

BOOK REVIEW

Tourism Development in post soviet Nations: From communism to capitalism

Susan Slocum & Valeria Klitsounova (eds). 2020. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, ISBN 978-303030715-8

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1 BOOK REVIEW

At the best for the scholarship, tourism and the capitalist system of production seem to be inextricably intertwined. The WWII end not only accelerated the expansion of Western economies but laid the foundations towards stable economic institutions for the multiplication of international travels and mobile cultures. Although the point was widely investigated in the literature less attention was given to the rise of tourism in the post soviet world. Susan Slocum & Valeria Klitsounova's edited book fills the gap in this direction. The present editorial project in question is formed by 13 chapters which are organized in two clear cut parts. The first (prefatory) chapter discusses theoretically the institutional challenges of post-soviet nations while the second one provides empirical study cases with a fresh focus on the importance of rural tourism to stimulate leisure consumption practices. On this introductory chapter in charge of editors speaks us of the soviet dismantling as well as the opportunities posed over tourism as a mechanism of development in the post soviet economies in Eastern Europe. Editors emphasize on the merits of the book which coincides

with the ammunition of different case-studies given by non-English native speakers, probably confronting with the Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism. The Soviet collapse was accompanied by the formation of a new national identity which incorporated liberal cultural values as consumerism and cultural exploitation –both key forces in the consolidation of the tourism industry, as Slocum & Klitsounova adhere. Tourism development goes through three different stages such as the period of socialism (1945-1990), the transition (1990-2004) and global emergence (since 2005). While the former signals to a period marked by low mobilities economically financed by the state, the latter refers to a gradual opening of visa restriction that encouraged many international flights without mentioning foreign investment. The global emergence starts with the opening of the EU (European Union) to Eastern markets. This new global world enters in conflict with the old long-dormant values of socialism and its legacy. To some extent, this conceptual model keeps constant in all revised chapters. In the second chapter, Ruukel, Reimann & Tooman explore the development of rural tourism in Estonia. The collapse of the Soviet Union presses Estonia to re-accommodate production in rural farms passing from agriculture to tourism

as the main form of commercial activity. The bankruptcy of farmers started a new privatization process which gradually attracted numerous foreign investors interested in developing tourism. The third chapter (which is authored by Stankova et al.) describes the pre and post-communist tourism policies destination in Bulgaria. Most certainly, Bulgaria represents a unique case in regards to the rest of the soviet bloc. Since 1980s Bulgaria is a targeted destination not only for Soviet but Western nations. Far from being liberated from the cage, the collapse of the Soviet Union affected negatively tourism industry in Bulgaria –while losing its dominant position before Greece, Turkey and other destinations. In consonance with this, P. Zmyslony & M. Nowacki offer a fourth chapter which delves in the connection of politics and Polish urban tourism. Using Butler' method (TALC) as a predictive instrument, authors hold that the evolution of Polish tourism was mainly determined by the deregulation of the market as well as the formation of legal institutions to replace Moscow's restrictions. However, tourism development was subject to some cyclical disruptions, as authors lament. The fifth chapter (S. Wroblewski et al.) dissects the necessary institutional changes for promoting tourism in Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet era. In this country, tourism development occurred in two different stages. Since the 90s decade, a disorganized growth of outbound travel enterprises arose escaping to the state-planning or intervention while a second period ranging from 2001 to date was marked by the sanction of Law on tourist Activity in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The same bottom-up growth replicates in the sixth chapter which is limited to analyze the case of Slovakia (Kucerova, Gajdosik, Elexova). The chapter shows how in spite of the several tourism awards granted by the European Union to foster tourism in the region serious material asymmetries proper of the post-socialist era widely persisted.

The second part of the book which is shaped by empirical-based chapters is oriented to validate the conceptual model presented in the introductory chapter by Susan Slocum & Valeria Klitsounova. Budapest, Hungary, is the epicenter of Kay Smith & Puczko's chapter which stresses the positive role of the image branding (over Hungary) in comparison with other Eastern destinations. The eighth chapter authored by S. Stoyanova-Bozhkova places the pro tourism discourse in the last 20 years in the critical lens of scrutiny. Although tourism governance has been valorized by authorities as an efficient instrument towards development less planning and appropriate monitoring take place in politics. Bulgaria starts from the urgency of radical transformations that are not prioritized by local authorities. The ninth chapter written by M. Campelj reviews carefully the ebbs and flows of tourist guides as a leading professional option -career- in Slovenia. Tourist guides occupy a central position mediating between hosts and foreigner guests. Taking the cue from Salazar's concept of cultural immersion facilitator, which means those facilitators organized to negotiation through selective identifying segments of local culture to be shared with visitors, the chapter gives a fresh insight on the challenges of Slovenia to develop tourism as well as the leading tourist guides shall play in the years to come.

In the tenth chapter, V. Klitsounova describes with detail the potential of networking and clustering as a vehicle towards creativity to promote Belarus as an international destination. The formation of tourism clusters allows a rapid formation of

valid diagnosis to understand the interaction between a private and public organization in a Post Soviet context. The concept which is forged in the introduction alludes to the transformation of rural destinations equipped with low infrastructure which characterizes the classic economies of Soviet republics towards new market-based economies which face new challenges and problems. The eleventh chapter (Graja-Zwolinska, MacKowiack, & Majewski) goes in that direction, as well as a twelfth chapter (Englander & Robitashvili) which focuses on Georgian experience. The last chapter on the ink of editors, S. Slocum & V. Klitsounova centers on the commonalities of selected chapters. The Soviet Union's collapse not only put the region with an emerging transformative process but also with daunting challenges. The annexation of Eastern economies to West (UE) accelerated the passage of classic domestic tourism to international demand. This poses serious challenges and risks for Eastern economies, problems which have been very well materialized in the book. The Post-soviet nations go through what experts dub as transitional economy which denotes the radical transformation oriented to form market-based institutions while undermining centrally-planned economy to private investment. The book addresses with different scenarios which range from the financial support given by the EU to some eastern economies to the resistances of other economies to adopt the westernized model of tourism development without mentioning the lack of progress in attracting further international segments.

After further inspection, this book, at the best for this reviewer, consists of a compilation of high-quality chapters that revolve around the needs of describing the radical shift of Eastern economies while adopting a westernized version of the tourism industry. Although the Soviet Union stimulated domestic tourism, it creates some financial unbalances which remain in Eastern economies even to date. The adoption of international tourism opens the doors to new forms of consumption but at the same time, it puts some risks for involving stakeholders. Tourism governance occupies a central position to keep economic stability in the Post Soviet World. In sum, this is a recommendable book for those economists, sociologists, tourism experts moved to understand tourism beyond the borders of the dominant paradigm forged by westernized models.

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