

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Julie Scott and Tom Selwyn, eds, *Thinking through Tourism*. Oxford: Berg. 2011, 261 pp. \$34.95 paper (978 1 84788 530 2).

This edited volume engages with debates and dilemmas in the anthropology of tourism. Most of the chapters are based on detailed field research in the ethnographic tradition, which makes for careful insights into tourism practices and discourses. *Thinking through Tourism* will also be of interest to sociologists who study and teach cultural commodification and representations, identity, and resistance across sites of consumption, leisure, heritage and religious observance.

Thinking through Tourism starts with a foreword by Margaret Kenna, who argues there is no single way to do the anthropology of tourism. The anthropologist is positioned as a tourist, a researcher, and a theoretician, playing different roles in the field. Kenna also argues that field research in the ethnographic tradition should offer a balance of theory and empirical detail, and that authenticity, representation, and performance are key issues that studies of tourism must address. Julie Scott and Tom Selwyn continue this discussion of core themes in the introduction, where they assert that such “bubbly terms actually mean little unless carefully grounded ethnographically” (p. 18). In insisting on the value of anthropological work in this area, they also seek to move the research agenda forward by suggesting that the study of tourism today should cover new terrain such as the work of developers, entrepreneurs and managers who are key players in tourism policy. The question is not only how to conduct research, but also if and when to intervene to shape tourism policies.

The chapters cover a range of topics from countries around the globe. Hazel Andrews shows how tour operators in Mallorca create “a sense of place and atmosphere” (p. 33) for British tourists. This performance takes form through the food, drink, music, and leisure opportunities that Andrews argues are vehicles for the expression of self-identity by British tourists. Based on an analysis of media coverage of the deaths of two young American women travelling alone in Costa Rica, Susan Frohlick problematizes depictions of female sex tourism as empowerment by showing how violence against those who do not follow normalized sexual and gender scripts is legitimated. Julie Harrison examines the social

meanings of place for those who travel to cottages near their homes, referred to as second-home tourists. Based on a historical and ethnographic analysis of “cottage country” goers in the Canadian province of Ontario, Harrison shows how being a “real cottager” — one who works and lives on the land, albeit occasionally — is considered a prerequisite of being a “real Canadian” (p. 80). Moreover, she notes how other second-home tourists are treated as outsiders if they do not perform the outdoor rituals accepted by the cottage community.

There are two chapters on Malta in *Thinking through Tourism*. Jeremy Boissevain demonstrates how developers, entrepreneurs, and managers have transformed its landscapes with massive buildings and concrete compounds to increase tourism on the small island. He shows how glowing tourism ads that depict pristine beaches and oceans are at odds with its polluted landscape. Kathryn Rountree explores how Malta’s Neolithic Temples have become destinations for pagan worship. Tensions have emerged between foreign pagan visitors to the temples and Maltese pagans who are contracted to enhance the authenticity of tourist experience yet poorly compensated. Shifting the focus to host-guest relations in Crete and Cyprus, Ramona Lenz explores how tourists complain about migrant workers in the service industry. Lenz explains that tourists are unsettled by migrants who work as hosts, not due to concern for their economic wellbeing, but because migrant workers disrupt the tourist sense of authenticity and “quality tourism” (p. 215). These three examples shed light on the exploitation that occurs within the tourism sector.

The themes of authenticity, representation, and performance are evident across *Thinking through Tourism*. Based on field research from the late 2000s, Annika Rabo demonstrates how traders in Aleppo’s Bazaar — recently destroyed by Syrian President Bashar Assad’s military siege — became frustrated with demands from tourists to perform a traditional Islamic role. As recounted by Rabo in a field note, tourists turned to staged spaces designed for foreigners and recorded audio guides as a means of trying to encounter the authentic Old City. David Picard also reflects upon the theme of authenticity in his chapter concerning the creation of tropical gardens at hotels on the Indian Ocean island of La Réunion. Picard argues that the island has been redesigned as a tourist territory, transforming rather than preserving the coast with gardens and other displays created to indulge tourists seeking a utopian return to nature. Vassiliki Yiakoumaki raises critical questions about whose roots are represented in heritage sites. Using the Etz Hayyim synagogue on the island of Crete — a site redeveloped by external agencies to commemorate the history and mourn the death of Jewish peoples from the area

during the Second World War — as a case study, Yiakoumaki illustrates how the meanings communicated about such destinations conflict with local memories of and narratives about the area.

The chapter by Simone Abram and the postscript by Nelson Graburn return to a question raised in the introduction: to what extent should anthropologists intervene in processes of tourism and development? In thinking about how involved anthropology should be in tourism policy and management, Abram cautions that activism is important to raise consciousness and halt unjust developments, but discourses and practices in this domain are hard to change.

One shortcoming of *Thinking through Tourism* is that it does not take advantage of the rich case studies by grouping them together thematically and creating dialogue between chapters. Reflection across the chapters would have elevated the impact that this volume will have on tourism scholarship in anthropology and other disciplines. Some chapters were more exhaustive in their offering of field notes than others, and those with more data to report on were more persuasive and better achieved the goal set out in the introduction of striking that balance between theory and empirical detail. We noted some gaps in terms of literature and topics covered. For instance, none of the chapters adequately address issues pertaining to dark tourism and its significance in tourism studies (Yiakoumaki mentions dark tourism in a footnote).

For all the emphasis on representation across these chapters, we were expecting more photographs and other visual data to be used to support the claims. We also thought that an engagement with tourism studies more broadly would have enriched *Thinking through Tourism*. Rather than branching out and creating a dialogue that includes other disciplines such as sociology that also investigate tourism and heritage sites, the volume is protectionist of anthropology's turf. Our sense is that thinking through tourism might benefit from using the methodological and conceptual tools on offer across the social sciences.

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