

BOOK REVIEW

Slow Travel and Tourism

Janet Dickinson & Les Lumsdom, editors (2010). Earthscan Limited

This book represents a jointly effort to define a new way of travelling. Slow travels evoke the needs of low consumption to herald diverse alternative to mass tourism. The primary goal of this research is giving accounts in the travel experiences to adapt practices to sustainable behaviour. Emerged as an issue of debate the concept of slow travels recently is associated to low-carbon transport; Authors defines slow travel as “an emerging conceptual framework which offer an alternative to air and car travel, where people travel to destinations more slowly overland, stay longer and travel less” (p. 2). The existent scaffolding of productivity and consumption, proper of capitalism, leads to mobilities and speed. In view of this, this book and the concept of slow travel represent an alternative.

Most certainly, slow customers adopted its nature from the idiosyncrasy of slow food. Although in the last decades, a lot of studies related to the role of tourism and environment has surfaced, few ones focused on slow tourism. Authors, in this vein, explain convincingly that green-tourism refers to the system of transport exclusively, while slow travels bespeaks from the tourist experiences and its being in the world. “Fast travels” are interpreted to liminoid movements toward certain destinations; the rhythm of travel is determined by the expectative of arrival. Destinations are more important than travel in such for this view. This sense of travels not only characterized the transport means during last century, but also produced serious harms to atmosphere and environment. Rather, the paradigm of slow travels subverts the logic of consumption to the extent to bring natural consciousness in tourist minds. This concept means a change in the way of interpreting the sustainability and the impacts of technology to the eco-system. The first and second chapters are dedicated to the examination on how the existent means of

transport impacts on ecology while the third and chapter delve into the world of slow tourism with more accuracy. The rest of this project refers to alternative ways of slow tourism as walking, cycling, coach tourism and their connection with the water-based sustainability. One of the most interesting aspects of this project is the dichotomy between destination success and eco-protection. To some extent, any system to operate appropriately needs from speed, mobile markets and popularity. To reduce the rhythm of travels may somehow push the tourism industry work-forces to unemployment or some destinations to decline, even after the financial crash originated in US that whipped widely to Europe. Even if Dickinson & Lumsdon acknowledge that the problem of change is the adaptancy of social customs. The green house effects reduction falls in three epitomized barriers, generated by attitude-behaviour gap: a) dismissal to take alternative means of transport to air travel, b) reluctance to shorten holidays for mitigating the impacts of mobilities on environment, and c) unwillingness to accept personal responsibility in the problem.

The primary thesis of this work seems to be that climate change paradox can be explained by awareness-attitude gap in lieu of attitude-behaviour gap theory.

“Exploratory Research with slow travellers found that while they recognized travel has an impact on climate change, and some were hence adjusting their everyday behaviour, many continued to travel by air and were able to justify this position. Participants used denial strategies and discourse of obligation interlinked with structural travel barriers” (p. 52). Lay people resist changing whenever they perceive their attitudes have no effects on the problem. The lack of responsibility to adapt the times and pattern of travels to deter climate change effects can be determined if global issues are minimized when their effects remain remote. This opens a paradox, in the discussion of sustainability and ecology. Basically, many persons accept flying and climate change are inextricably intertwined, but at some extent they trivialize their roles in such a process (Hardin’s Paradox).

To resolve this short-coming, slow travels not only represent a valid alternative to change the discourse but also make evident how the Hardin’s paradox can be resolved. If individuals prioritize their self-interest, the benefits for all are lost. Methodologically speaking, Dickinson & Lumsdon exert involuntarily a serious criticism to the existent studies in tourism and sustainability because the following two

reasons:

- a) Participants are contradictory in their answers showing a interference between what they say and finally do.
- b) Representation of travels determines the penchant of participants to see some problems and minimize others. Risks are socially constructed.

From this mind-set, studies based on the opinion of international tourists respecting to climate issues is not only troublesome, but also hard to sustain. The collective views about risks are often biased by stereotypes, and influenced by several representations. In this vein, this book stimulates a hot debate to understand the reluctance to change the existent forms of consumption in spite of the warning of specialists. Citizenry does not act differently if the causes of the issue are understood.

Under some circumstances, structural factors facilitate some particular behaviour patterns. To cut the long story short, the climate change poses a serious risk for humankind all, and should be addressed taking into consideration the process of behavioural decisions. Written in polished English and structured in a coherent way, this is one of the best researches I have ever read respecting to sustainable issues and tourism. Readers who wish inspecting *Slow Travel & Tourism* will find a rich academic compilation of ten chapters along with the needs to change directly to a new type of practicing tourism and mobilities.

Maximiliano E. Korstanje

Maximiliano E. Korstanje (maxikorstanje@fibertel.com.ar) is a Lecturer/professor/etc. at University of Palermo, Department of Economics, Larrea ST 1079 – 3 Floor, CP 1188 Buenos Aires, Argentina.