

book review

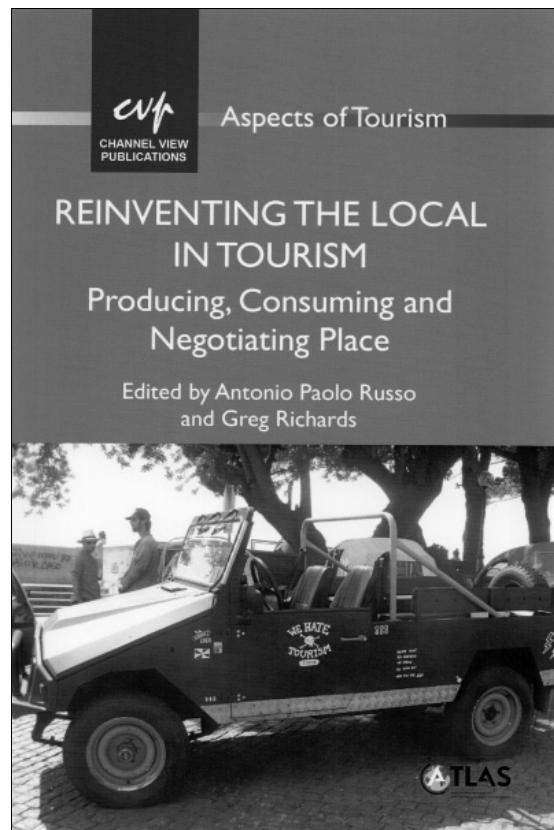
Reinventing the Local in Tourism: Producing, Consuming and Negotiating Place

Antonio Paolo Russo and Greg Richards, eds.

The book *Reinventing the Local in Tourism: Producing, Consuming and Negotiating Place*, edited by Antonio Paolo Russo and Greg Richards focuses on the relationship between place and society in the context of tourism by analyzing new trends in tourism such as the boom of virtual tourism platforms, peer-to-peer tourism consumption, and transformation of places through tourism.

The book is organized in three parts and divided into 13 chapters written by a mixed group of young scholars and more experienced researchers whose primary focus is on products, people and places, brought together in a new 'localness' by the rituals and technologies of mobility.

The first part of the book entitled New Products and Hospitality Models is organized around the theme of the new information platforms and products that have taken centre stage in tourism. This group of chapters addresses the relationship between the virtual environments which serve simultaneously as meeting places and co-production spaces, and the marketplaces of the communities of practice that they tap into. A whole new philosophy of travel which include cheap travel, value for money, learning from friends and peers, search for experiencing a destination 'like a local', social awareness etc. have led to new networked hospitality models and platforms such as Home Exchange, Airbnb, Couchsurfing etc. Relatively new and steadily growing phenomenon in tourism presented in this book is home exchanging – a pure model of peer-to-peer hospitality described on example of web-based hospitality platform Home Exchange which facilitates home-for-home



exchanges of various types. Through online and offline ethnography as well as survey analysis of short-term rental platform Airbnb, this first part of the book highlights the role of digital media in sharing experiences focusing on how people share, what they share and whom they share it with, as well as how interaction arises between hosts, guests and the platform that mediates their interaction. The increase of different types of tourism, such as ethical travel, which is presented in this part of the book, indicates a growing awareness among today's tourists of their impact and responsibilities as travelers. Example of Addiopizzo Travel, a tour operator in Sicily that organizes pizzo-free (or mafia-free) trips as a way to fight the mafia, have shown how ethical travel applied to the anti-mafia struggle can trigger positive economic and sociopolitical change. In the case of Addiopizzo Travel, calls for boycotts by tourists not only increased pressure for fair trade but has also helped to strengthen an alternative economic network able to integrate entrepreneurs

into a local project to resist organized crime. The first part of the book concludes with the chapter on 'diffuse hotel' – a new model of sustainable hospitality originating from Italy that has stopped the decline of semi-abandoned historical villages. Diffuse hotel is composed of dispersed rooms or suites located close to each other in abandoned old houses and apartments in villages and small towns, and run by single management that provides standard services. This type of accommodation offers tourists a friendlier, more authentic and more sustainable form of hospitality where residents are becoming a fundamental element of the tourist experience.

The second part of the book entitled *Flows and Communities* includes four chapters which deal with the roles of people in tourist experiences and focuses on communities of travelers that are mobilized by such emerging hospitality models and the growth of the relational economy.

The first chapter discusses how urban tourist experiences are co-created through direct encounters with other people and through online interactions before, during and after travel. Contemporary tourists want more interactive experiences and want to be involved in designing (co-creating) their experiences of places and the meanings of places. Qualitative research conducted in east and south-east London illustrate how the experiences of urban tourists are co-created through direct encounters with other tourists and locals, but also it shows how other space users, including residents, workers and other leisure visitors are affected by the presence of tourists. Next chapter sheds new perspectives on processes of community engagement in place making. The examples presented show that information and communication technologies (ICT) have an important role to play in enhancing community involvement in urban place making and related tourism development by encouraging urban community members to discuss. Using the case of the "Get Local" programme from Auckland, New Zealand, authors showed the potential of ICT tools to play an active and significant role in shaping the nature and outcomes of tourism development. The chapter on backpackers' usage of social media

during crises aims to explore how social media has been used by backpackers travelling in the midst of crises and how they engage and disengage with the local. Two case studies of the Chilean earthquake in 2010 and the violence surrounding the protests in Bangkok in the same year were used to illustrate how global, social and digital convergences can provide spaces of hope for members of the backpacker community in their everyday search for local answers. The last chapter of the second part deals with the relationships between hosts and guests in the context of urban ethnic tourism. Through case study of alternative and ethnic tours in Budapest authors examine and question the nature of the relationships between hosts, guests, residents, visitors, tourists, and intermediaries.

The third part of the book *Built environments and "glocalized" spaces* through four chapters discusses the way new mobilities 'touch down' in their places of transience and become embedded in physical landscapes.

Through two case studies of the transnational transfer of mega-structures and master plans, the first chapter illustrates their paradoxical effects: these projects are intended to distinguish tourist destinations as unique but on the contrary they tend to dramatically homogenize the urban landscapes of cities worldwide. The chapter *Hostels and making of new urban spaces* examines how the hostel industry has been transformed in recent years and how in turn it is beginning to change the tourism space of cities. The growth of youth accommodation in the centre of major cities has helped to transform tourism space and create new localities for tourism production and consumption. The next chapter analyses the role of hybrid gastronomic experiences in the construction of tourist places by focusing on and describing different food experiences and culinary projects in four restaurants in specific neighborhoods of Barcelona, intersected by tourist flows and the mobilities of immigrant communities and temporary residents. The chapter entitled *Unravelling Airbnb: urban perspectives from Barcelona* focuses on Airbnb in Barcelona by analyzing its contribution to the

revitalization of neighborhoods, increasing and diversifying tourism, providing economic support to families, and by analyzing its impact on urban development. How economic crisis and growing resistance to capitalist value systems in Athens has stimulated the development of alternative tourism experiences is shown in the last chapter of this book analyzing tourism company Alternative Tours of Athens (ATA) which targets customers who seek to understand Athens as a real-life place offering street art tours.

The concluding chapter written by book editors Greg Richards and Antonio Paolo Russo summarizes the major themes addressed and presented in the different chapters of this book.

The issues analyzed in this book have illustrated the many spatial consequences of tourism practices and the importance of the role of different actors

– tourists, hosts, and producers in reshaping the new localities of tourism. This book is a must read for students and researchers interested in the ways in which tourism co-produces and reshapes new localities and spaces. But, this book also goes beyond these issues and shows that analysis of tourism may provide new key to understanding place and society in general. Thus, it also serves as a valuable resource for other disciplines such as geography, management and economics, planning, sociology, anthropology and cultural studies.

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