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HOSPITALITY AND ANTI-TOURIST ATTITUDES THROUGH THE HOST-GUEST RELATIONSHIP IN THE WESTWORLD SCIENCE FICTION SERIES

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ABSTRACT

Westworld is a science fiction series that proposes a theme park of the future where 'guests' can live a Wild West experience without restrictions or reprisals, thanks to reallooking android 'hosts' who grant all their wishes. Due to the topic covered, this science fiction series allows its use as a common thread for an article that considers the concept of hospitality, the host-guest relationship and its consequence for the management of tourist destinations. This is achieved through an exegesis of Westworld and an analysis of academic bibliography. First, different concepts of hospitality and what they imply for the host-guest relationship are identified. Subsequently, how different theoretical developments on the resident-tourist relationship are proposed entailing different interpretations and reactions to the same objective reality. In conclusion, it should be noted that when tourism is perceived as subordinating the host to the wishes of the guest (as in Westworld), the appearance of anti-tourism attitudes among residents is only a matter of time, generating conflicts. Furthermore, the importance of dominant interpretive theories in determining the reaction of the local population to events that occur should be highlighted.

KEYWORDS

hospitality, hostility, neocolonialism, Westworld, host, guest

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1. Introduction

During the 1970s, dystopias were frequent in the cinema, posing in an extreme way the various fears that had appeared with the rapid technological and social development of the previous decades, and that have not disappeared today. In more recent times, given the need to find new ideas for film and television, the plots of series and films from that time have been recovered. One of these is the series Westworld (2016–2022), a dystopian science fiction series based on the film Westworld (1973) and its sequel Futureworld (1976) (Internet Movie Database [IMDb], n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c).



The film Westworld, directed by Michael Crichton and released in 1973, proposed a near future where there is a theme park for adults, called Delos, with three thematic environments that refer to periods mythologized by cinema (Friedman, 2007): the American Wild West (Westworld); Europe in the Middle Ages (Medievalworld) and imperial Rome (Romanworld) (IMDb, n.d.b). The three environments are populated by human-looking androids who act as stereotypical characters from the era represented. In these environments, guests are encouraged to do whatever they want, including attacking or killing the host androids. During one of the visits the hosts begin to respond violently to the guests, until murders of guests at the hands of the androids begin. 'The Gunslinger', an android played by Yul Brynner, stands out in his pursuit of the protagonists (Friedman, 2007).

A sequel titled *Futureworld* was released shortly after, directed by Richard T. Heffron, in 1976. Delos Park reopens, but without Westworld, and now there are four environments, Spaworld, Medievalworld, Romanworld and Futureworld, while also mentioning an Eastworld in development (IMDb, n.d.a). In this case, the story has changed and focuses on a plot to replace world leaders with cybernetic clones (Hardy, 1995).

Finally, *Westworld* is a dystopian science fiction series created by Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy and broadcast on HBO (today HBO Max) between 2016 and 2022. The first season was based on the film *Westworld* and, to a lesser extent, *Futureworld*, but only one of the three worlds of the original film appears. In the other three seasons it took a different direction from the central idea of the 1973 film and expands into a real world of the future where a showdown for the domination of humanity takes place (IMDb, n.d.c).

The context of the first season of Westworld is a futuristic theme park, belonging to the Delos Inc. corporation, where visitors, called 'guests' can live a mythologized experience of the Wild West in the late 19th century (Lovell & Hitchmough, 2020). Visitors can do anything they want (fight, killing, rape, etc.) without fear of reprisals, especially from the 'hosts'. These are androids with an appearance so real that it is difficult to distinguish them from humans and who are programmed to interact with the 'guests' and access all their desires, whatever they may be (Gurevitch, 2022; Netolicky, 2017). The narration of the series goes into more detail than the film and exposes various stories in parallel occurring in the park at different moments in time, increasing in confusion and intrigue during the evolution of the first season. But in both cases, the original film and the current series, there is a growing awareness of the 'host' androids that results in a violent revolt against the 'guest' visitors and park employees (Lacko, 2017).

As indicated before, the series Westworld recovers a dystopia created in the seventies. This dystopia captures the limits to which a host-guest relationship can reach in the world of leisure and tourism. This concern is not new, nor has it lost relevance over the years, as shown by the appearance of conflicts between residents and tourists in some destinations, under the media label of 'tourismphobia' (Screti, 2022; Seraphin et al., 2019; Velasco González & Carrillo Barroso, 2021), a concept related to overtourism (Veríssimo et al., 2020; Vetitnev et al., 2021). Therefore, the host-guest relationship deserves deeper reflection on its theoretical fundamentals and the implications of various interpretations of hospitality. The aim of this article is to consider the concept of hospitality, its different approaches and types, and its consequences for the management of tourist destinations through reflection on the fictional Westworld. Equality or not between the parties involved in the tourism sector is the subject of discussion and the central point of this article. The methodology consists of an exegesis (Krauth, 2011) of the dystopian science fiction series Westworld, taken as the guiding thread, along with a literature review on the concept of hospitality. The concept of hospitality and how it is perceived is of great importance as it is the foundation on which all tourist activity is based. The main conclusion is that the theoretical interpretation drawn of the concept of hospitality is key to facing the challenges of tourism.

2. THE CONCEPT OF HOSPITALITY

In prehistory, with the appearance of the first sedentary settlements, the issue of travel outside of a community arose. It was a problem for travelers who arrived in unknown settlements and for the communities into which these travelers arrived. There was always doubt about the intentions of the other which could be friendly or unfriendly. In this context, two complementary and opposite concepts emerged: hospitality (friendly contacts) and hostility (non-friendly contacts).

Hospitality is an agreement between the residents of a community, the hosts, and the travelers who come to that community, the guests. In the context of hospitality, hosts are in their dwelling (home, region, country, etc.) while guests have moved outside theirs. The concept of 'dwelling' implies morals and customs (Tomillo Noguero, 2013) and, therefore, hospitality implies that two sides, hosts and guests, meet in the formers' dwelling, an environment dominated by their customs and morals. For their part, the guests seek security (not suffering violence), food and shelter (conditioned on local customs, availability and the historical era).

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In essence, and from its most remote origins, hospitality implies a customary contract between host and guest that is formalized through rituals performed when the guest arrives at the host's dwelling and that binds both parties until the agreed end of the guest's stay. Examples of these rituals are the offering of bread and salt in Eastern European and Middle Eastern countries (Gall & Hobby, 2009; Hayward, 2020), or the welcome Lei 'necklace' (composed of flowers) in various parts of Polynesia (McDonald, 1995).

The concept of hospitality as a contract between host and guest, to manage the relationship between them, shows nuances in different cultures around the world. According to some authors (Derrida, 2001; Kant, 2003; Tomillo Noguero, 2013) there are various types of hospitality: contractual (Kant, 2003) or conditional (Derrida, 2001); universal (Kant, 2003); pure or unconditional (Derrida, 2001); and hyperbolic (Derrida, 2001).

'Contractual hospitality' (Kant, 2003) or 'conditional hospitality' (Derrida, 2001) implies an invitation from the host addressed to the guest, since it entails a desire to limit the welcome, maintaining the host's control and power over the dwelling. It is a very formal hospitality, represented by rituals, rules and conventions that represent the contractual relationship and the acceptance of implicit conditions.

Contractual or conditional hospitality is the most common in many different cultures, and leisure and tourism activities would be included within this concept. Tourism is a type of hospitality in which there is a formal contract between the parties and economic compensation from the guest to the host. In addition, there are precisely defined host services and rules to be met by the guest.

'Universal hospitality' (Kant, 2003) or 'pure/ unconditional hospitality' (Derrida, 2001) implies a right to visit by the traveler or guest and an assumption of risks by the host. It is a hospitality, incompatible with the sovereignty, control or power over a host's dwelling, based on religious ideas of love and borders on utopia. It is an absolute and unrestricted hospitality that seeks 'compensation' not immediate and not coming from the current guest, but in the form of equal hospitality when the host is also a guest in other's dwelling. In this case it is a behavior that is offered to everyone and expected of everyone as future compensation.

Universal, pure, unconditional or absolute hospitality is less common than contractual or conditional hospitality, with few contexts in which this type can clearly be found. These tend to be in poor societies with a very dispersed population where there are no commercial accommodation alternatives and the hospitality of any dwelling found along the way is essential or even a life-or-death necessity. The vital importance of hospitality in these societies is what

connects this type with religious concepts and a lack of compensation. One region famous for it is Polynesia (Leach, 2003) where it was vital for inter-island travel. Other places with a similar type are Bali, an island located in Indonesia (Mustafa et al., 2020), and Ibiza, a Spanish island located in the Western Mediterranean (Ramón Cardona & Serra Cantallops, 2013, 2014). Regions with universal hospitality have achieved great popularity as tourist destinations for conveying an image of a friendly and helpful population that serves visitors in exchange for, apparently, nothing.

In the tourism sector, tourists' vacations are clearly framed within the concept of contractual hospitality, since there are formal contracts subject to commercial law and monetary compensation for host services. A problem is that this type does not generate the highly positive emotional experience of unconditional hospitality which would be a recreation of the myth of the noble savage in the lost paradise (Serra Cantallops & Ramón Cardona, 2015). It must be contractual hospitality to guarantee the financial success of the sector and its economic sustainability, and thus it is not possible to create tourism based on universal hospitality. But it is possible to simulate it through pricing policies for packages and gifts. The guest pays for some services, the main ones, but the rest are offered to the tourist for free or in exchange for nothing. The costs of free, or apparently free, products are incorporated into the price of the main products, without breaking contractual hospitality. But some of the services are perceived as unconditional hospitality (without compensation) by the guest, who partially recovers the emotional effect of pure or unconditional hospitality.

Finally, 'hyperbolic hospitality' (Derrida, 2001) implies a xenophilia that translates into an excess or pathological obsession with the other and everything it represents. Normally, this hyperbolic hospitality implies the exaltation of the other, considering their culture as superior, but above all it implies a low opinion of one's own society and culture. In many cases, xenophilia is a form of criticism of local reality itself, considering any other society as better or superior, and inhabited by individuals with higher cultural, ethical and moral standards. But sometimes there is a level underlying this type of xenophilia, where it is interpreted as benevolence or supportive action towards others while praising one's own culture. This double level in the discourse about 'others' was possible to detect in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his references to the myth of the noble savage (Rousseau, 2018). In any case, hyperbolic hospitality is the result of a biased view of one's own and the hosts'/guests' societies.

The concept of hospitality, perhaps only with the exception of hyperbolic hospitality, posits a relationship between host and guest on equal terms. Each party has

obligations and requirements that must be met to avoid moving from a situation of hospitality to a situation of hostility. This implies that:

- The guest receives protection, a set of services and kind treatment from the host and, in return, respects the host's customs and rules, without breaking, contradicting or criticizing them. In addition, the guest may have to provide compensation in contractual hospitality, usually as gifts for the host or monetary payment in commercialized hospitality, such as tourism, leisure and other similar services.
- 2. The host is respected in his dwelling by the guest, and not as a threat to the host. In return, the host protects the guest, while the guest remains in the dwelling, and provides a set of services during the stay, such as shelter, food, advice, leisure and entertainment (if stipulated), among others. This set of services is expected to be of a quality in line with the host's capabilities. In relation to protection, every accepted guest is protected equally or greater than the hosts.

Therefore, hospitality is a customary contract between individuals or between groups of people in an equal situation. In tourism, hospitality is a commercial contract between a company and a tourist, both parties with freedom to contract in a more formalized and regulated way. In the tourism sector, the existence of a situation of equality between the parties (companies, individuals, society and administrations) and is the subject of discussion and the central point of this article. Equality between the parties within the tourism sector has similarities with that in international politics between sovereign states. Formally all independent and sovereign states are equal, but the reality of geopolitics indicates that the largest, richest and most militarily powerful states exercise power over smaller ones. The same would happen with large companies and administrations involved in the tourism sector, since they are formally equal, but size does matter in dayto-day reality.

3. FROM WESTWORLD TO ANTI-TOURISM ATTITUDES

The basic concept of hospitality posits equality between the parties. In this case, the host and the guest would be on the same level in all aspects, avoiding controversies about unequal relationships. But when there is an economic consideration, this equality can deteriorate when there is economic dependence through contractual hospitality relationships. Therefore, equality between parties as an anthropological concept loses force when analyzing the economic perspective. In this case, theories emerge that explain the relationships within contractual hospitality, and between hosts and regions 'sending' guests.

For example, the economic dependence of service providers is considered to generate a servant-lord relationship, instead of a host-guest relationship. Recalling the mansions of Victorian England, workers in the sector would be the servants of an elite of rich and powerful people (the lords), the current equivalent being large companies and, especially, clients or tourists. By being economically dependent, worker-servants must tolerate the whims and abuses of the client-lords, generating a clearly unequal and dependent relationship. This servant-lord mentality is present in many arguments for and against tourism:

- 1. In situations where tourism is defended, despite the many drawbacks, it is argued that 'without tourism, what would we live on?' demonstrating the high degree of economic dependence and the impossibility of choosing between this sector and alternative ones. Indicating a dominance of companies and tourist 'senders' over the workers and residents of the tourist destination.
- 2. In anti-tourism positions, this vision of tourism as a servant-lord relationship underlies the contempt for jobs (illustrated with expressions such as 'a country of waiters'), activities, training and research in the tourism and hospitality sector. In other cases, they are explicit in their expressions and speak of the subordination of tourist areas to the desires and whims of the 'sending' markets and their tourists.

This interpretation of tourist activity takes its very real problems (including high dependence on a very volatile economic sector, overcrowding of tourist areas or regions, the low added value of many jobs, high consumption of some resources) and links them to the essence of tourism, formed under a vision that is nothing more than a variant of the theory of domination (Bourdieu, 1994, 1998), which in turn is a translation of the theory of exploitation in the sociocultural field (Marx, 1887/1974a, 1910/1974b, 1909/1974c). The theory of domination has been adopted by various social groups since the mid-20th century as an ideological basis that allows the domination of one part of society by another (normally a minority) based on unjust reasons, demands for compensation or a reversal of this situation; usually partly real and partly imaginary. Worthy of a more general reflection would be an analysis of why these theories have had such social success. It may possibly bring relief to many people who believe that they have not had the success in life they deserved, but it is also possible that it will serve as an excuse for the political purposes of some opinion leaders.

If we move from an individual or sectoral level to a regional or national level, a new very prolific theoretical field appears, with clear references to the theory of Articles 27

domination and also to the theory of exploitation. In this case it is postcolonialism (Fanon, 1961; Memmi, 1957). Postcolonialism proposes that the colonial relations of domination still remain in the discursive sphere and the social analysis of the former colonies. Therefore, although the empires have disappeared, the former metropolises continue to influence the former colonies through economic, social and cultural relations. It should be noted that various former colonies of the United Kingdom and France remain linked to the former metropolises, not only by cultural or commercial ties, but also by treaties made during the independence processes and which maintain subordination to the former metropolis in various aspects such as defence, the economy and international relations. Clear examples are the Commonwealth of Nations, with respect to the United Kingdom, and the user nations of the West African CFA franc and the Central African CFA franc, with respect to France.

In this theoretical context, terms such as 'orientalism' have appeared to refer to a vision of the rest of the world as self-proclaimed by Western countries (Saïd, 1978), or 'subaltern' (Spivak, 1988), to refer to colonized peoples excluded from the exercise of power. Postcolonialism has carried a lot of weight in ethnographic studies of the developing world, where there are still very asymmetrical relationships, but they are studies that suffer from an essentialist approach and a static vision of native cultures (Boissevain, 1996). It is difficult to analyze these issues without falling into the bias already denounced, since criticism of ethnocentrism could be seen as a new ethnocentrism of moral superiority expressed through a criticism of classic ethnocentrism, aggravating the error with the attempt to correct it.

In this theoretical framework, tourist activity would be a part of neocolonialism (Ardant, 1965; Prashad, 2007; Sartre, 2001; Stanard, 2018), where the 'sending' regions are the dominant centrality and the 'receiving' regions are the peripheries of pleasure (Boissevain, 1996; Navarro-Jurado et al., 2015) dominated by the centrality and, therefore, subjects of postcolonialism. In this context, the image of tourist destinations would be an unreal mythologization and strongly impregnated with orientalism (Saïd, 1978), since tourism promotion would show what tourists expect based on their prejudices and pre-established beliefs, and not the reality of the tourist destinations. On the other hand, the resident population and tourism workers would be in a situation of subalternity (Spivak, 1988), excluded from the benefits and decision-making power monopolized by large tourism companies and some local powers. Although the existence of these elements in the reality of tourist destinations cannot be totally denied, their presence varies enormously between regions and countries. While in some cases the former colonialism continues, although formally there

is no longer administrative dependence, in other cases it is difficult to talk about neocolonialism and apply analyses of postcolonialism, especially in the tourist regions of the Western world closest to the centrality (Boissevain, 1996; Cooper, 1976), that is, in the first and second periphery of pleasure (Navarro-Jurado et al., 2015). In social sciences, totalizations are wrong and generalizations are risky. In this case, postcolonialism and neocolonialism provide a reasonably good analysis of some regions, but it is difficult to generalize it as a theoretical model for all tourist destinations.

Both theoretical visions of tourism, both the servant-lord relationship (tourism as servility) and the postcolonial vision (tourism as neocolonialism of the peripheries), generate an interpretation of tourism as domination. In this interpretation, local societies are 'subaltern' to a domain monopolized by tourism multinationals and tourist 'sending' societies, with *Westworld* being the most extreme embodiment. In *Westworld*, the use of androids allows this vision of host society domination to be taken to its ultimate and most violent consequences, with the androids' awareness being an 'awakening' to a postcolonial vision of their subalternity, and the violent revolt being the materialization of anti-tourist attitudes in the most extreme way: killing tourists and park employees.

This interpretation of tourism as host society domination has a lot of weight in the academic (mainly in the analysis of tourism from the social sciences), media (providing a vision of the world and forming public opinion) and 'associationist' (especially lobbies critical of tourism development) fields. This vision or interpretation significantly permeates public discourse in many tourist destinations and considers the negative impacts of tourism as something intrinsic with domination as its essence. Consequently, opposition to tourism impacts inevitably implies anti-tourism attitudes among residents (Cooper, 1976; Jacobsen, 2000; Kim & Kang, 2020; Screti, 2022; Seraphin et al., 2019), as these negative impacts are inseparable from the existence of tourism. But many are the result of poor tourism management or an excess of tourists (Cheung & Li, 2019; Dodds & Butler, 2019; Kim & Kang, 2020; Mihalic, 2020; Milano et al., 2019; Phi, 2020; Veríssimo et al., 2020; Vetitnev et al., 2021). Faced with the problem of overtourism, regional administrations usually choose, as a solution, to limit the growth of supply or even demand, but this usually leads to price increases and harm to tourists and residents. Although in recent times references to strengthening a region's resilience (Cheung & Li, 2019) or the adoption of policies aimed at 'degrowth' (Milano et al., 2019) are common.

Public opinion normally adopts the language that reaches it, lobbies adapt their language to their goals and the media transmit these messages, but there are doubts about the academic world and its lack of

greater criticism. This lack in some academic fields is difficult to attribute to a single cause: it may be due to the difficulty of departing from existing models and theories, something that affects all of them; it may be for argumentative convenience, by supporting its analyses on pre-existing, simple and clear theories; it may be acting as lobbyists for ideological or political intentions; it could be a combination of all these; or it could be for other reasons that need to be investigated. In any case, we are facing a 'discursive recurrence' that feeds its particular theoretical 'autism' (Boissevain, 1996), increasingly distant from the objective reality of tourist activity which is gradually permeating public opinion, generating anti-tourism positions characterized by actions and opinions hostile or contrary to tourism (Cooper, 1976; Jacobsen, 2000; Kim & Kang, 2020). It could also be based on real problems decontextualized and reinterpreted to fit the theoretical framework adopted, normally looking for a confirmation (Nickerson, 1998) of one's own prejudices about the sector. The real and tangible elements behind the emergence of anti-tourism attitudes are (Cooper, 1976):

- 1. An excess of tourists (Milano et al., 2019), being especially severe when very large and very rapid growth occurs, not giving time for the tourist offer or local society to adapt to the new reality. Poor planning or chaotic development of the tourist destination amplifies the negative effects on the local population.
- 2. That the exogenous development of tourism implies that decision-making occurs outside the region and the main benefits generated have repercussions outside as well. In this case, tourism will be seen as something imposed from outside and with few benefits for residents. On the contrary, endogenous development implies an initiative that arises from local society and maximizes local involvement in management, passing on the benefits locally and improving the socioeconomic situation of the local population.
- 3. That the culture and social structure of the region also influence the local reaction towards tourism. In more egalitarian societies that are open to outside influences, the perception of tourism is more positive. In closed societies or those with inequalities it is more negative since the benefits are not distributed among the whole society and higher classes despise the sector as they consider it servility towards tourists. These elements are challenges that the management of the tourist destination must face to reduce the negative effects on residents. But it is also important to check the 'story' that marks the visions and actions

taken by managers, workers and residents, and for this

it is necessary to recover the academic debate, beyond

the unconditional acceptance of current theories, as a starting point for a change of vision. It is not the enough

to see tourism as a host-guest relationship between equals and as a servant-lord relationship between the unequal. In the first case, the problems come from a bad agreement between the parties or non-compliance with it, not from tourist activity per se, and it is possible to correct these problems without abandoning tourism. In the second, the subalternity of the neocolonial situation in the peripheries of pleasure, prevents local society from being able to face the problems without abandoning tourism. Obviously, the result is not the same: whether to face these problems or whether to consider it essential to end tourism.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Both in Westworld and in real cases of anti-tourist attitudes, there is a hostile reaction from the host society against the tourist-guests. While in Westworld this violent reaction occurs when the park's androids become aware of their situation of the extreme domination of guests' wishes. In real cases an anti-tourist reaction exists (sometimes violent, but never to the level of Westworld) by a vision or interpretation of tourism as a form of domination. The 'story' of a society dominated by tourism (businesses and tourists), focused on an interpretation of tourism as a servant-lord or subaltern relationship generated by tourist neocolonialism, takes real elements that generate social concern, but is based on theories that propose tourism as a tool of subjugation for local society, with the resident-tourist relationship being essentially unequal in favor of the tourist. This interpretation of reality, and the implications it has for society and tourism management, is very different from the vision provided by the original concept of hospitality as a host-guest relationship between equals. Although the day-to-day reality of the tourism sector is quite far from the original application of hospitality in tribal or interpersonal contexts, the great distance between the anthropological concept and the theories that dominate the 'story' about tourist activity is striking. The causes of this distancing should be reason for reflection, especially in the academic world.

Theories propose explanations of reality and provide different interpretations of the same reality. Therefore, the prevailing theories determine the interpretations of events, the conclusions reached and, therefore, the opinions and actions of people. A theoretical vision of tourism as domination can generate antitourism attitudes and total opposition. A theory that sees tourism as a relationship between equals will cause tourism problems to be seen as errors in tourism management or failures in the host-guest agreements that gave rise to tourism. In the first case, the solution is to eliminate tourist activity, since it is an

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irreformable relationship and, in the second case the solution is to change tourism management. Therefore, the development and dissemination of theories is not an innocuous action and, when clearly improvable theories are strongly defended, the reasons for this must be raised.

The main conclusion is that theories determine the interpretation of reality and actions in response to that reality. Therefore, theories are not only a consequence of reality, but also a cause of reality. In tourism, it is essential to recover the essence of hospitality in its interpretation as a social reality, and the first step to achieve this is to promote the original concept and its implications in the academic world and, subsequently, in all public opinion. In this way, the problems that could generate anti-tourism attitudes will be considered as imbalances in management and not as something intrinsic and inevitable. It must be remembered that hospitality is a duty for both the host and the guest. The success, over the millennia, of the concept of hospitality is because it implies a relationship of reciprocity that entails the recognition of the guest as a subject of rights and, in return, the acceptance of the host's norms and customs (Tomillo Noguero, 2013). When tourism is perceived as subordination of the host to the wishes of the guest, as in Westworld, it is only a matter of time before rejection appears in the form of anti-tourist attitudes and violent reactions. For the future good of tourism, it is necessary to recover concepts and debates, in addition to proposing new ideas, theories and concepts (always subject to criticism) in the academic world and transferring them to reality. Future articles should reflect on the reasons that lead to the discursive dominance of some theories to the detriment of others.

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