such as identity and the social regulation of these relationships.

Ateljevic and Doorne (2003) have combined the idea of the Circuit of Culture, that is the changing meanings of commodities in the sense of Appadurai's (1986) concept of the 'social life of things', with commodity chain analysis, which follows the life of a commodity through its production and subsequent

consumption. Through tracing the journey of Chinese tie-dye fabrics, purchased by a tourist from New Zealand, from production and initial consumption in China to the recipients of the gifts in New Zealand, Ateljevic and Doorne (2003) demonstrate the social relations of production and consumption as they follow the path of the fabric and unveil the re-creation of meaning set on the object and thus the importance of the cultural context in consumption.

### ***Economy is embedded in the cultural***

This point of view situates the economic squarely in the context of cultural place at various scales such as the individual, the firm, region, nation-state etc. and analyses the embeddedness of economic practice and of its organisations. This is a research avenue that yet needs to be examined in tourism research and this thesis aims to provide an indication of the relationships between economic organisations and the political, social and economic fabric of the societies they operate in (Yeung and Li 2000; Riley 2000; Pavlinek and Smith 1998) and vice versa.

The essence of this theory is the embeddedness of firms within networks of social relations that are subject to the social context. Because the embeddedness is based on the social context, Zukin and DiMaggio (1990) argue that economic action is therefore dependent on four types of embeddedness: cognitive, cultural, social and political.

Cultural embeddedness, in contrast, refers to the embeddedness of institutions in collective understandings and values that influence economic action and strategy. Cultural/religious values for instance set limits to the commodification of sacred spaces. This is well documented in tourism research on contested sites, where access to certain sites are claimed for different purposes (recreation, sightseeing or for religious rituals) by different social groups (locals, tourists and pilgrims, respectively). Digance (2003), for instance, uses the example of Uluru (or Ayers Rock) as a site that is contested by mass tourists/commercial operators, the Aboriginal people, who view Uluru as a sacred site and what Digance (2003: 150) describes as ‘more secular pilgrims’, e.g. new age ‘hippies’. Kolås (2004: 274) in a recent paper, analyses the process of place-making in Tibet or more specifically the Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province, which has been (re)-discovered as the mystical Shangri-La and the resulting tensions between culturally different social groups:

‘... people not only engage with landscape, they re-work, appropriate and contest it ... a critical investigation should also ask ... who has the power to create, reinvent and contest places and what is at stake for those who engage in these practices’

In terms of cultural embeddedness, an important question would also be: who (which social group) has the power to engage in market exchanges over the contested site of Shangri-La?

The cultural influence on economic actions and social relations is of increased importance when these cross national as well as cultural boundaries. Scherle (2004) has demonstrated this in his analysis of the cultural influence on bilateral business relationships between German and Moroccan small- and medium-sized tourism businesses. However, it is indicative of the importance of personal social relations that both cultural groups ‘... reverted to the long-term social capital they had developed with their co-operators’ (Scherle, 2004: 248) in order to resolve these cultural conflicts.

Cultural norms and rules help guarantee a stable environment for market exchanges and the resolution of conflict, but can at the same time restrict free market exchange:

‘... culture has a dual effect on economic institutions. On the one hand, it constitutes the structures in which economic self-interest is played out; on the other, it constrains the free play of market forces’

(Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990: 17).

Structural embeddedness places economic exchange in context of social relations and the patterns of these dyadic relationships. In fact, it analyses the structural processes of interactions within social relations of economic action. As

Granovetter (1985: 495) states, ‘... the anonymous market of neoclassical models is virtually nonexistent in economic life and ... transactions of all kinds are rife with ... social connections’. Networks of social relations are key to the concept of structural embeddedness as they ‘... serve as templates that channel market exchange and ... facilitate collective action both within and outside market contexts’ (Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990: 20). Pavlovich (2003), for instance, uses network theory to examine the structural embeddedness of the Waitomo Caves in New Zealand. She encourages the use of ‘relational’ network analysis in tourism research, as it

‘... is particularly relevant in the tourism industry, as groupings of organisations cluster together to form a destination context. Complementary products of activities, accommodation, transport and food co-exist alongside support activities and infrastructure to form a complex system of connections and interrelationships’ (Pavlovich, 2003: 203).

The last type of embeddedness listed by Zukin and DiMaggio (1990), political embeddedness, is concerned with power relations between economic actors and nonmarket institutions and how these in turn shape economic institutions and influence their decisions. In short, economic action is dependent on the nonmarket regulatory institutions and frameworks at various spatial scales (international, national, regional, local), which ultimately shape the structure of markets. However, this is a rather simplistic, explanatory view as ‘... the political context

of economic action is made up of a complex web of interrelations and expectations' (Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990: 20).

While this approach seems akin to the structural approach of political economy, dichotomies such as capitalist and working class or economy and culture are not the focus of attention. Rather, political embeddedness '... explores historically contingent asymmetries of power' (Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990: 20). Socio-economic approaches are concerned with the adaptations of institutions to the historical sum of actions and view capital as embedded in the socio-cultural economy. These approaches do not reject the structuralist concept of historical materialism but recognise that while economic actors operate within macro-economic, cultural and social frameworks, these actors still have the capacity to cause different results.

### **Cultural political economy**

Clearly a changing understanding of the economy from an asocial space of economic transactions to the view of the economy as a dynamic, socio-spatial and differentiated economic landscape embedded in place-specific cultural contexts and social relations (Thrift and Olds 1996; Crang 1997; Lee and Wills 1997; Amin and Thrift 2000). This shift from a Marxian dominated political economy approach (one meta-narrative) towards a research agenda embracing the cultural

dimensions of the economy and politics and emphasising agency and social relations over structural determination (thus discovering multiple coexisting narratives of the same, economic and cultural story) has important implications for political economy approaches. Thrift and Olds (1996: 319) call this 'the fall of the singular'. With such a dramatic change in viewing the research 'object' comes a strong obligation to '... contextualize rather than to undermine the economic, by locating it within the cultural, social and political relations through which it takes on meaning and direction' (Lee and Wills, 1997: xvii). This is the starting point

The Cultural Turn has resulted in a number of debates within Geography on whether and how best to incorporate aspects of culture while keeping the good

"There is no doubt that a Cultural Turn has been needed to counter the previous extraordinary neglect of culture. The question is, what kind of Cultural Turn is most insightful?" (Sayer 2001: 705). There are two main approaches to political economy trying to tackle the challenge of culture and agency: cultural political economy and poststructural political economy. The first approach discussed here is the cultural political economy, which developed out of the engagement of economic geography with the Cultural Turn (see for instance Thrift and Olds 1996, Lee and Wills 1997, and Ray and Sayer 1999). At the forefront of cultural political economy is the wider and more complex conception of 'economy' gained from the Cultural Turn, the complicated nexus between 'economy' and 'culture' (although see Castree (2004) for a critique of such a nexus) and how best to

integrate cultural aspects without falling prey to an oversocialised explanation of economies at the expense of possible structural causes (what Jessop and Oosterlynck (2008:1155) call 'soft economic sociology'). Clearly, the aim is not to swap economic determinism with cultural determinism.

CPE is not anti-Marxian political economy, but is seen as 're-invigorating' or 'rounding out' Marxism (Jessop and Sum 2001: 93 and 97; Hudson 2006).

Cultural political economy aims to extend Marxian political economy by focussing on three themes: 1. the boundaries between what is considered to be economic and what is deemed cultural, 2. discourse and the subjectivities of knowledge creation, and 3. the material transformations and associated meanings.

Although CPE as an approach in itself has not gained any traction in tourism research to date, the three themes that form the root of the CPE concept have been addressed (at various levels of engagement) without explicitly incorporating them into a CPE.

1. To dismantle the boundaries between the economic and the cultural.

Because these concepts and the distinctions made between them are socially constructed, they have some bearing on the configuration and articulation of the relationships between the market, state and society and the ensuing systems of reproduction and regulation. Although the Cultural Turn has led to less debate in critical tourism literature than, for instance, in Geography, it has not been ignored following Britton's (1991) initial 'call to action'.

Ateljevic (2000) as well as Ateljevic and Doorne (2003) equate the contested ground between 'the economic' and 'the cultural' with the dichotomy between production and consumption. This reduces culture and agency to consumptive practices and dismisses the effects of cultural aspects within production systems, processes and relationships. However, Ateljevic (2000: 377) puts forward a neo-Gramscian view of negotiated (re)production in which 'tourism production and consumption operate in a form of continuing circular processes'. At the heart of this view are continuously changing meanings of tourist experience along the circuits of production and consumption depending on individual interpretations of tangible and intangible products.

The representation of the product in society, e.g. in advertising, media etc., is an important influence on the construction of social identities that are associated with the particular product. Production and consumption frame the commodification of the product and are also integral to the construction of identities within the processes of production and consumption (e.g. host – guest). Because some products have an impact on cultural life beyond the consumer, social regulations are in place to limit negative impacts of consumption and production: 'A cultural artefact ... has impact upon the regulation of social life, through the ways in which it is represented, the identities associated with it and the articulation of its production and consumption' (Woodward, 1997: 2-3). This view of the Circuit of

Culture (Johnson, 1986) acknowledges the importance of the consumer in the attribution of sign-values and goes beyond the dichotomy of production and consumption. It realises that through the constant renegotiation of representation at different levels, there are a multitude of meanings of tourist experiences, which depend on the cultural interpretation of the tourist (Ateljevic, 2000).

2. To examine not just subjects and but also subjectivities involved in the formation of discourses influencing economies. Semiotics and discourse create and confirm differences between subjects, objects, experiences and meanings. Especially feminist scholars challenge the conveying of unmediated aspects of 'reality' through the discursive framing of artificial boundaries. In their view, the subjects, objects, and experiences only acquire meaning through discourses, which confer – through meaning – the dominant form of social norms to everyday practices:

'Through discourse we come to understand where things fit in the world, literally and figuratively. We also come to comprehend the relationships among categories that have been established. And, discourses tell us a great deal about what is appropriate and what is inappropriate, what is valued and what is devalued, and what is possible and what is impossible' (Dixon and Jones, 2006: 49). Ateljevic and Doorne (2002: 651) 'producers and consumers communicate and negotiate between each other in the economic, social, political, and cultural (con)texts they create, constitute and (re)produce, which themselves construct a common sense

hegemonic understanding’.

Ateljevic and Doorne (2002) demonstrate in their analysis of images used in the tourism marketing of New Zealand that its visual representations in the early 1900s were used to reinforce notions of a colonial nation, to differentiate colonial identities and to reflect the dominant discourse amongst the tourists from the home nation. Representations in the 1990s further new vision of New Zealand as a postcolonial nation consisting of multiple identities, yet continue ‘to reinforce, reproduce, and maintain inequities in global structures of wealth and power that were established in the 19th century’ (Ateljevic and Doorne 2002: 662). Yet the dominant discourse (both popular and academic) on tourism often portrays tourism as an objective and neutral development practice: ‘the dominant tourism culture is essentialized and marked as a neutral activity, hardly ever questioned, yet assumes a distinct set of values and expectations’ (Ateljevic and Doorne 2002: 663). Cultural political economy utilises discourse analysis in order to understand how discourses become accepted and incorporated into everyday life and the implications of these discourses on economies and their regulation.

For an example of such an approach to discourse analysis, Mowforth and Munt (2003) discuss the implications of various discourses on carrying capacity and

sustainability in respect to sustainable tourism development. Their discussions illustrate the importance of disciplinary discourses on knowledge creation and practice. Lanfant (1980:18) also criticizes the traditional discourse within tourism research as simplifying production-consumption relationships: ‘The discourse about international tourism ... is based on a set of antipositions between originating and receiving societies, industrial and underdeveloped societies, arrivals and departures of tourists, etc.’.

3. However, while recognising the significance of social construction, pluralities and discourse, material objects, their transformations and associated meanings remain significant in CPE. Despite the importance of discourse and representation, one should not lose sight of the role material objects and their use-value play in social life. There is a danger of dematerialising culture by merely ascribing sign-value to objects, yet ‘things’ are an integral part of social life: ‘nonhumans’ such as objects and technologies enable human agency and are crucial in making leisure and tourism geographies happen-able and perform-able’ (Haldrup and Larsen 2006: 276). In economic activity, nature is transformed through the input of labour (see Bianchi, Chapter Two) into objects that are deemed to be useful and are valued by society. This transformation into material goods invariably entails the use of materials, tools, machines etc. as well as

human and non-human practices (Hudson 2008). At the same time, value is determined by social relationships leading to a dominant discourse about which material goods are valuable in a particular context: 'Economics is only a system of values' (Steinem 1997: 84). Economies are therefore mutually constituted by discourse, material goods, social practices and political economic structures (Peterson 2006): 'Discourses, sensuous bodies, machines, objects, animals and places are choreographed together and build heterogeneous cultural orders that have the capacity to act, to have effects and affects' (Haldrup and Larsen 2006: 278).

The work by Ateljevic and Doorne (2002) has highlighted the need to interpret the 'hidden' discursive ideologies of past and current tourism representations and thus offered a critical reading of national representations. While representation is important, it is also necessary to illuminate the practices that lead to certain representations. This involves a look at the materiality behind representations of touristic landscapes. On the one hand the materiality of what is captured in photographs is important as signs that point to touristic sights have become more important than the actual sight (Lash and Urry 1994): 'The signifier slips free from the signified and it is the markers that create the experience' (Crang 1997: 361). On the other hand, pictorial representations are mediated via technologies and their development. Crang (1997: 363), for instance, attributes the simplification of photographic practices via the development of easy 'point-press-shoot' cameras by

the photography industry for '... on the one hand democratizing aesthetic production and, on the other, colonizing an ever-expanding range of spaces and experiences'. These experiences are formed in a series of performances (in themselves mediated via the material camera) that ascribe meanings to the material objects that are photographed. For the tourist photographer this interaction with the material creates an experience in the moment rather than a mere reflection of the moment (Scarles 2009). As Haldrup and Larsen (2006:282) emphasize, representation is therefore not just a discursive order, but a combination of discourse (past and present), technology and practices: 'Neither the camera nor the photographer makes pictures: it is the hybrid of the camera-tourist'. And of course, access to a camera and a holiday may be affected by structural forces such as class (see Hall's discussion on class in Chapter Eight) and the production of a camera or holiday experience also involves divisions of labour, social relationships in production and, more generally, the regulation of capitalism. In short, Marxian political economy still has a role to play in Cultural political economy.

### **Alternative Political Economies**

While Marxian political economy analyses the structural conditions (class, race, gender etc.) that influence and shape capital production and, more recently, reproduction, poststructuralist scholars aim to demonstrate and unveil the discourses that lead to the formation and institutionalisation of these structures.

One area of poststructuralist feminist research is the deconstruction of binary, dialectic, discursive categories such as male/female and heterosexual/homosexual and how these categories are employed at specific times and in specific places to create spaces of exclusion or inclusion. The point poststructuralists are making is that the discourses, which bestow meaning to terms, are subject to the dominant social value and power. Once a structure is being seen as 'normal', patriarchy or capitalism in the case of Northern societies, this dominant structure creates the social norms that influence discourses and give meaning to terms, hence reproducing its dominance as it has 'the ability to construct and maintain difference through language and practice' (Dixon and Jones, 2006: 49).

Poststructural feminism perceives the binary relationship between certain dialectic terms as being too simplistic and aim to 'reveal intricate webs of material and discursive power relations' (Aitchison, 2000: 134).

The aim of post-structural political economists, like Gibson-Graham (1996), is to unveil the patriarchal hierarchy of the dominant capitalist system and its reproduction via discursive practices. She argues that it is incorrect to refer to countries as being capitalist as it is incorrect to refer to countries as being Christian or heterosexual. Instead, communities are constituted of a number of different discourses, which do not all follow the dominant discourse and may in fact contradict the dominant discourse even though it may be represented widely as the only valid discourse (O'Neill and Gibson-Graham 1999). Therefore,

Gibson-Graham (1996: 2) employ discourse analysis to examine the discursive reproduction of capitalism and to challenge the notion ‘... that capitalism is the hegemonic, or even the only, present form of economy and that it will continue to be so in the proximate future’. This poststructural feminist approach extends the Marxian focus on the capitalist production system to widen the research possibilities and challenge the represented hegemony of capitalism by including non-capitalist processes and spaces: ‘If we were to dissolve [deconstruct] the image that looms in the economic foreground [capitalism], what shadowy economic forms might come forward?’ (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 3). Gibson-Graham (1996) addresses the capitalism/non-capitalism binary to highlight the economic differences between different strands of the pluralist economy in order to diffuse the myth of an economic sameness, a *grand narrative* of capitalism.

‘As the black boxes of the formal, informal, alternative, and domestic economies are opened up for scrutiny, “the economy” emerges as a complex interdependency of different economic relations within the variously constituted household, volunteer, self-employed, family business, prison, and illegal, as well as industrial market, sectors’

(Gibson-Graham, 2000: 102).

Pavlovskaya (2004), for instance, challenges the assumption/myth of the post-Soviet transition towards a market-based, capitalist economy through an analysis of households in Moscow during the 1990s. She contends that ‘The dominant discourse of transition fails to see the many “other transitions” that accompany the

restructuring of industries and regions' (Pavlovskaya, 2004: 330). Indeed, these households were engaged in various economic activities linked to multiple economies in order to survive at least during the transitional period. By undermining the patriarchal discourse of capitalism Gibson-Graham (1996) aspires to prepare the ground for a multifaceted, flexible and open-ended economy of non-capitalist practices that is able to take over from the current thinking and representation of the capitalist economy. This example of poststructuralist feminism demonstrates that the poststructuralist approach not only constitutes a theoretical paradigm, but is seen by proponents to be a form of political intervention: 'Poststructural knowledge actively shapes "reality" rather than passively reflecting it. The production of new knowledges is a world-changing activity, repositioning other knowledges and validating new subjects, practices, policies, and institutions' (Gibson-Graham, 2000: 101). Within the project of postcapitalist politics, Gibson-Graham (2006: xxxvi) moves beyond analysing and deconstructing the capitalist discourse (see Gibson-Graham 1996) and towards a politics of 'a new kind of economic reality'. She endeavours to transform the dominance of capitalist political economy, 'to displace the familiar mode of being of the anticapitalist subject, with its negative and stymied positioning' by offering interventions which generate new economic languages, identities, communities and social relations (Gibson-Graham 2000, Gibson-Graham 2006: xxxv).

While the themes raised by Cultural Political Economy have received some interest within tourism research, tourism scholars have to date not discovered poststructural political economy. This lack of interest in alternatives to capitalism within tourism and mobility may be due to the continued dominance of so-called alternative types of tourism. However, in order to still pre-dominant interest in alternative types of tourism, such as sustainable and eco-tourism. Despite continued calls for a more critical analysis, broad generalisations bestowing the moral highground to adjectives and prefixes such as eco, green, soft, appropriate, alternative and responsible continue to abound in tourism research (Wheeler 1992, 2003, Butler 1990). As Wheeler (1992: 232) emphasises, alternative tourism 'must be treated with caution, indeed scepticism, scrutinised and critically analysed from a realistic, practical perspective'. Do alternative forms of tourism occupy different spaces between the market and state or do they merely reproduce dominant relationships in a different form? It is time that tourism research considers possible alterities of tourism and mobility.

In recent research, Mosedale (2010) has examined how non-capitalist social relations are producing mobile alternative economic spaces by using the case study of Wwoofing, Alternative economic practices create spaces in which the principles of the capitalist market system are transformed into alternative forms of production by way of employing different exchange mechanisms and valuing labour differently from conventional wage-based labour. Considering mobile

alternative economic practices enables a wider view on what is often considered a singular 'economy' and highlights multiple forms of economic practices.

### **Conclusion: Alternative political economies**

'There is no alternative' (Margaret Thatcher)

The Cultural Turn has forced political economists to take cultural meanings and discourses into consideration. The approaches towards integrating immaterial aspects within political economy have differed. This chapter has first described the Cultural Political Economy approach, which firmly incorporates the cultural within a structuralist Marxian political economy before turning to an account of poststructural political economy. Both are similar in that they reconsider the artificial boundaries of 'the economic', yet they differ greatly in their interpretation of the structure and agency debate. On the one side, Cultural Political Economy is firmly grounded within the dominant structures of capitalism and identifies culture as one strategy to provide a link between the macro-narratives or super-structures of Marxian political economy and the micro-narratives of cultural studies. On the other side, poststructural political economy aims to break down the dominant structures by deconstructing discourses (since structure is merely a dominant discourse) and creating alternative discourses to provide space for agency.

As stated previously, the intent here is not to denounce Marxian political economy nor to advocate for agency as sole determinant force. Instead, I posit that political economy can benefit from an engagement with poststructural theory. Marxian political economy has and continues to contribute greatly to tourism research (the contributions to this volume demonstrate this). Actually, 'Outside every "text" there continues to be an objective yet contested world of exploitative production relations, however remote geographically' (Gotham 2002: 1753). Societies continue to be influenced by material processes and inherent inequalities, yet the representation of these processes and inequalities and the associated discursive practices also have an effect.

The value of Marxian political economy clearly lies in an analysis of capitalism: 'At the end of the day, then, the key point is that Marxian political economy is still needed to provide answers to the “why” questions about capitalist economies, to reveal the inner mechanisms that drive the accumulation process that lies at the heart of the spatial and temporal dynamics of the economy and that delineate the limits to capital' (Hudson 2006). What is also needed is to go beyond analysing the representations of the dominant discourse (capitalism) and to include alternative discourses and practices.

Exchange spaces situated at the margins of contemporary mobility such as WWOOFing - willingly working on organic farms (Mosedale 2009, 2010), house exchanges (De Groote and Nicasi 1994) and couch surfing (Germann Molz 2007), just to name a few, produce spaces in which the rules, conventions and norms of

the capitalist marketplace do not always apply. Issues of concern in conventional market transactions, such as pricing, commodity exchanges, brands, marketing, are quite different from those apparent in alternative economic spaces. These distinct features give insight into contemporary practices in mobility, most notably in respect to multiple/diverse economies and notions of value in economic exchanges. Marginal mobile practices are also of interest with reference to empowerment, activism, and resistance to the hegemony of the dominant capitalist economy.

Poststructural approaches in conjunction with Marxian political economy and Cultural Political Economy (see Larner and Le Heron 2002, Phillips 2002 and Le Heron 2007 for a similar argument) can provide a useful avenue to balance structure and agency and analyse the multiple capitalist and non-capitalist economies that interact to shape our every day practices.

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