
Book Review

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Tourism Research Frontiers: Beyond the Boundaries of Knowledge
by: Donna Chambers and Tijana Rakic (Eds.)
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In only eight chapters and 165 pages, this book discusses the needs of introducing new themes of investigation in the specialised literature of tourism research. Likely, this globalised world looks pretty different from a couple of decades back, when the discipline was founded. New times, new horizons and new challenges need new thinking.

As a part of prestigious Emerald Series, Chambers and Rakic present an edited book, oriented to expand the epistemological boundaries of tourism research, imagining not only new themes and issues to explore but new problems. Based on the legacy of Jafar Jafari, the editors worked hard to compile different voices, dotted of different arguments, into a shared viewpoint.

In the first chapter, the editors introduce the concept of frontiers as the fringe between the known and unknown. The fieldwork suggests that we shed light on some issues while others remain unchecked. The legitimacy of academic disciplines rests on their explanatory capacity. These borders, far from being stable, are in continuous renegotiation. Though tourism-research has been consolidated as a promising academic option for graduate and post-graduate students, a radical turn undermines the dominant understanding of tourism as it has been formulated by the founding parents. Most certainly, beyond tourism, critical scholars unveiled a commoditised discourse where the 'other' is subordinated to a ruling class of developed countries. As something else than a peace-making industry, tourism covers racialised allegories which lead to control of the periphery. This paradigm sees in tourism an alienatory mechanism of surveillance. Nonetheless, this book proposes an alternative way. Instead of proclaiming the dismantling of epistemological borders of tourism, the editors suggest a shift offering a fertile ground to shore up new paradigms.

Through the second chapter, Gyimothy et al. discuss the ebbs and flows of pop culture tourism which represents an extension of cultural behaviour in a globalised and multiculturalist universe. In chapter 3, Mondoca presents a study case based on the relationships of stakeholders in Ilha do Grande, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Those communities which adopt tourism as a primary option monopolise a 'system of values' that to some extent re-organises the individual practices of actors. In this respect, she coins the neologism 'tourisimisation' as a powerful socio-economic process that subordinates other economic forms of subsistence once adopted. Creating substantial

changes in the social institutions, tourism recycles the already-existent traditional and tribal system of beliefs into a new, modern, secularised cosmology. Chapter 4 authored by Donna Chamber claims that scholars concerned with religious tourism not only misjudged the potentiality of festivals to revitalise the social capital, but misunderstood the complex nature of festival spaces. Robledo in chapter 5 distinguishes religion from spirituality. Spirituality and not religion, seems to be a key factor to boost attractiveness in tourist destinations. Tourists who visit shrines or cathedrals are seeking something else than an authentic experience, they look for spiritual growth.

Other less-investigated areas include the connection between elections and tourism. In chapter 6, Charles and Chambers explore, in the context of democratic societies, which are based on the fundamental freedom of peoples, how campaigns and politicians often incorporate tourism in their discourses as well as the reactions in voters. Feighery continues Charles and Chambers' concern. Undoubtedly, tourism and politics are inextricably intertwined. Sometimes, strangers are targeted by racist groups, or by officials interested in strengthening the in-group solidarity (chapter 7). The restant chapters are dedicated to the problems of sustainability and networking dynamics within the tourist system, an issue which merits to be discussed further in the next years.

This book exhibits a vast range of topics that are certainly of interest to students, social scientists and tourism practitioners. Nonetheless, it lacks originality since the proposed themes have been already studied at other times and in other languages. Far from proposing a new epistemology for tourism research which overcomes the obstacles or the fragmentation observed by some studies (Tribe, 2000, 2010; Korstanje, 2015; Thirkettle and Korstanje, 2013), Chambers and Rakic are unable to explain both the sociological nature of tourism and the crisis of meaning the discipline faces nowadays. They opt for proposing new original themes of investigation, reshaping the current boundaries but without questioning to what extent the pillars of tourist theories are firm.

References

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