

Chapter 1

Happiness: The Basis for Public Policy in Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents happiness from the perspective of a public good, that is, of collective character understood as the basis for the constitution of public policies in tourism. Thus, the intimate relationship between tourism, happiness, and tourism development is recognized. The reflection undertaken on public policies in tourism is based on the analysis of the capacities to generate happiness in society and on the offer of a proposition that state interventions, whether of distributive, redistributive, regulatory, or constitutional nature, under pressure from collective needs, must attend to the tourism development process and sustained in a humanistic conception. Therefore, it is believed that tourism, in its various aspects, will only achieve the happiness of a tourist destination if it meets the premises of sustainable development to the extent that the citizen residing at the tourist destination feels part of the decision-making process and the formation of public policies.

INTRODUCTION

The world is dynamic and, whether from an economic or social point of view, transformations occur without people having any control over them. However, when we observe the collective context we realize that specific forces, namely formed by social and economic groups, such as financial institutions, multinational companies, wars, and also migratory movements, among others, have the ability to influence and sometimes dictate the course of events. In this context, conformity, predictability

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are characteristics of the past, because with the advent of technology, generating new communication and information processes, people and organizations find themselves in need of learning how to learn (Senge, 2018), that is, conceiving and knowing new methods and knowledge that allow them to achieve their individual and collective goals.

In the above perspective, the forces described affect people's lives, either at the individual or collective level, by the decisions of public agents in legislative assemblies and other public organizations. According to Frey & Stutzer (2017), these decisions set restrictions, define the type, quality, quantity, and form of access to public services, influencing individual well-being and, consequently, the perception of happiness.

The policy practiced by public agents is defined based on the interests intrinsic to the acts and plans that reflect the desires of social groups, companies, states and countries, depending on the area, focus and the interested group.

Nowadays, in several tourist destinations, based on the experiences and knowledge about large flows of tourists - overtourism - and on the travel limitations resulting from the coronavirus pandemic (Sars- Cov-2), could it be said that the decisions of public agents and organizations for tourism development reflect the needs of the indigenous populations? Perhaps in some countries the perception may be positive, but in most, the answer to this question would be negative (Müller & Friederich, 2020; Novy, cit in Zmysłony & Kowalczyk-Anioł, 2019). The fact that the needs of people and social groups are not met, in the desired way and at the desired time, leads us to reflect on how public policies are designed and implemented.

Based on the reasoning referenced above, this chapter aims to develop reflection on the constitution of public policies in tourism, analyzing them in their capacities to generate the perception of happiness in society and offer the proposition that the actions of State intervention, whether they are of distributive, redistributive, regulatory or constitutional character, under pressure of collective needs, with reflection at the core of society, must meet the tourism development process that is sustained in the humanistic conception of Max-Neef (2012), fundamentally from the perspective that human needs are the origin for public policies and, therefore, pertinently associated with the dimensions of the GNH – Gross National Happiness index (or also Gross Internal Happiness) proposed by the Bhutan Study Center (Ura & Galay, 2004), because it is understood that this is the way to satisfy society in its expectations, generate welfare and also value to tourist destinations, conquering, consequently, high levels of happiness.

Thus, it is understood that the concept of happiness has had special attention by society since classical antiquity. Aristotle (384 BC to 322 BC) understood happiness as man's greatest good, which is identified with living well and doing well (Marques, 2000).

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