

2010

# Book reviews: Journal of Tourism Consumption and Practice Volume 2 No.1 2010

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/11537>

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Journal of Tourism Consumption and Practice  
University of Plymouth

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## Book Reviews.

### **Rural Tourism Development – Localism and Cultural Change**

George, E.W.; Mair, H.; Reid, D.G. (2009)

Channel View Publications

xii + 276 pp.

ISBN 13: 978-1-84541-099-5

Whilst the title does not convey it, this book is based on the Canadian experience of rural tourism development; this is not a criticism! Indeed, it is hoped that the title will encourage potential readers to look at it whereas incorporation of the geographical dimension might have dissuaded some. Can the lessons learned be extended internationally as the authors assert? Probably. How is this achieved? Well, the volume is divided into fourteen chapters, five explicitly addressing the phenomenon in Canada in a case study format and utilising the authors' four-quadrant analytical framework; some readers will critique this tool but it serves a useful purpose. Chapter 7 provides a synopsis, taking the case studies on to premises and the remaining chapters revisit the 'key theoretical concepts' set out in the earlier chapters.

For this reviewer, the identification of 'key theoretical concepts' after the introduction to each chapter, in bold font, was *prima facie* annoying. However, it raises the issues of target audience and *level*. Having taught on a now-defunct MSc Rural Development, it would have been a useful, introductory text given that most of those registered on the degree, over the years, had never *studied* tourism despite many being employed in rural development contexts. It would also have been useful as a text on that degree from the trans-national dimension of rural tourism development and the less than extensive academic referencing may suit practitioners.

The case study of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia (Chapter 3) sets out to relate to the two key theoretical concepts of commodification of culture and gentrification; surprisingly,

there is little academic underpinning of the former. The structure of the book is such that these key concepts are returned to later, post case-study, and commodification of culture receives some discussion in Chapter 8 (entitled 'The complex role of local culture in rural tourism'); having assumed the academic underpinning would come later, given that it was not comprehensive in chapter 3, it was surprising to see reference to just one source (McIntosh *et al* 2002) in the context of New Zealand indigenous peoples. The commodification of culture is of such significance, in rural tourism development, that it deserves more attention than it receives in this volume; Bourdieu (undated) and Flora (2001) are cited and that's it for the underpinning of cultural capital; with respect to the commodification of culture, it's not the Bourdieusian sense so much as what Busby & Meethan (2008) term *destination-based cultural capital* that is pertinent, in any case. Alzua *et al* (1998), Boissevain (1996) and Karlsson (2005) have all drawn attention to this process and are but three sources which could underpin the discussion. The authors argue that 'what has been commodified for tourism may not accurately reflect the *authentic* culture of Lunenburg' (p.52), begging the question of how this is operationalised; as Shaw *et al* (2000:276) so appositely state 'what may be interpreted by one visitor as authentic may not be so interpreted by another' – this is where the Bourdieusian concept of cultural capital is particularly relevant. In any event, for many visitors, it is likely that the site will be viewed through the lens of what Wang (2000) terms constructive authenticity. Intriguingly, almost as an afterthought, the sentence following the query as to whether authentic culture would be reflected states that no substantial data could be found about the roles of women over the period of evolution of the town – this must be a facet worth investigating. Clearly, designation of the town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site on 6 December 1995 has had a significant impact and the authors return to this in Chapter 14; as Harrison & Hitchcock's (2005) volume showed, the implications of WHS inscription can be manifold and it may not be the panacea first imagined. This is a fascinating case study and finishes with details of how the community is 'buying back' into its own creations.

The case studies provided feature Nova Scotia, Ontario and Alberta, leading the reviewer to consider why other provinces are left out – clearly, there is a limit to what

any book can comprise but there is passing recognition of Weaver & Fennell's (1997) work (in Saskatchewan) – but not Fennell & Weaver (1997) and, surely, British Columbia can offer examples? Similarly, Cormack & Fawcett (2002) and Squire (1996) have shown the impact on Prince Edward Island of *Anne of Green Gables* in terms of tourism development. Another linkage with popular culture is displayed in chapter 5 which addresses the case of Vulcan, Alberta; as a form of film-induced tourism, this settlement played on the name association with *Star Trek*. So, what are the omissions? Agri-tourism/farm tourism is, undoubtedly, a key feature of rural tourism in many countries and yet there is just one reference – on page 11. To title a book *Rural Tourism Development* and to ignore farm tourism seems very strange; to come at it from another perspective, Fleischer & Tchetchik (2005) ask whether rural tourism benefits from agriculture; there really should be greater discussion in this book.

Many book reviews point out what should/could have been incorporated, what glaring errors stand out and so forth... and then summarise the book as actually being acceptable. Well, despite a number of ways in which this text could have been 'improved', it is still worthwhile; on a personal level, this reviewer can see a niche for it on a second year undergraduate module, possibly two. It really would be interesting to see a second edition with examples from other Canadian provinces presenting a truly national picture of rural tourism development.

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## **Asian Tourism – Growth and Change**

Cochrane, J. (Editor) (2008)

Elsevier

396pp

ISBN: 978 0 08 045356 9

To review this book, a new approach, at least for this reviewer, was adopted, namely, to read the chapters in order of personal interest – at least what appeared to be of personal interest in that decisions were based on the titles of the thirty-one chapters. Therefore, commencing with chapter 30 (*Responsible destination development: Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippines*) was an eye-opener. As with all good research, it appears to be based on a long-time interest for the author, John Gray, states that he has been studying this destination for twelve years, a necessary ingredient given that what is under discussion is a so-called ecotourism destination... one with a population of 200,000. After reading the chapter, it is possible to conceive of this settlement as an ecotourism one; admittedly, it depends on the operationalisation.

However, is Puerto Princesa just too good to be true? The reader is advised that the minimum security prison, sorry, 'minimum security 'honour' farm' (p.373), admits violent offenders from all over the Philippines and manages to reintegrate prisoners into society. Interestingly, there are few tour operators with visitors making their own arrangements without intermediaries, suggesting independent travellers who are much less likely to be interested in a standardised form of tourism development. Visitor arrivals had grown from 7,707 in 1991 to 147,806 per annum by the end of 2006. Gray argues that the influence of a 'strong leader', in the form of Mayor Edward Hagedorn, is what has permitted the destination to develop in the way it has.

Chapter 6 entitled *Changing accessibility to Vietnam: the influence of a government in transition* provides an interesting, though too concise, review of the three

determinants of accessibility. The three authors, Wantanee Suntikul, Richard Butler

ISSN 1757-031X

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and David Airey, consider visa policy, transportation and tourism marketing as the key determinants. With the *doi moi* (renovation) programme running behind much of the transition period, the discussion of visa regulation is interesting and sufficient. However, discussion of transportation and, more so, marketing seems rather slim in the circumstances. The national tourism administration, VNAT, has seen much decision-making devolved to provincial control and this reviewer would like to have seen comparison of what the provinces actually undertake, particularly given that there are sixty-four provinces. The reader is advised that overseas tour operators try 'to capitalise on the romantic allure of Vietnam's feudal and colonial past' (p. 75) and this reviewer immediately thinks of Norman Lewis' *A Dragon Apparent...* after all, organic destination image is created by such informal sources as memoirs (Ateljevic 2000). Why not further analysis of which tour operators and which provinces?

In Chapter 11, Wolfgang Arlt examines the behaviour of outbound Chinese tourists, firstly outlining the chronology of this market. Upon reading of the 'original division of responsibilities between the two established travel services China Travel Service (CTS) and China International Travel Service (CITS) (p.136), this reviewer was transported back nearly thirty years and realised that his first visit to the country must have been under the auspices of CITS for this dealt with those non-ethnic Chinese visitors and the former with the ethnic Chinese market. As Arlt states, 'this peculiar form of organization is reported but generally not questioned in texts dealing with China' (p.137). The author proposes an interesting analytical tool in the form of concentric rings 'of growing 'cultural distance'' (p.139) for the outbound Chinese market; firstly, there are visits to the ethnic minority areas within the country; the outer ring is represented by the 'exotic' destinations of Europe or Africa or South America. Rather than detailing more fully here, the proposition is worth reading for it may well generate future research. Given the place of authenticity in Arlt's concentric rings, it is worth reflecting on Li & Hu's (2009) contribution to the Azores conference on intangible heritage. Guo et al's (2007) paper adds a further dimension to this chapter. Before leaving this chapter, this is perhaps the place to comment on the good map of Asia to be found on the inside covers of the book; even the Yangtze is shown, perhaps more appropriately, as Chang Jiang.

Rong Huang poses the question 'Are Chinese International Students in the UK Tourists?' as the title for chapter 13; the author is referring to students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and, without a doubt, the numbers attending British universities have risen quite dramatically – UKCOSA data indicating that 52,675 were registered in 2005 compared with 2,860 just seven years earlier. Huang discusses whether these individuals really are 'tourists' and refers to the WTO definition which indicates those studying for less than a year are such. This technical definition is enhanced with sources from the tourist typology literature before findings are discussed which emanate from face-to-face interviews with thirty students – from universities in London, Leeds and Derby. Whilst the principal motivation appears to be to acquire a clearer understanding of Western culture, there are three sub-groups: those who wish to check whether the culture is as portrayed by the Chinese media, those who have embarked on postgraduate study in order to obtain better employment upon return to the PRC, and a more mature group (late twenties/early thirties) who have retained their posts in the PRC whilst studying in the UK. The author states that 'no matter what the students' expressed motivation in travelling to the host country, their experiences while there and their own perceptions of their status indicate that they form a significant tourism market for the host country' (p.167).

The volume is the outcome of a conference, held at Leeds Metropolitan University, in June 2006 but it has been well-edited and does not feel disjointed in the least. Editor Janet Cochrane stresses that it is about 'policy and market aspects of tourism as (much) as ethnographic and sociological aspects' (p. ix). It is most certainly a timely book given the data for growth of tourism to, and within Asia. It is also welcome that fourteen of the chapters are written or co-authored by Asian researchers. The volume 'sets out to illustrate the diversity of manifestation of tourism in Asia' and, undoubtedly, achieves this. The only criticism this reviewer would make is that the index could be expanded to comprise rather more of what is in the chapters.



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## **New Axis of Accumulation and Nature: the case of tourism**

Cordero Ulate, A. (2006)

CLACSO (Buenos Aires) with The Swedish Agency of International Development and the Latin American Council of Social Science.

211 pp

ISBN 987-1183-58-5

In recent years more attention has been given to the problems generated by pollution, deforestation, contamination of rivers and global warming. Even though environment protection issues have become public knowledge and have been the subject of films, literature, conferences and congresses, pollution of the atmosphere still continues to rise. Within such a context, Cordero Ulate presents his book entitled *New Axis of Accumulation and Nature: the case of tourism*, which consists of two sections, each containing three chapters.

The main thesis of this work is that countries may be classified as receiving or generating tourism. That way, tourism is a reflection of the level of development

within a community but also reveals imbalances such as material deprivation, while sustainable tourism tries to balance between capitalism and protection of the environment.

In the introductory chapter (in section one), Cordero focuses on the political conceptualization of tourism in a complex economy. Cordero argues that people experience work as a means to gain leisure time, however, it is also rooted in a capitalist structure in which tourist services constitute a particular form of production. By allowing for leisure time, capitalism not only makes surplus but also creates demand in the leisure market. In addition he argues that the intangibility of tourist consumption leads consumers to seek well-known trademarks that monopolize the markets of the developed world. When this happens, expansion of these companies in the less developed world, where there are lower taxes and wages also allows an acceleration of the process of material accumulation, so that international tourism runs in parallel with globalization.

The second chapter examines the role played by environment in tourist development. First, Cordero engages in a philosophical consideration about the beauty of nature. Second, he analyzes the state of the environment in Latin America as well as the affects of tourism. Third, the author examines the debate about resources conservation in the discourse of sustainable tourism. Although many factors are involved in the valorization of a territory as tourist destination, two are of major importance: visual attraction and cultural heritage. The underlying problem is that international tourism consumes resources but this consumption is not accompanied by an appropriate net income to host countries in the less developed economies. Other statistics also reveal that in the world just 20% of forest remain untouched, while in Latin America 39% are threatened by deforestation. Under such circumstances, Cordero argues that the world is experiencing an international division of environment destruction where poor countries are responsible for deforestation in attempts to alleviate poverty while the richer countries are contributing more to atmospheric pollution.

The third chapter of section one examines the action of social movements and their effect on tourism. Social actors are concerned with a fairer wealthy distribution and Cordero approaches his analysis in terms of the economy, environment and society pointing out that while capitalism as well as tourism extends globalization, many imbalances and contradictions encourage national movements in a contrary direction. In part this is a result of the diverse political and economical crisis this region has suffered in the last three decades, but also because such movements have not had an association with International Marxism like in other points of the world. With the exception of Cuba, Latin American social movements combined a socialist alternative with a nationalist agenda claim, so that conflicts with the state in part reflect such agendas as well as the concerns of indigeneous people and environmentalists.

The second section examines the case of a small town situated 150 kilometers from San Jose city, called Quepos – Manuel Antonio, in Costa Rica, Central America. This country – like many others in the region – is characterized by a strong dependence on tourism in comparison with some South American countries (more than 20.6% in contribution to gross domestic product). In the town, traditional activities like fishing or agriculture are being increasingly relegated because of land speculation in relation to tourism development. However, the heart of the problem appears to be the decline of identity which acts against the residents being able to articulate a common strategy to offset the negative consequences caused by tourism.

Cordero also realizes that in popular wisdom, it is only important to protect a part of environment but not all. In fact, his empirical study finds a contradiction in the responses people had in regards to pollution. While people agree that environmental conservation is important, and that tourism should be planned sustainably, they also tend to ignore the costs of tourism urbanization on the landscape. Cordero acknowledges that tourism is advancing the expropriation of land and excluding people to peripheral sites, as the discourse of environment protection only applies for touristic sites and disregards land that has little aesthetic attraction

Broadly speaking, the environmental problems will persist if this issue is not addressed and the fundamental paradox is that although tourism encourages respect of the environment on which it depends, it also pushes some people to the periphery and a condition of poverty and pauperism, and as a result, many areas of virgin forest are consequently worked because of survival priorities.

Versed in an excellent style of writing, Cordero combines political, economic and ethical issues with a critical overview about the ambiguity that tourism represents for our modern society. As a whole, a book like this constitutes a pivotal contribution in the literature for readers who focus upon ecological issues.

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