



Book Review

Handbook of Social Tourism, A. Diekmann, S. McCabe (Eds.), Edward Elgar, Cheltenham (2020). p. 328 pp (Hbk.), £135, ISBN 978-1-78811242-0

In a time marked by the fear of an unknown virus, where the notions of cosmopolitanism, globalization and hospitableness have been radically transformed, Anya Diekmann and Scott McCabe present Handbook of Social Tourism. This editorial project is organized into five sections with 24 high-quality chapters authored by renowned experts from different countries.

In the introductory chapter, the editors introduce the potential contributions of social tourism to reverse not only pollution and the current ecological crisis but social inequalities such as ageing, poverty and exclusion. As they put it, despite its enormous usefulness, social tourism still remains marginalized as a peripheral object of study within the constellations of tourism research. The first part of the book sets out the historic and socio-political contexts that facilitated the emergence of social tourism. In this respect, Jolin (Chapter 2) argues that social tourism gradually mutates according to shifts in the socio-political context from where the industry operates. Chapter 3, by Billen, reflects on the massification of leisure practices, and the philosophical dilemma in affirming tourism as a universal right while actively advocating sustainability.

The second part offers a review of the economic and social effects of social tourism in communities through Chapters 4–8). Schenkel & de Almeida explore the first stages of social tourism in Latin America as well as the challenges posed by the industry in economies characterized by profound inequalities. Portuguese researchers, Lima and Eusebio argue convincingly that social tourism generates multiple positive effects on economies when states are limited to make direct interventions in the market or state-led programs are avoided. Equally important, social tourism shows potential to minimize the collateral damages of the global market (such as inflation or real estate speculation). In the sixth chapter, McCabe and Diekmann proffer a critical diagnosis revolving around the rights of paid holidays and tourism. Beyond its benefits, social tourism seems to be far from a universal right because its evolution is subject to each national context. The seventh chapter written by Cisneros Martínez & Fernandez Morales describe the case of Spain and the Institute for Elderly and Social Services (known as *Inmerso*), a social program that helps to stimulate senior tourism while reducing the negative impacts of seasonality. Further, Lynn Minnaert presents the study-case of the *Large Scale Listening Project* inaugurated by the Holiday Participation Center (Flanders, Belgium), a project that promotes the possibilities of making tourism more equitable through effective listening to those who face serious barriers. More than one thousand micro-narratives were gathered to answer to the problem of how to

create true tourism for all.

Part III (Chapters 9–13) explores the benefits and challenges of social tourism. Contributions are as diverse as the treatment of emotional problems and mental health (Hunter Jones et al.), and the development of thermal destinations as a source of well-being (Diekmann et al.). Challenges range from the role of voluntary tourism in a context of crisis and uncertainty (Shaw, McCabe & Wooler), deficiencies in the transport system that highlight much deeper inter-ethnic inequalities (Ram) and constraints in the ageing population for access (Vincent).

Part IV (Chapters 14–18) focuses on the application and implementation of social tourism programs to achieve successful results. Social tourism enhances the life quality of elderly groups interrogating furtherly on the benefits of escapement (debated by Morgan, Sie & Finnear) while Eichhorn discusses the promising use of social tourism to improve the conditions of low-income groups. In this respect, the next three chapters show how social tourism not only generates engagement to overcome problems of unemployment (Kakoudakis) but also boost the empowerment of families (Kosar) without mentioning the activation of multigenerational holidays (a term widely developed by Hermans, Herregots & Cops).

Part V (Chapters 19–24) explores to what extent case studies from different countries legitimise social tourism as an emerging field of study in tourism research, when outcomes about impact of social tourism in the “global North and South” are inconclusive. While Uribe explores the French case of VTF holiday villages, Vento & Komppula describe the relational perspective of Finnish tourism. Beyond the current legislation, Carr & Schanzel theorize on social tourism to reverse the unspeakable intolerance against strangers in New Zealand whereas Pyke & Pyke offers a solid diagnosis on the power of social tourism to improve the quality of life of low-income groups in Canada. Observations which are replicated in the twenty-third chapter fully dedicated to the study of social tourism in China (Qiao & Prideaux), as well as the implication of social tourism programs and their practical effects in Mexico (Estrada-Gonzalez).

At least for this reviewer, this book has two unquestionable merits. On one hand, it gives a fresh snapshot of the problem of poverty and inequalities accelerated by modern consumption. On another, an all-encompassing diagnosis shaped by interdisciplinary research, which was conducted by worldly researchers, is generously offered as interplay between theory and practice.

Maximiliano E. Korstanje
University of Palermo, Argentina
E-mail address: mkorst@palermo.edu.

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