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# Epistemología del Turismo: estudios críticos

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# Epistemología del Turismo: Estudios Críticos

Edited by Marcelino Castillo Nechar and Alexandre Panosso Netto. Trillas (www.trillas.com.mx) 2010, iv + 216 pp (figures, tables, bibliography, index) ISBN 978-607-17-0384-2.

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PUBLICATION IN REVIEW
EPISTEMOLOGÍA DEL TURISMO

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*Epistemología del Turismo is a most welcome addition to the tourism studies field in Latin America. Although Latin America does not lack first class academics in the field of tourism it is clear that the production of quality knowledge in those countries is highly compromised by a lack of public investment in research, particularly social science research. For this reason, as all authors of the edited book seem to agree, research in tourism in Latin America has been focused primarily on statistical, management-focused data, and profound discussions using more emergent approaches to research have remained marginal. Using the editors' words, the "excesses typical of capitalism and its positivist science" (p. 6) and the neoliberal governments that have dominated Latin America in the last 60 years have contributed to the almost suppression of funding to research operating under non-positivist paradigms. This context notwithstanding, the critical studies presented in this edited book show that the quest and passion for knowledge, which the editors argue was the main driver for the organization of this publication, is very much present in Latin America scholars, pushing research in tourism studies forward, as this book confirms.*

*The stated aim of the book is to "construct tourism knowledge from different critical, epistemological perspectives" (p. 5) where 'a critical perspective' is understood as one that is "guided by the concern for the establishment of a society where the individuals can be formed in a conscious way and actively determine their own ways of life, of a society where justice guides all human relationships, of the idea of a better society" (p. 6). The strength of the book lies in its diversity of approaches, as aimed at by the editors, although not all contributors seem to be guided by the same critical principles. A clear example of the diversity of approaches is found in the authors' perspectives of what tourism is or should aim to be. Some regard it as an established science, using the term coined by Jovicic (1988) tourismology, while others understand tourism as a complex human phenomenon that needs to draw from the most disparate disciplines to be able to deal with the plethora of possibilities that tourism presents. Although this is a sign of the inconsistencies of the field itself, the reader would profit from a good introduction to the problem, instead of searching for consistency within the book. In fact, the preface does little to clarify the rationale of the book. Apart from a brief description of each chapter, the editors do not explain how the contribution of each weave together to compose a unitary piece. Therefore, it is hard to describe the common thread of the book, which, instead, presents random discussions about tourism and knowledge production/construction.*

*While such diversity is indeed a strength, some inconsistencies in the form and format hinder the construction of a more concise manuscript. Arguably the greatest weakness of the book is the disparity of the depth to which each chapter discusses the proposed topics. Chapter 4, "A Critical Analysis of Tourism as Science," for instance, presents, in 6 pages, a very superficial discussion of what tourism knowledge is, asking the problematic question "what is the truth about tourism as science?" (p. 63), whereas Luiz Octávio de Lima Camargo presents a profound argumentation for understanding hospitality as gift or as blessing, in his well discussed Chapter 9. Another common problem of edited books occurs; there is some repetition in the arguments or issues covered, as made explicit in Chapters 1 and 2. The former is an excellent and comprehensive review of epistemological approaches to research, and the implications for tourism studies, by Marcelino Castillo Nechar and Alexandre Panosso Netto, the editors. The latter is a similar proposal by Napoleón Conde Gaxiolla ("Towards an Epistemologization of Tourism Discourse"), but in a more superficial vein.*

*Still regarding form and format, while some chapters are presented clearly as a 'critical study', such as the already mentioned Chapters 1 and 9, and also the excellent Chapter 5, by José Maria Filgueiras Nodar, "Kuhnian Reflexions about the 'Scientification' of Tourism," others are presented as dissertation/thesis literature review chapters, as it is the*

*case with Sidnei Raimundo's "Studies of the Relationships between Society and Nature, and their Contribution to Tourism and Leisure Research." The latter chapter only vaguely presents a contribution to tourism studies, as the (important!) link between nature/society relationships and tourism is only briefly explored. Lastly, Félix Tomillo Noguero's Chapter "The Concept of Tourism According to the World Tourism Organization," although presenting an interesting topic, diverges greatly from all the others in terms of formatting, presenting more than half of its material in the form of endnotes (13 extensive, font 8/10 pages of notes, for a 14 pages long chapter). More importantly, the chapter ends suddenly, without final considerations or a concluding paragraph to summarize what was presented/discussed/established in the chapter. The reader is left looking into the endnotes to find what the author's message was after all.*

*Despite these problems, the book is an invaluable contribution to tourism studies in Latin America. Certainly some of the best tourism scholars, particularly from Mexico and Brazil, are represented in the book, showing how Latin American countries are well attuned to the global tourism studies scene. As individual pieces, the chapters present significant contributions to the discussions pertaining to epistemology in tourism studies. As a unitary piece they lose some strength, as there is not a clear thread of argument, form and format weaving the pieces together. This weakness does not invalidate the effort, however, and it is still a 'must' on the shelves of tourism scholars who are either from, or based in, Latin America, or are interested in the issues relevant to that part of the world. This book leaves the imminent desire for the publication of some empirical work (the book presents only one example) using the diverse (non-positivist) epistemological approaches advocated/presented. Such studies would be a fitting further contribution to the discussions that will definitely be triggered by this publication.* **Arianne Carvalhedo Reis.** Department of Tourism, University of Otago, Dunedin, 9056, New Zealand. E-mail <arianne.reis@otago.ac.nz>

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Jovicic, Z. (1988). A plea for tourismological theory and methodology. *Revue de Tourisme 43*, 2-5.