

Chapter 15

Conclusions: Cross-innovations between Audiovisual and Tourism Sectors

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Abstract

This chapter summarises all the results of the section that studied cross-innovation processes between audiovisual media and tourism sectors. It relies first on the review of existing forms of cooperation and cross-innovation between sectors. Second, on the meso-level analysis of structural aspects that shape innovation processes in these sectors. Third, on a micro-level ethnography of a start-up company innovating at the intersections between the film and tourism industries. We learn that there are two core ‘rules’ that motivate sectoral cooperation – first, the broader platformisation of tourism and second, the emergence of augmented reality as a technique to augment experiences at locations. Regarding the second rule especially, we learned that the main innovator and innovation motivator in this area is currently the public sector, driven also by cultural policy goals. But local tourism sector small and medium-sized enterprises appear to not be particularly driven by innovation-orientated cooperation with other sectors.

Keywords: Cross-innovation; platformisation; tourism; innovation system; post-tourism; augmented reality

Two Rules

The stories and studies presented in this section direct us to somewhat different conclusions than the other two case-studies of this book: education (Section II) and health care (Section III). To put it bluntly, it is not clear that our initial hypothesis was correct, at least not currently. Our hypothesis was that



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audiovisual (AV) media industries in fact are co-innovating systematically with tourism industries and that it may be leading to the emergence of a new convergent industry, for example, the one of augmented reality (AR) storytelling. Having admitted the doubt, let us first take a step back and ask: What, if anything, could be the new ‘rule’ emerging out of the encounters between the two industries in terms of evolutionary theory by [Dopfer and Potts \(2008\)](#), described in Chapter 2?

Our suggestion is that there are two main rules. The first one has been gradually evolving since the 1980s and was originally called ‘post-tourism’ ([Feifer, 1985](#)). As tools of visual media (making) and tourism became more available to the middle-classes at that time, Maxine Feifer together with [Lash and Urry \(1987, 1994\)](#) started to point to the transformation of tourism. The boundaries of tourism with other areas of social life were getting blurrier, enabling the emergence of various kinds of niche markets and personalised forms of tourism. Feifer’s ‘post-tourism’ referred to a playfully mediatised form of travelling – where the tourism experience was not about the search for authenticity anymore, but along the lines of Eco’s writings on ‘travels in hyperreality’ ([Eco, 1986](#)) – it was about reflexive, often ironic mediatised performances – especially in the form of travel photography and videography. Also, as [Lash and Urry \(1994\)](#) suggested, tourism as an authentic experience was substituted with people’s everyday involvement in virtual travel through media consumption. The evolution of the Internet together with the explosion of mobile photography, social media platforms and their location-based versions could be seen to have only further facilitated this trend. [Jansson \(2018\)](#) has recently suggested that the ‘post-tourism’ term could be recycled to also include the contemporary media-enabled fragmentation of tourism practices and its convergence with other social realms. Tourists, he emphasises.

are to an increasing extent (co-)producers of media texts that can be spread and discussed far beyond the close circles of traditional family albums. Instagram images, for example, can be geo-tagged and immediately commented upon, which in turn contributes to the cultural (re)coding of tourism places and practices.

(Jansson, 2018, p. 102),

He also suggests that while this behaviour could be interpreted as a middle-class method to seemingly individualise the forms of mass-tourism, paradoxically, it could be seen to contribute to generalisation of tourism experiences in different, mediatised ways.

In this context, what needs to be highlighted is the role of platforms and their promise, on the one hand for personalisation of experience and, on the other hand, for interlinking market participants. Travel planning and booking accommodation and transportation has been, broadly, platformised with most of the platforms capitalising on ‘free labour’ ([Terranova, 2000](#)) by their users in the form of user-generated content and ratings. The best example of this is TripAdvisor, a hybrid between social media and a tourism platform. TripAdvisor, [Booking.com](#)

or Airbnb (among others) as platforms could be all defined, as we did in Chapter 2, as facilitators of ‘social network markets’ (Potts, Cunningham, Hartley, & Ormerod, 2008): constellations of enterprises, consumers, professionals and amateurs that constitute complex value and trust networks with the core purpose to use each other’s reputation and profiles in making decisions in markets where value is often uncertain. Yet, as van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018, p. 2) demonstrate, while Airbnb may offer some individuals an opportunity to make some money on a spare room and others to stay in relatively cheap accommodation, there are also collective costs, often undermining wellbeing, power balances and public value provision in cities. What this highlights is again the question that we have been addressing throughout this book: How do global platforms affect life in localities, and especially how do they affect the local (cross-)innovation systems?

In our interviews with stakeholders (see Chapter 13), we saw that local tourism agencies had ‘digested’ the platformisation of their markets and did not see the associated personalisation promise as a threat. Perhaps paradoxically their strategic response was one emphasising further customisation and personalisation. Furthermore, local tourism boards did not only provide training on social media and video-production tools to local tourism firms but were also building on the brand-power of travel bloggers and ‘social media influencers’ as they were cooperating with them to market their cities as destinations. No tourism policy maker mentioned TV travel series as a marketing tool anymore. The (social-)mediatisation of the tourism industry, especially its marketing, is a reality. Yet, another finding that emerged both in Chapters 13 and 14 was that the tourism industry in general and especially the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in small markets cannot be considered very innovative. It emerged in the interviews that to an extent this was due to platforms already providing them with the essential tools to carry out their business and there was, therefore, no need to push (with their limited resources and limited capacities) for something extra. That is, the SMEs cannot ignore the network externalities that the large platforms capitalise on, especially as their affordances come in handy. It is easy to describe one’s services, to upload photos or videos, to utilise Google maps or use platform’s communications utilities for keeping in touch with customers.

The first corollary that we could draw from this is that the first ‘rule’ in terms of Dopfer and Potts (2008) channelling (or limiting) cross-innovation between tourism and AV media is its mediatisation by global platforms. In terms of Schulz’s (2004) categories of mediatisation, this could be understood as *accommodation* – the tourism industry has had to fully accommodate the role of platforms that may also have conditioned their relatively limited own initiatives towards digitisation and innovations with regard to digitisation. This may be evidence for Lundvall’s (2010) suspicion that multinationals may not contribute positively to the health of local innovation systems.

The second potential rule was the promise of AR to emerge as a true form of cross-innovation between AV industries and tourism. AR could include forms of AV narration and present eloquent opportunities for augmenting experiences at tourism sites. Depending on the nature of these new forms and their operational models they could be qualified as either *extensions* or *amalgamations* in terms of

Schulz's (2004) forms of mediatisation. That is, if the mobile device is used to provide some additional information about the space it could be understood as a mediatised extension. But if it is used to fully guide the experience, maybe to connect the place to a transmedially unravelling world or to a database for further digging into the topic, then the mediatised experience could be understood as a new amalgamation – a convergent form to the development of which both tourism/heritage institutions as well as AV media/videogaming industries are contributing. Yet, despite the prevalent discourse – that *Pokémon Go* proved popular and that Apple is pushing AR with this iOS platform – our Chapter 13 gave evidence that AR used in tourism has not caught the attention of local start-up scenes or media industries. Thus, media start-ups are not considering tourism as their primary partners for cross-innovation.

Dialogues

Yet, dialogues exist. We learned in Chapter 13 that, for instance in Hamburg, the local media cluster organises meetups and networking events with tourism industries rather regularly. And it is still the media industry that is pushing for cross-boundary awareness development – the initiative comes from them and not from the tourism industry, which is clearly less organised and cooperative. What was, however, one of the core findings of Chapters 13 and 14 was that this cross-innovation area is in both countries still mainly coordinated by the public sector. The local tourism boards provide training to SMEs as we saw above, but they are also commissioning experimental projects and prototypes, finance solutions that should set examples and function as a benchmarks for others. These experimental projects have the potential to establish initial dialogues between industries that on their own raise awareness of each other's specifics and needs. The projects could also give their executioners necessary experience and provide opportunities to build the portfolios necessary to undertake further work in this area. This was, for instance, Simon's strategy, whose story was told in Chapter 14.

The public sector has taken the coordinator role for a variety of reasons. First, while locally the specifics of the tourism industry are more cooperative than competitive (once a tourist has arrived, all service providers gain from cooperation in their servicing and value chains are multi-linear), it is at the level of cities and countries as destinations where the competition is played out. Therefore, it is also the job of public authorities to improve value propositions of the whole of the local tourism services system. Second, as we saw, the SMEs of the local tourism industry are not ready to take this role. Third, innovation in tourism is different to education and health care as it is a much less socially sensitive topic. Its contribution to public value generation locally is limited and, hence, it is generally not a concern for public authorities. Relatedly, there is not much funding given to universities to conduct research and development, nor to provide higher education in this area. And so, the coordination of digital innovation in tourism cannot come from universities either. Lastly, as was posited in Chapter 13, authorities fund the development of innovative digital services by,

for instance, heritage institutions due to their multidimensional usage functionalities and target groups, that is they are not used only by tourists, but also local citizens who may use the novel functionalities or applications out of their educational needs or cultural interests. Yet, as these institutions also have tourists as a significant target group and as they are part of local tourism value chains, these novel developments also qualify as tourism innovations.

While we can conclude that it is the public sector that is investing in experiments and is coordinating information exchange between parties that could constitute the potential cross-innovation system in this area, there are also questions regarding how sustainable this role can be. Johnson (2010) was quoted in Chapter 2 that institutional diversity in an innovation system (that is inclusion of both public and private institutions) is necessary as it also brings about a diversity in objectives and this in turn is good for the general productivity and sustainability of the system. Chapter 14 demonstrated, however, that public sector leadership and its often unclear objectives could also be a challenge for market participants – especially those from whom the authorities commission the work. Frustrations relate to unclear goals as well as to the questionable afterlife of the produced applications, which are often developed without a sustainable operational model. Therefore, for the future of this cross-innovation area, especially for location-based and AR-related solutions, it is important that feasible business models and incentives for the local private industries are found. If not, this area, too, could be picked up by global standardised platforms with limited room for innovation by local players.

Conclusion

The case study of tourism as a cross-innovation area for AV media industries proved to be different than education and health care. While the latter two are closely related to public value creation and advancement of society and are therefore objects of public concern and are also well institutionalised, tourism lacks all of this. From the perspective of host countries tourism is, for the most part, seen only as another service market, a source of income. It is also a market that has shown relative growth, providing stable income and therefore has not been a subject of concern, especially in the Baltic Sea Region. It is perhaps due to its relative wellbeing and lack of strong public interest that it has emerged as somewhat uncooperative for digital AV industries. Furthermore, the sector has had to accommodate the platformisation of their market, which especially for the SMEs in small countries has meant that they get some of the necessary tools for free, but at the same time lose direct access to their customers (and data about them). And this, too, seems to have had a demotivating effect on their own innovation activities. Altogether, the potential for their convergence is there, the dialogues are also there, but in contrast to education and health care, we could not identify an emergence of an auto-communicatively functioning new convergent industry sub-section. Not yet, at least.

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