

BOOK REVIEW:

Tourism in the city, towards and integrative agenda on urban tourism.

Bellini, N. & Pasquinelli, C. (Eds.), 2017. New York, Springer International Publishing. ISBN 978-331926876-7

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From its onset as academic discipline, tourism-research was aimed to deciphering the complex intersection of touring with natural parks or spaces where modern citizens who opted for cultivating their interests for nature and environmentalism. This led to Dean MacCannell (1976) to assume erroneously that there was an irreconcilable division between two worlds: *primitive cultures and secularized urban societies*. Following MacCannell's insight, while the former is characterized by the adoption of a Totem-centered life, which is based on the respect for nature and religion, in the latter there is a gap left by the process of secularization, which is filled by modern-tourism. This suggests no other thing than in global cities tourism serves as a totem-like platform to keep united the society.

After such a statement of facts formulated by MacCannell, tourism scholars unwittingly adopted an ideological stance that ushered research into what we, the westerners ought to do for natives. This uncanny paternalist viewpoint, which was historically enrooted in Western colonialism, paved the ways for the adoption of heritage to helps locals in poverty relief (Korstanje 2012; Skoll & Korstanje 2014). Because of this, the urban tourism not only was relegated as bit-player in the epistemological configuration of this new born discipline, but also created a bipolar logic, which ideally pitted urban tourists against rural locals without solid basis, but as Bellini and Pasquinelli evinced in their book *Tourism in the city, towards and integrative agenda on urban tourism*, the reality seems to be something more complex than a simple theoretical model based on two contrasting poles.

As stated, Nicola Bellini and Cecilia Pasquinelli edit a more than interesting book, which is oriented to the study of urban tourism from an all-encompassing view. In this respect,

editors introduce the term *urban tourism* as the touchstone of a new type of postmodern lifestyle consolidated in densely-populated cities. While the specialized literature goes in another direction, which means the advance in the quest of authenticity in rural zones, this book brings the problem of urbanity into the foreground. Hence it is important to discuss that the lack of interests by scholarship respecting to city-tourism comes from the belief tourism serves only to help rural areas to alleviate poverty.

Doubtless, as Bellini and Pasquinelli observed, the theory of development played a vital role not only in the configuration of programs intended to help zones of disaster or poverty-relief, but also delineated the epistemological borders of tourism research as well.

As the previous backdrop, the present path-breaking book is conformed in nineteen chapters which are grouped in three distinctive sections. While the first section discusses the horizons and dimension of urban tourism, the second signals to explore the multiplications of cultural products heritage offers in the city. Later, the third section contains seven interesting chapters that reveal the tensions between city tourism and urban wellbeing in different European cities. Because of time and space, it is very hard to detail each chapter one by one in this piece, but a snapshot suggests the following three axioms,

- City tourism gives further insights on an updated methodological platform to expand the current understanding of the phenomenon and its limitations (part 1).
- The role of urban heritage as an articulator of regeneration and development in the city (Part 2)

- The multiple uses of city tourism to revitalize post disaster contexts, as well as the division among different subtypes classified as *green, resilient, innovative and creative cities*. (part 3)

At some extent, this project centers on orchestrating a wider multifaceted and multidisciplinary research inviting well-read authors in order to validate the importance of tourism within contemporary urban environments. The arrival of sustainable tourism to cities not only produces less polluted but also more resilient cities, which combines innovation with creativity to face looming global risks as climate change. To what extent the adoption of tourism in global city prompts further benefits for city-dwellers or it contributes to improve the quality of life are two of the concerns authors try to unpuzzle. In fact, the host-and-guest encounters generate not only risk or tension, but also a reacting anti-tourist force that puts the industry in jeopardy. It is important not to lose the sight that tourism is often integrated to a political agenda to legitimate undemocratic governments, or to have further governance in case of political instability. The question whether politicians and authorities often appeal to the economic benefits given by tourism to validate government performance but sometimes producing cleavage between the different classes according to their participation in the distribution of wealth. This begs a more than interesting question, is economic-factor the centerpiece towards the organization of tourism in the territory?

To put this in other terms, while in some conditions tourism promotes an atmosphere of peace and prosperity, in others it enlarges the gap between have and have-nots. As a result of a coordinated efforts which crystalized in a workshop held in *Gran Sasso Science Institute* geographically situated in L'Aquila, Italy through 2017, this masterful edition contains a selected material coming from almost 70 propositions or call proceedings, which situates as a high-quality book. Quite aside from this, one of the dilemma posed for the years to come seems to be associated to the multiplication of technologies, which are based on revolutionary innovation tends, or substantial shifts in the socio-economic background that global cities operate. The fact is that efforts of policy makers to make a more sustainable tourism coincide with some social problems that specialists have historically found in the process of tourism urbanization. Though amply-regulated, the ever-increasing number of tourists who visit urban contexts call for further considerations along with producing positive incomes for local residents but equally important, at a closer look, some critical voices have certainly lamented that city-dwellers experience some negative effects from tourism, which very well leads towards resistance and the outbreak of anti-hospitality attitudes. No less true is that tourism triggers unexpected process such as gentrification or the urban allocation of lower or middle-class families into peripheral zones. Since tourists feel displaced from their neighborhoods by the process of speculation tourism triggers, they struggle to recover their rights to live in the space, which is thought in dispute. As stated, the rise of tourism-as-discipline was originally interested in *city tourism* but gradually the question of development turned the attention to rurality and development in peripheral areas. Such a position ignited a hotly debate around the surface of a paradoxical situation simply because cities were imagined as spaces of

hard-work, and hyper-surveillance while beaches, farms and islands were portrayed as specially-chosen places for escapement, rest and hedonist consumption. To wit, this conceptual dichotomy obscured the possibilities of many tourism researchers to pose city-tourism as a coherent object of study within Academy. Still furthermore, it is very difficult to grasp the epistemological limits of this type of tourism simply because this represents a multifaceted issue, which encompasses many activities, situations, cleavages and socio-economic problems. The scarcity of well-grounded definitions on what urban-tourism means, adjoined to the volatile nature of global developed economies suggests that there is a co-dependency of urbanity and city tourism in which case it explains how economies in urban contexts resonate in popular parlance.

In sum, one of the merits of this book consists in discussing the European perspective and its tourism policies for the years to come. Although this segment exhibits a great interest for stagnant European economies, no less true is that the increasing climate of extreme competition among cities produces a sum-zero game which threatens the well-functioning of industry. In the next decades, the performance of tourism in cities will depend not only on the derived aftermaths over city-dwellers' culture, but in the success of governments in nuancing the collateral effects engendered by a hyper-competitive market. To avoid a problem of this caliber, new innovative policies and laws are necessary, in order for industry to regulate a more responsible tourism.

Not only by the robustness and the credibility of study-case, each chapter hints but also by as the different positions which were well-orchestrated in the book, we strongly recommend *Tourism in the City* as a must-read project, which offers a fertile ground for scholars who are interested in urban tourism as well as policy makers historically-dedicated to buttress a more sustainable tourism for crowd-populated cities.

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