

Tourism regulation and relational geography: The global, local and everything in between

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All too often within the tourism context, globalization is viewed as consisting of dichotomous geographical scales: 'the global', that is, the rise of transnational tourism corporations (see the 1990 special issue on tourism and transnationalism in *Tourism Management*), as well as 'the local', that is, unique local factors influencing tourism development (see Chang et al. 1996; Teo and Li 2003). However, one of the characteristics of globalization is the increasing connectivity of social relations across time and space: 'the stretching and deepening of social relations and institutions' (Held 1995: 20). This spatiality permeates beyond essentialist views of geographical scale and the influence of globalization on place and space indicates the need for 'a new ontology of place/space relations' (Amin 2002: 385). Such relational thinking is particularly important for tourism regulation as hierarchically organized institutions (at international, national and local scales) aim to regulate relational, non-scalar processes. This chapter therefore aims to offer a brief overview of tourism regulation before examining in more detail the recently advocated concept of relational geography in relation to tourism.

Governance and tourism regulation

As outlined by Cornelissen (see Chapter 3, this volume), regulation focuses on the transformations of social relations in capitalist production and the regulatory responses to these transformations. Accordingly, regulation is used

to denote a specific local and historical collection of structural forms or institutional arrangements within which individual and collective behaviour unfolds and a particular configuration of market adjustments through which privately made decisions are coordinated and which give rise to elements of regularity in economic life.

(Dunford 1990: 306).

Regulation is primarily concerned with stabilizing an unstable regime of accumulation that cannot guarantee its own reproduction (Jessop 2000). As a social process (depending on interpretations of value) regulation is dynamic, occasionally contradictory and suffers from occasional crises (Goodwin and Painter 1996), particularly when the mode of regulation is no longer adequate for the current regime of accumulation. The increasing globalization of the economy has been perceived by some to represent a crisis. As transnational firms are able to take advantage of differences in regulation between countries (such as in the level of tariffs, assistance with public financing, environmental and labour regulations, taxes, profit remittance), national governments are no longer in the position to regulate their national economies. This leads Hedley

(1999: 226) to conclude that 'In today's world, in contrast to the historical effects of differences among nations, variability among states diminishes sovereignty'. Given the international nature of capitalism and the exploitation of variations in national regulations, Hedley (1999) supports trans- or supranational legislation in order to effectively regulate firm practices across national borders.

However, such re-regulation includes a process whereby powers formerly assigned to the nation-state are transferred to other scales of regulation towards the international or transnational scale as well as the subnational. Jessop (2000: 352) has termed this 'hollowing out of the state'. This process is not as simple as national governments merely transferring their capabilities of governance upwards or downwards. Shaw and Williams (2004), for instance, contend that the argument of the curtailment of the state as a location of regulatory power is overstated. Instead they posit that there has indeed been transformation in the importance and role of the nation-state, because of increasing institutional connections between scales, yet 'the state exists in new and more complex relations- including partnership and multi-level governance - with other tiers of state regulation and with other bodies' (Shaw and Williams 2004: 47). This transformation also involves a shift from government to governance; an extension from governing by way of elected bodies to the involvement of public, public-private and voluntary agencies not just at the national scale, but involving subnational and supranational scales as well (Goodwin and Painter 1996). Such 'diffuse' governance has 'further complicated the relationship between the spatial scale of "the local" and the processes and institutions which affect localities' (Goodwin and Painter 1996: 636). Similarly, Church et al. (2000: 330) recognize the multiplicity of actors and spatial scales involved in tourism policy: 'Tourism is a diverse and at times chaotic policy arena . . . [with] numerous policy strands at a variety of geographical scales but without an overall strategic underpinning'. In addition to this messy scalar delineation of responsibilities, neoliberal policies resulted in a reduced state involvement as unregulated markets are seen to be the optimal strategy for economic development and growth. For instance, the institutional restructuring of tourism institutions in Peru following a change of government in 1990 provides a good example of the effects of neoliberal strategies on tourism development (Desforges 2000). Although the state was actively engaged in tourism development up to 1990, it has largely withdrawn from tourism planning and privatized key state functions in order to reduce public spending, leaving questions about its ability to adequately control the sharp increase in tourist numbers. The implications of a shift from state-centred or interventionist tourism development (through state-owned businesses or subsidies to private enterprise) towards a withdrawal of the nation-state in support of a more market-led approach are also highlighted by Clancy (1999) in the case of Mexico. These examples suggest a continuously evolving role of the nation-state in terms of its function to regulate economic processes. As actors take on different roles and the scales of tourism governance shift towards both the supranational and local scale, the nation-state may simply be reduced to 'play a central role in mediating the mechanics, ethos and outcomes of this [collaborative governance] process' (Church et al. 2000: 332).

Since the nation-state is just one of many institutions that frame public policy related to tourism, the complex system of regulatory relations requires an analysis that extends beyond the nation-state to include relationships between different institutions and scales of regulation.

Examining the role and increasing significance of supranational organizations in tourism governance, development and regulation, Hall (2005a) argues that non-tourism-specific supranational bodies are increasingly acting to regulate tourism and are active in creating institutional arrangements governing human mobility. International organizations dealing with trade issues that can be of relevance to tourism, among other sectors and industries, include the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in contrast, has a specific interest in tourism and defines its role as promoting tourism as a tool for economic development, job creation and education (UNWTO 2002).

At the same time, local destinations have the capacity to contest and harness globalization. Gotham (2002: 1752), for instance, demonstrates how New Orleans has positioned itself as 'a themed landscape of entertainment' for the consumption of tourists by 'using' global brands to promote Mardi Gras (and by association New Orleans) in the brands' imagery and advertising. Using the case of New Orleans, Gotham (2005: 322) argues against the homogenizing force of globalization and underlines the contesting power of place: 'Tourism is an uneven and contested process that involves a set of global forces imposed from above in conjunction with localized actions and organizations attempting to preserve place difference, local traditions and indigenous cultures'.

The diverse spatial scales that influence places lead Hall (2005b) to present a case for a multiscalar approach to tourism policy and regulation, which highlights the relationships between regulatory structures and institutions at different scales. Similarly, Pearce (1997) adopts an interorganizational framework that recognizes the importance of both spatial scales and time to examining the organizational structure of Spanish tourism. Following an open-system approach, he sets the network of tourism organization in the context of the wider social, political and economic environment. The regulatory network therefore does not only span the institutional scalar settings of tourism organizations but also transcends into what Pearce (1997) calls 'the wider environment' through exchanges and social relations. By including time as an additional dimension of the framework, Pearce (1997) acknowledges the dynamic nature and interdependency of these relationships. In context of the Middle East, Hazbun (2004: 336) contends that

the physical and cultural space tourists now inhabit in the Middle East is not the product of an unchanging natural or historical landscape, but instead an ever changing political construction, the product of struggles between state, societal and transnational actors over the control of transnational flows, the use of space and the nature of cultural representations.

Milne and Ateljevic (2001) discuss the spatial organization of production and regulation in relation to a nexus of global and local processes of economic development. They view tourism as a transaction process that transcends the scalar notions of space as it is influenced by 'global priorities of multi-national corporations, geo-political forces and broader forces of economic change and the complexities of the local – where residents, visitors, workers, governments and entrepreneurs interact at the industry “coal face”' (Milne and Ateljevic 2001: 372). However, their focus is not solely set on the global–local dichotomy but includes the interaction between multiple 'nested scales': '[tourism] is essentially a global process, which manifests itself locally and regionally and explicitly involves the construction of place' (Milne and Ateljevic 2001: 386, emphasis added).

Current consensus in tourism research seems to be that a number of scales interact in the current restructuring of the tourism system: on the one hand, institutions stretch and deepen their social relations over space and time, and on the other hand they are embedded in local networks that link as well as transcend spatial scales, thus raising the connectivity within the system through flows of tourists, ideas and information. Tourism destinations are thereby interpreted as 'sites within networks of varying geographical composition [and as] spaces of movement and circulation (of goods, technologies, knowledge, people, finance, information)' (Amin et al. 2003: 25). Yet previous tourism research has been surprisingly silent on the theoretical discussions of space and their implications for tourism regulation. The next section addresses theoretical discussions on the spatialities of political economy.

Spatialities of political economy

For Cox (1998, 2002: 106), the problem with a regulationist approach to economic globalization and the state's changing scalar fixes in response to it is its obsession with order rather than struggle, which 'cannot be forced into a simple national–international or local–global understanding of geographic scale'. Held et al. (1999: 16) describe globalization as a 'process which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and the exercise of power'. Although this statement elucidates how space and geography are at the forefront of the globalization process, there is disagreement over the ontology of space and the relations between spatial scales associated with these transformations and their implications for government and governance. As spatial scales are viewed as socially constructed (i.e. not as fixed entities), they are being continually transformed by the dominant discourse and resulting conflict with non-dominant discourses [Marston (2000) provides a comprehensive review of the literature on spatial scales]: 'spatial scales are never fixed, but are perpetually redefined, contested and restructured' (Swyngedouw 2004: 33).

The relationship between scales is indeed being questioned and some researchers such as Jessop (2000) and Swyngedouw (1997) argue that globalization processes result in a tension between socially constructed scales. Jessop (2000: 343), for instance, stresses the notion of the 'relativization of scale', as old scales are being transformed and re-ordered; new spaces and new scales of organization emerge, so that there is 'no pre-given set of places, spaces or scales'. Swyngedouw (1997) identifies a simultaneous shift in the place of regulatory power away from the national state and towards both the supranational and the local scale. He calls this concept 'glocalization', on one level signifying the breakdown of the national scale and the reconstitution of the local as well as the global. This is exemplified by the growing importance of supranational organizations such as the EU, the WTO or the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), as well as the emergence of local/regional governance as illustrated by, for example, devolution in the United Kingdom. At the same time, neoliberal policies have positioned the state in the background and put the onus on private enterprise, thus redefining the boundaries between public and private, as shown in transformations of the Keynesian welfare state. This mirrors Jessop's (2000: 352) notion of the 'hollowing out of the state':

de- and reterritorialization are occurring. Given the primacy of the national scale in the advanced capitalist economies in the era of Atlantic Fordism, this can be described as the 'hollowing out' of the national state or, in more formal terms, as the denationalization of statehood.

Amin (2002) bases his concept of spatial organization on Jessop's (2000: 341) notion of globalization as a socio-spatial process signifying the 'creation and/or restructuring of scale as a social relation and as a site of social relations'. But in contrast to Jessop's (2000) scalar view of the globalization process as multiscalar, multitemporal and multicentric, Amin (2002, 2004) advocates a non-scalar perception of global economic changes and proposes a relational understanding of the interaction between scales and social and economic relations between them. Amin (2002: 389) distances himself from the scalar notion of globalization and argues that globalization has created a non-scalar landscape of social relations:

I take it to suggest a topological sense of space and place, a sense of geographies constituted through the folds, undulations and overlaps that natural and social practices normally assume, without any a priori assumption of

In contrast to a hierarchical view (Swyngedouw 1997) or the relativization of scales (Jessop 2000), Amin's (2002) interpretation of the spatialities of globalization is based on the concept of networks that transcend spatial scales. Indeed, the territorial aspect of local, national and global scales is replaced with a relational understanding of scales as a nexus of social relations within fields of influence (Amin 1997). As networks transcend space and hence different scales, places attached to these networks become linked to each other across space: 'Therefore, places are more than what they contain and what happens in them is more than the sum of localized practices and powers and actions at other "spatial

scales” (Amin 2002: 395). However, adopting such a conceptual position towards spatial scales does not imply a universal rejection of scales as such but provides an alternative organization within networks while still recognizing the existence of scalar organization in certain practices and in institutional frameworks.

In a similar vein to Amin (2002), Sheppard (2002) proposes a positional perspective of economic and social organization across space and time. In his argumentation he draws on the feminist theory of a researcher’s positionality and situatedness in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality, etc., by highlighting the geographical situatedness of entities within the global economy; in other words, how different economic institutions are positioned in relation to each other. This perspective is based on three aspects of connectivity: first, positionality is relational in that the actions of an agent are dependent on his/her position in relation to others in the network; second, this automatically involves power relations in terms of exerting influence over others and, in keeping with situated knowledge, challenging the power of ‘objectivity’; and, third, this positionality is (re)produced as it is path-dependent yet, at the same time, subject to change through imperfect repetition (Sheppard 2002).

Healey (2004) goes beyond the notion of scale in delineating the relational from the essentialist concept; she incorporates five other criteria that she perceives to be the key differences between the two concepts and which are similar to the key concepts of cultural political economy (as discussed in Chapter 6): position, regionalization, materiality and identity, development and representational form (see Table 15.1).

Healey (2004) views positionality not as a traditional geographical characteristic in terms of geographical location, but rather in relational terms according to the relative distance (spatial and temporal) from significant nodes in the multiple networks of social relations. The relational range crosses scales and in the process connects multiple sites to networks of social relations. However, these processes not only transcend scales, but they intersect and interact in and with space and different scales. Healey (2004: 49) extends this analysis of spatial scale and positionality within the relational system to include the organization of locales or sites (regionalization), in which ‘nodes are actively constructed by mobilization effort and boundaries established by mental maps of place qualities’. This interpretation of the organization of place stands in contrast to the essentialist socio-spatial organization differentiated by the physical fabric of place and recognizes the ‘fragmentation and splintering of social relations’ (Healey 2004: 49).

Table 15.1 Comparison of essentialist and relational views of spatial scales

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Essentialist conception</i>	<i>Relational conception</i>
Treatment of scale	Nested hierarchy	Relational reach in different networks
Treatment of position	Hierarchy and borders	Different positions in different networks
Regionalization	An integrated, differentiated physical fabric	Fragmented, folded conceptions of space; multiple networks co-exist
Materiality and identity	A material physical future can be built; meshed with social relations in an integrated way	Materialities are co-existent with conceptions of identity and iconographies of space/place
Concept of development	An integrated linear trajectory	Multiple, non-linear, continually emergent trajectories
Representational form	Material metaphors of functional integration, expressed in maps	Metaphors of movement and ambience, expressed in multiple ways

Source: Adapted from Healey (2004: 48).

She sets these social relations in the context of the physical fabric, which result in a dynamic system of multiple and interconnected layers of social relations.

The third criterion distinguishing relational geography from its essentialist predecessor is concerned with the materiality of spatial relations and its role in constructing identities. Healey (2004) contends that a relational perspective is also associated with a social-constructivist view, in that objects and materialities are infused with meaning, which influences the multiple identities and naming of spatialities: 'the formation of the spatial patterning of the materialities of social relations and place qualities is co-emergent with the "naming" of these spatialities and qualities' (Healey 2004: 49).

Networks traversing spatial scales

Networks are inherently dynamic as they are set within ongoing social processes and 'constituted, transformed and reproduced through asymmetrical and evolving power relations by intentional social actors and their intermediaries' (Dicken et al. 2001: 105). A specific network is therefore situated within a time- and space-specific broader network of 'society' and can span across multiple spatial scales. As social relations are not bound to localities, they 'can have many geographies, from being localized and rooted in local social tradition to being spread across space' (Ettlinger 2003: 160).

According to Dicken et al. (2001: 91), 'Networks are essentially relational processes, which when realized empirically within distinct time- and space-specific contexts, produce observable patterns in the global economy'. This view of the economy as relational networks changes the unit of analysis from individuals, firms, institutions, nation-states, etc. to the networks of which they

are a part of. An analysis of relational networks therefore requires a deep understanding of the socio-spatial foundation of actors and organizations in order to portray the multiple forms of relationships that constitute the network. Such a relational view with an emphasis on interconnectedness offers opportunities for discovering pluralities of scalar interactions and meanings.

Although social relations in and between networks are not bound by geographical scale, they do not operate in a spatial vacuum. Coe et al. (2008: 279) underline the importance of the institutional and geographical environments [as appear in Pearce's (1997) framework] in which networks function, are shaped and originate: 'every element in a . . . network – every firm, every function – is, quite literally, grounded in specific locations. Such grounding is both material (the fixed assets of production) and also less tangible (localized social relationships and distinctive institutions and cultural practices)'.

Network analysis has also been employed in tourism to analyse practices of and social relations inherent in networks of governance (see, for instance, Scott et al. 2008). Yet many of the analyses are still framed within specific hierarchical scalar organization (see, for example, Pforr 2006; Tyler and Dinan 2001). Although Saxena (2005: 279) considers sustainable tourism to be 'territorially embedded' through its cultural context of social networks and relationships, her emphasis is the analytic shift from 'products and firms to people, organisations and social processes'. This notion of networks requires an ontological change from conceptualizing organizational units (e.g. firms or public institutions) as separate identities (i.e. black boxes) to understanding them as 'a constellation of network relations governed by social actors through both material and discursive practices' (Yeung 2000: 12). Social relationships between actors and organizations and discursive representation are additional elements in the consideration of relational planning. Drawing from Healey's (2004) work on relational planning, the next section outlines implications for governance and planning.

Spatial discourse and imaginaries

Finally, Healey (2004) turns to the representation of spatiality used to illustrate spatial relationships or processes. This is closely associated with the 'naming' of spatialities mentioned in context of materiality and identity above. Healey (2004) is particularly interested in these implications of a relational perspective as she compares the academic debates on spatial scalarity in the social science with the use of spatial concepts, vocabulary and representations in practice within European strategic spatial plans. Her analysis of the spatial vocabulary and representations used in these plans reveals the shifting discourse by some planning authorities in Europe from an essentialist to a relational view of spatial scales. However, this shifting discourse is only possible if support is present in the institutional framework:

shifting a planning discourse will be hard without other supporting shifts in the institutional context which makes a new discourse more welcome . . . If it is so difficult to change the spatial content of a planning discourse, is

there any merit in seeking to shift the geographical imagination from traditional, essentialist conceptions to the new relational geography?

(Healey 2004: 64).

On the one hand her study demonstrates the shifting discursive politics of spatial organization in European planning; on the other hand, it also shows the discursive power carried by the traditional hierarchical categories (Barnes 1996; Gibson-Graham 1996; Kelly 1997, 1999). Cox (2002: 105), for instance, argues that regulationist interpretations of globalization are skewed as they view globalization as a process that is merely imposed on nation-states without recognizing that governments (as well as many other actors) are actively engaged in creating spatial discourse and thus contribute to the shaping of space:

the way in which the state has been involved in the construction of globalization, not just materially but also discursively and how it has exaggerated its effects for its own purposes, is missed. Instead of examining as the starting point capital's restructuring strategies in the context of the long downturn and as they are mediated by the state, globalization is introduced as, in effect, a *deus ex machina*.

Spatial organization is socially constructed (Marston 2000) and is therefore apparent through discourses about spaces. These discourses are specific to socio-spatio-temporal interpretations of 'representations of space, which are tied to the relations of production and to the "order" which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to "frontal" relations' (Lefebvre 1991: 33). In the realm of policy-making, spatial metaphors, imaginaries and narratives are created and reproduced to legitimate and justify a certain spatial approach and politics (González 2006). Especially discourses about globalization include a variety of spatial imaginaries either to support or to oppose the dominance of the global: 'Spatial metaphors serve as important hermeneutical devices for the social-spatial constructions of globalization tendencies without which globalization would face a crisis of legitimation' (Cox 2005: 185).

Larner (1998) and González (2006) analyse the discursive spatial dimension of policy-making in New Zealand and Bilbao, respectively, and demonstrate that spatial imaginaries are employed in a political strategy to promote a new understanding of governance (both the practices and the sites of governing). Using discursive imaginaries of spatial organization, New Zealand, for instance, re-oriented its economic networks to the Asia-Pacific region in the late 1980s (Larner 1998), whereas Bilbao has followed academic discourse on global-city regions, glocalization and the spaces of flows to frame, promote and justify urban regeneration based on tourism and conspicuous architecture (González 2006). These two cases demonstrate that sites of governance are not merely reacting to an imposed spatial organization, but instead are actively engaged in framing political decisions within spatial discourses amenable to their particular positions. González (2006: 838) refers to politics of scales as 'strategies used by

actors to explain, justify, defend and even try to impose the link between a particular scale or scalar configuration and a political project’.

This implies that it is necessary to analyse spatial discourses, imaginaries and narratives in order to understand how spatial organization is framed and inserted into the formatting of new forms of governance in different times and contexts.

Conclusion: researching relational geographies in tourism

Amin (2002) puts forward the topological view that social relations stretch across space and therefore transcend the scalar organization of space. Places are therefore not reduced to being separate sites connected to each other through geographical links, but are rather constituted by social practices that create place regardless of predetermined territorial organization. The conceptual implications of this understanding of spatial organization are manifold for tourism governance and planning; taking a relational approach towards geographical organization has important implications for ontologies, epistemologies and resulting research methodologies (Amin 2002). With a relational understanding of space, territorially bounded research finds itself on shaky ground. See Macleod and Jones (2007) for an interesting discussion on the implications of a relational geography for the subdiscipline of regional geography, with distinguishable regions within nation-states being its object of enquiry.

Networks and social relations become key features in understanding how practices may transcend – but are possibly also bound within – geographical scales. Processes of governance and regulation take on meaning within the context of cultural, social and political relations (Lee and Wills 1997). Data needs therefore encompass qualitative relational data as research focuses on the characteristics of relationships in order to unravel the relational geographies between actors (Yeung 2003).

With the increasing acceptance of the importance of networks and positionality within these networks over traditional concepts of scalar boundaries and the changing nature of economic ordering or struggle it has also become necessary to re-theorize the implications for regulation and governance. As Milne and Ateljevic (2001: 387) state for the context of tourism:

A new configuration of articulated economic spaces and scales of governance is emerging in the tourism industry. Our challenge as tourism researchers is to embrace this complexity and not to shy away from dealing with a world of constant evolution and change.

What, then, are the consequences of a relational approach and socio-economic view for the study of tourism regulation? Regulation is set in networks of social relations as well as within the scalarity of the institutional framework that is predominantly structured according to hierarchically organized space (i.e. into supranational, national and subnational scales) (Hall 2005b). Indeed, Gotham

(2005: 311) highlights that interactions and processes within the tourism sector occur across and within multiple scales:

The generalized processes of commodification and homogenization that characterize the international tourism industry are not monolithic but are mediated at various spatial and institutional levels, from the macro-level of globalized institutions to the micro-level of people's day-to-day lives.

In light of the relational perspective on spatiality and Healey's (2004) research on the vocabularies of European planning documents, the principal questions to be considered in tourism regulation are whether the practices and organization of regulatory institutions have also shifted to better reflect network relations across places and space. As Massey (2004: 9) observes: 'In this world so often described as a space of flows, so much of our formal democratic politics is organized territorially'. This raises the question whether territorially bound tourism regulation can still be successful or whether an increasing significance of social relations demands a changing orientation and organization of tourism regulation beyond spatial scales. This chapter has aimed to demonstrate the need to take spatial organization seriously in context of tourism regulation and that a cultural political economy has to be conscious of discourses about spatiality. Spatial imaginaries have repercussions on the notions of governance that are presented within the discourse (see, for instance, discourses on globalization and the linked strategy of neoliberal governance). It is therefore imperative for a cultural political economy of tourism regulation to analyse the various discourses on space and to examine how they are represented and employed strategically within a politics of scale in order to implement a particular policy.

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