

## TOURIST'S GAZE

The term introduced by John Urry in the book under the same title ("The Tourist Gaze"), meaning a kind of social tourism practice and experience, characteristic of a modern, mass form of travel that emphasizes consumer attitudes and visual pleasure.

The tourist's gaze is characterised by a modern, superficial and aesthetic view of the world, subjected to the processes of globalisation and standardisation. The tourist's gaze is a recognition of the visual attractiveness of views, objects and events, prepared for the visitor by the mechanisms and strategies of the tourist market. The essence of the tourist's gaze is "looking": watching and recognising natural sceneries, urban landscapes, objects, events that are unique to the tourist in so far as they can be identified with their marker and "consumed" only in the situation of undertaking a real (or virtual) journey. The subject of the tourist's gaze – regardless of whether it is a landscape, ethnic group, lifestyle, historical monuments, etc. – can be described using three key dichotomies for Urry: collective – romantic, authentic – non-authentic, historical – contemporary.

The gaze became the dominant "tool" of tourist experience in the nineteenth century. It appeared in place of the discourse accompanying previously all cognitive, research and analytical travel purposes (Adler), contributing to the development of an aesthetic form of travel (in place of the earlier art of travel). According to Adler, until the end of the 18th century travels were oriented towards discourse and cognitive observation, and not towards looking, sightseeing, watching, which resulted in putting philosophical cognition before aesthetic cognition. At the end of the 18th century, the traveller's "eye", so far limited by the normative discourse and scholastic attitude towards the world, was increasingly directed towards the outside world, seeking in it the support for the educated taste. An "aesthetic turn" took place in travelling, and the gaze, visual consumption became its dominant factor, with aesthetic pleasure supposedly behind it. The promoter and practitioner of the new approach to landscape was Gilpin, who promoted in his essays *the picturesque* aesthetic category. He tried to visualise it, identifying it with what pleases the eye: pleasant views that could be contemplated and analysed in a way appropriate for the reception of a painting composition. Travel began to be associated with sightseeing, hiking in the landscape, which lost its elite character and became accessible to the middle class, which resulted in the popularisation and democratisation of travel. The growing popularity of hiking trips made it possible to complement "looking" with a richer sensual reaction, and the look gained the features of a "wandering eye". (Shepard), which on the way learned to share visual impressions with other senses. The historical order of the transition from discourse to gaze is complemented by a "fusion of the senses and gaze". (Adler), occurring on the road, in motion.

For Urry, gaze is a central issue for tourism, but it is also a category subject to historical change, reflecting changing viewing patterns and related social practices. On the one hand, the tourist's gaze is symbolic: it identifies things and places worth seeing. On the other hand,

it casts the tourist as a spectator. Two phenomena contributed to the isolation and crystallization of the tourist's gaze: the invention of photography and the creation of a new type of urban space as a place of performance. Urry distinguished several types of tourist's gaze: environmental, anthropological, spectacular, ecological, and finally reduced to just two: romantic and collective. A romantic view is characteristic of the auratic world (Benjamin) and can be linked to the moment of distinguishing the landscape as an aesthetic phenomenon: it is its perception and experience. It is a look focused on the recognition of the size of a given scenery or object. A lonely wanderer, admiring the landscapes, looking for aesthetic impressions, transformed into an experience of contemplative nature, seems to be the most characteristic feature of this approach.

The collective gaze of the tourist is characteristic of the system, in which the attractiveness of a given place is determined not by the system itself, but by the tourist industry. Attractive tourist destinations, subject to a collective gaze, have been designed as public spaces: their character is determined by the presence of people. The collective gaze of the tourist requires a multitude of eyes – the number of others admiring the same view confirms the importance and attractiveness of the place, which is admired together in the context of symbolic and historical meanings. The collective gaze of a tourist is the collective "consumption of a place", regardless of the extent to which it has previously been mediated by the media and their respective forms of reproduction.

[B. F.]

#### **Literature:**

Adler, Judith. "Origins of Sightseeing". *"Annals of Tourism Research"*, 16 (1989): 7-29.

Shepard, Paul. *Man in the Landscape. A History of the Esthetics of Nature*, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2002.

Adler, Judith. "Travel as Performed Art". *"The American Journal of Sociology"*, 6 (1989): 1366–91.

Urry John, *Consuming places*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Urry, John, *The Tourist Gaze*. London: Sage 2002.

Wieczorkiewicz, Anna. *Apetyt turysty: o doświadczeniu świata w podróży*. Kraków: Universitas, 2008.