

Michael Lück
Jan Velvin
Bernd Eisenstein
(eds.)

**The Social Side
of Tourism:
The Interface between
Tourism, Society,
and the Environment**

Answers to Global Questions from
the International Competence Network of
Tourism Research and Education (ICNT)

Tomas Pernecky

Tourism, Prejudice and Societal Conflict

1. Introduction

The 21st century continues to be marked with disagreement, violence, and lack of respect for human life. According to the United Nations Security Council, by the end of 2010, approximately 27.5 million people were displaced, with an additional 15.4 million becoming refugees due to conflict and violence (*Report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict* 2012). The World Development Report (*World development report 2011: Conflict, security, and development*, 2011) offers further insights on contemporary conflict, stating that over 1.5 billion people live in countries affected by violence, fragility or conflict; that only a few countries have a true 'post-conflict' status because violence is likely to recur; that the gap in poverty between countries impacted by violence and others is increasing and; that no low-income fragile or conflict-affected country has yet achieved a single United Nations Millennium Development Goal. With regard to the last point, the United Nations specified eight Millennium Goals in 2000, which include eradicating poverty and hunger, providing universal education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating diseases such as HIV, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership.

In contrast to these statistics is tourism – a phenomenon that can transform places into tourism destinations, give objects a touristic meaning, and turn people into hosts, maids, tour guides, waiters and tourists. This socially constructed machinery engages millions of people, and is capable of generating employment, revenues, and business activity. The question is whether it can make a difference in the communities that need it most. Tourism is understood to have both positive and negative aspects, and most undergraduate students should be able to articulate the ways in which tourism can benefit different stakeholders, while recognising also that there is a wealth of less desirable facets. For example, one only needs to browse an introductory text to learn about the negative impacts such as crime, noise levels, violence, pollution, drug and alcohol consumption, gambling, increase of cost of living, the destruction of local ecosystems, the loss of traditional values in host communities, changes in moral conduct for the locals, and much more (Rodgers, 2001). However, when presented with the more momentous questions, and situating tourism within

the milieu issues noted in the World Development Report above, it can be a bewildering exercise for students and researchers alike to grasp the so-called 'hopeful' or 'peace-making' agency of tourism.

The premise of this paper is therefore to critically engage with the possibilities and limitations of tourism with regard to societal conflict, a topic that ought to be better integrated in tourism education, and to contribute to the development of a broader theoretical agenda that scrutinises tourism against important societal problems. The specific contribution of this paper lies in unfolding a conceptual framework which combines motivational theory with destination status in order to examine *if* and *how* different types of tourism may play a (significant) role in bringing about a positive change. The stance from which this paper is written does not pre-suppose that tourism is intrinsically good or bad, and instead sees the need for more situated and context-specific knowledge of tourism. In other words, tourism is offered as a volatile phenomenon and subject to many variables – thus necessary to be studied with regard to contexts (social, political, historical), people, cultures, bureaucratic processes, stakeholders' motives – all of which jointly shape the environment in which tourism exists, and its agency to be a force for positive change.

The answer to questions of what tourism *can do* in regard to societal conflict therefore demands a hermeneutic treatment (i.e. methodological approaches which take into account socio-cultural-political contexts, locality, customs, types of conflict, and historicity), and will differ depending on a multitude of factors. By developing a framework that seeks to position tourism, and mass-tourism in particular, in the wider context of a destination status, it is argued that only some forms of tourism can be assigned agency as to positive change in a post-conflict setting, which can be a lengthy and challenging process. It is also put forward that much of touristic contact is motivated by commercial interest and not by improving inter-group relations of people in a conflict/post-conflict setting. With regard to the organisation of the text, the manuscript first begins by acknowledging related projects and the work of relevant special interest groups. The paper then moves on to examining literature on the contact hypothesis and motivational theory necessary to introduce new conceptual models that examine tourism's role in recovery from societal conflict.

1.1 Recent Developments in Tourism Studies

It is apposite to say that tourism academics are in healthy disagreement as to the limits and possibilities of tourism, with voices on each side of the continuum. On one end of the spectrum are contributions representing the more critical voices,

and on the other are the visions of hopeful intellectuals. There are also scholars in the middle – both hopeful and critical – who see potential for tourism to be a tool for positive change, but are aware of the fact that tourism is not the solution to problems that are rooted in deep cultural, political and social divides between peoples. In addition to these are works concerned mostly with the practicalities of tourism and the testing of hypotheses, but frequently isolated from critical theory and thus open to criticism (see, for example, the work on Mt Gungang by Kim, Prideaux & Prideaux, 2007; Kim & Prideaux, 2003). Taken as a whole, the importance of all of these contributions should not be diminished, as they jointly advance knowledge on the ways in which tourism manifests in different contexts. The following sections offer a brief review of the key developments that are of particular relevance to discourse on tourism and societal problems.

1.2 Tourism and Conflict

In conceptual terms, conflict occupies a vast area that is intertwined with various research foci, and is prone to disparity with regard to its examination in the context of tourism. There are numerous researchers whose contributions to the study of tourism and conflict are important but, due to the limited space available, not all can be noted. The works noted here are highlighted as they are aligned with the overall aim of this paper, which is largely concerned with societal conflict. Societal conflict is not only restricted to acts of violence, as it can be coloured by all types of disputes: be they racial, religious, economic, or ideological. It can play out in different ways, and stem from class differences, gender, age, ethnicity and other social factors (Marger, 2011, p. 3). If we were to include globalisation in the picture, societal conflict can be seen as ‘a function of culture, caused by a dysfunction of societal communication’ (Flor, 2002, p. 3). By further drawing on literature on conflict management and resolution, societal conflict can be fathomed as follows:

Societal conflict is a universal phenomenon, intrinsic to the process of social change. It is inevitable so long as material and social resources are unequally distributed within society, and inequity is reflected in cultural, social and political relationships between groups (Cliffe & White, 2002, p. 45).

With this basic outline in place, it is first necessary to acknowledge that tourism can produce, reproduce, and maintain states of anxiety and tragedy. From one point of view, tourism is the platform for attacks motivated by ideological aims (Freyer & Shroder, 2007) – such as when the opportunities provided by mass tourism (easy targets, large number of victims, the perceived hedonism of tourists and publicity) are exploited by terrorist organisations, as humanity

witnessed in the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005 (Putra & Hitchcock, 2008). From a different point of view, tourism can be a reminder of hostility and judgment – here the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York have manifested *vis-à-vis* tourism through prejudice, discrimination, religious profiling, and xeno-racism. Stephenson and Ali (2010, p. 236) use the term *islamophobia* to denote the ‘dread or hatred of Islam and therefore fear of dislike of all or most Muslims’. Tourism is thus not immune to the ways in which conflict manifests in this day and age; it is intertwined with conflict, and has ramifications for many aspects of tourism.

The consumption of conflict in tourism is perhaps best described by the term ‘dark tourism’. The concept of dark tourism, popularised recently by Lennon and Foley (2000), was built on people’s interest in disaster, death and atrocity. The way it transpires in the tourism phenomenon is through tourists visiting sites associated with human suffering, warfare, and genocide. Smith, MacLeod and Robertson (2010) note that dark tourism is not entirely new and has been in fact researched under different conceptual cappings, such as ‘thanatourism’ (Dann & Seaton, 2002; A. V. Seaton, 1996), ‘Black Spots’ tourism (Rojek, 1993), and in the context of heritage of atrocity (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996). Some researchers (Causevic & Lynch, 2011; Lynch & Causevic, 2008) have used the term ‘phoenix tourism’ to underscore the importance of social reconciliation and urban regeneration in the process of destination development. Although only little is known about the problems of dark tourism or thanatourism management (T. Seaton, 2009), more research is starting to emerge on issues such as place identity, destination management, motivation, marketing and interpretation of such sites (see, for example, the recently edited volume by White & Frew, 2013). The problems of interpretation are of particular significance and are revisited later in the paper.

An important point to clarify is that, when speaking of societal conflict, the discourse is not only limited to research on tourism and war (Butler & Suntikul, 2013), or tourism and terrorism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2007; Putra & Hitchcock, 2008; V. Smith, 2005). It is entangled with matters of control and power (see the work of Church & Coles, 2007; Elliot, 2004; Hall, 1994; D. Hall, 2007; Macleod & Carrier, 2010), and entwined with politics, ethnic issues, indigenous rights, and hegemony (Burns & Novelli, 2007). It must also include the concerns existing in the less developed nations. These have been, for example, noted by Harrison (2001), and recently explored by Cole (2008), who immersed herself in the setting of a poor remote community in East Indonesia to unveil the conflicts of tourism development, and the challenges that arise between the different stakeholders. Societal conflict is also linked with responsible tourism (Leslie, 2012), conservation issues (Spenceley, 2012) and poverty (C. M. Hall, 2007; Scheyvens, 2011).

It is impossible to tackle all of these issues in one paper and therefore the conceptual analysis presented here is limited to a large-scale perspective on the role different forms of tourism play – mapped against destinations that have experienced conflict. Conflict can be underpinned by different principles and Tornblom and Kazemi (2012) list 13 different categories, noting that each demands a tailored solution. This paper does not delve into such depths of typological distinction, and focuses broadly on inter-societal disputes that have impacted local communities and saw the use of military/political power, continued state of occupation, physical destruction and violence. In other words, this paper is mostly concerned with observable nation-state and inter-group conflict such as the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, the civil wars in Africa and the continued tensions between North and South Cyprus. Whilst other issues such as conservation are acknowledged to fall into the category of societal conflict, its examinations are not part of the offered analysis.

1.3 Tourism and Peace Research

The tourism-peace nexus has occupied tourism academics for nearly 25 years, and has undergone several stages: from euphoria in the late 1980s, to scepticism and disbelief, to revival and new levels of interest in 2000, to renewed belief in tourism as a contributor to peace (Moufakkir & Kelly, 2010; Salazar, 2006). In 1988, the field witnessed a new direction when a conference titled ‘Tourism – A Vital Force for Peace’ was held in Vancouver, Canada. Several scholars (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2003; Jafari, 1989) have commented on the importance of this event, which is now understood to have triggered a wave of peace-oriented research, giving impetus also to the establishment of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT, 1999). This was the beginning of a hopeful vision that would lead to presenting tourism as a ‘peace industry’, embedded in the belief that ‘tourism properly designed and developed, has the potential to help bridge the psychological and cultural distances that separate people of diverse races, colours, religions and stages of social and economic development’ (D’Amore, 1988a, p. 154). Under the IIPT banner, every traveller was potentially ‘an ambassador for peace’ (IIPT, 1999).

Apart from the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT), still active today, other organisations, underpinned by the vision that tourism may be able to tackle significant societal problems, had been formed. The Israeli-Palestinian Tourism Forum (IPTF), founded in 2004, represented tourism and hotel industry professionals, such as travel agents and hotel executives. The goal

of this forum was to strengthen dialogue, advance incoming tourism to the region, and solve common problems (Tourism4Peace, 2008). The Tourism4Peace Forum, founded in 2005, was also an initiative by the Israel Hotel Managers Association and the Peres Centre for Peace, with the aim to 'advance peace through tourism by strengthening dialogue and ties in the region' (Tourism4Peace, 2008). The chief purpose of this endeavour was to encourage regional cooperation, ensure free movement of tourists between countries throughout the region, and organise joint marketing activities.

On the academic front, researchers have been optimistic about the possibilities of tourism also, and several scholars have upheld the more noble visions of tourism, including those that propose that tourism is characterised by 'understanding, tolerance and human dignity' Goeldner (1989, p. 167); that tourism is the largest 'peacetime movement of people in the history of mankind' (Jafari, Pizam, & Przeclawski, 1990, p. 469); that through travel we 'evolve a mutual trust and respect for one another and the dignity of all life on earth' (D'Amore, 1988a, p. 154), find 'friends in every corner of the earth', and spread 'messages of hope for a peaceful world' (D'Amore, 1988b, p. 270); and that 'people engaged in any dimension of the vast tourism, hospitality, recreation and sports industries seek to provide a welcoming experience for travellers, much like the peace-making activities experienced within family: offering information, food, shelter, comfort and relaxation' (Haessly, 2010, p. 13). Researchers have also studied student perceptions and argued that tourism is a force for peace (Var & Brayley 1989; Var, Schluter, Ankomah, & Lee, 1989).

On the other side of the spectrum are those who posit that 'scholars have good reasons to be sceptical about the way the peace-through-tourism discourse is currently framed' (Salzar, 2006, p. 330). There are a number of academics who are not fully convinced by the tourism-for-peace proposition and its related claims (see for example Brown, 1989, p. 270; Cohen, 1972; Ferreira, 1999; Furnham, 1984; Gelbman & Maoz, 2012; Pizam & Mansfeld, 1996). In addition, a lot of critique is directed towards the Contact Hypothesis, discussed separately in greater detail in the following section. Then, somewhere in between, are the researchers who see the potential for tourism to be a positive force, but through a critical lens. In this regard, the Critical Tourism Studies (CTS) network, which has produced five conferences since 2005, gathers over two hundred academics who 'share a vision of producing and promoting social change in and through tourism practice, research and education' – as stated in the CTS V conference aims by the 2013 conference conveners (Minnaert et al., 2013).

Despite that, not all critical tourism studies academics carry out peace-related research; many delve into related societal problems including poverty,

injustice, oppression, corruption, ecological crisis and so forth. Some, inevitably, write on conflict as noted in the previous section, hence the separation of scholars into clusters of peace and conflict is only artificial. Important to mention, under the critical voices, are also those that examine tourism's role in societies and the global community (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006), and those who call for 'justice tourism' (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008), 'hopeful tourism' (Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011), and a 'moral turn' in tourism studies (Caton, 2012). Importantly, the examination of what is good and what ought to change about tourism, continues to attract scholarly activity. Since the publication of *Tourism Progress and Peace* (Moufakkir & Kelly, 2010), there is now a second edited volume by Blanchard and Higgins-Desbiolles (2013), which offers a collection of the latest critical essays on matters of tourism and peace.

2. Understanding the Limits and Possibilities of (Mass) Tourism

2.1 Tourism and the Contact Hypothesis

The study of prejudice has been greatly inspired in the early 1950s by Allport's (1958) landmark book *The Nature of Prejudice*. Allport developed a theory which sought to reduce prejudice and improve relationships between groups that are experiencing conflict. This came to be known as the 'contact hypothesis'. Allport's legacy is undeniable, for his ideas continue to stimulate academic debate across social sciences (Dovidio, Glick, & Rudman, 2008). The contact hypothesis is not a silver bullet and is subject to certain conditions. In order for the contact hypothesis to work (i.e. to change the negative attitudes between two groups experiencing conflict), Allport believed that there are certain conditions that have to be met. These are equal status between the groups; personal and sustained communication between individuals from the groups, cooperative interdependence (this is necessary for effective contact and involves cooperative activities), and the necessity for relevant authorities to endorse social norms in support of equality (Ellis & Maoz, 2008).

In theoretical terms, the contact hypothesis offers a promise to bridge the divides amongst people, bring one closer to another, and lead to a positive change in attitude. Furnham (1984, p. 51) states that studies on nationality 'have supported a culture-distance hypothesis, which suggests that the amount of difference between cultures (in terms of geography, religion, language) is directly proportional to the adjustments of that culture'. In the context of tourism, the contact hypothesis has been promoted as the 'major theoretical foundation for peace through tourism' (Kelly, 2012, p. 32). Tomljenovic (2010) confirms that the arguments of

the tourism-peace nexus are generally underpinned by three main assumptions. The first two have origins in contact theory of social psychology and go as follows: first, tourism brings people together and thus provides opportunities for contact; second, this touristic contact is sufficient enough to result in mutual liking and greater understanding of the other. The third assumption is that this will lead to world peace.

Tomljenovic (2010) also points out that several of these assumptions have been contested. For example, tourism activities do not necessarily provide sufficient contact opportunities in order to become familiar with local cultures (Cohen, 1972). Furnham (1984) argues that tourists are often engaging in only certain type of social encounters that are designed for tourism, such as shopping, eating, drinking, and leisure and entertainment related activities. He further notes that the reaction of tourists to places differs from person to person: from being enchanted, delighted, adjusted in a new (touristic) setting as well as being bewildered, tense, and unhappy. Noteworthy is also the disparity between locals and tourists, which can lead to unfavourable responses towards tourism, particularly in societies with colonial past, and where tourism development can be met with aggression against tourists, feelings of resentment, feelings of envy, and the 'colonists' contemptuous and disparaging behaviour' (Dogan, 1989, p. 221).

In addition, large numbers of tourists have been noted to have a 'detrimental' effect on local cultures and customs (Cohen, Yeshayahu, & Almagor, 1992, p. 229), and it cannot be ignored that the tourism industry is driven by profit and can raise, not diminish, barriers between tourists and hosts (Bruner, 1991; Cohen, 1972; de Kadt, 1979; Nettekoven, 1979, cited in Tomljenovic, 2010). Tourism can lead to intergenerational conflicts, disruption of intimate and personal relations, and the transformation of relationships into a source of economic gain (Dogan, 1989). Indeed, a vast part of the travelling population is motivated by the desire to simply escape the daily reality; it has been acknowledged that tourism is motivated by hedonic reasons (Goossens, 2000; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; McCabe, 2000). Unequal economic status and superficial interactions between hosts and tourists can also pose a problem (Nyaupane et al., 2008). Not all touristic encounters are therefore meaningful, and experiencing different cultures can go either way.

Perhaps for all of the above reasons, it is not surprising that empirical studies on contact hypothesis in the field of tourism studies have yielded mixed results. A few selected works ought to be noted. In the examination of the effect of encounters between Jewish-Israeli tourists and Arab Egyptian hosts, Maoz (2010) found that, while positive attitude change with regard to stereotyping and prejudice was