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Book Reviews

Tourism and the Muslim World.

Noel Scott & Jafar Jafari (2010)

Emerald Group Publishing, Bingley, UK.

ISBN 978-184950920-6.

The post 9/11 effects were manifold, many economies and industries not only suffered serious losses but also stagnated for years. It is safe to think that tourism and hospitality experienced a decline in the international demand and the volume of air passengers. For months, New York was portrayed as an unsafe destination by the media. Former president George Bush claimed that traveling inside the country was a way of overcoming the fear of terrorism. Recently, the idea that terrorism affects directly tourism in the long term has been questioned. After a terrorist attack takes place, as in the case of Bali and Egypt, the international demand is diverted towards other destinations.

To what extent the Middle East is affected by this is the main thesis in *Tourism and Muslim World.*, which contains 21 chapters that address a wide range of complex issues. Not all can be reviewed here, but some are worth particular mention. Boris Vukonic (chapter 3) painstakingly explores the importance of tourism in Middle East, considering previous studies that have focussed on the troublesome encounters between international tourists and locals. The Muslim World has suffered many changes by the advance of modernity and tourism, and while some states kept a friendly relationship of cooperation and diplomacy with the west, others, such as Iran, clearly did not. What remains clear for Vukonic here seems to be that western travelers are sometimes attacked, not only because of their lack of familiarity about the environs they visit, but also the cultural values they represent. Unless the state intervenes in their protection, tourist values may be seen as offensive to local tradition and customs. However, Vukonic convincingly explains that the religion / tourism connection may be seen in terms of three primary questions: First, that religion somehow supports tourism, and that displacement and travel play a crucial role because they paves the way for the construction of shrines and other holy places which are themselves visited by pilgrims/tourists.

The second question, that tourism somehow influences religion can also be seen in the idea that tourist behaviour may be at odds with local customs, belief and cultures, which in turn leads to the third question, that religion & tourism stand in opposition to each other. Some guest-introduced practices may be incompatible with religious beliefs of hosts.

Furthermore, throughout Middle East and beyond, developing countries adopted tourism as their primary industry to adjust some economical asymmetries that resulted from, corruption and bad administration. States may then develop a dependency on tourism, and terrorists and insurgents may take advantage of this situation, an attack on tourism is also an attack on the state and jeopardizes its economy.

What is interesting is the extent to which Muslim-countries are often viewed as homogenous. After all, there are radicalized countries as Iran or Pakistan that nothing have to do with Egypt, Jordan or Morocco for example. Such issues are addressed in chapter 6, Islam & Tourism, where Joan Henderson examines tourism in Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore, focussing on the role of ethnic minorities in the conflict-management, where the messy realities in Malaysia where Muslims are a minority contrasts to Brunei. What Henderson reminds us after all is that the right to tourism is universal, no matter what race, religion or culture.

Despite the many good aspects and coverage of this book, there are too some flaws, most notably, almost all authors dealing with the Middle East seem to ignore the facts that terrorism is rooted in long standing historical religious disputes with secular values or earlier encounters between Muslim and Christianity. Many chapters are in fact a-historical and represent a conceptual discussion about modern social issues, which while welcome lacks some depth at times. Neither religious fundamentalism nor terrorism are representative of Muslim-culture as some sections suggest, but overall, the book fulfils its main goal of achieving micro-analysis based on case studies and also opens up the field to further enquiry.

Reviewed by Maximiliano E. Korstanje
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Slow Travel and Tourism.

Janet Dickinson and Les Lumsdom (2010)

London, Earthscan Limited.

ISBN 978-1-849711128, PP. 232

This book represents an attempt to define a new way of travelling, as slow travel evokes an alternative to mass tourism. The primary goal of this book is to argue that practices need to

adapt to more sustainable forms of tourist behaviour. The authors defines slow travel as ‘...an emerging conceptual framework which offer an alternative to air and car travel, where people travel to destinations more slowly overland, stay longer and travel less’ (p.2), as opposed to the existing structures of productivity and consumption, which leads to mobilities and speed. The act of travel itself, they argue is important, as slow travel is rooted in tourist experience and its being in the world., while fast travel is interpreted as liminoid movement toward certain destinations so that the rhythm of travel is determined by the expectation of arrival. Destinations then, are more important than travel as such.

The paradigm of slow travels subverts the dominant logic of tourism consumption and also means a change in the way of interpreting sustainability and the impacts of technology on the eco-system.

The first and second chapters outline how the existent means of transport impacts on ecology, while the concept of slow tourism is developed in the following chapters which cover topics such as walking, cycling, coach tourism and their connection with water-based sustainability. One of the most interesting aspects of this book is the dichotomy between destination success and eco-protection. To some extent, for any system to operate appropriately needs speed, mobile markets and popularity. To reduce the current rhythms of travel may result in unemployment or the decline of some destinations, and Dickinson and Lumsdon acknowledge that the main problem of change is the adaptation of social customs.

‘Exploratory Research with slow travellers found that while they recognized travel has an impact on climate change, and some were hence adjusting their everyday behaviour, many continued to travel by air and were able to justify this position. Participants used denial strategies and discourse of obligation interlinked with structural travel barriers’ (p. 52).

People resist changing whenever they perceive their attitudes have no effect on the problem. The lack of responsibility to adapt the times and pattern of travels to deter climate change effects can be determined if global issues are minimized, when the effects appear remote. This creates a paradox, in that many people accept flying and climate change are inextricably intertwined, but to some extent they trivialize their roles in such a process. To resolve this, slow travel presents a valid alternative to change the discourse.

Overall this book stimulates debate concerning the reluctance to change existent forms of consumption in spite of the warning of specialists. Well written and coherently structured, this is one of the best books I have ever read respecting to sustainable issues and tourism.

Readers who wish inspecting *Slow Travel & Tourism* will find a rich academic compilation of ten chapters along with a strong argument to directly dominant modes of tourism and develop new ways of practising tourism and mobilities.

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