
Editorial

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It was during the International Conference on Tourism (ICOT 2015) in London that the idea to have a special issue of *International Journal of Tourism Policy* mooted. This special issue ought to have the same theme as that of a special-session organised for the conference which was, 'Political systems: the drivers of tourism policy'. It is indeed a privilege to guest-edit this special issue, as it was to organise the special session; all the seven contributors of the special-session agreed to submit their articles for this issue and five of the original contributions are included in this issue besides four more that were invited through an open call for papers. It also was heartening to get such an enthusiastic response to the theme that a total of 14 submissions were received and after a rigorous review process, this issue includes nine of the accepted papers.

The theme brings back focus on an under-researched area in tourism scholarship; the articles in this issue have covered a wide range of case examples to examine the symbiotic relationship between political systems and tourism policies taking it further to the issues and challenges of destination management and governance. The combined wisdom of the contributions in this issue, definitely highlight the nexus between politics and policy frameworks that are pursued by various political dispensations, across geographical expanse on the globe as if, only to derive tourism generated benefits for the state. It is very interesting to note that six papers out of the nine published in this issue actually discuss national case studies and analyse this nexus with a variety of approaches and in most instances reach somewhat similar conclusions. Scholarly, summation of the conclusions drawn out of these papers brings-forth a clear theoretical construct that the political systems, in all their ideological and administrative forms and formats, prefer to pursue economically attractive policies, which benefits the state and in turn sustains power for the ruling dispensation. As such, development of tourism proves to be an alluring proposition, quite non-controversial and mostly devoid of strong political leanings either way, to the left or right of the political spectrums, as practiced in the post-World War II global politico-economic environment.

Another significant highlight of the special issue is a clear preference of majority of researchers, for a qualitative, descriptive case-study approach to arrive at their respective conclusions. In seven of these articles, a direct case study has been explored with a variety of interpretations tracking the polity and policy changes. These have been methodically recorded to test the premise around which the research arguments have been developed. This may even be an indicator that areas of research that seek experiential on-the-ground causes, for socio-cultural and or politico-economic phenomenon, are better explored qualitatively.

In perfect line with the theme one paper in the issue discusses the Spanish tourism policy vis-à-vis the political systems between 1952 unto 2015, and concludes that changes in the political system do not have a relevant impact on tourism policy. Another paper takes Chinese regime changes and its impact on tourism policies since 1949 and reaches the conclusion that it is all about economic priorities. Yet, another paper explores the need of environmental sustainability, as a priority in tourism policy planning of Kenya. There also is a case study on Gabon, examining the constraining effects of structural environment on tourism growth with a two-layered analytical framework. Then, there are two case studies on Norway and the Lake Simcoe Watershed in Ontario, evaluating implications of innovation policies on cultural organisations and large scale regional tourism management challenges respectively. Interestingly, the Lake Simcoe Watershed case uses the theoretical context of 'political ecology' to examine and offer insight into factors affecting destination management and conservation. Another paper using the dual methodology of exploration through case studies focuses upon the six Gulf Arab Monarchies, as distinct examples of prioritising tourism development, with a long term strategic goal of maximising economic benefits for their respective countries, especially in the aftermath of exhausted oil reserves upon which these economies are currently depended. There are also two papers with a slight departure from a direct case method where one delves in the ideologies behind the logic of the regulation of tourism flows with visas and highlights the role of this highly political and entirely non-economic variable and concludes that national security plays a significant role in shaping visa policies. And the other such paper explores a methodological proposal for a tourism governance model at destinations.

This special issue will surely enrich the existing body of knowledge in regard to the understanding of tourism policy frameworks, destination management and governance, and the role of destination management organisations in modern political economies. Hoping that the issue fills an identified gap in tourism scholarship, feedbacks on the articles and that of the theme are most welcome.