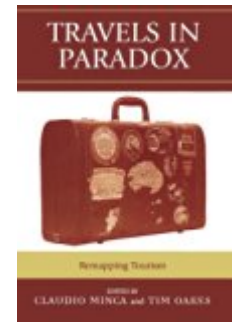


Claudio Minca, Tim Oakes, eds.. *Travels in Paradox: Remapping Tourism*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006. xi + 286 pp. \$34.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7425-2876-5.



Reviewed by Noel B. Salazar

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This book is the latest addition to a rapidly growing list of edited volumes that claim to advance the study of tourism. Inspired by theoretical frameworks from cultural theory and geography, the ten authors (mainly geographers) "explore the paradoxes of the tourist experience and the implications of these paradoxes for our broader understanding of the problems of modernity and identity" (quoted on the cover). The editors were inspired by new theorizing on mobility which, as John Urry argues in his preface, "sees places as material, embodied, contingent, networked, and performed" (p. viii). The various contributors analyze different elements of the complex and sometimes conflicting interrelationships between mobility and place in contemporary tourism, arguing that both are instrumental for the formation of (predominantly Western) modern identities.

In their well-grounded introduction, editors Claudio Minca and Tim Oakes write, "Any study of travel must also raise questions about the meaning of home, about belonging, about how places get made and remade" (p. 1). Mobility is impor-

tant for identity construction because travel and tourism provide "a stage upon which to act out the binaries by which we make sense of and order the world" (p. 13). The dualisms modern people are confronted with are multiple: subject-object, self-other, mind-body, culture-nature, progress-tradition, reason-experience, masculine-feminine, map-territory, representation-represented, secular-sacred, ordered-carnavalesque, quotidian-extraordinary, authentic experience-fallen modernity, etc. However, we should remember that it is not the mere act of traveling or the geographical places visited that help us figure out who we are. Rather, it is what happens psychologically within the traveler and interactionally when meeting others that deconstructs the neat binaries modernity presents us with. Sociologist Soile Veijola rightfully reminds us that places "are geographical expressions of interactions between historical processes, individual actions, and specific locations and sites" (p. 78).

As is common with edited volumes, the reader is presented with a wide array of writing styles—from objectified and depersonalized essays

to deeply auto-ethnographic accounts--and various levels of theorizing and reflexivity. This might explain why the editors chose not to divide the contributions in subsections. Depending on the educational background of the reader, some chapters may seem opaque while others are easy and pleasant reading but sometimes lacking analytical depth. Nevertheless, there is a clear thread weaving the various contributions together: a description of the paradoxes of (post)modernity as they play out in tourism. Mike Crang writes, "It would be difficult to imagine a modernity without tourism, since tourism contributes precisely to a sense of modernity" (p. 49). Crang's chapter is one of the clearest examples of theory-building. He proposes to move tourism studies away from epistemology to questions of ontology by showing the real-world effects of touristic imaginaries in the construction and ordering of places. In his words, "It is not about what representations *show* so much as what they *do*" (p. 48).

By showing the various ways in which the tourist experience is controlled, various authors demystify the dream sold by the industry that tourism is the ultimate expression of personal freedom and an escape from our ordered and rational life. Tim Edensor gives a nuanced and original account of the sensual experiences of tourism, describing how modern tourists are constantly moving between "an embrace of familiar comforts and the sensualities of the unfamiliar" (p. 44). This need for the known as well as the new is, of course, something the industry cleverly exploits. Sociologist Ning Wang writes about tourist itineraries as the commodity form of tourism, as the way that tourism products circulate, and as menus for tourism consumption. The reason that tourism, despite all ordering and control, is still "one of the most popular leisure, consuming, and cultural pursuits in postmodern societies" is "not for the reason that tourism is laden with paradoxes and ambivalence, but because there is no other way" (p. 76).

A book that seeks to untangle the modern identity of tourists would be incomplete without tackling the thorny issue of authenticity. Tim Oakes uses his well-known work on Chinese ethnic villages to make pointed philosophical remarks about authenticity and its relationship to subjectivity, the paradox of authenticity being that "it vaporizes only when you look for it" (p. 250). In her personal search for a homeland or *Heimat*, sociologist Soile Veijola makes the interesting observation that, "The obsession with the authentic" is now being replaced by a "quest for the *local*--as a basis for social life, identity, and belonging for both individuals and communities" (p. 77). Paulina Raento and Steven Flusty write in a very readable and entertaining style about three different representations of Italy in the so-called New Las Vegas ("The Strip"). These fantasy entertainment places serve as an illustration of "the interoperation of modernist production principles with postmodern priorities and modes of experience" (p. 100), hereby problematizing the artificial separation between what is modern and postmodern.

Postcolonialism is another hot topic in tourism studies these days, and three chapters of the book delve deeper into this subject matter. Jessica Jacobs focuses on how the imaginaries of Western female tourists about the oriental(ized) Sinai they visit are influenced by broader geographical and historical imaginations that, paradoxically, contain elements that are unmodern, premodern, as well as antimodern. Claudio Minca meticulously traces the historical influence and continuity of colonial ideas in contemporary tourism to a famous square in Marrakech. He shows how those involved in tourist encounters that take place on the square "share a colonial vision that each subject reinterprets in a process of hybrid constructions of meanings and identities" (p. 183). Anthropologist Kathleen Adams analyzes the phenomenon of danger-tourism, an extreme form of special-interest tourism to urban zones of political turmoil in postcolonial Southeast Asian

cities. The paradox this time is to be found in the fact that the places visited act "as both global metropolises and untamed urban jungles" (p. 206).

Where do all these apparent contradictions leave us? Although Urry proposes that the way forward for tourism research is "to leave behind the tourist as such and to focus rather upon the contingent networked performances and production of places that are to be toured and get remade as they are so toured" (p. x), it is remarkable how little mention there is in this volume about people involved in tourism other than tourists. As such, the book seems to be contributing more to tourist studies than to our understanding of tourism in general. Steven Flusty's contribution on the worldwide circulation of Zapatista dolls might be an exception, and this might explain why his essay on mobility and material culture feels out of place when put alongside the other contributions. Even though some authors hint at the mobility of locals living and working in tourist spaces, others seem to silently reinforce the false binary between the ephemeral roles of mobile tourist and place-bound locals. Does this tell us something about the positionality of the authors themselves? Except for Ning Wang, all scholars are writing from their privileged positions at northern American and European universities. While tourism studies is slowly opening up to non-western (especially Asian) views on global tourism, not much of this is present in this volume. This lack of diversity limits the claims to universality the book seems to be making about tourism.

Reading this volume leaves the informed reader with many questions. Why should tourism be a preferred lens to study complex issues such as modernity and identity? What are the real-world consequences, if any, of the multiple paradoxical binaries described? Why and for whom is the demystification of the (post)modern contradictions at play in tourism important? What impacts can or should the analyses presented in edited

books such as this one have on actual tourism? Apart from mobile tourists, who and what else is circulating through tourism and why? The fact that this scholarly work raises these and many other questions is a good thing, because in trying to formulate answers we will be advancing tourism theory. The multiple examples described in the book offer scholars useful templates to launch new research projects. Despite the shortcomings described above, this volume is highly recommended for all cultural geographers, anthropologists, and sociologists of tourism.

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