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Opiniones y ensayos

Community Attitudes and Failure to Respond: A Hegemonic Model

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Tourism can be viewed as a social problem or a theoretical question, and the effects of tourism to host populations have long been discussed in the literature (Dann et al., 1988: 3). However, little attention has been directed at attempting to explain why host populations, some of whom openly admit they do not wish to see tourism development in their communities, are unable or unwilling to keep development from occurring. To better understand this phenomenon this paper will consider attitudes toward tourism through the context of a hegemonic framework.

As with other types of development, tourism development often does not serve the best interests of those who are directly affected by it (Murphy, 1985). This failure to serve those touched is, in part, a result of a capitalism-based world economic system, which draws capital and resources out of developing areas. However, underlying this system is the concept of hegemony, first put forward by Antonio Gramsci. Hegemony, as established by Gramsci, is rooted in the notion of “intellectual and moral leadership” (Kurtz, 1996: 103). Gramsci (1971) believes the leadership of any government engages in two related practices. In the first, domination, force and coercion are used against those who resist authority. In the second, hegemony,

“intellectual devices (are used) to infuse...ideas of morality to gain the support of those who resist or may be neutral, to retain the support of those who consent to its rule, and to establish alliances as widely as possible” (Kurtz, 1996: 106). Hegemony therefore refers to the different organizations involved in state formation (Kurtz, 1996: 107), but it is always a process “aimed at obtaining consent and establishing its legitimacy” (Gramsci, 1971: 12 in Kurtz, 1996). Fundamental to Gramsci’s hegemonic practices are political and cultural agents whom Gramsci calls traditional and organic intellectuals. Gramsci argues that ‘All men are intellectuals...but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals’ (Gramsci, 1971: 9 in Kurtz, 1996), which is to provide the direction for hegemonic processes. To simplify a complex relationship, traditional intellectuals are agents who represent and direct the interests of those in power. Organic intellectuals are agents who represent and direct the interest of subaltern populations who are being exploited, and provide them with a counter-hegemony to resist their exploitation. It is the intellectuals who contest for the minds and support of the masses and create the alliances necessary either to sustain or establish a hegemonic formation unified under the moral princi-

ples of an intellectual leadership (Kurtz, 1996: 108).

These agents may be involved in either cultural or political practices, or both at the same time as for Gramsci, culture is itself a political process (Kurtz, 1996: 108-9). Thus, what Gramsci (1971) is suggesting, is that in any complex political formation there exists a balance between domination (coercion and force) and hegemony (intellectual and moral leadership). Intellectuals who oppose the existing hegemonic structure constitute a counter-hegemonic formation (Kurtz, 1996: 109).

How then is the hegemonic structure subverted and an existing structure ousted? Dependent upon the position of the ruling powers Gramsci offers two avenues for subversion. If a government or agency is weakly entrenched, that is recently formed, lacking in public support, or is in some other way weak or threatened, the most effective way to challenge its authority is directly, such as revolution, through what Gramsci (1971: 108-10) calls "a war of movement" (Kurtz, 1996: 109). If, however, a government is deeply entrenched and is seen as legitimate by the majority of its population, a direct challenge to its authority, such as revolution, is less effective than "a war of position" or passive revolution (Gramsci, 1971: 110-11). Kurtz (1996: 109) states that a passive revolution "entails a slow and protracted struggle by political and cultural agents for the minds and support of the subaltern population, and is in practice a cultural process."

For Gramsci, culture is part and parcel to the political process. When defining culture he states, "it is the exercise of thought, the acquisition of general ideas, the habit of connecting cause and effect" (Buttigieg, 1987: 20 in Kurtz 1996: 110). Thus, culture is a critical element for Gramsci, and he uses it as a foundation for understanding how people establish relations within, and in spite of, hegemonic organizations. "Culture conceptualized as the product of a process by which human subjects establish relations of cause and effect between themselves and their social, political and economic environments suggests the motivation for why subjects work, fight, think, worship, and behave generally in ways that are acceptable to a hegemonic

organization" (Kurtz, 1996: 110). A hegemonic organization of intellectuals attempts to construct a cultural configuration that provides least resistance to practices and ideas a government or agency deems to be acceptable. It is only when subaltern populations perceive alternatives to their usual cultural business -- their practices of cause and effect as determined by those in power -- that a counter-hegemonic organization can marshal that population's energies and their culture" (Kurtz, 1996: 110-11).

The strength of an established government is it is based on "an articulated structure of values, ideologies, symbols...and practices that constitute a unified cultural configuration" (Kurtz, 1996: 190). Furthermore, in societies like those in Europe and the United States Gramsci (1971: 349) believes that it is doubly difficult for a counter-hegemonic organization to marshal its energies against the hegemonic structure because of class differences. Gramsci believes that culture is intrinsic to a society's social classes (Kurtz, 1996: 111). This being the case, European societies do not represent what Gramsci (1971) calls total cultural configurations. In other words, because these societies are made up of various classes, with each class possessing its own culture, it is unlikely that the classes will perceive alternatives to their usual cultural business in the same way. This, in turn, makes the formation of a unified counter-hegemonic organization less likely than in a society that has total cultural configurations.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony remains sound as a theoretical perspective and is a useful heuristic device. However, his conception of how the hegemonic structure can be subverted, and its application to most entrenched complex political formations in the world today, is becoming increasingly limited due to the integration of cultures under the hegemonic structures. Gramsci's work fails to adequately address the fact that more than one culture can exist within a society, and that these cultures are not necessarily unified by class. Gramsci is correct in his statement that culture is intrinsic to the classes within a society. However, in the world today the movement of different cultural groups increasingly

puts them under the same governmental leadership with other cultural groups, with whom they may share very little in the way of culture. These groups often do not share a common language, folklore, or world view. This makes the subversion of the dominant hegemonic structure all the more difficult because the subaltern population is split yet again, first by class and culture, and then by the classes within each culture. This makes it increasingly difficult for a passive revolution, which is in itself a process of cultural change, to occur in a deeply entrenched state. These divisions are significant in understanding the weak nature of counter-hegemonic formations toward tourism development, and help to explain why little is done to halt outsiders gaining control and reaping the profits from the tourism development.

Conclusions

From this discussion, the future of many tourism destinations appears to be sealed, with local community members having neither a voice in how the industry will develop nor a powerbase from which to attempt to exercise some form of control. For those organic intellectuals who are determined to wield influence over the development of the industry, they must somehow form and build upon their own counter-hegemonic formations, and in doing so build links across cultural and class groups. The principle problem faced by organic intellectuals is that they, unlike policy makers, must secure community consensus. Organic intellectuals do not have the unprincipled option of manufacturing consent through what are typically dubious methods of public participation such as public meetings, for if the counter hegemonic formation is to succeed it must have widespread support. Existing hegemonic structures have the far simpler task of ensuring that widespread support for the counter hegemony does not occur. It is primarily for this reason that residents of host populations who have voiced their disquiet over tourism development have failed to exact their wishes upon the development of the industry. The fact that most tourism destinations contain a large and diverse population helps to explain why

there have been few successful counter-hegemonic formations.

It is postulated here that the lesson to be learned in terms of tourism development, is that because tourism does not affect all equally, and can be of benefit to at least some residents, a counter-hegemonic formation is unlikely to be able to subvert the hegemonic structure until a community can be unified by some rallying point, such as an overt threat to a way of life. However, even then it may be too late for action to be taken to alleviate the threat from tourism. This is because it is not until the perceived effects of tourism are felt by all, or at least a majority, that a counter-hegemonic formation can even begin to unify a community's many subaltern populations against tourism. Given that most hegemonic structures are deeply entrenched, revolution is an improbable option. Thus, if a counter-hegemonic formation is to be successful, a passive revolution must occur. There must occur "a slow and protracted struggle by political and cultural agents for the minds and support of the subaltern population" (Kurtz, 1996: 109). However, while this slow protracted process is occurring, tourism development is continuing, often at a startling rate. Thus, even if a passive revolution comes to pass, and an anti-tourism counter-hegemonic formation subverts the hegemonic structure, it might be too late -- the community may have already developed into something it did not want to become.

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