Educating the modern tourist: Sympathie-Magazin, circa 1974



On the seventh of eight of Mai 1973 a conference, organized by the Studienkreis für Tourimus and the Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit was held on the putative negative consequences of tourism in Asia and Africa. A great variety of participants, ranging from scientists, representatives of governments and the tourist industry, visited the

conference. Visiting remote destinations was no longer a privilege for the daring or affluent, as attested by the recent increase of German tourists visiting Africa, Asia and South-America during their holidays. The conference was premised on the notion that long-distance travel to developing countries was a public affair and the concern of government, society and the economy alike. The recent developments in the sector had accentuated that travel to these destinations was wrought with problems and that intervention by these parties was required.

The conference was held in response to the recent trend of West-German tourists, which increasingly spent their sojourns on other continents than Europe. The percentage of German tourists having their holiday in Africa or Asia increased from 4 percent in 1971 to 14 percent in 1988. These tourists predominantly visited these locations primarily for the excellent weather and its tourist infrastructure in the form of luxurious resorts and hotels. The possibility for contact with other cultures featured prominently on the agenda too. ¹ Another significant for tourism to these new destinations was its potential for social distinction. According to a psychological study, the presence of fellow Germans was undesired, as one did not want to travel 'mit der Masse'.²

A wide range of scientists and experts initially applauded the advent of this travel form. Tourism was thought to be an important component in the economic development of the Third World. This euphoric phase was however followed by a more critical stance towards tourism to developing countries from the 1970's onwards. This critique was an international phenomenon: in their famous study, the sociologists John Turner and Louis Ash compared vacationers with barbarian invaders who invaded less advanced regions, turning them in pleasure peripheries, suited to the tourist demands, and

¹ Sina Fabian, *Boom in der Krise: Konsum, Tourismus, Autofahren in Westdeutschland und Großbritannien 1970-1990* (Göttingen, 2016), 171-174.

² HAT FV-S/973/ME Wolfgang Meyer, *Ferntourism. Vorstellungen über Ceylon – Kenia – Tansania – Tunesien als Urlaubsländer* (Starnberg, 1973), 186.

effectuating the socio-cultural disintegration of the traditional host culture.¹ The putative boons of capital injections were less considerable than projected. In addition, tourism engendered a series of negative side effects, ranging from the dissolution of traditional social structures and cultural practices, the rise of crime and prostitution to damaging the environment.³ This critical discourse was echoed in various contributions of the conferences. According to the journalist Wolfgang Boller, the prime motivation for tourists to visit third world countries during their holiday was the promise of a beach, sea and good prices. The cultural and political dimension of the host country was completely neglected and tourist behaviour was characterized by frivolous consumption: 'Das Verhalten deutscher Touristen in Fernen Länder, soweit die Reisenden nicht tagsüber am Strand liegen und sich abends an der Hotelbar festhalten, wird von Unwissenheit und Unsicherheit beherrscht.'⁴ When tourists engaged with the host culture it was rather shallow and amounted to regurgitating the sights as delineated in brochures: 'Sie photographieren das Erwartete und erleben das Vorgedachte.' The desire to interact with the local populace was limited to the promise of 'Sex mit dünkelhautigen Mädchen'.⁵

Fostering international fellowship and understanding by mass education

The Studienkreis für Tourismus was founded in 1961 as a social-scientific interdisciplinary research institute, which focused on promoting and critically studying international tourism. As the first research institute dedicated to this field, it played a key role in promoting international research on tourism.⁶ The circle sprouted from and contributed to a broader trend termed the 'scientization of the social': the rise of sociological and psychological concepts, categories, methods, and insights reaching out from consumption to politics, religion, and social care.⁷ The Studienkreis sought to scientifically explain tourist as a distinct social phenomenon and leisure activity. In addition, it played an active role in influencing the perception, expectations and behavior of tourists. By ways of scientific research and mass education they sought to alter tourist behavior, of which this magazine is a poignant example.

The research on perceptions of host countries featured prominently on the increasingly systematic and scientific research agenda of the Studienkreis. By ways of empirical quantitative and qualitative psychological studies, the researchers sought to chart the motivation of tourists to go on holiday to particular countries and the corresponding image of that country. A key aspect of the Circle's thought was that the idea that international travel could foster international understanding and sociability, and fellow feeling across social and national demarcations. A number of psychological studies, initiated

¹ Louis Turner and John Ash, *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery* (New York, 1976).

³ HAT FV-S/981/VIE Armin Vielhaber and Peter Aderhold, *Entwicklungspolitik. Tourimus in Entwicklungsländer* (Bonn, 1981), 23-24.

 ⁴ HAT FV-X/STFT-974-2 Wolfgang Boller, 'Erleben und Verhalten deutscher Ferntouristen: Sie wissen nicht, wo Sie waren', *Ferntourismus. Ein Mittel zur Entwicklungsfhilfe und Völkerverständigung?* (Starnberg 1974), 30.
⁵ Boller, 'Erleben und Verhalten deutscher Ferntouristen', 31.

⁶ Hasso Spode, 'Tourism Research and Theory in German-Speaking Countries', in: Graham Dann and Giuli

Liebman Parrinello, *The Sociology of Tourism. European Origins and Developments* (Bingley, 2009), 65-88. ⁷ K. Brückweh, R.F. Wetzell, D. Schumann et al., (eds.), *Engeneering Society. The Role of the Human and Social Sciences in Modern Societies, 1880–1930* (Basingstoke 2012).

by the circle, led however to the more pessimistic conclusion that this was not self-evident: in many cases the tourists in questions were hardly concerned for the socio-economic living conditions of their predominantly less affluent hosts. In many cases, stereotypes, ranging from deviant sexual mores to an inherent laziness, were affirmed and even consolidated.⁸ According to a comprehensive psychological study on the travel motivation of tourists and their perceptions of host countries, stereotypes and cliché featured prominently on the cultural horizon of tourist. Even after the vacations, these negative images persisted and were in some cases even consolidated. The inhabitants of Kenia for example were described by some tourists, who had gone there', as 'harmlos, fröhlich, lustig, wie grosse Kinder'. In a similar vein, superficial contact with the local populace, in particular at local dance and folkloristic events, confirmed these stereotypes.⁹

Several experts argued that an amelioration of international relations could be effectuated by differentiating the imagery of holiday destinations. A 'directed information program' could mitigate the encounter with other people and living conditions and improve international understanding.¹⁰ One solution to the problems was thought to be a more intensive engagement with cultural host and ethical stance towards holiday. The journalist Heinz G. Schmidt, who wrote extensively on the subject, argued that the conception of a form of 'Sympathie-Information'', which 'in Form eines normalen Reiseführers mit den psychologischen Mitteln der Veranstalter-Katalog zu Assoziation, Sympathie und möglicherweise Solidarisierung mit dem Land und den Menschen, zu denen man reisen will, hinführen soll.¹¹ In promotional material the exotic and strange aspects of the host country were accentuated on the one hand. On the other hand promotion of modern amenities, like resorts hotels etc, in order to accommodate consumer preferences. In addition the trope of the scarcely clad exotic beauty featured prominently.¹² The aim of Sympathy magazine was to complement and amend this imagery by sketching the cultural, historical and religious mentality of the host country, and its diversity and socio-economic context. Indicative of its educational motives, was the fact that it was implicitly targeted at the 'einfache Urlauber, der über keine höhere Schuldbildung oder spezifische berufliche Kenntnisse über das betreffende Land verfügt'. In order to dissuade these putative gullible tourists, the texts were in a relatively simple and flashy style, and accompanied by a multitude of pictures.¹³

'Kenya: mehr als ein 'exotischer Zoo"

In 1974 the first issue of Sympathie-Magazin on Kenia was published and distributed to several travelling agencies. The first, and most explicit, objective of these magazines was to complement the dominant imagery of the host country in the popular tourist imagination. According to the editorial board, the phrase 'Ich will Tiere und Menschen sehen' encapsulated the typical expectations and

⁸ See for example: Klaus D. Hartmann, *Auslandsreisen. Dienen Urlaubsreisen der Völkerverständigung?* (Starnberg, 1974), 3-10 and 159-161.

⁹ Wolfgang *Meyer, Ferntourismus*, 105.

¹⁰ HAT FV-X/STFT-974-2 Wolfgang Meyer, 'Erwartungen und Verhalten deutscher Ferntouristen. Erste Ergebnisse einer psychologischen Untersuchung', *Ferntourismus. Ein Mittel zur Entwicklungsfhilfe und Völkerverständigung?* (Starnberg 1974), 15.

¹¹ Entwicklungspolitik. Tourimus in Entwicklungsländer (Bonn, 1981), 91.

¹² Fabian, *Boom in der Krise*, 174.

¹³ Wolfgang Meyer, Sympathie-Magazin. Untersuchung zur psychologischen Wirkungsweise von Sympathie Magazinen bei Fernreisenden (Starnberg, 1977), 6.

motives of tourists to visit Kenia.¹⁴ By ways of a diverse spectrum of information, the magazine sought to foster understanding and consideration of tourists for the host culture. The magazine on Kenya for example contains numerous digressions on the socio-economic state of the country and reflections on the indigenous culture and customs. In addition it contains a critical note on the role of tourism on the country. In addition the magazine should effectuate by ways of personal examples the identification of tourists with their hosts and raise awareness.

The magazine is in many aspects a form of prescriptive literature: it contains a section with admonitions for tourists. From this perspective, it sought to regulate encounters with hosts and prescribe proper tourist comportment. The magazine for example encouraged tourists to try to experience something of the 'real' country and its inhabitants, rather than lying just at the beach and going on safaris. In addition it advised tourists not to address waiters with the 'üblen, aus der Kolonialzeit stammenden Wort "boy" and not to snap with his fingers in order to get their attention.¹⁵ The subsequent issues on Egypt, Sri Lanka and Tunisia feature a similar mixture of 'human interest' coverage and a critical reflection on the behavior of tourists. According to a psychological study on the reception of the magazine, Sympathie-Magazin was relatively successful in its aims of mass education. A first, probably unintended, effect was that it functioned as an instrument of social distinction: tourists appreciated the magazine if it conveyed the impression to them that they received more and in-depth information than the average tourist. It most successful however in enabling tourist to identify with their host: according to the testimonies of tourists who read the magazine, it engendered a 'positive shock', which increased social awareness and feelings of sympathy with the local populace.¹⁶

¹⁴ HAT *SYM-X...K12 Armin Vielhaber, 'Einleitung', *Sympathie-Magazin: Kenya verstehen*, 1 (1974), 1.

¹⁵ 'Wie Sie mehr aus Ihrem Urlaub machen können', *Sympathie-Magazin: Kenya verstehen*, 1 (1974),46.

¹⁶ Wolfgang Meyer, Sympathie-Magazin. Untersuchung zur psychologischen Wirkungsweise von Sympathie Magazinen bei Fernreisenden (Starnberg, 1977), 44-47.



Afrika als an der eigenen Tri dit im Trotz alledem: er a ist in gastfreundliches Land gebileb n. dis ur manchmal auf etwas mehr Verstar unis seitens seiner Besucher Anspruch nat. Andreas Banziger

Wie Sie mehr aus Ihrem Urlaub machen können

 Falls Sie bei Ihrem Kenya-Aufenthalt unbedingt alles wie zu Hause haben wollen, sollten Sie Ihr Geld gar nicht erst für eine Reise verschwenden. 2. Wagen Sie es ruhig einmal, während Ihres Kenya-Urlaubs nicht nur em Strand zu liegen oder auf Foto-Safari durch die Tierparks zu fahren, sondern auch etwas über das Land und seine Menschen zu erfahren – über ihre Freuden und ihren Alltag ebenso wie über ihre Probleme und Schwierigkeiten.

Seie ie offen teger be oren Eindrüc i und ein Sie irst indnis Andelse tkeit vic Land und Leut Das seit für d Kenyaner ven Priblem off u ie wirdes eine schonere Reise werden.

- 4. Lassen Sie die Gewohnheit zu Hause, für alles eine Antwort oder einen Kommentar bereit zu haben. Hören Sie lieber zu und fragen Sie oft nach, wenn Sie die Gründe für einige Verhaltensweisen nicht gleich verstehen.
- 5. Vermeiden Sie, vorschnell irgendwelche Pannen oder Fehlschläge – womöglich auch noch anderen gegenüber – einer angeblichen »Unfähigkeit« der Kenyaner anzulasten. Bemühen Sie sich vielmehr, die Gründe zu erfahren – es gibt sehr viel mehr, als einem Europäer auf den ersten Blick vorstellbar ist. Kenyaner sind nicht »unfähiger« als andere Menschen – sie haben aber eine lange Kolonialzeit erlebt und reagieren deshalb oft empfindlich auf abwertende Äußerungen.

- 6. Wenn Sie meinen, Beschwerden gar nicht vermeiden zu können, dann bringen Sie diese ruhig und sachlich vor, ohne dabei Ihre vielleicht vorhandene Erregung spüren zu lassen. Das stößt auf viel mehr Verständnis.
- 7. Nehmen Sie auf die Gefühle der Kenyaner Rücksicht und bedenken Sie, daß Ihr Verhalten – auch ohne daß Sie es wollen – verletzend wirken kann. Das gilt nicht nur für das Fotografieren, sondern vor allem auch an Stätten wie Moscheen, bei deren Besuch Sie sich genau an die Vorschriften halten sollten.
- Halten Sie sich mit Kritik an dem Gastland und der Regierung zurück. Kritik kommt leicht schief an und läßt Sie zudem als überheblichen Europäer erscheinen.
- Rufen Sie nie einen Kellner mit dem üblen, aus der Kolonialzeit stammenden Wort »boy«, und schnippen Sie nicht mit den Fingern, wenn Sie etwas bestellen wollen. Die passende Anrede ist immer »bwana«.
- 10. Lassen Sie Ihre Juwelen zu Hause. Werfen Sie nicht provozierend mit dem Geld um sich. Der Whisky-Konsum eines Abends zum Beispiel könnte leicht den Monatslohn ihres Keilners ausmachen, der davon noch viele Familienmitglieder mühsam über die Runden bringen muß.

Alternative travelling in Kenia.

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