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Space of Risk, Space at Risk: Climate Change and Tourism Adaptation in Tadoussac, Canada

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Title: Space of Risk, Space at Risk: Climate Change and Tourism Adaptation in Tadoussac, Canada

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Abstract:

Located at the confluence of two rivers forming the estuary of the Saguenay-Saint-Laurent fjord, the town of Tadoussac offers unique natural and geographical features. The city of Tadoussac is nowadays a worldwide destination through the development of nature tourism and whale watching cruises developed in the beginning of 1960s. The success of these tourism development strategies has made Tadoussac a city developed around and for tourism. Indeed, today, it is a mono-industrial city with a seasonal flow of 300,000 to 350,000 tourists each summer.

Recently, the phenomenon of climate change has tended to upset the configuration and tourist orientation of this small community. Threatened by the warming of the waters and by the phenomenon of erosion of its coasts, the village of Tadoussac is in a period of a redefinition of its space, both as a tourism space and a lived space. In the case of the city of Tadoussac, these risks linked to climate change recreate a space limited by the protection and adaptation discourses. Those discourses create territorial governance that is increasingly dissociated from the municipality and community.

The objective of this study is, therefore, to understand how tourism and environmental discourses in their interaction contribute to the creation of space at risk. Moreover, the study explores how the concept of risk and the urgency that it implies favors actions and movements of adaptation and protection against climate risk, and so recreates the leisure space. Through the theoretical notions of space and risk, the present study aims to study the social-environmental process of transforming a space (especially touristic space) of risk into a space at risk. In this study, we choose to disassociate the concepts of space of risk and space at risk. The reason why is that we think that space of risk doesn't threaten the socio-economic viability of a territory. On the contrary, the concept of a space at risk is a space directly threatened by the climate risk. Thereby, a space at risk is the gradual emergence of practices and discourses that favor the creation of a space in danger that needs to be protected.

To this end, the present research tries to examine how discourses and actions of communities and government promoters contribute to such a transformation. Eleven actors, directly linked to the tourism industry, were interviewed in order to analyse their perceptions and their relationships with the concept of climate risk in the territory. This data will allow us to see how their perceptions of climate risk (through practices and discourses) transform a space of risk into a space at risk.