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Culture as Impermanence: A Liquid Modern Critique of the Interpretive Capacity of Tourism Today

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Title: Culture as Impermanence: A Liquid Modern Critique of the Interpretive Capacity of Tourism Today

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Abstract:

This presentation is the first of two cousin working papers on the fate of culture under globalisation and the found intermingling of populations. It focusses upon the changing role of culture under liquid modernity, and it constitutes an applied extension (to Tourism Studies) of the ideas of the sociologist Bauman.

This first Mallorca presentation will address the following six (and conceivably other, subject to time) points about the new impermanence of culture ... where under the globalisations of our contemporary age *the scale of population movements is vast* and keeps on growing, generating a global growth of ethnic diasporas and new protean sorts of cultural loyalty (pp. 38–43).

1 = Under the globalising imperatives of liquid modernity, the world distribution of capital and information becomes exterritorial (i.e., external to every place), and governments have had to cede control over economic and cultural processes to ‘market forces’, which tend to be unfettered by political control (p. 79). Consonantly ‘culture’ today tends to be much less frequently a matter of ‘propositions’, ‘prohibitions’, and ‘norms’, and more *a matter of ‘offers’* within the consumer-oriented marketplace (p. 13) – *a means of seduction*.

2 = Under the globalisations of our contemporary age, ‘culture’ has tended to lose much of its erstwhile localising / regionalising / nationalising *missionary role*, and *individuals are inclined to be much less engaged* locally / regionally / nationally (p. 55). Several questions are consequently posed upon individuals, in terms of the degree to which their cultural identity is incipiently and unbreakably bound up with their place of habitation and physical neighbourhood (p. 36).

3 = Under the globalising imperatives of liquid modernity, the old / established right of nations to self-determination is slowly evaporating (p. 99), and the identity-guaranteeing sovereignty of nation-states has corroded (p. 71). Consonantly, nations are turning from being territorially cohesive bodies into ever-more mobile and *spatially dispersed associations of spiritually allied units* (p. 72).

4 = Under the globalisations of our contemporary age, ‘culture’ is not so frequently found to be the messianic force by and through which (under high nationalism) it had been ... i.e., enlightening, converting, reflecting, perfecting local / national citizens (p. 97) ... but has become *a perpetually widening polylogue* (p. 116).

5 = Under the globalising imperatives of liquid modernity, ways of life have tended to drift in varied and not necessarily coordinated directions, where cultural relations have become rather less ‘vertical’ and more commonly ‘horizontal’ (p. 37). As old certainties and loyalties are accordingly swept away, people are prone to seeking *new belongings / new cultural identity storylines*, which are decidedly different from the old narratives built on an assured naturalness of historical belonging (p. 81).

6 = Under the globalisations of our contemporary age, people increasingly have had to become accustomed to *living in close proximity with strangers* (p. 37), and thereby cheek by

jowl everyday with ‘cultural differences’ (p. 36). In the past, such assuring ‘situational newcomers’ (e.g., ethnic minorities) would have had to renounce or hide their separate cultural identities, or have had them taken away by force (p. 75).

In the cousin (CULTURE AS SEDUCTION presentation) a number of propositions will be drawn about the contemporary capacity of the tourism industry (and of the field of Tourism Studies) to decently / faithfully interpret culture, today.

All citations (above) are from the work of Bauman (2012), as commissioned by the National Audiovisual Institute for the European Cultural Congress, based in Wroclaw, Poland.