

Book Review

Social Memory and Heritage Tourism Methodologies

Reviewed by Maximiliano Emanuel Korstanje, University of Palermo, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Social Memory and Heritage Tourism Methodologies (Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobility)

Stephen P. Hanna, Amy E. Potter, E. Arnold Modlin, Perry Carter, and David L. Butler

© 2015 by Routledge

256 pp.

\$163.00

ISBN 978-0415745383

Doubtless, tourism epistemology failed to forge a shared object of study despite the number of publications and interests by academicians in the recent years. Somehow, tourism, which experienced a dispersion of what has been produced to date, showed some caveats at the time of dialoguing with other mature disciplines (Tribe, 1997; 2010; Thirkettle & Korstanje, 2013). In the middle of this mayhem, the present book starts from the urgent need to discuss new methodologies—qualitative and quantitative—in the configuration of social memory and heritage tourism as an emerging field of study. Though the scrutiny of social memory seems not to be new, editors present a high-quality work, which is formed by three parts and 11 chapters, where the invited authors debate hotly on the innovation of new methodologies that help in the understanding of heritage tourism. While heritage tourism practices activate some representations, further investigation, revolving around how these techniques affects the social imaginary and individual behaviour, is needed. With a clear prose and rigorist, chapters integrated in this edition discuss the existing methods to articulate new experiences and forms at the time the information is collated and deciphered. Authors provide with specific case studies which centers on the formation of representational landscapes, synthesizing emotions, experiences and narratives towards the formation of social memory.

“While this book’s case studies interrogate memory and heritage tourism in a variety of ways, the editors and authors agree that all memory is social. Even the memories that we view as personal are framed through our interactions with others. Within research on social memory, there is a strong focus on the development, maintenance, and contestation of memories that are shared by social/cultural collectives” (p. 9)

For some reason, there is a strong connection between identity and memory which deserves to be discussed. The expanse of globalization paved the pathways for the rise of new lifestyles, which made from heritage consumption the touchstone of entertainment industries. Tourists not only look for strange customs and cultures -like in other ages- but commoditizes social memories through their own experiences. Groups are connected through how events are memorized as well as through the analysis of the different reactions to these events one might obtain an all-encompassing view of the problem. Although we socialize with others, there is conflictive discourses which often struggle to impose as the truth that explains others the past. Each person may very well engage with some discourses overlooking others, but at the time one story situates as hegemonic, other peripherals are shared in the periphery. Investigating how these memories and stories are drawn and integrated within a cultural matrix seems to be one of the goals of this interesting book.

Chapters in this edition, though works from different angles, center on social memory as both -unifying and cutting social groups. In so doing, authors and editors toy with different definitions and conceptual limitations, which are successfully addressed. They attempt to escape to unilateral explanations and developments, which oversimplifies “heritage” as a alienatory text that legitimates a further commoditization of culture. In the opposite direction, heritage should be understood as a social institution that facilitates some identifications respecting to how unexpected problems of present should be solved. By emulating the example of founding parents or simply listening the lesson of the past society reinforces its capacity to adaptation and resiliency. To validate their argument, editors cite the example of traumatic events such as the Holocaust and WWII. The cruelty of Nazis not only is remembered by Jews but also by mankind as “instructional devices” that explain how this violence was orchestrated. Besides, the position of marketing is placed under the critical lens of scrutiny. Some advocates of heritage tourism misjudge the unicity and outstanding role of heritage as the touchstone of collective identity. Generally marketing methods aim to promote a site focusing on its distinctive assets, with caution the site should be protected for the in-group loyalty persists, but what these experts ignore is that heritage can protect or jeopardize culture in the same way past is memorized and rememorized in different manners in the threshold of time. Equally important, social memory has investigated from diverse disciplines, which led towards a fragmentation of produced knowledge as well as the meanings and definitions around the term.

The first part of the book concentrates efforts to dilucidated the role of digital technologies in the configuration of social memories. The advance of internet and travel blogs not only changes the field-working but also offers a fertile ground to understand the tourists` experiences. Even some ethnographers followed recently the “virtual ethnography” to enter in the traumatic spaces of mass death or mourning. Unlike other times, the high-tech breakthrough and media have contributed to a more fluid digital methods that defy the traditional methodologies. The second part signals to the methods employed in the field while scholars involved in research may create a reflexivity with the informants and their cosmologies. In fact, it provides interesting evidence that would help tourism-researchers to improve their techniques of research. While tourism-related researchers adopted intrusive methods to understand the tourist`s mind, this section reminds “the tourist experience” is a complex object almost impossible to grasp with open or closed-ended interviewees or questionnaires. Ranging from actor-network theories towards mental mappings or volunteer photography, contributors dissect non-obtrusive methods in the study of social memory. Likewise, the last part debates the limitations of traditional methods in heritage tourism. With the benefits of hindsight, it gives further insights to adapt the method to the social environment. Not only because of the profundity of the discussions but also by the clarity of chapters, this seminal work situates as must-read collection that expands methodologically towards new horizons in days tourism-research faces one of its worst crises. At least for this reviewer, this represents one of the best studies in methodology I have ever read. Among the weaknesses one might ask for the homogenization of viewpoints, which articulates into a one-sided argument. Originally thought as a result of the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, this book incorporated a whole portion of proceedings from such an event.

Particularly, since the diverse chapters are written by geographers, its main argumentation pays too much attention to the production and negotiations of landscapes. The argument would be enriched if authors would come from other disciplines than geography. It exhibits only a part of the problem, while social memory contemplates much broader aspects than the consumption of landscapes.

REFERENCES

- Thirkettle, A., & Korstanje, M. E. (2013). Creating a new epistemology for tourism and hospitality disciplines. *International Journal of Qualitative Research in Services*, 1(1), 13–34. doi:10.1504/IJQRS.2013.054342
- Tribe, J. (1997). The indiscipline of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(3), 638–657. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00020-0
- Tribe, J. (2010). Tribes, territories and networks in the tourism academy. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(1), 7–33. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2009.05.001

Maximiliano E. Korstanje is editor in chief of International Journal of Safety and Security in Tourism (UP Argentina) and International Journal of Cyber Warfare and Terrorism (IGI Global). With more than 700 published papers and 25 books, Korstanje was awarded as Outstanding Reviewer 2012. International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment. University of Salford, UK, Outstanding Reviewer 2013. Journal of Place Management and Development. Institute of Place, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK and Reviewer Certificate of Acknowledgement 2014. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (IJCHM), University of Central Florida, US. Now he co-edits almost 10 specialized journals in such themes as human rights, mobility, tourism and terrorism. Korstanje is subject to biographical records for Marquis Who's Who in the World since 2009. He had nominated to 5 honorary doctorates for his contribution in the study of the effects of terrorism in tourism. In 2015 he was awarded as Visiting Research Fellow at School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK and Visiting Professor at University of La Habana Cuba 2016.