

# ARTICLES

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**Michel Bonneau**

Emeritus Professor of the University of Angers  
and *professeur associé* of the *École Supérieure de Commerce* of La Rochelle

## 'TIME' IN TOURISM: 'INDIVIDUAL TIME' AND 'SOCIAL TIME'

**Abstract:** The author does a review of the research into tourist activity and concludes that the particular character of tourist behaviour is reflected best in the study of time budgets. He proposes Max Weber's ideal-type method to be used in the analysis. In the conclusions to the article the author presents typical examples of qualitative time (recreation, holidays, tourism).

**Key words:** individual time, social time, family time.

One of the issues discussed in *Temps et Tourisme* lays stress on 'time' as lived, the 'time' of everyday life, and the individual organisation of time as an essential component of personal choice concerning consumption and mobility. This is why it is necessary to put 'time' at the heart of analysis. The issue of 'social time' and the interrelations between 'work time' and other social times are familiar to socio-logists and historians. Geographers, apart from the Swedish school (Hägerstrand, Carlstein), have done little work on the spatial overlaying of these 'lived times'.

'Time' is not absent from research in the social sciences. Its role has often been put forward in plans for the construction of urban and rural 'spaces' and also tourist resorts. Today it is responsible for a rich architectural inheritance, and an organisation of space within which people find enjoyment in identifying the heritage of the past. Each activity generates its own 'time' in interaction with other 'times'. In tourist resorts, some enjoy themselves while others work, each group generating its own 'time' that evolves in accordance with social, economic and cultural changes.

For several decades now, in connection with changes in work and lifestyle, many conflicts have arisen in everyday life between these various 'times', especially between individual, collective and family 'times'. Therefore, questions of 'time' are at the heart of concerns with space.

The origin is to be found in Italy in the 1980's, with the awareness, especially of women, of the importance of social 'time' and the social organisation of time that underlines problems of 'synchronisation'. This awareness was a result of the

creation in 1975 of the European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions. A large part of its work has been dedicated to an analysis of working 'time' and its interaction with other social 'times'. This interdisciplinary research has given rise to many tools such as those used in measuring ('chronocards'), models for social surveys, 'chronotopical' spatio-temporal analyses, and so on.

### 1. RESEARCH IN FRANCE INTO DIFFERENT KINDS OF TOURISM (*PRATIQUES TOURISTIQUES*)

When used in the titles of articles, or chapters from textbooks, the term 'tourism' is usually a misuse of language. The concept includes, essentially, an analysis of tourism, its scale, and its social and geographical origin, and the aim is to try to measure its impact on the physical and human environment. In practice, however, it is limited to the number of visits to the main tourism sites in areas studied, with at best a few reflections on duration and the busiest periods, or the distance between a picnic site and the car. If there is to be a strong renewal of reflection on tourism, analysis shows many serious conceptual gaps and a lack of precise frames of reference.

Highly symptomatic of the conventional approach to leisure, is the study made by *CEMAGREF* from Grenoble as part of a survey conducted in 1980-1 of 70,000 mountain sports practitioners. The purpose was to contribute to 'better understand their presence on the mountains'. The variables were gender (mountain sports are traditionally done by men), age

(mountain sports are mainly done by those aged 16–35), occupation (a high prevalence of independent professionals such as those in academia, medicine and engineering), place of residence (the highest number come from alpine *départments* or major cities such as Lyon or Marseille and the Paris region). A descriptive study of mountain sports shows frequency (for 10% it is only one day, but there is an average of 48 days), variations in frequency by activity (mountaineering and high mountain off-piste skiing, hiking and climbing, and cross-country skiing), and finally analysis by mountain range (Mont Blanc massif, Vanoise-Maurienne, Oisans, the Pre-alps, Pyrenees, Southern Alps, Corsica and others).

This mountain range study focuses on the difficulties confronting specific activities, and is linked mainly to the nature of the relief. Otherwise, interestingly, it neglects all the problems, crucial in the mountains, of everyday 'time' such as schedules, duration, rhythm, intensity and so on.

An article by THÉNOZ (*La pratique touristique estivale et son impact dans un espace protégé: le cas de la Vallouise dans le parc national des écrins*» – R.G.L. 1981/3) is a bit more precise about the issue of time, but is still very traditional. Only two parameters are taken into account: the morphology of the valley and its transport network; and the spatial, economic and cultural behaviour of visitors.

If reference to very large daily variations in tourist frequency is made, it is to relate busy days with social 'times' (holidays, weekends), and the nature of weather – rain and thunderstorms being particularly unfavourable in the high mountains. On the other hand, with regard to walkers, the author goes further in his analysis, highlighting the average length of daytime stay (less than two hours, two to six hours, more than 6 hours) and the busiest period (15.00–17.00).

## 2. RESEARCH USING TIME BUDGETS (BUDGETS-TEMPS)

A time budget has been used frequently and over a long period to study the use made of time. Nicole Samuel (*Temporalistes* No. 39 – March 1998) traces its history to the publication by Friedrich Engels in 1845 of *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, which includes estimates on how workers used their time. A time budget is a statement of the sequence and the duration of an individual's activities over a period that usually covers the 24-hour day or a week. A time budget includes at least three data sets: the activities carried out, the 'place in time' of these activities, and their duration. Sometimes, data is added on the link

between the activities and who else is involved. They especially help to emphasise behavioural differences and similarities: between men and women; blue and white collar workers, and managers; those in work and the unemployed; and so on.

Time budgets have been mainly used in the study of unemployment, life cycle, lifestyle and leisure practices, not only in Western but in Eastern Europe and in North America. In the *USSR*, research conducted by Strumilin, was designed mainly to investigate the results of the revolution on social and cultural life, while in the United States it was more integrated into government plans to fight unemployment (by Sorokin, a former follower of Strumilin, who emigrated to the United States). It was especially after the Second World War that the time budget method was widely extended to try to understand the uses of time (given the profound changes in society).

Many criticisms have been directed at the study of time budgets, particularly by William Grossin (*Temporalistes*, March 1998). Apart from the criticism that can be set against the method in general, the most profound are related to the fact that it gives 'time' a material value, however in fact hours are not equal (a 'controlled' hour does not have the same value as an hour of 'free' time). Moreover, cutting time into equal parts (for example into 15 minute chunks), eliminates the linkages and articulations that give value and meaning. It is actually 'quantitative' time as measured by the clock which is being called into question. Time budgets content themselves to classify activities on an essentially descriptive level without finding room for the complexity of human behaviour.

It is becoming increasingly difficult, due to changing lifestyles, to study in a segmented way those practices that come together to form a structured spatio-temporal system. In such a system, the elements are interdependent, regulate one another, and allow the construction of a 'time' appropriate to each individual.

It is in response to these critiques that some writers (*Temporalistes*, March 1998) from the Sociology Centre of the Free University of Brussels (*L'université libre de Bruxelles*), have collected data on the general meaning of activities in their surveys. Eight values are identified: physiological satisfaction, personal satisfaction, obligation, means to an end, moral duty, improvement in personal relationships, meaningless time, and time killing.

Thus time budget investigations, if they include ways of exploring the meaning given by individuals, and are complemented by other types of analysis (e.g. interviews), can provide real, theoretical and practical guidance for research.

### 3. RESEARCH BY THE IDEAL-TYPE (L'IDÉAL-TYPE) METHOD

Tourism (*pratiques touristiques*) should not be compared with its 'material dimension' (golf, tennis, hiking...) because it is a symbol, a sign of something else, referring to such non-material aspects as feelings, expectations, desires and values. It is therefore not the point to describe such activities in a naturalistic way, but to ask questions leading to an understanding of the choice of a particular one and how the meaning the tourist gives it is determined. Tourists themselves are the only ones capable of giving a more or less rational meaning to such activities and it is therefore essential to understand the meaning they give to their behaviour. This can be helped by what Max Weber called 'mental experience' (*l'expérience mentale*). As a human being, the observer of tourism has the opportunity to imagine being in the place of a tourist, having already experienced a similar situation or having projected him/ herself into one. This experience allows its significance to be grasped.

The method developed by Max Weber, where he seeks to grasp meanings by comparing them to general 'types', constructed from 'ideal-types' (*types idéaux*) i.e. conceptual categories, will be proposed as an aid to inspiration.

The concept of 'ideal-type' is both a means of understanding and an intellectual construction; it is a rational abstraction that aims to define tourism (*pratiques touristiques*). The 'ideal-type' rarely corresponds to established empirical phenomena but serves to allow comparisons to be drawn. It defines opportunities for observations because an 'ideal-type' is an instrument that helps state the proximity or distance between a theoretical construction and empirical data.

As Jacques Coenen-Huther has emphasised, 'ideal-typical conceptualization is a logical construction in terms of which empirical reality is considered', the differences observed empirically allow the building of hypotheses to give explanations concerning the diversity of tourism activity. To do this, it is necessary to clearly bring to the fore the 'gaps' observed and speculate on the causes that divide it from the 'ideal-type'.

Max Weber used the 'ideal-type' in all his work but particularly in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904). Here he developed the 'ideal-type' of 'capitalist economic action' (*l'action économique capitaliste*) which is based on the hope of a profit by exploiting opportunities for exchange. This developed because of the separation of the financial accounting of family and business life. There are 'elective

affinities' between the ascetic attitude of the capitalist entrepreneur and the Calvinist belief in predestination. In constructing the 'ideal-type' of a tourist, two pitfalls must be avoided: the first is building a type to explain everything which is so abstract that its operational value is low (e.g. individualism explains everything about tourism); the second is to align empirical data so closely with concrete results that it is not possible to distinguish an activity from its simple description, and does not therefore allow its understanding.

Here the construction of an 'ideal-type' for tourism based on 'time' is proposed: how much does 'time' organize the everyday life of the tourist?, and what are the 'times' of the tourist? The hypothesis is that the 'time' of a tourist is opposed to the 'quantitative' time of everyday life.

Six characteristics can be identified:

- The tourist is a person whose connection to 'schedules' is very loose

Pomian relates in his book *L'ordre du temps* (POMIAN 1984) the results of a survey in France among holidaymakers in 1980 showing that during 'holiday time' there is a tendency to free oneself from 'measurable time': only 4% of employees plan their holidays by imposing a timetable on them, but 35% retain some of their routines (especially regular meals), 40% however avoid any regularity, and only 20% live absolutely free of 'measured time'.

Links were thus made with the results of research on 'time budgets and the study of the pattern of everyday life' (*budget-temps et l'étude des horaires de la vie quotidienne - Revue française de sociologie*, VIII, 1967, pp. 169-183) comparing the use of time on Wednesdays and Sundays, and emphasising 'moments of the day' (*les moments de la journée*). Sunday is always characterized by a greater diversity of activity and by later hours (times of getting up and going to bed, meals and so on).

- Social activities are shifted: one gets up later than usual, eats later ...

Time discipline, long based on the disciplines of 'work time', is called into question. It is time away from work which today seems more to be building individual and collective identities, although without entirely eliminating the organization of time at work. This leads to a situation which is increasingly difficult to balance. 'Holiday time' justifiably breaks down those barriers and empowers the 'time' that is organized through activities away from work.

- Activities within the family are better synchronized: we eat together, we take walks together, go to the cinema... activities are more numerous and varied.

The family, criss-crossed by the different uses of time between its members and torn between the

hours of work, school, transport and services, is the site of everyday pressures. 'Holiday time' allows a more peaceful 'synchronization'.

- There is greater harmony of the body with biological and meteorological 'time', the rhythms of 'nature'

As opposed to 'industrial time', the 'time' of the tourist is not measured by the clock but by activities, 'qualitative' time tends to take precedence over 'quantitative' because 'there is no free time which is not qualitative (*il n'est de temps libre que qualitatif*)' (POMIAN 1984). 'Work time' and its rhythm is organized according to successive sequences planned from outside by hierarchies that impose.

- The 'time' of the tourist is organized from within; it is the individual him/ herself who creates it, and this leads to a true 'rupture'

The 'time' of the tourist during the year alternates between 'quantitative' time, planned and essentially urban and industrial, dominated by work; and 'qualitative' time, left to itself, related to 'nature' and avoiding constraints.

- 'Synchronization' through a linear sequence of activities is replaced by a new polymorphic type which leads, during 'holiday time', to the entangling of activities and spaces in a complex manner

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The everyday life of a tourist is always marked by a compromise between 'individual time' and 'social time'. This compromise may be studied through

tourism activities – but until now these analyses have still been very conventional and do not put at the heart of their approach the issue of 'time'. The study of time budgets allows better understanding of the place of time in these practices, but it remains insufficient. A new approach is proposed based on the method of the 'ideal-type'. The construction of an 'ideal-type' for tourism (*pratiques touristiques*) allows us to see the proximity or distance between theoretical construction and empirical data.

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