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From Production of Space to Citizen Innovation: Looking at Climate Change and Tourism Development from a Critical Perspective (and within a Business School)

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Title: From Production of Space to Citizen Innovation: Looking at Climate Change and Tourism Development from a Critical Perspective (and within a Business School)

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Abstract:

The tourism industry is vulnerable to climate change because many of its resources will be strongly affected by it (Jones & Phillips, 2011). Coastal destinations are likely to be the most affected, with rising sea levels and extreme weather events. All these changes compel coastal destinations to adapt. Adaptation is a challenge, but also a priority, for this industry is critical to many communities. Adaptation is a complex issue, full of wicked problems, and builds through representations of space, place, environment, climate, and tourism. All those representations are the product of history, dense social interactions, power relationships, political arrangements, and individual stakeholder life stories. And not to forget, for many coastal tourism communities, the clock is ticking because sea level is rising and extreme weather events are becoming more and more regular. This is the case of the St-Lawrence estuary in Quebec, Canada, which is where our researchers' gazes have been set upon during the last three years.

With space being the first resource of tourism, we looked at tourism adaptation through the lens of the production of space to identify first the institutional discourses through the form of governmental strategies and how they reproduce the tourism space of the St-Lawrence (Lapointe, Sarrasin, & Guillemard, 2015). We notice discrepancies between the discourses of tourism and climate change, even if the main stakeholder in producing those discourses is the Government du Québec. Then, we looked at how, locally, other discourses interact with those institutional discourses to finely reproduce space through local tourism practices (Lapointe, Lebon, & Guillemard, 2016). The importance of land value as a structuring force under the tourism and environmental discourses was blatant; the adaptation spatial dynamics were contingent on whether the land was public or private. However, it left a blank spot about what this type of spatial dynamics holds for the future for these communities, therefore calling for another analytical lens. That's where we turn to resilience theory, to observe how the action-reaction of adaptation, to the rhythm of extreme weather events, structured the answer.

We end up looking at strong tendencies to engineered resilience to return as fast as possible to a state close to the previous perceived steady state. Stakeholders, especially private land owners, target short-term reactive actions that secure fast the value of their property at the detriment of long-term actions, which seem riskier on the short term (Lapointe & Sarrasin, in press).

Our previous research identified that adaptation of local communities would be influenced by spatial dynamics in transformation. These new dynamics emphasize the social and collective dimension of adaptation to climate change and would make it dependent on the social innovations of the stakeholders (Rodima-Taylor et al., 2012). However, current research on adaptation to climate change of the tourism industry has paid little attention to the social dimensions of adaptation and its non-climatic factors. The issue of innovation in adaptation to climate change has mainly focused on the administrative and technological aspects (Rodima-

Taylor et al., 2012), leaving aside the issue of adaptation as a social innovation. Nevertheless, the low propensity of tourism enterprises to cooperate to innovate and the emphasis on partnership to foster social innovation in adaptation to climate change (Rodima-Taylor et al., 2012) highlight the importance of finding an effective and efficient intermediary to improve cooperation, stimulate innovation, and involve citizens within a social citizen innovation process. There is a role for a Living Lab (LL) to play (Guimont & Lapointe, 2016). Therefore, opening up the field for action research to try to answer the following is important: (1) How can the LL remove the barriers to innovation for a coastal destination in the process of adaptation to climate change? (2) How do the participants' social representations of climate change evolve within an LL approach? (3) What forms of territorial organization/mobilization emerge from the LL approach to meet the climate change adaptation needs of the local tourism industry?

This presentation aimed at bridging theoretically three years of research on climate change adaptation; the research path described before is a back and forth discussion from the theoretical critical thinking and empirical events on the field. Critically thinking of how climate change adaptation is framed by discourses and how it is lived by social agents brought us to engage in action research to break from the adaptation triad: do nothing, hold the line, move away. It will also be a reflexion of how the institutional context in which the researchers are involved interacts with the actual research we do.

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