
Book Review

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The New Spirit of Hospitality: designing Tourism Futures in Post-Truth Worlds

by: Rodanthe Tzanelli

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From its outset, the sociology of tourism has historically focused on the intriguing dialectics of what is real and staged. In fact, this academic stance seems to be a legacy left by French philosophy which over the years interrogated the interplay between reality and representation. From this point departs interesting studies published in the past such as MacCannell (1976), Sheller (2004), Korstanje (2018) and Bianchi (2018) – only to name a few of them. In the above-referenced book, Rodanthe Tzanelli explores a must-provoking line of research oriented to expand the current understanding of hospitality – at least how it is imagined in the west. Per her viewpoint, there is a new *spirit of hospitality* mainly marked by the digitalisation (if not mechanisation) of daily life. She also devotes efforts to deciphering not only the paradoxes of mobility but also how post-modernity affects the professionals who produce the aesthetics of tourist destinations worldwide. To put the same in other terms, it is safe to say that digital tourism changes destinations and the lifestyle of locals but scholars overlooked how the same forces mould the professionals' lifestyles. Here a question arises: why hospitality? What does Tzanelli mean with the new spirit of hospitality?

As a reviewer, I intend to answer the above-noted questions in the present review. In so doing, I must come back to her introductory (prefatory) chapter. She coins the term *techno-anthropocene* to denote an emerging era where organisational design, which is legally supported by technocracy, shapes the community. As she explains, this thesis means that man is unable to intervene in the environment without technology. Let's explain to readers that this book review will exhibit something pretty different from the texts or pieces that I am accustomed to writing. I shall not discuss the argument chapter by chapter, but also the general spirit of the book. All chapters of this book are based on a hot debate regarding how film-tourism embodies emerging post-colonial forms of consumption while reproducing the new mobility of capital. Paradoxically these new forms of mobility engender a new spirit in the hosts-guests' relationships, so to speak, a new spirit of hospitality.

Anthropologically speaking, the book holds that the cultural manifestations resulting from world-making have concrete political effects taking place in different social groups. The techno-anthropocene questions the itinerary of new and old technology in the

reconstruction of new semiotic discourses revolving around place and culture. In this context, world-making engages with a much deeper multi-scalar process of design that puts life worlds, places, and cultures unevenly re-allocated in different stakeholders operating in the tourism industry.

In the present book, Tzanelli argues convincingly that the field of cinematic tourism inscribes in the constellations of what scholars dubbed as post truths which involve professionals and unskilled workers in a neoliberal design of politics. The chapter holds the thesis the *tourist and hospitality apparatuses* (a-la Agamben) reproduce ultimately the subject they intend to govern (p.19). The spirit of hospitality is based on the combination of two different circuits (ways) of belonging and networking known as hosts and guests. These two circuits reproduce the condition for the subject to feel safety and well-being while paradoxically the agency resigns to its individual freedom. The ideology of tourism is at least centric, which means capitalocentric, western-centric, Eurocentric, and anthropocentric. At least conceptually, Tzanelli here divides tourism from hospitality, since both take different dynamics. While the former signals an aesthetic logic if cultural visibility is enrooted into the public sphere, the latter operates by crossing the borders of publicness and privateness. The rupture with the classic tourism epistemology, which is centred on a new labour division, leads to the current crisis of hospitality today. At the same time, modern tourism rests in a fallacy, overlooked by theorists and scholars. While modern nation-states encourage tourism as a form of valid development, they forget the effects of their programs which include the intensification of ethnic conflict as well as the eradication of ethnic differences in tourist territories. Most plausibly, these interactions emanated from the old colonial discourses, and have been invariably shifted by the introduction of new digital technologies systematically organised for virtualising the tourist experience.

It is important to mention that her original (stronger) discussions are structured on the evolution of film tourism on the island of Crete (just after the release of the film *Zorba the Greek*) or the contextual interrogations of virulent sexism [present in movies like *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* (Director L. Charles in 2006) and *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm: Delivery of Prodigious Bribe to American Regime for Make Benefit Once Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* (Director J. Woliner in 2020)]. As Tzanelli eloquently observes, this ZG tourism niche says little about Cretan's cultural landscape, rather it is structured into an embodied discourse of Greek masculinity that looks to enjoy life to the fullest. This distorted vision aligns with mechanised forms of relationships between female tourists and Greek local men (*Kamákia*). *Borat* – unlike *Zorba the Greek* – exemplifies the impact of the new spirit of hospitality within the fields of division labour, which remains inexpugnable to the capitalist structuration (submission) of leisure. In both cases, tourism apparatuses manipulate not only the creativity of tourism designers but also the host guests' engagement in its implications in the territory. What is more important, technocracy accelerates new forms of mobilities where the individual agency is simply effaced. The rest of the book discusses critically the intersection between the mediated popular culture (associated with the tourist-centred paradigm) and the imagined topographies where these discourses are shaped. Tzanelli looks to interrogate the models of sensorial experience previously determined by what she named *fabricated atmospheres of thrill*. Based on the saga *Breaking Bad*, the last chapter speaks to us of the *flaneur of crime*, which means the design of dangerous mobilities (articulated in specific corridors) where criminal plots are consumed, commoditised, and embodied in the safest ways. This exhibits the main

paradox (contradiction) of the cultural-industrial marginality that appeals to a strong element of contingency. Film-tourism paved the way for the rise of new multiple designs based on the post-colonial conditions of race.

This book reminds us not only of the importance of critical sociology to understand the new hard days, above all after the pandemic, but also of how evolves tourism after tourism. The introduction of new digital technology is accelerating the end of tourism itself, or at best, in other words, the destruction of the contextual (industrial) conditions that created the tourism industry in the past. Sooner than later, tourism is cannibalising itself through the destruction of the original conditions that gave it birth.

References

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