Title:
Doing Things Differently: Cracks in the Tourism System
There Is a Crack in Everything, That's How the Light Gets In – Leonard Cohen

Author:
Michael O'Regan
Michael O'Regan, PhD is a Senior Academic at Bournemouth University, United Kingdom. His research interests are slow, alternative, historic, future and cultural mobilities such as drifter tourism in the 1960's to Ant-Airbnb protests today.

Sell:
In this essay, Michael explores cracks in the tourism system, such as moments, activities, and spaces in which relations of domination are broken and other relations are created to assert a new ways of doing, moving, encountering and dwelling.

Introduction
At a time of economic austerity and political turmoil around the globe, the fear of cultural, ethnic, religious or socioeconomic externalities has escalated. There are growing tensions within and outside the tourism industry as cultures of fear and mistrust arise from the financial crisis, immigration, terrorism, sectarianism, the war on terror, and military interventions. A hardening of attitudes toward "Others" has led to the Tourist-Other binary installing itself into tourist discourses and practices of everyday life. As a result of this dualism of splitting and naming, tourism's growth is often based on naive representations and assumptions of otherness, so as to allow tourists to reaffirm their identity without the development of accountability and responsibility. There is concern that despite supportive government policies, the lack of dignity and suffocation caused by unsustainable tourist practices is removing the need for solidarity. This essay calls attention to alternative modes of engagement and encounter seen to be re-establishing trust and solidarity. I argue in this essay that "cracks" in social relations, spaces, times and activities can enable individuals to find new ways to structure their experiences so as to deny and resist the social determinations of modern society and an overpowering tourism system.

Tourist Cultures
Set-in configurations within tourist cultures and their signifying practices mean many tourists are bound up in networks with little connection or knowledge about the people and places they pass. Their practice and performance of tourism is often far from the lives of those they reroll as objects of their gaze. Each new attraction and temptation is sold through the possibility of encountering "real" places, people and cultures without risk, entanglement, turbulence or friction. However, tourist "dalliances" in the margins often means keeping the marginal at bay. From volunteer tourism to ecotourism, the tourism industry mobilizes seductive imaginaries of the other, but through immense institutional and organizational forces; they reinforce otherness and limit any particular relationship or interaction with the destination, its people or its culture. The tourism industry has invested heavily to prevent individuals from experimenting and communicating with those outside tourist cultures. They lock tourists into particular styles of dwelling, encounter and movement through spatial segregation and enclosed architectures, like hotels and resorts, to ensure tourists are circulated without friction, undesired socio-spatial interstices or the possibility of traumatic social antagonisms with others. Furthermore, a low friction design is built into systems, technologies, products and services, from hotel apps that create seamless hotel check-in to platforms such as Airbnb, that generate the illusory of "friction-free" exchange with hosts.

Because the tourism industry largely sees all relations between people in market terms, they have embedded fixed roles into the fabric of the tourism system. It reproduces a form of social organization that is profitable, but involves little intersection, encounter, empathy, and collaboration. Whether driven by institutional forces for efficiency and profit, appeasement for insider groups, or an expression of an individual's own fear and search for safety, security and cultural capital, splitting and naming processes have risen to become major organizing principles of social relations in tourism imaginaries. It seems hosts and guests are obliged to gaze at each other; with the tourist model solidifying mutual distance. No wonder then, NGO's, local authorities and tourism academics wonder about the benefits of tourism in sustaining the exchange process (e.g. where strangers meet and interact) and whether modern tourism destroys its cultural and social merits?

Economism or the reduction of all social relations to market logic has created a more individualistic, transactional, less creative tourism commons; leading to manipulation, appropriation, exploitation and commercialization and less participation and solidarity, as shared values weaken. Those stripped of agency feel marginalized if unable to reduce the inequality of exchange with tourists. Tourists go home' graffiti appeared in Palma de Mallorca in 2016. A 'neighbours, not tourists' campaign in New Orleans and 'tourists go away' posters in Venice point to accusations that visitors are accused of taking more than is given back (figure 1 & 2). Communities in destinations such as Santorini in Greece, Omori in Japan and Cinque Terre in Italy are considering restrictions on tourist arrivals. While there are a range of issues that have led to these calls, blame primarily falls on the tourism industry as they enrol cultures, peoples and places too weak to resist and make "strangers out of people who should be able to see themselves as being in relationship where discretion and moral responsibility go hand in hand." [i] Therefore, not only is disenfranchisement exacerbated by market interventions, new nationalism etc., but also the failure of tourism institutions like UNWTO to address the desires for accountability, responsibility and trust that extends beyond a code of conduct.

Figure 1: Anti Airbnb posters in Berlin.[ii]

Figure 2: Ant-Tourism Stencil in Barcelona.[iii]

Within tourist imaginaries, nonmarket relationships are defined by fear. Those who fail to "articulate" themselves in terms acceptable to tourism are invalidated, immobilised or marginalized. It is the particular experience of those who utilise cracks, as they work through space, time and events, exploit ambivalence and ambiguity for fleeting victories that I now turn. However temporal, Holloway[iv] argues it's "Better to step out in what may be the wrong direction and to go creating the path, rather than stay and pore over a map that does not exist."

Cracks.
Holloway outlines the pain created by the social relations of capital, and how refusals can be seen as cracks in the system of capitalist domination. Holloway argues that as each one of us actively creates capitalism, individual subjects should take responsibility for their actions, utilising what Castaneda[v] referred to as the "crack between the worlds" where commonly held beliefs and clichéd role-play are stripped bare and boundaries become blurred. A refusal to fit into the pattern of capitalist social relations is based on an individual questioning traditional division, to occupy the cracks, including those in the tourism system[vi], to provide glimpses of possible alternatives. Holloway[vii] defines a crack as "the perfectly ordinary creation of a space or moment in which we assert a different type of doing". A crack is where

we can work against and beyond abstraction, commodification, alienation and market value. Holloway argues that just doing something for its own sake can be seen as an anti-capitalist crack, simply because it breaks the instrumental chain of reasoning typical of capitalism. There are millions of everyday cracks in the tourism system, such as moments, activities, and spaces in which relations of domination are broken and other relations created. Holloway[viii] argues that "the acting-out of a world that does not exist, in the hope that by acting it out, we may really breathe it into life." These cracks can be spatial (places where other social relations are generated), temporal (at this event, we are going to do things differently) or related to particular activities or resources (e.g., platform cooperatives or activities that pursue a non-market logic with to travel and tourism). This potential however has been hijacked by many in the "Sharing Economy" who promise disruption of the "out-dated" and "anti-people" tourism industry.

False Dawns.
The erosion of ethical and moral compasses and an outright negation of responsibility amongst tourists have seen social entrepreneurs and start-ups disrupt and reinvent under the umbrella term "Sharing Economy." Sharing platforms are increasingly intersecting with the established tourism industry and how tourists interact with each other, host communities and destinations. By connecting individuals to information, other people, objects, ideas, lifestyles, experiences and physical things such as cars and apartments in more efficient ways, they offer equitable exchange between tourists and hosts. However, from Dopios (locals who serve as guides and drivers), to EatWith (meals cooked by locals), there is absolutely no evidence[ix] that commercial sharing economy platforms can "offset" ecological and human damage caused by tourism, make us responsible or more ethical tourists. The majority of these platforms place the responsibility for any unintended consequences, such as the degradation of labour and socio-spatial inequalities onto those who share.

In a dystopian future, a seller's day might include collecting tourists from the airport, sharing their house, cooking meals, doing their laundry and packing their bags. While receiving everything one desires by a commoditised transaction at the touch of an app can be liberating for tourists, it can also be dehumanising as they conceal any monetising of interaction and intimacy. While one's intimate or private life will never be ruled by the absolute logic of market, much of the sharing economy is driving a new kind of flatness which threatens the very source of culture of which tourism feeds. As information, knowledge, and culture are produced through market rather than social relations, almost everything will be viewed or interacted with becomes an act or object of consumption. The expansion into intimate lives flattens the texture of the social fabric, and the illusion of affluence pushes the poorest, with little to share and little to lose into new terrains of rent extraction dominated by large online businesses. By offering false solidarity and hope, many platforms package their market communication along the rhetoric of morality and eco-ethics, but do not address or promote moral or ethical decision-making.

My Work
Over the past decade, I have paid attention to particular experience of individuals who rethink their habits to get caught up within and between flows, networks, and systems, to utilize "cracks" in social relations, spaces, times, and activities. From those engaged in free hospitality exchange on bewelcome.org or trustroots.org, to those hitchhikers who move beyond any deliberate plan; I remain fascinated by those living the world they want to create. While the drifters in the late sixties, found their collective power, to disrupt the tourism industry by "travelling" east to India, my research explores whether new practices, groups, ideologies and activities not subordinated to the logic of profit. I explore whether they

engender trust in a tourist model or challenge it, and whether different ways of living, exchanging, and connecting can challenge growing mistrust, fear, and new nationalisms?

Hospitality exchange

The CS platform, launched in 2003, as a non-profit, enables you to identify and find someone to give over sleeping space in their home for free. While CS was not the first hospitality exchange platform, it drew, connected and served and geographically dispersed network of strangers based around shared beliefs, norms of participation and attitudes towards hospitality, openness, communal uplift, ethical invigoration and intercultural exchange. Participation on CS had not been market based, with stories of trust and intimacy circulated across differences in individual socio-economic background, ethnicity, motivations and self-interest. The community did not see CS as a corporation, but as a medium or tool where individuals in a self-organizing and reflexive manner could address each other as part of a community based on non-institutional sociability and hospitality.

Subjects took the risk of entering into a relationship via the site in which the divisions and boundaries became continuously blurred or contingent through encountering and negotiating difference, unexpectedness, unpredictability and ambiguity. In far flung housing estates, flats and squats, far from town centres, guidebooks, tourist attractions, hostels and hotels, CS members did not perform a cultural authenticity flattened by a commercial tourism industry, a tourism policy or code of conduct. The private sphere of the home was a space that could be disciplined in line with fantasy, regulation or performed kinds of authenticity. For five years, millions of people doing the same thing "created cracks that move just as cracks in ice do, unpredictably, spreading, racing to join up with other cracks."[x] Holloway argues that stronger the flow of dignity within these cracks, the greater their force will be. However, the creative resistance came to an end in 2011 after CS dissolved and became a for-profit entity. For many members, the social norms within CS were replaced by market logic, to threaten the very source of culture on which the commons emerged (figure 3). While the initiative managed to survive in non-profits like bewelcome.org, the case study of CS shows the challenges of scaling up and maintaining a post-capitalist commons.

Figure 3: Member resistance against the move to for-profit status (creator unknown).

Hitchhiking

A billion operating cars with people are on the road around 1.1h a day has spawned an emergent, complex system of roads and motorways no longer designed for people. The private vehicle has created car-dependent cultures with banal infrastructural spaces that have also come to influence the embodied mobility of hitchhiking. Rather than passive bodies in cars or motorways ramps and service stations, the hitchhikers I have interviewed have been driven to the surface because of environmental, political, social, technological and economic changes. Hitchhiking can transgress societal pressures and habitual social norms, and has become a collective practice that depends on the quality of relations between people.

Looking beyond comfort, speed or any other benefit inherent in vehicles themselves, hitchhiking has again become central to many people's worldview. It embroils hitchhikers in multiple relationships, emotional connections as well as intensities of risk, fear, atmosphere and excitement. Each year at various gatherings (figure 4); hundreds of geographically dispersed participants from around the world meet together. The "gatherings" make visible the social phenomena of hitchhiking as a grassroots experiment. These gatherings show the collective power of individuals, who, whilst doing their own thing, can also show how things can be done differently. They are a reminder of the power of individuals to critique and change the spatial domination by private vehicles, and the ability to produce feelings of trust,

dignity, and mutual consideration.

Figure 4: Hitchgathering 2011 Poster. Artwork by artymori.[xi]

Implications
Fluid practical values bind those hitchhikers and hospitality exchange members I have interviewed. They are not driven by money but rather by care, creativity, dignity, love and fun. While their experiments are niche, and do not constitute a divorce life under capitalism, they are angry at the twisted social relations of capital and have sought to take control of their own lives to rework and subvert forms of capitalist social relations that the tourist system depends. Their practices assist them to become self-transformed, self-directed, self-managed. As they perform their lives together with others in homes and vehicles around the world, they became entangled with others. This opens us up to the possibility of doing things differently, as individuals move to shift the presumed oppositions and clear cut classifications. Dichotomies are continually challenged and destabilized, always open to change as subjects emerge through encounters, and thereafter set the boundaries that matter to them. Those with the necessary desire, determination, intention and resources, can challenge dichotomies such as insider-outsider, modern-traditional, authentic-inauthentic, mobility-immobility, host-guest, home-away, traveller-tourist, everyday-holiday, beaten track-off the-beaten track, us-them and near-far; so that they no longer apply in the way they once did. They are not willing to take on the fixed role of tourist (the interacting) and other (the interacted) so as to reproduce the form of social cohesion the tourist system requires.

Future
Hospitality exchange and hitchhiking emphasizes the capacity for doing things in ways which affirm dignity and the value of all life. There has been a rise in creativity that breaks distinctions of "set in" socio-cultural relations. New co-operative platforms and peer-to-peer communities open up opportunities for us to contemplate how we'd like to do things differently. From wikis like nomadwiki.org, nomad houses, hospitality camps, protests against Airbnb, and rainbow gatherings; individuals can constantly create "cracks" and allow them to take action in small and large ways. The collective force of individuals "doing" may not change the structure of the tourism industry, but Holloway argues cracks, fissures, and spaces of creation allows for the expansion and multiplication of cracks. It means resistance to the pressure of classification is not futile if the tourism industry finds it more difficult to continue to produce socially useful others on whom to push undesired consequences. I have sought to illuminate how encounters that unfold in the home or car hold subjects responsible and accountable to each other at some level, with cracks providing space to redefine, reveal and disrupt taken-for-granted orderings, alignments, institutions and networks. These creative engagements may result in new knowledge, alternative economic environments and communities, and spatial imaginings of possible pasts, presents and futures.

However, given capitalism's fluidity, and its constant need to accumulate monetary value from human needs and wants such as experiential tourism, businesses are demanding even more from individuals in tourism destinations. In a time of austerity, many are stuck between wanting to create alternatives, but also the need to make a living. Holloway argues cracks are always questions, rather than answers and those individuals can only live against and beyond the system in so far as they can. However, I believe those who engage in cracks can come together to found a social centre and embrace their collective power, to critique modern tourism by doing things differently.

Conclusions

The dominant tourist discourses etched into social spaces, tourist movements and encounters help to cement certain networks that impose rhythm's and habits on tourists as well as on receiving people, places and cultures. Rather than discourses linking tourism to emancipatory potential, we now have representations of dangerousness associated with it. In a world split into "us" and "them" wherein all relations between people are conceived in market terms, the concept of cracks opens us up to the possibility of doing things differently, and affirming the dignity and of those we encounter. Even if the emancipatory potential of what I describe in this essay, comes at the cost of speed and seamless, smooth mobility; cracks can expand tourism's emancipatory potential, and challenge the taken for granted ways of travelling, doing, and connecting.

[i] Hugman, Richard. 2005. *New Approaches in Ethics for the Caring Professions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillian, 111.

[ii] Credit: https://www.flickr.com/photos/thewavingcat/28283994251/

[iii] Credit: https://www.flickr.com/photos/subconscience/9196999/

[iv] Holloway, John. 2010. Crack Capitalism. London: Pluto Press, 13.

[v] Furlong, Monica. 1973. The End of Our Exploring. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 191.

[vi] Leiper, Neil. 1990. Tourism systems: An interdisciplinary perspective. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Massey University Printery.

[vii] Holloway, John. 2010. Crack Capitalism. London: Pluto Press, 21.

[viii] Holloway, John. 2010. Crack Capitalism. London: Pluto Press, 37.

[ix] O'Regan, Michael and Choe, Jaeyeon (2017). "Airbnb and Cultural Capitalism: Enclosure and Control within the Sharing Economy." *Anatolia*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2017.1283634

[x] Holloway, John. 2010. Crack Capitalism. London: Pluto Press, 17.

[xi] https://casarobino.org/2011/06/hitchgathering-2011-artwork