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Conference Reports

British and American Studies XXI, Timisoara, 19-21 May 2011 – Conference Report

Graham Busby

British and American Studies... my conscience in attending this was salved by reflection on Ateljevic *et al* (2005). Their discussion of the Critical Turn in tourism studies justified my attendance at the 21st conference; remember, this started so soon after the bloody revolution which began in Timisoara. Perhaps, only fifteen per cent of papers reflected some facet of tourism *per se* but it was a good example of how interdisciplinarity is relevant in the non-business-oriented curriculum. Indeed, some of the papers provided me with fresh material to use in teaching in the next academic year. Twenty countries were represented, including Australia, Canada, South Africa, India, with academics from seven American universities... and just this reviewer from a British one! There were six parallel streams for nearly all the sessions and, so, something like one hundred and sixty papers presented.

Plate1: Piața Unirii – Union Square, Timisoara



Author photo

The opening address came from Dr Nigel Townson, Director, British Council Romania, somewhat thought-provoking. The first plenary lecture was given by Professor Maurizio Gotti, University of Bergamo, entitled 'English across Boundaries and Media'. Very thought-provoking. Stick with this; it is pertinent for readers of this journal! Gotti suggested that English as the *lingua franca* has the highest utility and exchange values; this has come about because of globalisation. Look at Singapore – four languages: Tamil, Mandarin, English and Malay but the language common to the whole country is English; families are starting to speak English at home... grandparents in many cases are unable to communicate with grandchildren because of loss of the mother tongue. Sounded dramatic but I guess this guy knows what he is talking about. In African and Asian countries, there is a linguistic apartheid because of the high cost of quality schools. This can lead to differing levels of competence amongst students. Yes, this seemed likely to this reviewer but the point is, it had never occurred to me before.

Gotti advised that in India there are two recognised national languages - Hindi and English. This led on to a discussion of 'language death' - the globalising action of English is leading to the gradual disappearance of other languages. This made me reflect on tourism's influence... Denmark was used as another example of English across boundaries: English is used by some Danes to communicate with other Danes; popular music, advertisements, and commercials in English. Alternatively, Gotti argued some people now possess functional illiteracy, i.e. they only have their mother tongue - this clearly has a number of consequences (!). In Switzerland, a national slogan, in English, had created debate; it was 'No Drinks - No Drugs = No Problems'... local language policy was now being reconsidered...there is a fear that English might become the country's *lingua franca*. This led on to the concept of linguistic 'borrowing' which leads to juxtaposition of two languages for some terms and introduction of pseudo-terms, e.g. 'monkey class' for economy class! A new one for this reviewer. Also, new expressions appear; for example, 'prepone' - to bring something forward to an earlier date, this was first recorded in usage in India; Melvyn Bragg could have used some of this material in his Story of English on Radio Four a year or so ago.

Professor Gotti argued that there is a move towards global communicative models - so, tourism may homogenise some destinations...but the spread of the use of the English language may well have a much greater homogenising effect (at this point, I was more than ever reminded of Richards & Wilson's, 2006, paper on creative cultural tourism for if we all understand English, the tourism offer really will need to be much more creative). In terms of border crossings, apparently this first started in Britain; that is, the migration of features used in advertising and public information campaigns; for example, HIGHER sum assured... VITAL protection for you... and the impact of new technologies - IMHO - in my humble opinion - in emails referred to as one example along with changes because of mobile 'phone texts. Can we/do we simply ignore this 'abuse' of English. What is the consequence, if we do?

Plate 2: Multilingualism in Timisoara



Author photo

The conclusions were that we need to free English language teaching from native speaker ethnocentricity (reviewer adds: mmm.....). We need to expose students of English language to a variety of spoken and written English. There appear to be two 'trends': a risk that a single global standard might arise and dominate all others and the danger that English might fragment into mutually unintelligible local varieties. Gotti thinks the former may be more likely. Pertinent to many readers of this

publication is the observation that many submissions to peer-reviewed journals are written by researchers whose first language is not English. What standard should editors expect of submissions regarding the quality of English?

All five of the papers in the session chaired by this reviewer related to either the small or large screen; two of those screen productions emanated from literature. Julianna Borbely's 'Jane Austen's Narrative and Feature Film Adaptations' was particularly interesting; she addressed the 'fidelity discourse' which, of course, applies to most adaptations, it would seem, i.e. how true is the screenplay to the original novel. Indeed, this reviewer is reminded of a quote from Gareth Neames, executive producer of *Downton Abbey*, at the Daphne du Maurier Festival, exactly one week earlier, viz. whilst Borbely advised that the first two pages of *Sense and Sensibility* would put off most readers because it discussed primogeniture/the entailed estate, Gareth Neames had told us that his production for ITV made such concepts interesting for they had twelve million British viewers and series one has now been sold to over one hundred and thirty territories; as an adjunct, of course, it has done wonders for the visitor numbers to Highclere Castle – now a major visitor attraction in north Hampshire, as a result of the television series. Borbely went on to assert that 'film is more direct than the novel' – is this how movies/television productions can make something mundane of interest? Yes! Another comment identified *Pride and Prejudice* as 'hybrid anti-heritage drama'; yet, this reviewer seems to recall visitor numbers to Lyme Park or somewhere rocketing as a result.

References

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Sixth Annual International Conference on Tourism, held at St George Lycabettus Hotel, Athens, 1-4 July 2010

Graham Busby

In his opening remarks, Gregory Papanikos, Director of ATINER (Athens Institute for Education and Research), advised that this conference was unusual for “ninety per cent of First Annual Conferences never hold a Second...” – this reporter considers that, perhaps, the location is something of an enticement to delegates and, axiomatically, conference continuity (see second photograph – view of the Acropolis from the venue’s roof terrace). Given that these are small-scale conferences, it was amusing to be informed that Papanikos uses the concept of ‘face control’, that is, “we like their faces and we publish their papers in the bi-annual report”. Yes, well.....

Plate 1 The St George Lycabettus Hotel



Author photo

Other opening remarks were made by Nicholas Pappas, of both ATINER and Sam Houston University (USA) and Marios Vasilopoulos of ATEM (Academy of Tourism Research and Studies). Despite numerous presenters from Taiwan, Australia, Hong Kong, USA and Malaysia, there were few Europeans – and only this reviewer from

the UK. With less than forty delegates, it was possible to talk to nearly all present and, given the eclectic range of papers, there was undoubtedly something for everyone.

Plate 2: The Acropolis from the roof terrace
of the St George Lycabettus Hotel



Author photo

The first paper came from academics at Australia's University of the Sunshine Coast; entitled 'Sunshine Coast residents' perceptions of tourism impacts: a longitudinal study', Sharma and Dyer reported on data collected between 2004 and 2008 and, surprise, surprise, advised that "tourism is likely to result in traffic congestion" – a noticeable increase over the time frame. However, there is increased recognition, by residents, that tourism will result in jobs in the region and that there will be increased cultural exchange. Implications were noted for policy-making at different levels of government and this research provides a base for such policy-making.

Professors Hu and Chen, from Ming Chuan University, Taiwan, reported on 'The role of relational benefit between service quality and customer loyalty in the airline industry'. Dr Hu asked delegates if they had received any special treatment by their airline in getting to Athens and, if so, what form it took. She then detailed the

research; data was collected from 403 respondents at the exit lobby of Taoyuan International Airport; perhaps begging a further question, 63 per cent were female with those aged 21 to 30 forming the largest single segment (38 per cent); more than two-thirds had a Bachelor's degree. Not surprisingly, the results indicate customer service quality has a statistically significant positive effect on customer loyalty to an airline.

From the Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM), Italy, Cassinelli and Chiarullo discussed the potential for tourist development in the Val d'Agri National Park; this listener was intrigued when the possibilities for sustainable tourism were covered given that the largest inland oilfield in Europe is in the national park (perhaps it is not intrusive à la Wytch Farm near Poole Harbour, UK, which I thought was the largest). The researchers provided a typical potential visitor profile using a cartoon character with relevant features; they also referred to an 'energy theme park' – when queried by me in the questions session, it emerged that the regional government of Basilicata funded this although it seems to be indirectly funded by the oil production company because the regional government receives revenues.

Culture and history were viewed as a sub-set of rural tourism by Dr Bozkova, South West University, Bulgaria; her paper identified a typology of rural tourism in Greece "according to the character of the touristic product". She maintained that even into the 1970s there was no organized form of rural tourism in Greece; since the 1980s, there have been efforts to set standards and this has, possibly, paid off. Given the eclectic nature of the conference, it was not surprising to hear of foodservice operations for the Olympic Games; Chen-Feng Kuo, Tunghai University, Taiwan, considers this to be an under-researched aspect of THE Games. Reflecting on the Beijing example, alone, he reported that 13 million meals had been cooked for athletes and support staff – as many as 10,000 meals per hour and with 800 items on the menu. The modes of Olympic food service operations were detailed, that is, whether there is a single provider or a joint venture; this is important given the diversity of cultures represented at an Olympic Games – well-designed menus are critical, we were told. In conclusion, he emphasised that Olympic Games food

service is very professional and usually run by international companies. Kuo's study was said to be pioneering. Eva Maleviti, University of Surrey, actually made her evaluation of Greek hoteliers' attitudes to energy and environmental initiatives sound interesting. She identified quite a high level of ignorance and although the 'problem' was recognised not a great deal has yet been achieved.

In a different session, Professor Jennings, Griffith University, Australia, presented the paper entitled 'Role play scenarios: an educative tool to engender critical thinking and reflective praxis regarding sustainability management issues in tourism enterprises'. She reported that stimulated debate came from students engaging in this type of activity. Her concluding slide is shown below:

