

Book review

F. Higgins-Desbiolles, L.-A. Blanchard and Y. Urbain, *Peace Through Tourism: Critical Reflections on the Intersection Between Peace, Justice and Sustainable Development* (Routledge 2023) 452 pp.

Mohanna Nikbin*

Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, West Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

Director of Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) Department, Creative Economy Research Center, West Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

Edited by Freya Higgins-Desbiolles, Lynda-Ann Blanchard, and Yoko Urbain, the 2023 book *Peace Through Tourism: Critical Reflections on the Intersection Between Peace, Justice, and Sustainable Development*, which views tourism as an agent of transformation, advocates peace, justice, and sustainability. The book explores how tourism addresses major social, political, and environmental issues from academic and practical perspectives. In this overview, each chapter outlines briefly some of the main claims that are made in the book while systematically assessing strengths and weaknesses, thereby clarifying what each chapter offers to different audiences.

This volume is organized into four clear sections, including a total of 22 chapters, each representing one dimension of the complex relationships between tourism, sustainability, justice, and peace. The editors set out to problematize dominant discourses of tourism and present new ideas about how the sector might be reconceptualized to help bring about positive change for global peace and justice.

Part I of the volume contains six chapters, each examining the relationship between tourism and structural violence defined by Galtung (1969) as systemic injustices and inequities deeply embedded within societal structures. Structural violence refers to “social conditions-economic, political and cultural-that inhibit human beings from fulfilling their basic needs and sustain a situation in which inequalities reside across communities” Scheyvens (2007: 246). Through a socio-ecological lens, the authors seek to analyze how tourism can worsen or offset manifestations of violence, especially in highly marginalized and conflict-affected countries (e.g. see chapters of Trogisch and Fletcher; Muldoon and Mair). Each chapter in this section identifies how tourism reinforces or challenges structural violence. In chapter 1, Fortress Tourism, Trogisch, and Fletcher identify how conservation in Virunga often marginalizes local communities. Chapter 2, by Seyfi, Hall, and Vo-Thanh, explores how tourism in sanctioned countries, in this case Iran, has the potential to feed and reduce inequalities but does little to develop a number of concrete solutions concerning ethical management. Chapter 3, by Torabian and Mair, outlines how global travel restrictions create mobility injustices, although offering very limited policy recommendations.

It is in chapter 4 by Šuligoj and Kennell that an account of how dark tourism and sports events have nurtured peace in the Balkans is pursued, though they could suggest

* Email: Nikbin.m@wtiau.ac.ir; Mohanna.Nikbin@Gmail.Com.

more ways to scale such efforts. Chapter 5, by Guasca, Vanneste, and Van Broeck, situates tourism within the context of post-conflict peacebuilding in Colombia but recognizes limitations without broader policy reforms. Finally, chapter 6, by Muldoon and Mair, discusses township tourism in South Africa and calls for further action to ensure that locals benefit without being exploited.

While the case studies in this section give crucial insights into global contexts, more chapters could have shown pragmatic ways of dealing with these concerns. The chapter might be difficult for those who are not familiar with the concept of structural violence given the complexity of the dialogue.

Part II comprises eight chapters that examine tourism as a transformative tool for peace education, cultural reconciliation, and social cohesion. Each chapter offers unique insights into how tourism provides experiences, that foster cultural understanding and sustainability through educational initiatives and thematic exploration of agency, cultural sensitivity, and transformative learning. Chapter 7, for instance, explains how peace tourism curricula can be designed to facilitate intercultural competence (see p. 88). In chapter 8, the authors discuss some of the practical obstacles and strategies involved in incorporating peace-oriented pedagogy into tourism programs, providing real-world examples of the importance of cultural immersion and reflective practices to inspire empathy and social responsibility (p. 105). Chapter 9 discusses how these pedagogical frameworks may support conflict-sensitive tourism, especially for destinations where there has been political violence. This chapter, however, like some of its predecessors in this section, could be strengthened by more concrete suggestions of how to carry these pedagogical insights into practice in different cultural and educational settings. Chapters 10–14 continue this train of thought, arguing for the various ways tourism pedagogy can be used to challenge stereotypes and promote peace; again, though, theoretical insight here may seem very abstract to practitioners looking for how-to guidance. While the section enriches discourse on peace tourism pedagogy, there is always going to be that segment of readership looking for more pragmatically applicable strategies on how to translate these theoretical approaches into broader practical applications in the industry.

Part III features three case studies focusing on new and innovative approaches toward peace tourism that challenge the dominant models of the industry. These chapters review the ability of tourism to act as a radical tool in peacebuilding, justice, and reconciliation within both the Global North and the Global South. Chapter 15 provides an example from Indigenous tourism in Australia, where tourism practices are critically examined for their ability to interrupt the colonial narrative and contribute to reconciliation processes (see p. 217). Chapter 16 investigates community-based tourism in Guatemala, focusing on how grassroots efforts in tourism can empower marginalized communities while fostering a deep sense of place and identity (p. 233). Together with chapter 17, which explores the convergence of ecotourism and radical peace in post-conflict Colombia, this chapter provides very strong examples of alternative models of tourism. To a great extent, though, these chapters could have been improved by further critiques of larger systemic barriers that these communities face in sustaining such models. Moreover, while the case studies are well-detailed, some may overemphasize idealistic views without sufficiently addressing the institutional and structural hurdles to scaling these initiatives.

The postscript section contains five chapters that offer forward-looking reflections on the future of tourism with regard to themes of sustainability, decolonization, and social justice. Each chapter engages with previous thematic discussions but adds new insights on emerging issues, such as gender dynamics and Indigenous tourism. Chapter

18, for example, points at the necessity of gender-sensitive policies in tourism, which should recognize women's roles in sustainable tourism practices (see p. 265). Chapter 19 discusses the abstruse condition of Indigenous land rights within the development of tourism through case studies from Canada and New Zealand, illustrating not only progress but also continuous step-leveling in striving toward equitable practices (p. 278). Chapters 20 and 21 continue this line of discussion in relation to themes of decolonization and community empowerment, though some parts are open to critique for their lack of engagement with systemic challenges that impede sustainable and just tourism practices. Finally, chapter 22 synthesizes the broader discourse of the book into a call for a reimagined tourism industry that actively engages with socio-political contexts to promote peace and sustainability.

This last section is thematically rich, though some readers might find it light on concrete suggestions for how to put these insights into practice in real-world tourism policies.

In conclusion, one of the salient strengths of *Peace through Tourism* lies within its interdisciplinary framework that gives a synthesis of views from tourism studies, peace studies, sustainability, and decolonial theory. It greatly makes this book relevant to a wide array of stakeholders, be they scholars, policymakers, or practitioners. Critical scrutiny visited on the tourism industry is refreshing and imperative; it pushes readers out of their comfort zones to consider the far-reaching social and political implications of tourism.

The book is not devoid of limitations, however. Although theoretical discourses are detailed, at times the practical applications remain underdeveloped. The case studies, though informative, call for more critical analysis, especially on the challenges and deficiencies that best describe peace and justice tourism initiatives. Besides, it assumes knowledge concerning certain complex theoretical concepts that are quite hard to access for novice readers.

This work provides the academic scholar with a rigorous theoretical underpinning for researching the intersections of tourism, peace, justice, and sustainability. It challenges established paradigms and opens up new lines of inquiry, in particular within the fields of decolonization and Indigenous rights. To policymakers, this book may be beneficial by showing the wider implications of policies on tourism at the level of social justice and sustainable development. Indeed, practitioners in the tourism industry will find valuable insights from this book on how tourism might be reimagined for peace and justice around the world. They would want to be supplemented with more practical resources, no doubt. Ultimately, however, it is possible to propose the view that this book lays an auspicious foundation for further research inquiry and practical application of this area, which has been relevant to urgent contemporary issues, despite its potential strengthening through the use of more empirical examples and greater accessibility to non-academic audiences. It is an essential read, particularly for those dedicated to the understanding of transformative capacities in tourism.

REFERENCE

- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6, 167–191.
- Scheyvens, R. (2007). Exploring the tourism-poverty nexus. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10(2–3), 231–254. doi: 10.2167/cit318.0.