

Book review

Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research (AHTR) 2014
An International Journal of Akdeniz University Tourism Faculty Vol. 2 (2)
ISSN: 2147-9100 (Print), 2148-7316 (Online) 50-53
Webpage: <http://www.ahtrjournal.org/>

Ethnicity, Inc. John L., & Jean Comaroff. 2012. Buenos Aires,
Editorial Katz. ISBN 978-9871566-57-0, pp. 250, \$56

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The discussion of heritage tourism and sustainability has drawn the attention of many scholars and universities over the last decades. The problem of ethnic discrimination that concerned philosophers and sociologists is a thing of the past. However, a more radical viewpoint is questioning the role played by heritage in this postmodern world of consumers (Bauman, 2007).

As the previous backdrop, *Ethnicity Inc*, the new book authored by John and Jean Comaroff discusses the reason why both still are voices of authority in themes associated to anthropology and economy. Beyond the promises of the globalized world, per the argument readers will find in this text, there is an underlying logic of commoditization and consequent exploitation by which human beings, their cultures and traditions become in business enterprises. Since anthropology as academic discipline emerged as an extreme concern in founding parents to the disappearance of non-western cultures, this sentiment has taken the opposite direction. In our days, aboriginals appeal to reinforce their own differences to be sold to the international segment of travelers and tourists. In perspective, cultural tourism is one of the most growing industries in the world. *Ethnicity*, in this vein, set the pace to a new type of cultural consumption fabricated from outside to regulate emotions. The term “empowerment” as it has been formulated by the specialized literature is defined as strategy followed by local actors to improve economic and social conditions by means of the proactive participation and commitment. At the time, aborigines adopt “empowerment” simply because they know

something special can be offered to the international Western consumer, their culture is recycled as a commodity. This new type of identity, though more flexible, objectifies the native to the extent to its needs are enslaved to a fabricated past. Basically, cultural tourism not only evokes a vibrant past which does not exist, but confers to local communities the legal mechanism for launching to self-representation. The value of aboriginal culture is conditioned by those features that legitimate the West supremacy. Aboriginals may say something if this discourse can be commercialized. This represents a much deeper process of alienation where cultures are disclosed from their original roots. In doing so, the culture is sold attending only to the interests of consumers. The enthusiasm and leading role of aborigines as cultural managers blurs the conflictive relations of Fourth World and States, but creating new ones.

In this discussion, two significant ideas arise. On one hand, tourism disposes from cultural protection to re-draw the geography of the world. On another, native constructs their sentiment of belonging in view of what tourists want to hear and see. The merit of this work consists in reminding that this trend not only blurs the boundaries between past and present but also impose new economies based on ethno-merchandise where the production never ends. The classic rules of economy teach us that the rise of demands entails a decline in the production. Needless to say, this does not happen with ethno-merchandise. The much demand for cultural consumption, the better for production; that way, the destination never declines in extractives.

The five chapters conform this valuable book are elegantly written to be read separately but a main-threat of argument persists. Comaroff & Comaroff explore not only the modern obsession by authenticity but also the proper inconsistencies of ethnicity. Situated in a nuanced argument, this book does not demonize but accept widely the promise of heritage tourism. The empire of market gives considerable autonomy to non-western respecting to their purchasing power, even their capacity to ask for loans beyond the control and hegemony of state's apparatuses. Unlike their ancestors, by the embracing of substitute identities the modern aboriginal reservoirs gained more prosperity and wealth. Their profits are based on their abilities to manage businesses or take the lead in real state speculations. Nonetheless, a more critical view has emphasized that these monetary benefits have serious costs for the community such as the ecological pollution, problems of sustainability, rise of crime rates and so forth. Quite aside from this discussion, Comaroff & Comaroff remind that one of the aspects that characterize the post modernity is the imposition of

copy-right legal forms. If the condition to enter to tourist market implies that native voices are commoditized as products, no less true is that the terms and condition of copy right apply on them. The cultures are protected by the copy-right imposition, which confers to marginal groups a possibility to make decision but under the logic of market. The paradox lies in the logic dispositions given to ethnic-minorities that lead towards the alleviation of poverty allows Western forces to creates a staged-history. This new type of existence not only is weak, but also is fraught of problems and conflicts. The sense of autonomy aboriginal gain to negotiate with globalized capital is pitted against the interest of nation states. This is the reason why, Comaroff & Comaroff add, the more heritage demands worldwide are accompanied by ethnic-cleansing in the Third World. Radical cultural studies evinced how local voices struggle against nation-states to impose their view about politics, economy and even demography. The nexus given between territory and market sometimes paves the ways for the advent of genocides and bloody warfare. The main argument, which is presented by our ethnologists, suggests that the obsession for authenticity, which is associated to the need to belong, constructs new defying borderlands where the native becomes in a producer of culture.

Although this is a wonderful text for anthropologists, sociologists and tourism-led scholars interested by the heritage and tourism, there is a clear lack of interest to deepen the socio-economic causes that legitimized the sense of copy right in the globalized world. In earlier studies, Korstanje (2012; 2014) has demonstrated how the ideological discourse of cultural tourism marks some monitories at the time other are demarked automatically. Since all human beings are enrooted in a culture, it is a tautology to refer to "cultural tourism". By default, tourism is cultural per se. To put this in bluntly, if a contingent of American tourists visits a Reservoir in Ghana, they are making "cultural tourism". Conversely, if African tourists go to California they only make tourism. Well, the fact is that the term cultural is employed to denote the other that does not like me. The circles of elites where these marks are produced, never is marked by the periphery (Korstanje, 2012; 2014; Busby, Korstanje & Mansfield, 2011; Korstanje & Skoll, 2013).

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